

“*Watchman,  
what of the night?*”

“The hour has come, the hour is striking and striking at you,  
the hour and the end!”  
Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)



**From 1915-1952**

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### **Editor's Preface**

In 1931 a new Statement of Beliefs, written by the Editor of the *Review & Herald*, was inserted into the *Yearbook*. In regard to the Incarnation it stated, "He took upon Himself the nature of the human family" (#3). All previous Statements had declared that "He took on Him the nature of the seed of Abraham for the redemption of our fallen race." From this assertion there could be no question but that Christ took upon Himself the fallen nature of man. The new statement was ambiguous.

Froom in his book, *Movement of Destiny*, reveals that at the time of the issuance of the 1931 Statement of "Fundamental Beliefs" a group of leaders at the General Conference headquarters were meeting on Sabbath afternoons for Bible study and informal dialogue. These were not official gatherings. There was no chairman nor secretary; however, some in attendance took copious notes (p. 429). Froom does not reveal who these men were, nor where such notes might be found at the time he was writing the book. It can be reasonably assumed that he was one of those who took notes. The question remains as to where these notes might be for verification. They could cast light that might explain why Rebok in 1949 was asked to revise *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*, and that revision be focused on the Incarnation (p. 428). Froom does indicate that those in attendance were those of the leadership who were "home" any given Sabbath, which could indicate that the regular attendees would be primarily editorial personnel. The record indicates that from the pen of these men - Wilcox and Nichol - the first deviations in the formulation of the doctrine of the Incarnation took place.

## From 1915 - 1952

Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant, died in 1915. In the intervening years from that date till 1952 the belief of the Church concerning the doctrine of the Incarnation can best be described in the language of the book of Joshua – “And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that He had done for Israel (Joshua 24:31).

The Sabbath School lessons for the Senior Division continued the same clear testimony in regard to the nature of Christ’s humanity that had been evidenced during the preceding decades. A lesson in 1921 on the purpose of the Incarnation quoted with approval a comment from a source documented only as “The Great ‘I AM’s’ of Christ.” The writer had written:

**Christ assumed, not the original unfallen, but our fallen humanity. In this second experiment, He stood not precisely where Adam before Him had, but, as has already been said, with immense odds against Him – evil, with all the prestige of victory and its consequent enthronement in the very constitution of our nature, armed with more terrific power against the possible realization of this divine idea for man – perfect holiness. All this considered, the disadvantages of the situation, the tremendous risks involved, and the fierceness of the opposition encountered, we come to some adequate sense both of the reality and the greatness of that vast moral achievement; human nature tempted, tried, and miscarried in Adam, lifted up in Christ to the sphere of actualized sinlessness (pp. 248-249; *Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly*, 1<sup>st</sup> Qrt., 1921, p. 16).**

In another lesson the same year on the Priesthood of Christ, a note commenting on the first two chapters of the book of Hebrews read:

**He who is introduced in the first chapter as Son, God, and Lord, whose deity and eternity are emphasized, meets us in the second chapter as the Son of man, with all**

**the limitations of our common humanity. He is known now by His personal name, and as one who can taste of death (Heb. 2:9), and can be made “perfect through sufferings” (verse 10). He partook of the same flesh and blood which we have (verse 14), becoming just as truly man (verse 17) as He is truly God (*ibid.*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Qrt. pp. 13-14).**

A further lesson in 1921 emphasized the same concept. A note taught that “when the Son of God was born of a woman (Gal. 4:4) and partook of our sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3), the eternal life was manifest in a human body (I John 1:2)” (*ibid.*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Qrt., p. 10).

In 1923, a Sabbath School lesson on “The Godly Life” was studied by the Senior Division. The first note of the lesson declared:

**Christ took upon Himself the infirmities and sins of the flesh...; but to every sin He died, every lust He crucified, every selfish desire He denied Himself – all for our sakes (*Ibid.*, Second Quarter, 1923, p. 22).**

The First Quarter’s Lessons in 1928 were on the book of Ephesians. A note in comment upon Ephesians 2:15 read:

**Carnal, natural man cannot abolish his enmity against God. It is a part of his nature. It is intertwined in every fiber of his being. But Jesus took upon Himself our nature of flesh and blood; (Heb. 2:14), “in all things... to be made like unto His brethren” (Heb. 2:17), “of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom 1:3); He met and “abolished in His flesh the enmity,” “the carnal mind” (Rom 8:7), “the mind of the flesh” (Rom 8:7 ARV). He conquered sin in the flesh for us forever (*Ibid.*, First Quarter 1928, p. 15).**

