



*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12

BENCH MARK OF CONFUSION

"Hindsight" Evaluation of the S. S. Lessons

Not since the Second Quarter's Lessons in 1977 on "Jesus - The Model Man" has such controversy convulsed the Church as was generated by the Lessons on "Christ's All-atoning Sacrifice" this past Quarter. Many a layperson who had been unaware of the doctrinal issues which were introduced in the Church by the SDA-Evangelical Conferences suddenly awakened to the fact that something was terribly wrong. Both series of lessons were built on the same basic doctrine - the Incarnation.

Reaction to the Lessons on the All-atoning Sacrifice varied from place to place. One conference president reported hearing of "cases" where individuals "would hold up the quarterly and say it is heresy and throw it to the floor." (E. C. Beck, Letter dated, February 4, 1983) Other groups were reported to have boxed up the quarterlies and returned them to the General Conference Sabbath School Department. One church in the local conference substituted the 1977 Quarterly and re-studied it. The response was so negative and became so widespread that it was necessary for Dr. Leo Van Dolson, Editor of the Adult SS Lessons to make up a "form letter" so the secretary had to merely type the name of the concerned member in the heading and salutation. This "form letter" settled little, but has added fuel

to the fire. The first paragraph set the tone for what followed. It read:

"1 The Human Nature of Christ: Because the Seventh-day Adventist Church has not taken a definite position on the three possibilities mentioned on page 22 of the quarterly, the editors cannot do so and adequately represent the current position of the church. Although the author leans one way, the editors modified his position in the quarterly so that it might better represent the various positions held by the church as a whole on this issue."

One's immediate reaction to this explanation is that if the Church "has not taken a definite position" how can there be a "current position" which inhibits the editors - there were two involved - from taking a stand? Then in the same paragraph, Van Dolson indicates there are "various positions held by the church as a whole." This is telling all who will listen that the doctrinal thinking of the Church is in disarray. The "various positions" presently held by the Church on the doctrine of the Incarnation are indicative of the confusion which has permeated the Church resulting from the SDA-Evangelical Conferences. The Bible has a name for religious confusion.

The "form letter" is not the only one which Van Dolson has written. In another letter, he stated - "The lessons are prepared for and approved by a General Conference appointed committee of 66 leaders and scholars around the world. (Have you noticed the statement on page 4 under the contents?) This committee and editors

are charged with the responsibility of modifying the lessons so that they present the position of the world church." (Letter dated January 31, 1983) This shows the reason for the present confusion. It has always been the understanding of this editor that the Sabbath School was the place where the Bible was to be studied as the Textbook. The Sabbath School lessons were to teach truth based on the Word of God. But truth cannot find its source in the positions held by men unless based on that Word. Truth is of Divine origin finding its source in Him who is the way, the truth and the life. (John 14:6) The "world church" cannot originate truth - it can only proclaim truth. But if it has various positions on such vital doctrines as the Incarnation, then the trumpet is giving an uncertain sound - a confused babble of discordant notes.

This brings us to another conclusion if we are willing to annoint our eyes to be healed from our Laodicean blindness. The leadership of the Church today is as far from the message of 1888 as were the men who at that time rejected it. "The righteousness of Christ" has been defined as "pure unadulterated truth." (TM, p. 65) Now it should be clear to all that to express in the Sabbath School lessons "the various positions held by the church as a whole on this" doctrine is not expressing "pure unadulterated truth" but rather adulterated truth. Are we going to walk in the freedom of truth, or are we going to continue in the bondage of error? The Church "which now is, is in bondage with her children." (Gal. 4:25)

We need to remind ourselves that God sent to this people two men who were designated as "His messengers" (TM, p. 95), with "a most precious message." (Ibid., p. 91) What did these men teach in regard to the Incarnation?

