

"Watchman, What of the Night?"

COMMENTARY

Volume VII

Number 2

WHAT CAN WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE INCARNATION?

Every human pregnancy is an incarnation - the process by which one comes into the flesh. From a theological perspective the term is applied to the birth of Jesus Christ conceived in the womb of Mary. The difference between His pregnancy and our pregnancy is the source of conception. Of His conception, the angel Gabriel said to Mary - "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you." (Luke 1:35 NKJV) Our conception is from an earthly father. Jesus had no such father.

The Scripture takes this unique Incarnation one step further. Jesus Christ was God incarnated. "The Word became flesh." (John 1:14, NKJV) He had preexisted as God in the form of God. (John 1:1; Phil. 2:6) His transition to the flesh was not the beginning of a new Identity. He had existed from eternity. Our conception is the beginning of a new distinct identity.

In reading various dictionaries as to the meaning of the word, incarnation, I found in one a unique but challenging definition: - "the process of healing in a wound." (Funk & Wagnalls, New College Standard Dictionary, 1950 ed.) What better definition could be applied to the objective and nature of Christ's incarnation? Yet it is at this very point that the controversy over the doctrine of the Incarnation centers. How deeply did God become involved in healing the "wound" sin had inflicted?

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church today, one has three options in regard to God's involvement with the "wound" sin has inflicted in humanity. He can believe that Christ either took the nature of Adam before the Fall, or the nature of Adam

after the Fall. If he should not opt for either one of these two positions, he can choose the theology of the Anglican divine, Henry Melvill, who proposed that Christ took a little of each. (See p. 3, Tithe insert, by Roger W. Coon of the Ellen G. White Estate; SDA's Believe..., pp. 47, 57)

Why the Incarnation?

Man needed a Saviour, one who could accept in his stead the penalty of death because of sin. Jesus Christ in the form of God could not die; but by becoming incarnate, He could die. "In fashion as a man, he humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 2:8)

Further, the Law of God was weakened "through the flesh." Therefore, God sent His Son, that by becoming incarnate, He "condemned sin in the flesh." God did not condemn sin by merely pronouncing against it as a judge sitting on the judgment seat. In Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, sin was condemned at its very source, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." (Rom. 8:3-4)

It is this second objective of the Incarnation, the condemnation of sin in the flesh, which is the root of the controversy regarding the nature Christ assumed in humanity. How could He condemn sin in the flesh, if He took a human body that did not possess sin which could be condemned? If He took the nature of Adam before the Fall, where was the flesh of sin to be condemned? If Christ took only that part of human nature which Melvill assigns to Him, "innocent infirmities," Christ did not really condemn sin, in the flesh, for "innocent infirmities" are not sin, but the results of sin.

(See SDA's Believe..., p. 57) Yet the Scriptures plainly teach that God "made [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (II Cor. 5:21) The basic thoughts expressed in Romans 8:3-4 and II Corinthians 5:21 are parallel.

We seem to be unable to grasp the concept that the Divine preexistent Identity "knew no sin," but that He took upon Himself a "slave form" which contained the same elemental "sin" every other child of Adam possesses. It is what He did in the flesh as compared with what we do in the flesh that produces the sharp contrast which we see. We do not condemn sin in the flesh, but allow it to control us. Christ condemned sin in that flesh, and brought the life He lived in the flesh into harmony with the will and purposes of God. Thus the two objectives of the Incarnation - Substitute and Example - are realized in Him.

It is true that when we set forth the dual objective of the Incarnation, the subject of perfection becomes involved, because Christ lived a life free from all sin in both thought and deed. The texts noted above plainly teach that Christ's involvement in the sin problem had as an objective that "we might be made the righteousness of God in Him," with the ultimate realization of "the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us" as we cease to walk after the flesh, but live by the power of the Spirit. The "how" of this experience is just as controversial as the issue of the nature that Christ assumed in the Incarnation. First, the "form" Christ took in place of the "form" of God must be settled before the "perfection" problem can be accurately addressed. The nature of the perfection to be realized is directly related to the victory which Christ obtained in His humanity. But "how?" - that is the question.

"What Does the Bible Tell Us About Jesus' Humanity?"

