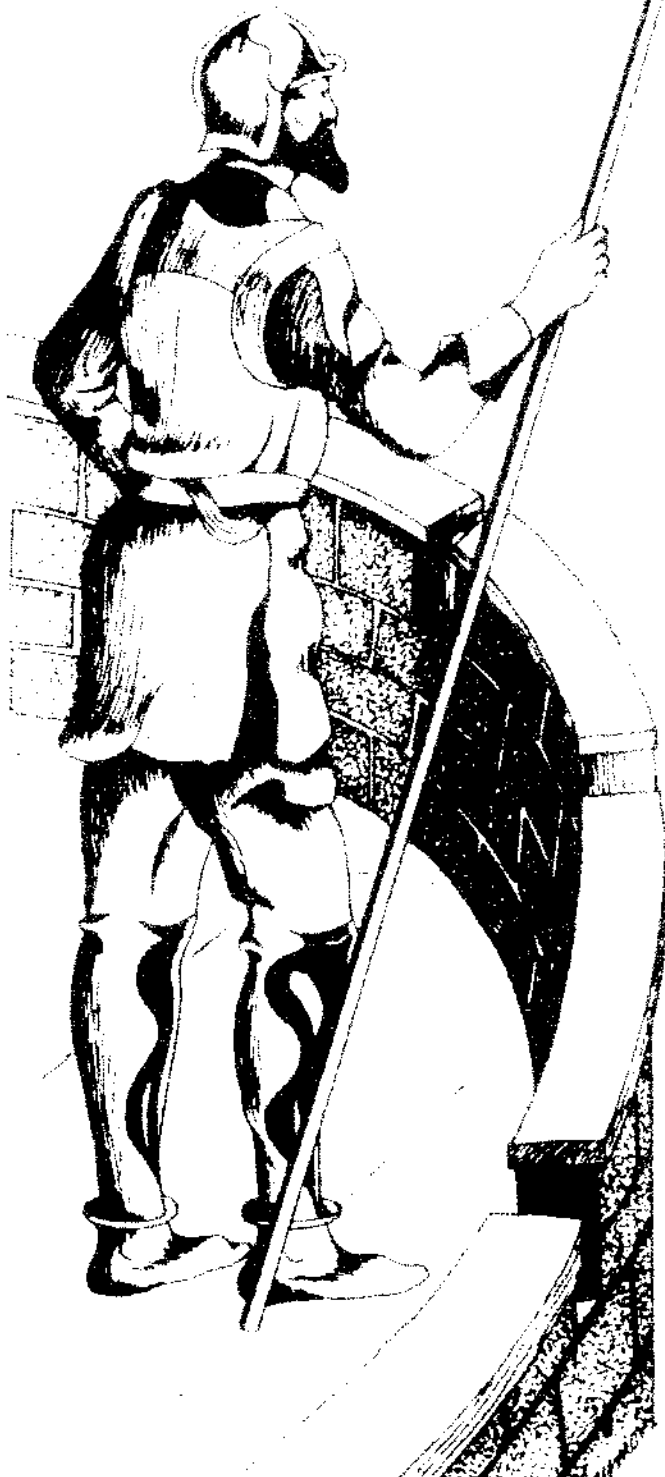


*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

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



LARSON:

"CHECK AND SEE"

This We Have Done. Now Read the Findings.

After the October issue of WWN reached the field, two calls were received here at the study, one on September 24 from a Florida-based ministry which was extremely negative and vituperative; and the other, the next day from Maine, positive and commendatory in the assessment of the same subject - Larson's deviation from his original position on the Incarnation. Due to all the calumny of the first call, and being dared to call Larson direct, I accepted the challenge and called Dr. Larson. The conversation though reserved, was, as on all previous occasions, courteous and gentlemanly. His position in regard to the Anglican divine's concept as set forth in the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe... [SDAB] (See page 47) is that it coincides with his position as set forth in the work, The Word Made Flesh. He also called my attention to the repeated times in the preceding paragraphs, that the phrase from Romans 8:3 was used - "in the likeness of sinful flesh" - meaning, "sinful human nature" or "fallen human nature." (p. 46) He insisted that the definitive parts of Melvill's conclusion be carefully noted. Hence, this article will review the section in SDAB on "Jesus Christ Is Truly Man" with special attention to Melvill's conclusions.