The positive emphasis which marked the Sabbath School Lessons from 1889 in regard to the nature of Christ’s humanity was muted in a lesson for the Senior Division in 1941. An introductory note stated:

**Through sin man finds himself without hope and without God in the world. “The wages of sin is death” – death confronts every son and daughter of Eve. Into this hopeless**

picture the Son of God presents Himself. Because of His infinite love, He took upon Himself the form of man and the frailties of a long ancestral line. Having accepted human nature, He endured the sentence of sin in His body on the cross. He suffered the death that is ours because of sin, that we might live the life that He merited because of righteousness. This is the only avenue by which man might escape the penalty of sin and enter into life – the more abundant life here, and everlasting life in the eternal kingdom (*Ibid.*, 4<sup>th</sup> Qrt., 1941, p. 6).

Three books, one printed by the Review & Herald Publishing Association, and the other two by the Southern Publishing Association, presented from two different approaches the same basic truth on the Incarnation of Christ, which marked the Sabbath School lessons during the first part of the period under review. In 1924, Meade MacGuire's book – *The Life of Victory* – was published. In the chapter, "The Awful Nature of Sin," after describing various manifestations of the sin problem he wrote, "still another aspect of sin is set forth strikingly in Romans," where Paul indicated that in the body there is a law "warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." What is the answer to this aspect of the sin problem? MacGuire replies:

There is only one means of deliverance from this inherent law of sin. That is Christ. He took humanity upon Him. He conquered sin while in a body which had come under the hereditary law of sin. He now proposes to live that same sinless life in my members. His presence completely counteracts the power of the law of sin (pp. 17-18).

In another chapter – "Delivered from Death" – this comment is found:

When Jesus bore the cross, He acknowledged the death sentence upon the sin nature. He took our nature, the Adam nature, the Saul life, and agreeing with the Father that this nature was fit only to die, He went voluntarily to the cross, and bore that fallen nature to its inevitable and necessary death. ...

By this great sacrifice Christ made provision for the death of the Adam nature in you and me, if we are willing to bring this degenerate nature of ours to His cross and nail it there (p. 43).

Approaching the subject of the humanity of Christ from another angle, Christian Edwardson in 1942 discussed the text in 2 John 7 which states that the antichrist would deny that "Christ came in the flesh." He observed there were objections in applying this identification of the antichrist to the Papacy because it is argued that the Catholic church does not deny the incarnation of Christ. To this argument Edwardson replied:

This argument, however, is based on a misunderstanding, caused by overlooking one word in the text. Antichrist was not to deny that Christ had come in flesh, but was to deny that He had "come in *the* flesh," in *the same* kind of flesh, as the human race He came to save. ... On this vital difference hinges the real "truth of the gospel." Did Christ come *all the way down* to make contact with the fallen race, or only part way, so that we must have saints, popes, and priests intercede for us with Christ who is removed too far from fallen humanity and its needs to make *direct contact with the individual sinner*? Right here lies the great divide that parts Protestantism from Roman Catholicism. ...

Through sin man has separated himself from God, and his fallen nature is opposed to the divine will. ... Only through Christ, our Mediator, can man be rescued from sin, and again brought into connection with the source of purity and power.

But in order to become such a connecting link Christ had to partake both of the divinity of God and the humanity of man, so that He with His divine arm could encircle God, and with His human arm embrace man, thus connecting both in His own Person. In this union of the human with the divine lies the "mystery" of the gospel, the secret of power to lift man from his degradation. "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in *the* flesh" (I Tim. 3:16). The "mystery," or secret of power to live a godly

life in *human* flesh, was manifest in the life of Jesus Christ while on earth. ...

But mark! It was fallen man that was to be rescued from sin. And to make contact with him Christ had to condescend to take *our* nature upon Himself (not some higher kind of flesh). "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, *He also Himself likewise took part of the same.* . . . Wherefore in *all things* it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren." Hebrews 2:14, 17. This text is so worded that it cannot be misunderstood. Christ "took part of the *same* flesh and blood as ours; He came in "*the*" flesh. To deny this is the mark of Antichrist. (*Facts of Faith*, p. 204-205; emphasis his).

