

*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

"BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM!
Come out to meet Him."

(Matt. 25:6 RSV)



THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION

AS TAUGHT IN THE HOLY FLESH MOVEMENT

Somewhat over thirty years ago, while serving as pastor of the Marion District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Indiana, I had occasion to visit the late Jesse E. Dunn, who had retired at Rockford. The course of our conversation turned to the book, Questions on Doctrine, which had just been released. A discussion of certain controversial concepts including the section on the incarnation of Christ led to the observation by Dunn that a similar teaching had been advocated by the leaders of the Holy Flesh Movement in Indiana at the turn of the century.

Jesse Dunn had been State Agent (now known as the Publishing Department Secretary) for the Indiana Conference at the time of the Holy Flesh Movement. With his help and contacts plus his first hand knowledge of what took place, I began an intensive research of the movement. Attention was not only focused on the nature of their religious services, but their teaching on the incarnation was carefully studied. However, it was not until recently that the complete concepts of R. S. Donnell on the doctrine came to my attention. (Donnell served as conference president through the duration of the Movement.) I am indebted to Jeff Reich for a copy of Donnell's tract on "What I Taught in Indiana."

What makes this research of such crucial value at the present time is: 1) Ellen G. White was shown that the pentecostal elements of their religious services would come again into the Church "just before the close of probation." (SM, bk ii, p. 36); and 2) The doctrine of the incarnation similar to what was advocated by the leaders of the Holy Flesh Movement is now being put forth as the basis

for church unity. The similarity between what was happening in the church as the 19th Century closed and what is happening today as we near the close of the 20th Century cannot be overlooked or dismissed. The increasing proliferation of Celebration churches in Adventism with their incorporation of pentecostal elements into their worship services marks the most obvious parallel between the two movements. But with the emphasis given the doctrine of Christ by Dr. Norman Gulley and featured through six issues of the Adventist Review, the official organ of the church, though no longer so noted, brings the parallel together.

Further, as Gulley's series was ending, one of the associate editors, Roy Adams, began a series specifically directed to the doctrine of the incarnation asking the question - "Like Adam or Like Us?" (AR, March 29, 1990, p. 5) In a footnote, it indicated that these articles were a modification of a series he had written in the Canadian Union Messenger when its editor. These were being reintroduced "in response to queries that have come in to us, some arising from a recent series that touched on the nature of Christ."

While the Gulley series did not "headline" the incarnation, emphasizing rather Christ as Substitute and Example, the doctrine of the incarnation was foundational because there could have been no "example" or "substitution" without an incarnation. The associate editor wants to make the point emphatic and projects the issue in regard to the incarnation - Did Christ take the humanity as created, or the humanity as it became through sin? Before discussing this latest and flagrant extension of the heresy set forth by Gulley, we need to outline in full the teaching of the Holy Flesh Movement on this doctrine.

The articles in the tract - What I Taught in Indiana, [All page references will be from this tract] - were a reprint of a series which Donnell had written and published in the Indiana Reporter, while serving as president of the conference. He was making these articles available because of an action taken against him by the president of the Southern Union Conference. After leaving the presidency of the Indiana conference, Donnell ultimately went to Memphis, Tennessee. There he taught the same things he had taught in Indiana, and on February 27, 1907, action was taken to remove his credentials and disfellowship him from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The report of this action was made in the Watchman with the

reason being given that he was teaching "Holy Flesh" as he had done in Indiana. Donnell in this tract admits that "a number of the General Conference Committee" took strong exception to the articles when originally published, and that this "opposition" became so strong that he was forced to resign the presidency of Indiana. He then makes this comment:

The articles were headed "Did Christ Come to This World in Sinful Flesh?" I know not, unless it was my article, as well as in the pulpit, I took the negative side of the question." (p. 1)

Then he added - "The Laodicean message involves the nature of Christ, hence the articles." On this point, Donnell does not enlarge.

[Here is an intimation as to why the name, "Holy Flesh," was attached to the aberrant movement in Indiana. It was not their incorporation of pentecostal elements into their meetings, but rather that Christ took "holy flesh" in the incarnation. Thus the doctrine of the incarnation becomes primary in any discussion of their teachings. This also makes this doctrine a crucial issue at the present time due to the teachings being set forth by the church's theologians and editors. Tragically, some on the periphery of Adventism are advocating shades of the same.]

In Donnell's articles, he leaves no question as to what and to whom he is responding. At the time in 1900, a series of editorials were being written by one of the editors of the Review and Herald on "The Faith of Jesus." Although the editorials are not initialed, Donnell clearly identifies the editor as A. T. Jones rather than Uriah Smith. He wrote:

From the last two articles it appears evident that the object of the writer is to refute the idea that when Christ came to this earth, He came in sinless flesh, and that he writes in support of his theory, which he began to advocate only about ten years ago, viz: that Christ did actually come in sinful flesh, and that He did actually possess man's sinful nature." (p. 15)

These articles appeared in the last two issues for 1900, and thus "ten years ago" puts the whole issue back into the 1888 Message era. The fact is beyond dispute that one cannot divorce the acceptance or rejection of that message from what one believes about the incarnation of Christ.