In 1890, the Pacific Press released a book by Dr. E. J. Waggoner - Christ and His Rigueousness - which Froom avers to be an edited presentation of Waggoner's messages at the 1888 General Conference Session. See Movement of Destiny, p. 189. Commenting on Romans 8:3-4, Waggoner in His book stated:

"A little thought will be sufficient to show anybody that if Christ took upon Him-

self the likeness of man, in order that He might redeem man, it had to be sinful man that He was made like, for it was sinful man that He came to redeem. . . Moreover, the fact that Christ took upon Him the flesh, not of a sinless being, but of sinful man, that is, the flesh which He assumed had all the weaknesses and sinful tendencies to which fallen human nature is subject, is shown by the statement that He 'was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.'" (pages 26-27, emphasis his.)

In 1895, Elder A. T. Jones presented a series of studies at the General Conference Session in which he enuciated the doctrine of the Incarnation and the nature of Christ's humanity more clearly and more completely than had been done before in any single presentation. Jones began the study of the humanity of Christ by noting the common source from which the humanity we possess was derived. He stated:

"One man is the source and head of all human nature. And the genealogy of Christ, as one of us, runs to Adam. . . All coming from one man according to the flesh, are all of one. Thus on the human side, Christ's nature is precisely our nature." (1895 GC Bulletin, p. 231)

In commenting on John 1:14 - "And the Word was made flesh" - Jones asked the question - "Now what kind of flesh is it?" In answering this question, he asked another, and amplified the answer as follows:

"What kind of flesh alone is it that this world knows? - Just such flesh as you and I have. This world does not know any other flesh of man, and has not known any since the necessity of Christ's coming was created. Therefore, as this world knows only such flesh as we have, as it is now, it is certainly true that when 'the Word was made flesh,' He was made just such flesh as ours is. It cannot be otherwise." (Ibid., p. 232)

Whence have come the "tares"? Dr. Frank B. Holbrook of the General Conference Biblical Research Committee answers that question, in replying to an inquiry about the recent Sabbath School Lessons. He wrote:

"The major points which Elder Gulley makes in the quarterly and in his book are held

by a large portion of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This is the position that most Christians hold. This is the stand that the church took publically in 1957 in the printing and wide distribution of the book Questions on Doctrine. It is also the position taught in our Seminary for more than 30 years. It is not a new viewpoint." (Letter dated, Feb. 3, 1983, Quoted in "Which Gospel?" RV, p. 8)

To what extent has the teachings as set forth in the book Questions on Doctrine and which have been taught for 30 years in the Seminary permeated the Church? Dr. Richard W. Coffen, book editor of the Review and Herald Publishing Association, in defending the book by Gulley - Christ Our Substitute - indicated in a letter dated, January 17, 1983 - "The lessons and the book were not released to stir up controversy but to present a position that a large number of Adventists (the majority perhaps?) hold and cherish." (Ibid., p. 15) In other words, the heresy of the SDA-Evangelical Conferences has now become the majority view. To challenge this conclusion of Coffen's is to take an ostrich stance - head in the sand!

In recent months, I had the occasion to visit in Collegedale, Tennessee. While there I talked to some of the professors on the campus including two in the Department of Religion. I discussed the controversy swirling around the department, and the coming of Dr. Gordon Hyde to chair the department. (Dr. Hyde was also a co-editor of the Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly - Christ's All-atoning Sacrifice) This teacher related how he had talked with Dr Hyde and discussed with him what he had been teaching for the past fourteen years. Dr Hyde assured him that he had been teaching standard Adventist theology. What was it? His college concepts at Columbia Union College were derived from the book, Questions on Doctrine. He said that at Andrews University it was the same. (That was true, for I was there at the same time he was) So he has been merely teaching what he has been taught.

To center one's attack on Southern Missionary College (now Southern College) as Vance Ferrell has done is deceptive and misleading. All such attacks are merely pulling leaves off the tree. It

makes a show and plays to the "bleachers" but does not lay the axe to the root of the tree.