First, we need to review the background of the formation of the book. Unlike Questions on Doctrine [QD], a book written by a committee, this book was written a chapter at a time by Dr. P. G. Damsteegt with a committee looking over his shoulder. While the QD publication was supervised by a committee appointed by the President of the General Conference, the book, SDAB, was the dream of one man, J. R. Spangler, and sponsored by the Ministerial Association of the General Conference with the authorization and encouragement of the then president, Neal C. Wilson with the other officers of the GC. (p. v) A certain factor dare not be overlooked. The positions taken in this book have not been voted by the General Conference in session as were the 27 Statements of Fundamental Beliefs which this book seeks now to interpret and modify, as well as mollify the divergent concepts in Adventism today. Dr. Roger Coon in his tract on "Tithe" has already

declared that "there are at least three views on the nature of Christ current in Adventist circles." (p. 3) These are the Pre-Fall, the Post-Fall (Larson's original position), and the Melvill perception which is set forth in the book, SDAB. Larson now declares that this latter position is "the true doctrine of the nature of Christ." (The Tithe Problem, p. 32)

There is another factor concerning the book, SDAB, which must be taken into consideration. "A Christ-centered manuscript on Adventist doctrines prepared by Norman Gulley... provided both inspiration and material for this volume." (op. cit.) While there are conflicting estimates from 5% to 15% as to the amount of Gulley's material included in the book, one must decide how much inclusion would make the book, fruit from the tree of the knowledge of truth and error. This book, therefore, leaves the individual Adventist in the same position as was Adam and Eve when they stood before the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, to eat, or not to eat. Further, it leaves those devotees of the Independent Ministries of which Larson is the "patriarch" with the choice of following him as Adam did Eve, or to separate from Larson and hold to the truth on the nature that Christ assumed in humanity as revealed in the Scriptures!

In the chapter, "God the Son," is the section, "Jesus Christ Truly Man." (SDAB, pp. 45-50) This is further divided into sub-sections, one of which #5b, concludes with the Melvill position. (p. 47) We shall note pertinent statements made in this section on Jesus, truly man, which sets forth the position taken by this book in regard to the human nature Christ took upon Himself in the Incarnation.

It is stated that Christ "could claim true humanity through His mother." (p. 45) This is true. However, unless one assumes a divine intervention, such as the Roman Catholic Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, or the Evangelical Doctrine of the Sanctification of the womb of Mary, one must conclude that Jesus received the same identical human nature that every child of Adam receives at birth. But the book, SDAB states, "there was a great difference, a uniqueness." This book confuses the difference and uniqueness of Identity with the humanity this Identity took upon Himself. He was God manifest in the flesh, but He was manifest in the same flesh as all human children receive from their mothers.

This book sidesteps both the Roman Catholic teaching as well as the Evangelical position. However, it does teach a divine intervention

which circumvents the normal process of birth, by declaring - "His human nature was created..." This is not a new teaching in Adventism. The aberrant Holy Flesh Movement in Indiana at the turn of the century also taught this concept. Donnell, president of the Indiana Conference, and titular head of the Movement, wrote:

In order to save men, Christ must enter humanity, and because all were sinners, and not a body could be found that was suitable, what was to be done? A body had to be made for the occasion. And so we read in Hebrews 10:5: "A Body hast thou prepared Me." (What I Taught in Indiana, p. 9)

L. E. Froom, one of the Adventist conferees at the infamous SDA-Evangelical Conferences, and who "was actively involved in composing the written distillation of the conferences," wrote in an unpublished manuscript, The Virgin Birth, the same concept. It reads:

The Eternal Son of God entered into the human race by means of the Virgin Birth. The Holy Spirit generated within the humanity of Mary the body of flesh by means of which the Son of God tabernacled among men. Scripture says, "a body hast Thou prepared Me." (Heb. 10:5) [emphasis his]

In the same manuscript, in answer to his own proposed question - "How did He [Christ] escape the taint of sinful heredity?" - Froom wrote: "His human nature came into being by a direct and miraculous intervention." He defines that intervention as "a creative work for the redemption of a lost race - a creative work just as verily as was the original creation."

The position taken in SDAB that Christ's "human nature was created" echoing as it does the teaching of the Holy Flesh Movement and the thinking of L. E. Froom becomes the Adventist equivalency to the Roman Catholic Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and the Evangelical concept of the sanctification of the womb of Mary. All of these teachings seek to set forth a Divine intervention whereby the humanity that Christ assumed in the incarnation is different from the humanity every other child of Adam has received.