Another book that presented Catholic doctrine in contrast to the plain teachings of Scripture published by the Southern Publishing association was written by Mary E. Walsh, whose forebearers "for many generations... were confirmed believers in the doctrines of the papacy." She herself was "a faithful communicant of that religious body for 20 years" (*Wine of Roman Babylon*, p. 3). In the chapter "The Immaculate Conception," Ms. Walsh wrote: "All that Mary gave to Christ was His human body. It is a law of nature that one cannot give what one does not possess, and Mary, being human in every respect of the word, could not impart to her Son the nature of divinity (p. 32). Prior to this statement she noted that Mary was a sinner in common with all mankind. Then showing both the divine and human characteristics of Jesus in His earthly ministry and quoting such texts as Romans 8:3 and Hebrews 2:14, 17-18, she wrote:

In the genealogy of Christ as given in Matthew we find Jesus called the Son of David and also the Son of Abraham. One has to study only the characters of Abraham and David to learn that they were very human and had a tendency to sin. Thus we see what kind of human nature Christ inherited from His progenitors (p. 134).

During this period a feature article appeared in the *Signs of the Times* ("The Begats," March 22, 1927), which contained two sentences which enemies of the Church lifted out of

context and used to attack the teaching of the Church in regard to the human nature of our Lord. In his book on Adventism, Walter Martin cited this article as one of the chief sources of the critics, stating:

Since almost all critics of Seventh-day Adventism contend that Seventh-day Adventists believe Christ possessed a sinful human nature during the incarnation, a word should be said to clarify this point. These charges are often based on an article in the *Signs of the Time*, March 1927, and a statement in *Bible Readings for the Home Circle (The Truth About Seventh-day Adventists*, p. 86).

Martin then proceeded to quote from an evangelical source the statement found in the *Signs of the Times*. The ignorance and lack of scholarship evidenced by the evangelical writer would indicate that it could be ignored with impunity were it not for the part it played in the dialogue between representatives of the Church and Barnhouse and Martin. Resulting from these SDA-Evangelical conferences, L. A. Wilcox, the author of the article in the *Signs*, thirty years after it was written, wrote an apology retracting his statements. From this letter, Martin also quoted.

In analyzing Wilcox's article, there are two questions that need to be answered: How was he quoted? What had he written in context? The evangelical writer is quoted by Martin as follows:

In March 1927 [Wilcox] wrote: "In His (Christ's) veins was the incubus of a tainted heredity like a caged lion ever seeking to break forth and destroy. Temptation attacked him where by heredity He was weakest, attacked Him in unexpected times and ways. In spite of bad blood and an inherited meanness, he conquered" (Martin, *op. cit.*).

What did Wilcox write in context? The paragraphs involved, which follow, are presented in full context with the evangelical's quotations from the *Signs'* article underscored. The article on the "Begats" was the answer to a simple question that had been asked - "Is there hope of overcoming our inherited tendencies toward

evil?" In responding to this question, Wilcox used the genealogy of Christ. He asked the reader to "look for a moment at this pedigree" – Jacob, Judah, Rahab, Ruth, David, and others. Then he wrote – "Yes, Jesus came from a line of sinners." The paragraphs from which the evangelical quoted follow:

**And I am glad for that [Christ's genealogy]. For it helps me to understand how He can be "touched with the feelings of all my infirmities. He came where I was. He stood in my place. In His veins was the incubus (weight) of a tainted heredity like a caged lion ever seeking to break forth and destroy. For four thousand years the race had been deteriorating in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of humanity at its worst. Only thus could He rescue man from the lowest depths of degradation.**

"If we have in any sense a more trying conflict than had Christ, then He would not be able to succor us. But our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation. We have nothing to bear which He has not endured."

It is good to know that. He, the Son of God, became the Son of man, that I, a son of man, might become a son of God. He became as I am that I might become as He is. He partook of my human nature that I might partake of His divine nature. In every temptation that assails, it is strength to know that just such a temptation in all its overwhelming force attacked Him, attacked Him where, by heredity, He was weakest, attacked Him in unexpected times and ways; and that, with equal tendencies toward evil, in spite of bad blood and inherited meanness, by the same power to which I have access, He conquered. He won for me. He offers me His victory for my own – a free gift. And so in all these things I am more than conqueror through Him that loved me.