Not only have the college Bible teachers been schooled in the concepts of Questions on Doctrine, but logic tells us that the ministers of the Church coming out of the Seminary have also been so taught. Thus the basis of indoctrination of all new converts comes from the same source. A look at the membership of the church now compared with what it was in 1957 tells you that it is now three times greater than it was then. Subtract because of death those who held to the historic 1888 position from the over-all total, and you have as Coffen suggests - "a majority" holding the neo-Adventist view on the Incarnation and the Atonement. This should tell us something. Whose ranks have we joined? Are those who possess truth going to continue in the march away from the "precious message" given by God's "messengers" in and following 1888? When is the lock-step toward "Egypt" going to be broken by those who profess to believe "historic" Adventism?

"2. The Nature of the Atonement"

The second point which Van Dolson in his "form letter" discussed was the subject of the Atonement." He stated:

"As the title suggests, this quarterly emphasizes the aspect of the atonement that was completed at Calvary. In doing so it quotes Ellen White (see pages 79 and 83). But it recognizes that there is another side to the atonement coin by stating 'Although the price of the atonement was paid fully at Calvary, Christ ministers His atonement in the heavenly sanctuary today. (See Selected Messages, bk. 1, pp. 67, 68)" - page 79. Christ's pre-advent sanctuary ministry includes interceding for us and judging the world. (see p. 83)

One may ask - Was the other "side of the atonement coin" in the original lessons as submitted by Gulley, or was this supplied by the editors to "represent the various positions held by the church as a whole on this issue" as stated for the Incarnation?

In the presentation of the Incarnation in the Lesson Quarterly, it was stated

that the writings of Ellen G. White could be used to support two of the positions presented. (p. 22, Adult Quarterly) So likewise, the two references used relative to the Atonement as cited by Van Dolson are supportive of the two positions - the two sides of "the atonement coin." The one cited in Acts of the Apostles, p. 29, states - "Christ's sacrifice in behalf of man was full and complete. The condition of the atonement had been fulfilled." (Emphasis mine) The other reference (p. 83, Quarterly) from the Signs of the Times indicates that "His atonement was complete in every part. As He hung upon the cross, He could say, 'It is finished.'"

The Lesson Quarterly was specific as to where the emphasis was to be placed. Speaking of Pentecost, it read - "For the first time the Holy Spirit brought the God-man, the completed atonement, . . . into man." (p. 86) Noting the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, the comment is found - "His mission for man was completed at the cross." (p. 53) Gulley in his book is very emphatic - "Calvary fully finished Christ's mission." (p. 101)

If the atonement was completed at the Cross, then there is nothing further that needs to be done except the application of the benefits of that atonement to the lives of those who accept the substitution. This is exactly what the book, Questions on Doctrine teaches,¹ and exactly what was voted at the 1980 General Conference Session in Dallas.² What then is the significance of the work of Jesus Christ as the great High Priest in the Most Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary? His mission completed at Calvary makes the whole structure of the heavenly intercession of Jesus a farce. By trying to present both concepts in the Sabbath School lessons amounts to nothing but confusion - and the Bible has a name for that!

"4. Christ Has an Advantage Over Us"

In defense of this charge, Van Dolson in his "form letter" indicated that -

"Throughout the quarterly the author takes the clear position that Christ does not have an advantage over us. Lesson 5, p. 40, quotes Ellen White: 'If we have in any sense a more trying conflict than had Christ, then He would not have been able

to succor us. But our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities."

However, one of the lessons clearly stated - "All human beings are born in sin and commit sin themselves. This finds them two steps removed from the man Jesus as far as the past and present are concerned." (p. 36, Quarterly) We truly admit all have sinned, except Jesus Christ. But by His sacrifice, He has provided a means whereby man can be placed on vantage ground, and can stand before God as if he had never sinned. This removes one step of the separation, and the other concerns the Incarnation. Did Christ accept the fallen nature of man, or did He not? If He came in our likeness, in all things made like unto His brethren, then the gap is bridged. The Ladder is set up on the earth, and in "earth" - our flesh, He has condemned sin and destroyed the enmity. See Romans 8:3 & Eph. 2:15.