This question is asked in the third editorial of the series on "Our Matchless Saviour" by the Adventist Review Editor-in-chief, William G. Johnsson. (August 12, 1993, p. 4) The answers which he gives are open to serious question and challenge. Before noting specific deviant assertions by Johnsson, we shall seek to find the truth as revealed both in prophecy concerning the Promised One, and in the reports on that life as lived in humanity.

The first gospel promise found in Genesis 3:15 states clearly that "the seed" of the woman

would bruise the serpent's head. This promise was made to our first parents not as they stood in their innocence in Eden. There would have been no need, but the promise was made to them in sin. Three of the first sons by Adam are named - Cain, Abel and Seth. Adam gave them not only an inheritance but also "identity." In Eve their humanity was formed. The power to form the body of every child became the prerogative of each and every daughter of Eve. The nature of that body of flesh was the same for every child of humanity, unless there was a divine intervention in that process. This is the other side of the coin in the controversy.

Peter tells us that the prophets of the Old Testament both searched diligently and inquired concerning the salvation which the grace of God would bring into humanity. (I Peter 1:10) He would be a "tender plant" but as "a root out of a dry ground." (Isa. 53:2) These "roots" would be based in Jesse. (11:1) This "Branch" from Jesse would grow up "out of His place." (Zech. 6:12) Both in environment and in heredity, the Divine "Identity" would tabernacle in flesh.

When God desired to dwell among His people, He gave instruction to Moses to make a tabernacle of the finest materials available to man - gold, silver, and linen. Even those ministering within the tabernacle were to be attired in "fine linen" to reflect glory and beauty. (Ex. 28:39-40) But the covering of that tabernacle was of ram's skins dyed red and badger's skins. (39:34) This revealed the contrast between the "Identity" of the One who would be "manifest in the flesh" and the "flesh" He would assume. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness." (I Tim. 3:16)

In announcing the coming of the Word into flesh, the angel Gabriel told Mary that "the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy [thing] which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35) The first thing that Gabriel revealed was the energy God would devote to the accomplishment of the Incarnation. The inherent power of the Highest would be involved. The result - a divine "Identity" in human flesh would be called "the Son of God."

The word, "thing" is supplied and not in the Greek text, because the adjective, hagion (holy), is in the neuter gender. Some have suggested the word, teknon, a neuter word for "child," thus having the text read - "The holy child which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of

of God." While this linguistically is feasible, it does not convey the idea of the transition of God into flesh, but only that God initiated a fetus to begin in the womb of Mary. There is another word which meets the requirement both linguistically and Scripturally. It is the word, pneuma (spirit), making the text read - "The holy Spirit which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." This concept is also suggested in the Writings. Speaking of the Incarnation, Ellen White wrote - "He united humanity with divinity: a divine spirit dwelt in a temple of flesh. He united Himself with the temple." (YL, Dec. 20, 1900)

Paul introduces his Epistle to the Romans with a statement as to what constitutes the Gospel of God. It concerns "His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." The first point, the basic point, is that Jesus Christ "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh." (Rom. 1:1, 3) In all of the books and articles which the Editor-in-chief of the Adventist Review has written, I can find nowhere where he defends or declares that David was impeccable. Yet Paul writes that the humanity which Jesus assumed in the Incarnation was "of the seed of David."

In Romans 8, Paul again introduces the subject of the nature which Christ took upon Himself in humanity. He writes that Christ was sent "in the likeness (en homoimati) of sinful flesh." (8:3) Johnsson observes that the "problem is, the Greek for 'likeness,' homoioma, ..." He then calls attention to Paul's use of the same word in Romans 1:23 where the comparison is made between the immortal God, and the idols created by the heathen to represent the "likeness of God." There is another place where Paul uses the same word but in relationship to the Incarnation which is the subject in Romans 8. He wrote that Christ "was made in the likeness (en homoimati) of men" (Phil. 2:7) Was Jesus truly man, or did it just seem that way? Would Johnsson opt that Jesus in His earthly life was merely a phantom? Is Johnsson a Docetist? Thus the force of Paul's use of the word, "likeness" in Romans must be measured by his use of the same word in Philippians. As He was truly man, so likewise He was made in sinful flesh. Paul leaves no doubts in Philippians as to the nature Christ assumed in humanity. In place of the "form of God", He took the "slave form" of man. (ibid) The word, "form," in each instance is morphe, which signifies "the substance, and not merely the outward shape, or external experience." (See Adventist Review, August 26, 1993, p. 9, col. 3) The external bearing, is expressed by the word, schema, and is

used in verse 8 - "found in fashion as a man." He carried the "slave form" to its ultimate end, death - even the death of the cross. That act was the final condemnation of sin in the flesh. He became our Substitute.