The Extent of His Identification with Human Nature

In the section following the stated position that Christ's "human nature was created," the "extent of Christ's identification with human nature" is discussed. Here Romans 8:3 is quoted from both the KJV and NIV with the question being

OPEN LETTER TO FOLKENBERG

FROM BELIEVERS IN HUNGARY

On June 10, 1992, the leadership of the "Small Committee" church of Hungary addressed an open letter to Elder R. S. Folkenberg as a result of a visit which he and Dr. Jan Paulsen, president of the Trans-European Division made to Hungary. To understand the why of this letter, the schedule of the visit as published in Advent-hirnok, official paper of the Hungarian Seventh-day Adventist Church needs to be carefully noted. We shall give the schedule as copied in the Newsletter (92/2) which is published by the "Small Committee" church leaders. The open letter to Folkenberg follows.

The Schedule

- May 31 - 16.45 Church meeting at Horticultural University.
18.30 Conference for pastors from all over Hungary at University.
- June 1 - 8.30 Union Committee Meeting.
10.00 Visit to Arpad Goncz, president of Hungary.
12.30 Working lunch with representatives of the Ministry of Education.
14.00 Meeting representatives of the historical Protestant Churches.
16.00 Press Conference at Hotel Beke.
- June 2 - 10.00 Visit to Laszio Paskai, Archbishop of Esztergom.
13.00 Working lunch with the members of the presidency.
15.00 Evaluation of the visit, discussion with Union Committee members.
16.30 Leaving for Poland.

THE OPEN LETTER

Dear Brother Folkenberg,
we send our greetings to you as fellow-members

of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We write to you with the best of intentions because of our deep concern regarding our common faith.

While in no way wishing to attack you personally, we would like to accept the invitation which you made in the Adventist Review of April 16, 1992, in which you remarked that regarding your activities as church leader you were ready to accept criticism. Rather than criticism, we would like you to regard our remarks as a brotherly testimony. E. G. White stressed "the necessity of faithful reproofs in the church, and the cultivation by all its members of love for the plain testimony." (Testimonies, Vol. 2, p. 15) The reason for our writing an open letter is because the things that we object to also took place in the open. The program of your visit was published in Adventhirkok, the official paper of the Union.

During your stay in Hungary, the following interpretation of your programme could be heard on various Adventist forums: That the aim of your visit was partly to minister to the pastors and members of the church, partly to raise the banner of our message as well as the subject of religious liberty in front of secular and church organizations. Reference was made to E. G. White's testimony saying: "We don't as a church seek isolation." As to your visit to the Catholic Archbishop and the Protestant Church leaders, there were two arguments for it:

- 1) We have to make ourselves known in order to dispel prejudice against our church.
- 2) Our task is to publicly stand for religious liberty and invite them to hold it in respect.

With reference to the latter, you were said to have thanked the Catholic Church for not having enforced her great influence on the State at the expense of the freedom of our small church. It was also said that Brother Jan Paulsen, president of the Trans-European Division, a member of your company, would pass the greetings sent by Archbishop Paskai to the head of the Polish Catholic Church, Archbishop Glomp.

While we are sure that many church members accepted that you acted with the best interests of our church, in our view, this reaction is really alarming. It shows that the majority of our church members have gradually got accustomed to these things and have started accepting this kind of reasoning. Therefore, besides addressing you in person, our intention is to witness the Biblical stand-point to the church members, too. We write in the name of those Hungarian Seventh-day Adventists living outside the Union since 1975/76 for reasons well known to you. We have

always felt and confessed ourselves to be a part of the SDA world church, even in those years when our membership had not yet been reestablished. In 1989, our membership was restored formally although the constitutional reunion has not yet taken place. We are writing to you as brethren who are devoted to the Advent movement and feel themselves responsible for its mission. There are many within the Union Church who think similarly to us and who were also shocked by the schedule of your visit.

We would like to present our viewpoint on the way your visit was perceived by many Seventh-day Adventist believers here in Hungary.

First of all, we do not stand for separation from either the world or the followers of other religions. On the contrary, we disapprove of any sign of Adventist pride or false sense of superiority towards sincere believers of other denominations. It frequently happens that, having listened to our cassettes or [having] read our publications, other churches - Baptist, Pentecostal or Calvinist - invite us to preach for their members. We are most happy to accept these invitations. Also, we are in favor of having friendly and open relations with State and social institutions as well in accordance with Biblical principles and Spirit of Prophecy.