Donnell's key reason for his position on the incarnation is exactly the same basic premise which Gulley set forth in his articles; namely,

that Christ could not be a Substitute acceptable to God unless He came in a nature "unaffected by" the results of sin. [Catholic doctrine and the book, Questions on Doctrine use the expression, "exempt from" instead of "unaffected by"] Here is what Donnell wrote:

When Christ came to this earth He came to make Himself an offering for sin and, in order to make an offering that would be acceptable to the Father, He must at least be as free from sin in every particular as was Adam before he fell. It was because of this that He could not step into some human body already on earth, and purify that body and offer the sacrifice. (p.8)

What we see today is the Church rejecting the 1888 Message and in turn advocating the foundational teaching of the Holy Flesh Movement, plus adopting the policy which was formulated in its inception - the "spirit" of pentecostalism mingled with what has now become apostate Adventism.

After the 1901 General Conference session, a special constituency meeting of the Indiana Conference was called to restore the conference from the effects of the Holy Flesh Movement, and the removal of the officers and ministers of the conference who had been advocating it. Ellen G. White went to Indianapolis and spoke to the delegates. At the close of her discourse, she said: **"When I am gone from here, none are to pick up any points of this doctrine and call it truth. There is not a thread of truth in the whole fabric."** (EGW Estate, Document File #190) Today, Gulley of Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists and Roy Adams of the Adventist Review have picked up points of the Holy Flesh doctrine and are vigorously advocating the same as truth.

But not alone do we find this "thread" of Holy Flesh doctrine advocated by the theologians and editors of the Church, but on the periphery of Adventism, we find the same basic premise taught by the editor of Our Firm Foundation. Donnell taught that "when Adam sinned, divinity left him." For humanity to be saved, "the Holy Seed, divinity and humanity combined, must be restored. This seed was found in Christ, the second Adam." (p. 19) "Christ's nature was a divine human nature, a nature which prior to the new birth, has not been possessed by a single son or daughter of Adam since the fall." (p. 20, emphasis mine) Spear teaches:

Yes, Christ [in the incarnation] had an advantage in one sense. He had a sanctified will from birth to the cross. He was born with the nature that becomes ours when we are born again - divinity united with humanity. (The Waymarks of Adventism, 2nd ed., July, 1981, p. 39)

The underscoring for emphasis in both quotations was done so that each reader can clearly see the same "thread" that was in Donnell's teaching is to be found in Spear's book. Among the "waymarks" of Adventism, Spear has placed the "waymark" of the Holy Flesh Movement!

Also of interest is the fact that the night before Ellen G. White bore a testimony at the 1901 General Conference session concerning the Holy Flesh movement which ended it, Elder E. J. Waggoner was scheduled to speak. He chose as his text - a key text of the advocates of the Holy Flesh Movement -- Hebrews 10:4-10: "A body hath thou prepared Me." After reading this Scripture, Waggoner indicated a question had been given him. The question asked - "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?" Dr. Waggoner told the delegates that in the very question itself was the idea of the Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Then he stated:

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 the virgin Mary? Mind you, in Him is no sin, but the mystery of God manifest in the flesh, ... is the perfect manifestation of the life of God in its spotless purity in the midst of sinful flesh. (Sermon, April 16, 1901, 7 p.m., GC Bulletin, p. 404)

Today, everyone needs to settle the question as to whether he is out of the church of Rome or not, and there are many among us, including Gulley, Adams and Spear, who have the marks yet!

Roy Adams' Position

There is only one word to describe what Adams wrote -- tragic! Penetrating his verbage, he refers to three sources upon which to draw a conclusion regarding the incarnation, and eliminates one of these. The three editorials as noted above pose the question - "Like Adam or Like Us?"

In the first editorial (March 29, 1990, p. 5), Adams accurately assesses the prime importance of the doctrine of the incarnation. He writes:

This is the central doctrine of the Christian faith. Without it, the whole canon of Scripture becomes a meaningless document, a non-sense. (Emphasis his)

ONE LAYMAN'S TESTIMONY & APPEAL

Allen M. Steward

Forty-six years ago, after attending a series of evangelistic meetings, I accepted the Three Angels' Messages. In connection with the meetings, the evangelist held a series of Bible studies for those who had accepted the message. In one of these studies, he used the text - "Hearken unto Me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged." (Isa. 51:1) I do not recall now all that he said in the study, but having been a worldly man deep in the pit of sin, I knew that Christ in His incarnation came to this pit, and by His righteous, sinless life rescued me, and put me on the solid ROCK of Truth. He lowered Himself till He could go no lower, drinking the very dregs of outer darkness itself. This text has never left my thinking. This is still fundamental truth.

We have been told - "The Lord has made His people the repository of sacred truth. Upon every individual who has had the light of present truth devolves the duty of developing that truth on a higher scale than it has hitherto been done." (EGW, March 30, 1897) By God's grace, I want to do this, as there are some things we need to face.