The reality of the forces operating in the body of Jesus is expressed by John as he denotes "the seed of the woman" as "the Man-Child." He does not use the Greek word, anthropos, man in the generic sense, nor aner, man as a human being, but rather arsen, the male sex. Jesus was not an anaphrodite. The forces which surge through man, He also felt, but ruled that nature with a rod of iron. Caught up unto God and to His throne, having been made like unto His brethren "in all things" (Heb. 2:17), and understanding "the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15) He could there make intercession for us.

With all this plain testimony in the Bible as to the nature Christ assumed in humanity, Johnsson would write in the Adventist Review, "The Scriptures don't give a specific answer, ..." (August 12, 1993, p. 4, col. 2) Then he would add a few paragraphs later - "The silence of the New Testament on this specific point is deafening." (col. 3) These observations shout loud and long telling us that something is wrong in the Church. In reality it pin-points one primary source of the problem, the editorship of the Adventist Review itself.

These distortions of truth about the testimony of Scripture in regard to the Incarnation were but added comments to another perversion of the reality. Johnsson had written (col. 1), Christ "experienced no inner conflict, as if deity and humanity pulled Him in different directions." We cite two references for consideration of how Christ in humanity viewed events in relationship to the Father's viewpoint: (1) In the course of His ministry, Jesus knowing Himself to be what He was, felt keenly His rejection, and "began to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works" had been performed. (Matt. 11:20) Then He paused to pray. In this prayer, He told the Father that He was resigned to this rejection by "the wise and prudent" because "it seemed good in [the Father's] sight." (ver. 26) Not His! His earthly infirmities pulled in a different direction. However, by bringing His humanity into line with the Divine viewpoint, He was able to give the call to one of Heaven's greatest gifts - rest of soul. (Matt. 11:28-30)

(2) The second illustration is found in the experience of the Garden of Gethsemane. Three times His humanity pulled in a different direction

from the commitment He had made as a part of the counsel of peace which He and the Eternal One had formulated for the redemption of man. All that was within Him abhorred going into "outer darkness" which He faced in doing the Father's will that sin might be eradicated from the universe. Each time it was His will - "take away this cup from Me" (Mark 14:36) - versus the Father's will. Finally the decision was made - "Thy will be done." He drank the cup; He went into "outer darkness." This struggle was real for the fallen nature He took was also real. He brought into subjection the fallen human nature to the will of the Divine. He became our Example.

The Writings of Ellen G. White

In the fourth editorial on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, Johnsson asks the question - "What did Ellen White tell us about Jesus?" (August 19, 1993, p. 4) After listing several quotations from her pen which indicate that Christ took the unfallen nature of Adam (the prelapsarian view), he quoted another which unequivocally read - "He took upon Himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin." Then he comments:

"We could list many more statements in support of each side. And from those lists each party in the debate draws its ammunition. Some Adventists have striven mightily to bring these apparently contradictory statements together under the post-Fall view. I don't think it can be done."

In this conclusion of Johnsson, we must concur. The first manuscript we published in 1972 was - An Interpretive History of the Doctrine of the Incarnation as Taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In bringing together the documentation, we became very much aware of some of these "contradictory statements" to which Johnsson alludes. We sought to harmonize them with the historical documentation which clearly indicated that until the mid 20th Century the Church had consistently taught the post-Fall view of the Incarnation. Some 14 years later (1986), Dr. Ralph Larson, building on previous research, brought out an enlarged documentary - The Word Made Flesh - but he also faced the same problems and sought to harmonize the various references found in the Writings. (See p. 29)

To illustrate one problem in this contradictory picture, we shall use the reference cited by

Johnsson from The SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 7, p. 924. This statement from the Youth's Instructor, April 25, 1901, as published in the first edition of The Commentary did not read as Johnsson quoted it. Note the difference. Johnsson wrote:

"He [Christ] vanquished Satan in the same nature over which in Eden Satan obtained the victory."