In spite of all of this, we cannot approve of your visit to the Catholic archbishop and the Protestant church leaders. The Word of God makes it clear that we should not separate ourselves from the sincere believers and pastors of other denominations. But we are, however, to separate ourselves from the church organizations declared by the second angel's message to be fallen (Rev. 14:8). In Rev. 14:4, we read that one of the basic characteristics of the remnant church in the end time is: "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins." It is obvious from the first six verses of chapter 17 that these "women" are the same as churches which belong to the symbolic Babylon at the end time. The phrase "were not defiled" refers to the total separation or keeping away from them as the right attitude. This cannot be otherwise, since "Satan has taken full possession of these churches as a body." (Early Writings, p. 273) God's presence is not among them so Satan and his followers take control. Rev. 18:2 says Babylon to be "the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird" before Christ's return.

Now how can the leader of God's remnant church, who should understand and believe these prophecies, and is obliged to bear witness to

them, pay visits to these church bodies? The official leaders of these churches are the primary representatives of their organizations and therefore it is their duty to identify themselves with the ideas and interests of their churches. But to attempt to witness the truth under these circumstances would break all the rules of protocol and would be an anomaly.

How can we dispel the prejudices of these committed leaders of Babylon against the Adventist Church during an official visit? What we actually have to preach is that these churches as a body have fallen once and for all. As to God's people, we have to call them out of these churches. Our mission is to reveal the alliance of the Antichrist as well as its activity among the nations according to the prophecies.

Although we ought to feel respect for everyone as an individual and look to his salvation whatever his views may be, our position is in opposition to that of these church leaders, in that it is for the Lord and His truth. In these circumstances their prejudice against us cannot be dispelled other than by withholding or changing the prophetic message entrusted to us.

How can we invite them to observe human rights such as the freedom of religion? The prophecies point out that the spirit of persecution is part of the invariable essence of the Catholic Church and that the Protestant churches will soon be like them in spite of their earlier views. Do we thank the head of the Catholic Church for not hurting us as yet? Is the guarantee of the freedom of conscience a favor or the observation of a basic human right given by God? Instead of asking religious organizations intoxicated with power, we must turn to the State whose task [as] ordained by God is to ensure the freedom of religion in the interests of peace and welfare of the whole society. There are no instructions to be found in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy to say that we should expect the leaders of Babylon to respect freedom of conscience. On the contrary they are to be restrained, and this is the miraculous work of the angels holding the winds behind the scenes. According to E. G. White, it will be members of the legislature all over the world whom God will use as the means to keep this tendency in check.

Such visits cannot be regarded by the public but as a tribute and the establishment of diplomatic relations between the churches represented by their leaders. Brother Folkenberg, even if your motives for paying those visits had been the very best, you should not have done so. You have actually denied the mission of our Church by

visiting the above-mentioned church leaders in your capacity as Adventist president.

What has been said so far can be summed up in the following question: Is there, can there be, any kind of relation between Christ and the Antichrist? If we take sides with Christ while the above church organizations belong to the alliance of the Antichrist, our only guide to what attitude to have towards these churches as a body should be II Cor. 6:14-16: "What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial? ... And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?" If we do not keep ourselves to this instruction, we are unfaithful to the Lord and His Word. Why should we, leave the straight path shown clearly in the word of God? **What would the pioneers of our movement say if they were raised to hear the new order of things, namely, that a leader of the Adventist Church conveys greetings sent by one Catholic archbishop to another?**

Finally about the consequences of your visit in the Hungarian church: You knew a lot about the problems caused by the unbiblical ecumenism of the Union leaders. The General Conference representatives also admitted this policy to be wrong in the Joint Statement signed in September, 1989. This document obliged the Union Committee and the Union president to set their unbiblical statements right, which has not been done since. That was the reason why the planned re-union came to nothing.

With this as the backdrop, the Union prepared your programme by using its previously established good ecumenical connections. You accepted and fulfilled this programme, which not only served to justify but also to protect the Union's ecumenical policy for the future. **Can anybody criticise the union's ecumenism after you have visited the Catholic archbishop?**

This has blocked the way to re-union even more. It was also painful to us that although you came for a pastoral visit, you did not seek contact with us over the last year. You must have realized that we are sincere Seventh-day Adventists not some offshoot movement. On the other hand, you had plenty of time to meet with Catholic and Protestant church leaders.