Wilcox's position doesn't vary from the teachings of the Church through previous decades. Some may quibble over his terminology and figures of speech. The word "incubus" is from the Latin, *incubo*, "to lie

upon." Did Christ accept the weight of our heredity? If not, why then did He "in the days of His flesh" find it necessary to offer "up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears" to His Father to keep Him from sinning (Heb. 5:7). The word – "meanness" – which Wilcox used in connection with heredity is defined as "low of grade, quality, or condition. Isaiah pictured Christ as a "root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isa. 53:2). Was Isaiah's prophecy fulfilled or not?

The figure of speech used by Wilcox was also very interesting. The inherited tendencies were pictured as a caged lion seeking to break forth and destroy. This is closely parallel to the statement of the Lord to Cain – "If you do not do right, sin (as a wild beast) crouches at the door and awaits you" (Gen. 4:7, Farrar Fenton, trans). Cain did not overcome "the beast;" Christ did!

By mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the winds of change were blowing through the corridors of Adventism, and changes were being made in the teachings of the Church. The doctrine of the Incarnation was openly being altered. In 1932 when the associate editor of the *Review & Herald*, F. D. Nichol, published the first edition of *Answers to Objections*, the answers included various subjects on which the Church is challenged, such as, the Sabbath, the state of man in death, the atonement, but not one paragraph discussed the Incarnation. The book was updated and enlarged in 1947 and again in 1952. The final edition carried a foreword by W. H. Branson, then president of the General Conference. "Objection 94" of this 1952 edition discussed at length the position of the Church on the Incarnation. Nichol indicated that "Adventists have never made a formal pronouncement on this matter in their statement of belief. The only pronouncement in our literature that could be considered as truly authoritative on this is what Ellen G. White has written" (p. 390). His assertion that no pronouncement is made in the statement of beliefs is open to question, and yet he writes pontifically that "Adventists believe that Christ the "last Adam," possessed on His

human side, a nature like that of the "first man, Adam," a nature free from any defiling taint of sin" (p. 393). This, too, can be challenged if Ellen G. White is to be the final source of authority as stated by Nichol, for she wrote: "He took upon Himself fallen, suffering humanity, degraded and defiled by sin" (5BC:1147).

Nichol closed his discussion of "Objection 94" with a note of counsel. It reads:

**A word of counsel to some of our Adventist writers and speakers may be in order here. The incarnation is a very great mystery. We shall never fully understand how a Being could at once be both the "Son of God" and "Son of man," thus possessing both a human and a divine nature. Likewise, the presence of sin in the universe is a very great mystery. We shall probably never understand fully the meaning of the term, "sinful flesh," which we and others often use without attempting to define it. When we speak of the taint of sin, the germs of sin, we should remember that we are using metaphorical language. Critics, especially those who see the Scripture through Calvinistic eyes, read into the term "sinful flesh" something that Adventist theology does not require. Thus if we use the term "sinful flesh" in regard to Christ's human nature, as some of our writers have done, we lay ourselves open to misunderstanding. True we mean by that term simply that Christ "took on him the seed of Abraham," and was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh," but critics are not willing to believe this.**

**Let us never forget that a Scriptural mystery is always most safely stated in the language of Scripture. Hence, when we must move amid the mists of divine mystery we do well to stay within the protecting bounds of quotation marks. We need not move beyond in order to secure from that mystery its saving, sanctifying power. And staying thus within those bounds, we best protect the mystery from the ridicule of sceptics, the Adventist name from the attacks of critics, and ourselves from becoming lost in the mist (p. 397).**

**If caution enshrines heresy, and truth is blunted to accommodate error, then let caution be**

**thrown to the four winds, and truth and truth alone be uplifted. If it means a "cross," so be it. He who was the Truth, so accepted the reality of the "great controversy."**

The real meaning of the counsel given by Nichol had already been translated into reality prior to 1950. According to Froom, "in 1949, Prof. D. E. Rebok, then president of our Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, when it still was in Washington DC., was requested by the Review & Herald to revise *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*" (*Movement of Destiny*, p. 428). He accepted the invitation, and coming to the Chapter, "A Sinless Life," he judged certain notes to be erroneous and proceeded to make corrections. The note under the question, "How fully did Christ share our common humanity?" stated clearly:

**In His humanity Christ partook of our sinful, fallen nature. If not, then He was not "made like unto His brethren," was not "in all points tempted like as we are," and did not overcome as we have to overcome, and is not, therefore, the complete and perfect Saviour man needs and must have to be saved... On His human side, Christ inherited just what every child of Adam inherits, a sinful nature (1915 edition, p. 115).**