In Volume 7, first edition, the statement read:

"He [Christ] vanquished Satan in the same nature over which in Eden Satan **had** obtained the victory."

Just the addition of one word - "had" and the statement moved from the prelapsarian view to the postlapsarian position. However, in this same first edition, the statement is also found in Vol. 5, p. 1108 with the word, "had" omitted as quoted by Johnsson. The second edition of The Commentary series harmonizes the two references omitting the word, "had." This conforms to the facsimile reproduction of The Youth's Instructor Articles (p. 512) which confirms the omission.

We did our research prior to the publication of The Youth's Instructor Articles, and found it necessary to go to the Ellen G. White Estate Archives at Andrews University to clarify these contradictory statements. The question for us was - Was the word, "had" in the original text? After seeing the article on film, we asked if we might see the autograph from which the article was written. This is a reasonable request in any critical area. The process through which the article had to go - secretary, typesetting, proof reading and editing - could have been the cause for the omission of the word, "had." We were told, however, that the autograph had been burned in the Review & Herald fire. This means that when the article was sent from Elmshaven, the autograph, secretarial copies - all - had been sent to the Youth's Instructor editor. This simply "blows" one's mind!

To maintain that the "had" was not in the autograph only adds to the problem. This article was published in the April 25, 1901, issue of the Youth's Instructor. Four months prior in the same journal, Ellen White had written - "Think of Christ's humiliation. He took upon Himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin." (Dec. 20, 1900) To omit the "had" from the 1901 statement, leaves it in complete contradiction with the 1900 reference. Either Ellen White wrote one of the statements, and the secretaries the other, or else somebody removed

the word, "had" from the 1901 article, and the fire proved to be a good "cover up." Whatever happened, the Ellen G. White Estate needs to come clean with a viable explanation and/or admission. We can name the respected person who stated that the autograph had been burned.

The clarification of this reference could remove one contradiction immediately; however, there are others as every researcher knows.

In this fourth editorial, Johnsson uses a ploy to bolster his thesis in regard to the nature Christ took in the Incarnation as set forth in the Writings of Ellen White. He wrote:

"In all her thousands of comments about Jesus' humanity, she nowhere calls this matter one of the pillars of the Seventh-day Adventist faith. Although she refers to the 'pillars,' 'foundations,' 'waymarks,' and 'landmarks' in a number of places - apparently using the terms interchangeably - we fail to find mention of the human nature of Christ." (op. cit., col. 2)

He then lists the "pillars" citing Counsels to Writers and Editors, pp. 30, 31. Technically, he is correct. There is no specific mention of the Incarnation in this list or any other that might be cited. But has not God given to every human being the power to think? There is listed as one of the "pillars," the three angels' messages. Basic to the three angels' messages is the "everlasting gospel." (Rev. 14:6) And what is that age-long gospel? Paul specifically wrote that "the gospel of God" concerns "His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh." (Rom. 1:1, 3 NKJV) Further he wrote to the Galatians that should he, "or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1:8) Basically, the bottom line in this whole question of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ is whether we are going to preach the "everlasting gospel" committed to the Advent movement, or whether we are going to preach "another gospel" which is not another, but a perversion of "the gospel of Christ." (Gal. 1:6-7)

What then is the teaching which one can find in the Writings of Ellen White on the nature of the humanity of Jesus? In 1848, Ellen White was given a vision "concerning the great controversy of the ages between Christ and Satan." Ten years later at Lovett's Grove, Ohio, the vision was repeated with instruction to write it out. The result was the book, Spiritual Gifts, Vol. I. (Life Sketches, p. 162) In chapter III - "The

Plan of Salvation" - two statements are found. These read:

"Jesus also told [the unfallen angels] that they should have a part to act, to be with Him, and at different times strengthen Him. That He should take **man's fallen nature**, and His strength would not be even equal with theirs." (p. 25)