You did one good thing during your visit which we do not want to leave unnoticed. You positively confirmed, on forums outside the church as well, that it is a fundamental principle in our church not to accept financial support from the State. It is not quite clear if you insisted on this with or without knowing that last

year the Union in common with the rest of the churches accepted millions from the State for the purpose of church ministry. We appreciate the Biblical position you took up in this case.

May the Holy Spirit convince you of our sincerity. May God bless you in your work,

Your brother and sisters in Christ:

[This open letter was signed by Pal Kovacs, Zsuzsa Vanko, and Oscar Egervari]

PS. We write this letter under the direction of the official delegates of the so-called Small Committee church.

LET'S TALK IT OVER

In the month of October, Brother Oliver and I spent a day observing an Independent Ministries Campmeeting being held some fifty miles from the Foundation campus. We learned several things one of which explained to us the why of the emphasis on "historic" Adventism which is being used by these ministries as the basis of their appeal to those who are concerned about the direction the Church is taking. This we shall discuss in detail in a future issue of WWN. There is another factor which I want to talk over in this brief editorial comment on the campmeeting.

Prior to each meeting we attended, the "song service" consisted of singing texts of Scripture which had been set to folk music. There was no piano, and the use of even the old Church Hymnal was discredited.

First, let me make myself very clear. I have no objection to singing the Word of God. But should not that Word be set to the most stately and sublime music possible, reflecting to the best of human ability the Majesty of its Author? Religious folk music has its place reflecting human experience, and I have been blessed by such singing from the heart. However, as I have reviewed in my mind the whole impression of the day, one comment of Jesus which He directed to the Laodiceans of His day has been ringing in my ears. Jesus said - "This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. (Matt. 15:8)

The messages which followed each song service, without exception, were introduced by one or two texts of Scripture, and the rest of the message given was a series of quotes from the Writings of

Ellen G. White. Brother Oliver on his own volition kept a record on each speaker as to how many times he used the Bible, and how many times he quoted. The ratio was disproportionate. There was not a single indepth study of the Bible all day long.

Now again, I need to make myself very, very clear. I believe that Ellen G. White was as she bore record of her calling, a "Messenger of the Lord." (SM, bk i, p. 32) She gave messages by the Holy Spirit for God's people at this time. But she also gave guidelines as to how her Writings were to be used; what was to be the source for God's people in determining both doctrine and life-style; and where the information as to the perfection to be realized by the people of God is to be found.

Let us notice the last point first before talking over the other factors noted. In an article, "Benefits of Bible Study" (ST, Jan. 30, 1893), the Messenger wrote - "In The Word of God is contained **everything** essential to the perfecting of the man of God." Do we believe what she wrote, "**everything essential**" is to be found in the Bible, or do we not? Then if we need to be perfect before the close of probation - **and we do** - what should we be searching? Not Margaret Davis and her neo-Holy Flesh teaching. Before you trash this paper, know for yourself just what the men in Indiana taught. They did **not** teach the perfection of the body of flesh. Go to the word of God and learn from the sanctuary truth just how the perfection of God's people will be accomplished. It will be a new learning experience for most of God's professed people.

Now let us talk over some of the guidelines set forth by the Messenger of the Lord for the understanding and interpretation of her Writings:

1) "The testimonies themselves will be the key that will explain the messages given, as the scripture is explained by scripture." (SM, bk i, p. 42)

By an incomplete study, and often through manipulated compilations, the true message of the Writings is distorted. Since most of the messages given by the "voices" sounding on the periphery of Adventism today primarily cite the Writings, the failure to follow this guideline accounts for the confusion everywhere evident.. An example of an incomplete use of the Writings was seen in one of the messages given at the Campmeeting. The subject concerned the Latter Rain, and admittedly the teachings on this subject are found largely in the Writings. Attention was called to Early Writings where it reads:

At that time the "latter rain"... will come.

to give power to the loud voice of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out. (p. 86)

But the listeners were left with the traditional view of "historic" Adventism as to what the work of the "third angel" is, rather than citing an explanatory reference in the same book which reads:

I then saw the third angel. Said my accompanying angel, "Fearful is his work. Awful is his mission. He is the angel that is to select the wheat from the tares, and seal, or bind, the wheat for the heavenly garner. These things should engross the whole mind, the whole attention." (p. 118)

Note the work - "select the wheat from the tares" **not** the tares from the wheat, and "bind" the wheat in bundles for the heavenly garner. It is a separation message plain and simple. Following the guideline given in the Writings would have brought light and directed those listening on the right course of action for this hour.