Confusion Compounded

Some sentences in the 11th Lesson caused considerable comment. They read:

"At Calvary humankind finally crossed the line back into Eden; with Jesus' cry 'It is finished,' the world of the Fall came to an end - those who would accept Christ are at home in Eden once more." (p. 82)

Apparently this was a rewording by the editors, and in their "touch-up" job, confusion resulted. Gulley in his book makes the concept crystal clear. He wrote: "At Calvary he finally crossed the line back into Eden. With the cry 'It is finished' the world of the Fall ended. Man was at home in Eden once more - in Him!" (p. 100, emphasis mine) Some of the concepts in the Lessons were heretical enough without creating one where one did not exist prior to editing, thus compounding the confusion.

During the study of the 12th Lesson, I read the following paragraph to the class:

"We are given the 'earnest' (Greek arrabon) of the Holy Spirit. Arrabon is a downpayment, or pledge, used in business to guarantee the rest of the payment for a purchase. We have been purchased at Calvary. Our reception of the Holy Spirit in the present is guarantee that the fullness of the reward of the cross purchase is on its way. In the meantime, the arrabon is not part of the sacrifice, but the

full sacrifice - the total Jesus - coming to us. His future coming will be in greater fullness because we shall see Him." (p. 87)

I asked the class what this meant? The response was that it was contradictory - one sentence saying one thing: the arra-bon, as an earnest, or a downpayment, a pledge - and another sentence stating that the arrabon was "the full sacrifice" not a guarantee that something was "on its way." I then asked if there is a word to describe such mingling of concepts? The answer was quick - "Confusion." The question follows - Is there a Bible word symbolizing confusion? Have we been made to sip this past quarter of the wine in the cup of that symbolic woman? Or was it merely from the wine cup of one of her daughters?

The Fruitage of Error Revealed

When we in the December Thought Paper sounded the initial alert as to what was coming in the First Quarter's Lessons for 1983, we were challenged by several concerning the second article in the issue entitled - "Fully God and Fully Man or Truly God and Truly Man? Which?" Others since then have considered this splitting hairs. But the full fruition of the concept of "fully God" surfaced in the Lessons. Both in the Lessons and in Gulley's book, the emphasis was that the sacrifice God provided was only a human sacrifice.

The Lessons stated at one point - "On the second Friday [Creation Friday referred to as the first] as the second Adam - as a human - He died to bring life to 'whomsoever will.'" (p. 78) In his book, Gulley writes - "He came as the second Adam, lived a human life, died as a human - for divinity cannot die - and offered a perfect humanity to replace his." (p. 44)

While quoting Ellen G. White to sustain this concept, they evidently forgot that she also wrote - "Jesus Christ laid off His royal robe, His kingly crown, and clothed His divinity with humanity, in order to become a substitute and surety for humanity, that dying in humanity He might by His death destroy him who had the power of death. He could not have done this as God, but by coming as man Christ could die." (7BC:925) Paul declares emphatically - "Christ died for

our sins according to the scriptures." (I Cor. 15:3) He did not say, Jesus, referring to his humanity as the Son of man, but Christ, the Messiah, God's Son, died.

He who was fully God laid aside the "form of God" and while still retaining His true identity as God, He "in humanity" provided a divine sacrifice for the sins of the world. But if as taught by Gulley and Van Dolson in the book he co-authored with Dr. Herbert Douglass for the 1977 Sabbath School lessons, Jesus Christ was "fully" God, then the conclusion drawn by these theologians is logical - God cannot die. Therefore, Jesus was only a human sacrifice provided for sin. My Saviour is God, not a man! Whose wine cup are we sipping from? It is a drunk man who is confused.