"Satan again rejoiced with his angels that he could, by causing man's fall, pull down the Son of God from His exalted position. He told his angels that when Jesus should take **fallen man's nature**, he could overpower Him, and hinder the accomplishment of the plan of salvation." (p. 27; emphasis supplied in both quotations)

During this very interval of time between 1848-1858, Satan, through "another gospel," promulgated the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception which declared that Mary, mother of Jesus, "was preserved free from every stain of original sin." Commenting on this, Cardinal Gibbons wrote:

"Unlike the rest of the children of Adam, the soul of Mary was never subject to sin, even in the first moment of its infusion into the body. She alone was **exempt** from the original taint." (The Faith of Our Fathers, p. 171, 88th Edition)

Thus the battle was drawn between two gospels, the "everlasting gospel" committed to the Advent people, and the gospel of "the mystery of iniquity." It is no accident that the "mystery of godliness" is declared to be God manifest in the flesh of the seed of David, born of a woman, and made subject to the law of human heredity.

It was not until the SDA-Evangelical Conferences in 1955-1956, that the key word of the Roman Catholic explanation of her Dogma of the Immaculate Conception appeared in Seventh-day Adventist Publications. In the book, Questions on Doctrine, it was stated of Christ - "Although born in the flesh, He was nevertheless God, and was **exempt** from the inherited passions and pollutions that corrupt the natural descendants of Adam." (p. 383)

Johnsson in setting forth the objective of his series of editorials on the Doctrine of the Incarnation stated that his "purpose" was not "to try to prove that one side is 'right' and the other 'wrong'." His hope was to draw all together. This cannot be done, for there is a right and there is a wrong side to this controversy. There is the "everlasting gospel" committed in sacred trust to the Advent

Movement, and there is the false gospel, "the mystery of iniquity." The stage was set at the very beginning of this movement and was plainly revealed as a part of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. The climax has been reached today in the apostasy that has engulfed the Church.

"The Real Issue"

In his final editorial, Johnsson attempts to deal with what he calls "the **real issue**." (August 26, 1993, p. 4) He wrote - "**The issue behind the issue** is the concept of sin. (Emphasis his) There can be no question but that the real issue is sin. That is what the plan of salvation is all about. But the question is how did God deal with this issue? Did He promulgate against sin from the Throne of the Universe, or did He come into the region of sin and condemn sin in the flesh? Johnsson wrote - "In a penetrating analysis, Paul describes sin as a force, an indwelling principle, a state - 'sin living in me' (Rom. 7:14-20). So not only are our acts sinful; our very nature is at war with God." Then he asks a question - "Did Jesus have such a nature?" His answer was "No." But Paul also wrote that Christ was made "to be sin." (II Cor. 5:21) He did not write - "to be a sinner committing acts of sin." Acts arise from the flesh wherein sin resides. Jesus condemned sin in that flesh! (Rom. 8:3)

Then Johnsson rests his case by citing the proverbial argument that if Christ had such a nature - a fallen nature - "He would Himself need a Saviour." (*ibid.*) The problem is that Paul declared of himself that sin is "**living in me**." Here is the difference. Though taking "upon Himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin," He condemned it, He crucified it; it did not live in Him. And this Paul recognized as his only source of victory writing, "I am crucified with Christ." (Gal. 2:20) That which Christ did at the end of His earthly ministry, was but the climax of what He had done every day of His life in regard to the human nature He assumed. This Paul also recognized as his need, writing, "I die daily." (I Cor. 15:31)

Now we reverse the picture. If Johnsson's answer to the question - "Did Jesus have such a nature?" - remains, "No," then Jesus was "exempt" from that which every other child of Adam receives by the operation of the great law of heredity. This very issue was discussed at the General Conference session of 1901. To a question raised, Dr. E. J. Waggoner responded in an evening sermon, April 16. The question asked

was - "Was that holy thing which was born of the virgin Mary born in sinful flesh, and did that flesh have the same evil tendencies to contend with that ours does?" (1901 GC Bulletin, p. 403) In response, he stated:

"Did you ever hear of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the immaculate conception? And do you know what it is? Some of you possibly have supposed in hearing of it, that it meant that Jesus Christ was born sinless? That is not the Catholic dogma at all. The doctrine of the immaculate conception is that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was born sinless. Why? - Ostensibly to magnify Jesus; really the work of the devil to put a wide gulf between Jesus the Saviour of men, and the men whom He came to save, so that one could not pass over to the other. That is all.