Another guideline reads:

Regarding the testimonies, nothing is cast aside; but time and place must be considered. (SM, bk i, p. 57)

This is probably the most frequently violated rule given. The violation of this rule is seen in the application of the "Sunday Law" references written prior to 1888 in Testimonies, Vol. 5. Nowhere to my knowledge, is the term, "National Sunday Law" found in the Writings. After 1900, the call to leave the cities is based on other factors rather than a Sunday Law. Observing the guidelines of "time and place" would keep our perceptions of the future in proper focus as to what the "oppressive law" (R&H, Dec. 13, 1892) will be like and what might cause its enactment. The nature of society in the United States prior to 1900 is **not** the pluralism which marks today's American society. This factor must be considered.

As to the basis and source of our doctrine and life-style, Ellen White has written:

God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of **all** doctrines and the **basis** of all reforms. (SP, IV, p. 413)

This is a very simple test to determine whom the people of God are today. When asked what you believe, and why you dress or eat as you do, what do you quote? What is your "standard" and what is the "basis" of your reform message? Do you really believe the Writings, or is it lip service?

proposed - "To what extent did He [Christ] identify with or become identical to fallen humanity?" The answer is given in two parts. Subdivision 5a equates the Biblical expression, "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3) to two expressions found in Adventist writings - "sinful human nature," or "fallen human nature." [See E. J. Waggoner, Christ and His Righteousness, pp. 26-27; Ellen G. White, Youth's Instructor, Dec. 20, 1900]

In subsection 5b, the concept that Christ is the second Adam is discussed. The same contrast is invoked as found in Desire of Ages, p. 48, that Christ "like every child of Adam...accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity." Then SDAB reads: "Christ took a human nature that, compared with Adam's unfallen nature, had decreased in physical and mental strength - though He did so without sinning." (p. 47, col. 1) This is paralleling a concept also found in the Writings, but with an omission, which is noted in the References found at the end of the chapter (p. 57). The statement from the Writings noted in the Reference reads:

Adam had the advantage over Christ, in that when he was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him... It was not thus with Jesus when He entered the wilderness to cope with Satan. For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in size, in mental power, in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity. (Signs, Dec. 3, 1902)

The subsection closes with the Melvill position which is affirmed to be "the orthodox doctrine." It reads, and note the summary word, "thus":

Thus "Christ's humanity was not the Adamic humanity, that is, the humanity of Adam before the fall; nor fallen humanity, that is, in every respect the humanity of Adam after the fall. It was not the Adamic, because it had the innocent infirmities of the fallen. It was not the fallen, because it never descended into moral impurity. It was, therefore, most literally our humanity, but without sin." (SDAB, p. 47)

"Innocent infirmities" are defined by Melvill as meaning, "hunger, pain, sorrow, etc." (See References, #13, p. 57) Now if you are confused by going from a created human nature to a nature "in the likeness of sinful flesh" which is equated to "sinful human nature," and "fallen human nature," and which revealed "decreased...physical and mental strength" to a human nature which had only "innocent infirmities," so are we.

The issue is not whether Christ sinned. He did not. The issue is what kind of human nature did He receive from Mary in which He achieved His great victory over sin. But now a new dimension has been added - a reflection is made upon God in all of this confusing meandering. If God created the human nature of Jesus, as declared in SDAB, and taught by the Holy Flesh men of Indiana, and affirmed by Froom, then He created according to SDAB, a fallen human nature with less mental and physical strength than was given to Adam, and possessing the moral worth of humanity after 4,000 years of degeneracy, inflicted with pain and sorrow. This is a reflection upon God who when He finished His first creation declared it to be "very good." (Gen. 1:31) No, Christ accepted the great working of the law of heredity receiving from Mary a human nature the same as every other child of Adam received.

Instead of creating for Jesus a body which was exempt from "the taint of sinful heredity," God "permitted Him to meet life's perils in common with every other human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss... 'Herein is love.' Wonder, O heavens! and be astonished, O earth!" (DA, p. 49)

Yet this "new theology" which casts reflection upon God, and is a confusing labyrinth of conflicting thoughts is now declared by Dr. Larson to be "precisely and specifically" his "theology" - "the true doctrine of the nature of Christ." He asked that we "check and see." This we have done, and have found it to be abject heresy. May God be merciful to those who have accepted him to be their "patriarch."

‡

"Watchman, What of the Night?" is published monthly by the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi, Inc., P. O. Box 69, Ozona, AR 72854-0069, USA.

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