Rebok altered this to read:

**Jesus Christ is both Son of God and Son of man. As a member of the human family "it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren" - "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Just how far that "likeness" goes is a mystery of the incarnation which men have never been able to solve" (1949 revision, p. 121).**

Then he added:

**There is no Bible support for the teaching that the mother of Christ, by an immaculate conception, was cut off from the sinful inheritance of the race, and therefore her divine Son was incapable of sinning (*ibid.*). If Mary was not cut off, then what kind of nature on the human side did she give Jesus? What then was wrong with the 1915 note when the conclusion was drawn that Jesus inherited what every child of Adam**

**inherits, - a sinful nature." (See statement above.)**

The most interesting omission and alteration that Rebok made is to be found in the note under the question – "Where did God, in Christ, condemn sin, and gain the victory for us over temptation and sin?" The 1915 edition stated that "God, in Christ, condemned sin "by coming and living *in the flesh, in sinful flesh*, and yet without sinning. In Christ, He demonstrated that it is possible, by His grace and power, to resist temptation, overcome sin, *and live a sinless life in sinful flesh*" (p. 116; emphasis, author). Rebok revised this note by omitting "in sinful flesh" in both instances of its use in the 1915 edition.

Rebok, in making these changes was logical. If Christ did not condemn sin "in sinful flesh," then God cannot make the demonstration in us of a "sinless life in sinful flesh." The brethren of Indiana at the turn of the Century believed that it was necessary to have "holy flesh" before the demonstration could be made. There is just one step from a Christ in sinless human nature conquering sin to the concept of "holy flesh." Otherwise, the only alternative is the denial of the possibility that the life of Christ can be reproduced in humanity this side of the Second Advent.

**The last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was just beginning. Much more was to be written. A church would be divided doctrinally.**

## **The Pope's Intent**

**Pope John Paul II died following the close of the first Sabbath in April. In March he had set his prayer intentions for the month of April against the backdrop of the "Year of the Eucharist." The weekly edition of *L'Osservatore Romano, March 23, 2005*) reported these intentions. The "general" intent read:**

**That Christians may live Sundays more fully as the Day of the Lord, to be devoted in a special way to God and their neighbours (p. 12).**

**Does this indicate the direction Papal thought and action was tending as the Year of the Eucharist would come to its climax?**

**With the election of Cardinal Ratzinger as Benedict XVI will this intent change? Under Benedict XV, the "wound" began to heal; under John Paul II, the wound has been healed. What next under Benedict XVI?**

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E-MAIL

Editor – [grotheer@adventistlaymen.com](mailto:grotheer@adventistlaymen.com)  
 Webmaster – [webmaster@adventistlaymen.com](mailto:webmaster@adventistlaymen.com)  
 Webmaster,JO – [adventistalert@cs.com](mailto:adventistalert@cs.com)

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Editor, Publications & Research

Elder Wm. H. Grotheer

Regional Contacts:

Australia - 1745 Cape Otway Rd., Wurdi-Boluc, VIC 3241

Canada - P. O. Box 117, Thorne, ON POH 2J0

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“People who don’t believe there should be a separation of church and state are the people who believe mixing government and religion is OK, as long as it is their religion that is government sanctioned,” wrote Dougherty, the weekly news’ editor (*Church & State*, April 2005, p. 21).

## IN ARKANSAS

The Arkansas House of Representatives has rejected a resolution supporting the First Amendment principle of church-state separation.

The Arkansas House voted 44-39 against Resolution 1005 that quoted the religious liberty clauses of the First Amendment and a section of the state constitution, which holds that citizens cannot be “compelled to attend, erect, or support any place of worship.”

Democrat Rep. Buddy Blair sponsored the resolution. Following the House action, he told the *Arkansas Democrat*, a Little Rock daily, “Apparently, the churches are dictating how they vote, not their conscience.”

Blair, a Methodist, said, “Too many people use their own church or their own religion as an example of how they’re going to vote on legislation. I felt like I wanted to remind them that there is a wall [of separation between church and state] there.” ...

Some observers lamented the House vote. Mike Dougherty, a staffer at the *Benton Courier*, a Benton, Ark., weekly, blasted House members for rejecting the pro-church-state separation resolution.