"We need to settle, everyone of us, whether we are out of the church of Rome or not. There are a great many that have got the marks yet...

"Do you not see that the idea that the flesh of Jesus was not like ours (because we know ours is sinful) necessarily involves the idea of the immaculate conception of Mary? Mind you, in Him was no sin, but the mystery of God manifest in the flesh, the marvel of the ages, the wonder of angels, that thing which even now they desire to understand, and which they can form no just idea of, only as they are taught it by the church, is the perfect manifestation of the life of God in its spotless purity in the midst of sinful flesh." (*ibid.*, p. 404)

The editor of the Adventist Review needs to settle the question as to whether he is out of the Roman Catholic Church or not. If he is not willing to come out, then he needs to be relieved, with all of the others of his staff who also so believe, of their positions. However, if such a course was boldly pursued by the General Conference administration, no one knows where it would end, so completely has the enemy infiltrated the thinking of the leadership of the Church.

The Provision of a Saviour

It is assumed that if the doctrine of the Incarnation is stated so as to teach that Christ took the fallen nature of man, He Himself would have needed a saviour. God does not hold one accountable for that which he is not responsible. Christ was not accountable for sin even though He created man, and man fell. Neither is a child of Adam accountable for what he received

from Adam - a fallen nature.

Christ, to meet the sin problem, became "sin for us," accepting the working of the great law of heredity. What He accomplished - the condemnation of sin in the flesh and the provision of a sacrifice for sin - provides for man the only means of salvation. It is "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 3:24)

Man is held accountable for what he **does** in the fallen nature received from Adam, not the nature itself which he did not choose to be in. However, in that nature, he can do only acts of sin, break the Law. In the final judgment the decision will revolve around how he related to the provision through Jesus Christ. Did he recognize his total inability, relying completely on the merits of Jesus Christ, or did he still try to do his righteousness in the fallen nature? Did he seek to justify his course because he believed that Jesus was not like him, and thus he could not be like Jesus?

Johnsson seeks to frame the whole of the Incarnation controversy in the picture of "Our Matchless Saviour," yet he robs Him of His glorious victory over sin. It is only when I truly perceive the struggle of Jesus both in life and in dying, that there is called forth from me an appreciation of the matchless charms of Christ so that I willingly bow at the foot of the Cross, the highest place that I can attain. There, I too, die that the life which I now live in the flesh, may be lived by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. That faith conquered in a fallen nature like mine, and it can conquer in my fallen nature. Praise God from whom all blessings flow. "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Cor. 15:57)

"When we want a deep problem to study, let us fix our minds on the most marvelous thing that ever took place in earth or heaven - the incarnation of the Son of God. God gave His Son to die for sinful human beings a death of ignominy and shame. He who was Commander in the heavenly courts laid aside His royal robe and kingly crown, and clothing His divinity with humanity, came to this world to stand at the head of the human race as the pattern-man. He humbled Himself to suffer with the race, to be afflicted in all their afflictions." - Ms. 76, 1903

THE ROAR of THE "PAPER TIGER"

In the October issue of WWN, we commented on Dr. Desmond Ford's analysis of the dissertation written by Elder Kai Arasola for his doctorate from the University of Uppsala, Sweden. Ford had written:

"For over a hundred years, loyal Adventist ministers have contended that the supposed prophetic date of 1844 and the theory of the Investigative Judgment were contrary to Scripture and alien to the gospel of Christ. Protester after protester has arisen, been overwhelmed by prejudice, vilified, and passed by. Today they are vindicated by a recent undeniable turn of the tables in Europe." (J'Accuse!, 6/14/93)

He cites, as this European event, the research of Dr. Arasola, stating that "Arasola writes what the scholars of Adventism in Europe, America, and around the world have long known - that there is no biblical (sic) basis for 1844." (ibid.)