It was Moses who said -

"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." And why?

"Because I will publish the name of the Lord: . . . He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." (Deut. 32:2-4)

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FROM ADVENTIST LAYMEN'S PIPELINE

Under a dateline - January 20, 1983 - an author who "requests anonymity" gives a summary of the present state of the Davenport Scandal. He writes:

"RELIABLE SOURCES INDICATE that on, or about December 30, 1982, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the United States Department of Justice descended upon the Washington D. C. headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Exact details of what transpired are unknown but it is said that at that time it became quite clear to Elder Neal C. Wilson, General Conference President, that these government agencies did, indeed, intend to prosecute a number of Adventist ministers and other ordained fiscal officers involved in the Davenport schemes and alleged fraud.

"ADDITIONAL ADVERSE PUBLICITY for the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its membership is thought to be on the horizon. Damaging publicity, considerably greater than that already sustained is expected by those acquainted with facts still not generally known. The individual church member is expected to suffer additional loss of esteem and reputation in his community. The suggestion that prison terms may be meted out to some church officials is terribly revolting to those laymen who have in vain been struggling for many years to participate in a meaningful way in church affairs but have been denied any significant voice due to tight control by an all-powerful clergy. As one layman put it, 'there has been a solid wall of opposition to the laity. Even the chairman of the Lay Advisory Committee has been usurped by the Conference President. Our preachers have had absolute control and we can see that permitting that to happen, the members individually, and the church body as a whole are now paying an extremely high and devastating price.'

"IT NOW APPEARS that Elder Wilson, in order to make himself and his administration look good to the membership and to keep as many members as possible believing that the hierarchy has still retained a degree of responsibility is finally announcing that punitive action will be taken by the church against those whom some have termed, 'this band of crooks.'

"REPORT HAS IT that five Union Conference Presidents are to be fired, but it is thought that more likely these men will be given other jobs at a new and distant location.

"IT SHOULD BE NOTED that former General Conference President Robert Pierson, former Pacific Union Conference President Cree Sandefur, former Northern California President Helmuth Retzer, and certain others, all investors of personal funds with Davenport, and thought to be involved in a conflict of interest, are all out of reach in retirement as far as their jobs are concerned. That Elder Cree Sandefur and Elder Desmond Cummings were actually in personal partnership with Dr. Davenport is incredible, but documented.

"CHURCH MEMBERS WHO LOANED MONEY TO DAVENPORT have been assured that the General Conference will cover their losses and that additional lawsuits are unnecessary.

"THE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP HAS NOT BEEN TOLD that the \$23 million admittedly lost by various church organizations (SDA) via Davenport's bankruptcy and the additional \$20 million plus lost to individual church members will be paid out of tithes and offerings but the current reduction in giving and the membership's re-evaluation of 'the storehouse' into which tithes and offerings are to be brought may well be a significant reason for the general retrenchment taking place and that church finances are receding at an ever alarming pace.

"THE QUESTION IS BEING ASKED, are 'The Thousand Days of Reaping' aimed at souls for the kingdom of God or for the replacement of disenchanted, sorrowful, deluded and departing members and their purses?

WILSON WAFFLES

In the Adventist Review (Jan. 27, 1983, p. 10), Elder Neal C. Wilson wrote:

"Difficult as it may be, we will seek to implement as faithfully and as impartially as possible the recommendations that have been agreed upon by the commission [that Wilson had appointed to evaluate the involvement of the church and church employees in connection with the Davenport loans] and the General Conference officers."

The Review Commission recommended that the names of those subject to public discipline should be published, preferably in the Adventist Review.

In the Adventist Review (March 24, 1983, p. 7, Elder Wilson told the Church:

"The General Conference Committee has endorsed the decision not to proceed with the previously proposed plan of publishing names in the Adventist Review."

The end is not yet in sight. The light at the end of the tunnel has gone out.

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"What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken in the wind?"

Matthew 11:7