We, too, obtained the book but failed to find the vindication of the position which Ford claimed it supported. We wrote "that Dr. Desmond Ford's evaluation of the dissertation reveals his deceptive tactics in seeking to bolster his personal heretical teachings. Having noted his conclusions and being able to read for myself the dissertation, his integrity in dealing with any source documents is now questionable in my judgment. He is truly a 'paper tiger'." (WVN 10/93, p. 6)

Naturally, Ford did not like what I wrote. The "paper tiger" roared. In a letter dated October 18, 1993, he threatened:

"With reference to your recent statements on Dr. Arasola's book we plan to print the enclosed. The only thing that might cause us to change our mind would be a frank retraction on your part in print reaching us by November 12."

The enclosure was a three paragraph article. The first paragraph noted my statement quoted above with the omission of the last sentence. The second paragraph read:

"For the sake of those who do not yet possess the book, we will quote some passages to see whether it is William Grotheer or myself who has misread this splendid volume. Let the reader

keep in mind that the primary issue is whether we are justified in saying with historicism that significant prophetic dates in New Testament times can be calculated from the symbolic language of Scripture. Does Dr. Arasola believe that there are good grounds for saying that 538, 1798, August 11, 840 (sic), October 22, 1844 are biblical (sic)?"

The third paragraph is a summary of the points in which Ford thinks William Miller was correct, and those in which he believes that Miller erred.

To the "paper tiger's" roar, I replied:

"You may proceed to do as you wish as I have no plans to retract what I have written. It stands, and I am ready for any assault which you might make on truth." (October 26, 1993)

A comment or two on Ford's second paragraph is in order. Any one who has done public evangelism, as others and I have done in our ministries, and who have been willing to preach the sanctuary teaching in the light of the prophecies of the book of Daniel, know that the date, 1844, can be sustained using the hermeneutic concepts of historicism. It is true that one must make an adjustment for the absence of a Year 0, which the Millerites failed to do, and which Arasola notes. (The End of Historicism, p. 144) It must be kept in mind that Adventist sanctuary teaching is a combination of historicism and typology. This Arasola also notes. (ibid., p. 161-168)

In regard to the dates which mark the beginning and terminus of the 1260 day prophecy, historical documentation can be found in Facts of Faith, pp. 52-60. As for the prophetic time elements in Revelation 9, the use of which by Miller and Litch gave impetus to the Movement, these need to be carefully restudied. No one should be blind a devotee to the past, but neither should one worship so-called scholarship per se.

In the mail which brought the threat from Desmond Ford, was a letter from Dr. Arasola commenting on the analysis of his dissertation in the same WWN (pp. 4-5). This letter read:

"Dear Elder Grotheer,

Some time ago I finished reading your comments on my dissertation on Millerite Hermeneutics (WWN 10/93). I want to express my appreciation of the fair way in which you deal with my book. I have been alarmed by some extreme conclusions that have been drawn from

my book. Your conclusions are very close to the ones I have expressed while explaining the results of my research in our local church paper."

This incident illustrates a point. Dr. Ford is ready to tell you what Paul says in the book of Hebrews, even though Paul specifically states otherwise. Now he is seeking to tell those who read his paper just what Dr. Arasola's research states when a careful reading thereof indicates otherwise. No doubt by improper abridging of paragraphs one can manipulate the dissertation to say what it does not say. Dr. Arasola did not name Ford, but one wonders if he is alluding to Ford's assumptions as a part of the "extreme conclusions" being drawn from his research. It is sad to what lengths Ford will go to sustain error.

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NEWS NOTE

The Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order held by the World Council of Churches (WCC), August 4-13 in the pilgrimage city of Santiago de Compostela, Spain, called Christians to seek "fuller koinonia." The opening worship service was held in the local Roman Catholic Cathedral of St. James, where a dramatic visual feature was the swinging of the botafumeiro, an exceptionally large censer suspended by ropes from the ceiling. The service included the traditional singing of a hymn to St. James as the botafumeiro swung. While worship services were conducted throughout the conference sponsored by Protestant Churches, the final service was in a local Franciscan church.

This convocation marked the first time that Roman Catholics were official delegates to a World Faith and Order Conference. This fact was highlighted by the appearance of Cardinal Edward I. Cassidy of the Vatican Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The conference anticipates an ecumenical assembly during what is called the "jubilee year" of 1998, which is the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the WCC. A report issued by the conference proposes that such a jubilee assembly be convened jointly by the WCC and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

Source documentation: EPS 60/22.

This is the final issue of Commentary. The purpose which the Commentary served will be met in special issues of WWN. For information write: P. O. Box 69, Ozone, Ark.

SHADOWS OF COMING EVENTS

After writing the "News Note" on the previous page based on a release in the Ecumenical Press Service, we received the October issue of One World, the monthly magazine of the WCC. In it was a six-page article detailing the same world conference on Faith and Order. The growing presence of the Roman Catholic representation was highlighted as evidence of "ecumenical movement since the last Faith and Order World Conference" in Montreal thirty years ago. In 1963 only five Roman Catholics attended as "observers;" in 1993 thirty-two Catholics registered and made up the fourth-largest confessional group after the Orthodox, Reformed and Lutheran. Another evidence was cited, the preaching of a Methodist woman pastor in the pulpit of a Catholic Church in Spain.

Three documents were noted as marking the achievements of the last three decades: 1) The Lima Text on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry; 2) Confessing the One Faith, an attempt to make the Nicene Creed the basis for doctrinal unity; and 3) The study, Church and World, designed to be an understanding of "the essential link between the vocation of the church and the destiny of the world in the perspective of the kingdom." The bottom line objective is to achieve visible unity which thus far has escaped them. This fifth World Conference was perceived as a pilgrimage toward that unity.

The date 1998 loomed large in the thinking of the planners for the sixth world conference, since this date will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the WCC. No decisions or recommendations were made at Santiago de Compostela as to where this conference should be held; however, Faith and Order vice-moderator, Jean Tillard, did suggest in his address on the last day of the conference that consideration be given to "a gathering of all the major leaders in the churches - perhaps at Jerusalem - simply to sing the [Nicene] creed together. That would be a wonderful expression of the degree of unity already present and of its origin."

The General Secretary of the WCC, Konrad Raiser, proposed 1998 as "an ecumenical jubilee year" - like the jubilee years in the Old Testament. Specifically he said, "doctrinal anathemas of the past could be lifted and churches could be expressly converted from separation to the koinonia that is God's gift and

calling to them." "Koinonia" was defined as "a gracious fellowship in Christ expressing the richness of the gift received by creation and humankind from God."

HANDS ACROSS THE GULF

Jerry Falwell, pastor of the Thomas Road Baptist Church and head of Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, at a rally in a Prince George's County, Maryland church, last July, "exhorted his evangelical Protestant listeners to put aside theological differences and become 'co-belligerents' with Roman Catholics, Mormons, conservative Jews and Muslims." (Church & State, October, 1993, p. 15)

Here we have the synthesis of a modern version of Protestants (Religious Right) reaching out to the same element in Romanism and seeking an accord with Spiritism (Mormonism). To this picture is now added the ingredients of the Middle East - the conservative Jew and Islam, forces represented in Daniel 11:40-45.

In the same issue of Church and State (p. 19), the founder of Operation Rescue, Randall Terry, is quoted as stating unequivocally the objectives of the religious right. He declared at a rally in Ohio, "Our goal must be simple: We must have a Christian nation built on God's law, on the Ten Commandments. No apologies." The overtones of the prophecy of Isaiah 2:1-3 can be heard.

It must be remembered that John Paul II's apostolic letter, Redemptionis Anno, closed with a paragraph using Isaiah 2:3. The thrust of the letter was "The City of Jerusalem, the Sacred Patrimony of all Believers and the Desired Meeting Place for the Peoples of the Middle East." Citing Jerusalem as "a symbol of coming together, of union, and of universal peace for the human family," he declared in that final paragraph:

"This peace proclaimed by Jesus Christ in the name of the Father who is in heaven thus makes Jerusalem the living sign of the great ideal of unity, of brotherhood and of agreement among peoples according to the illuminating words of the book of Isaiah: 'Many peoples shall come and say: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.'"