We know of the events taking place in Europe; the pope drawing everybody together. But what about the heresy, error and apostasy in the body of the Adventist Church? I do not believe I would be doing any violence to the text - Isa. 51:1 - to say that the corporate body has become a pit and hole of apostasy. We have had the compromise with the Evangelicals, the resulting book, Questions on Doctrine, which denies the final atonement; the 27 Statements of Fundamental Beliefs in which there is language borrowed from the Constitution of the WCC. Elder Neal C. Wilson calls for the "Latter Rain" when the preliminary work of reproof of sin, righteousness, and judgment has not been heeded. (See John 16:8)

We are in a serious situation for we as individuals will be held accountable for the sins of the corporate body. There are numerous examples of this in the Bible. Consider David's numbering Israel (I Chron. 21). Of

the men of Israel, seventy thousand fell in the pestilence sent by God (verse 14). David was permitted to see the angel with His sword drawn over Jerusalem (verse 16). He prayed to God - "I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done?" David was the king and corporate head of Israel, yet all Israel suffered under corporate guilt.

In the book of Ezekiel, we note that God's judgment falls upon the individuals involved with the corporate entity. The command of God was - "Slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women: and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began with the ancient men which were before the house." (9:6; See also 5T:211) How tragic! But how can Christ take to Heaven anyone who in mind still sympathizes with those in error and apostasy?

The Holy Spirit through Peter held all of the House of Israel responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus (Acts 2:36) When those hearing cried out for an answer, Peter said - "Repent," change your mind, your thinking and save yourselves from this crooked and perverse generation. If we are looking today for things to be different, and the church to be turned around, we are deceiving ourselves. We have been told:

One thing it is certain is soon to be realized, - the great apostasy, which is developing and increasing and waxing stronger, and will continue to do so until the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout. We are to hold the first principles of our denominated faith and go forward from strength to increased faith. (Series B, #7, pp. 56-57)

"For the leaders of this people cause them to err, and they that are led of them are destroyed and swallowed up." (Isa. 9:16, margin)

"A nation's sin and a nation's ruin were due to the religious leaders." (COL, p. 305)

Where or to whom are you looking? Jesus Christ has made it possible to be digged from this pit and hole of sin: Are you willing? He advises - "Hearken unto Me, ye that know righteousness." (Isa. 51:7) The righteousness of Christ is pure, unadulterated truth. (TM, p. 65) Look at the pit from which to be dug, and look at the Rock upon which He desires to place you. Let us prepare for the final atonement when the special group - the 144,000 - shall be revealed, those who have vindicated God's name.

He then proceeds to outline the Christological debate of the early centuries of the Christian era quoting the decrees of the Councils of Nicea (325) and Chalcedon (451). He is enamored with this last decree noting that "it was a ringing testimony to reverent and careful scholarship." In fact, he begins the second editorial (April 19, 1990, p. 4), quoting from it. He writes:

I would hazard a guess that all Adventists accept the phrase, from the Creed of Chalcedon concerning Jesus Christ, highlighted in Part 1 of this editorial: "In all things like us, sin only excepted."

This would have been true had Adventists maintained the only Biblical definition of sin (which even Gulley held when he headed the Bible Department at old Madison College) that sin is the transgression of the law. (See WVN, XXIII - 5(90), p. 3) But since the definition of sin has been changed, the whole issue has been reopened.

Recognizing that "herein lies the debate," Adams states - and note this carefully:

The problem we face here is similar to that which confronted our Christian pioneers in the early centuries - the lack of any definitive statement in Scripture.

Consider the import of this. First, he is not referring to the pioneers of Adventism, but to the Church Fathers in their Council decrees, noting them as "our Christian pioneers." (The Adventist pioneers had a clear perception of the doctrine.) Secondly, he dismisses the Scripture as a source by which to determine the question. Then he comments - "This is one reason that Adventists have leaned so heavily on the Writings of Ellen G. White on this question." But what does he do about the Writings?

In this second editorial, Adams quotes two sets of quotations from the Writings of Ellen G. White, one supporting the concept that Christ was "like Adam," and the other set that Christ was "like us." Herein lies the real problem. If the Writings come down on both sides of the question, and the Scriptures "lack any definitive statement," then this leaves only one basis for the doctrine of the Incarnation - the Church Fathers and the decrees of the Councils. This is not a happy solution for either the Adventist theologians or the hierarchy of the Church. So where do we go from here?

In Adams' third editorial (and hopefully his final one; but no chance for this), he sets forth the position outlined in the new book - SDA's Believe... - without mentioning it. Rather, he

refers to a report from the White Estate by Tim Poirier. (AR, April 26, 1990, p. 5) This report appeared in the Ministry (Dec., 1989) fully documented. It revealed the source of several of the Ellen G. White statements on the incarnation which are at variance with such plain statements as - "He [Christ] took upon Himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin." (YI, Dec. 20, 1900) This source was a sermon by an Anglican clergyman, Henry Melville, entitled, "The Humiliation of the Man Christ Jesus." Melville ingeniously worked out a compromise so that "the incarnate Christ was neither just like Adam before the Fall, nor just like us." The White Estate does not explain how these concepts - some almost verbatim - were worked into the Writings in contradiction to the other statements of Ellen G. White on the incarnation.

Adams then takes off from this position of Melville, and seeks through the use of the now famous "Baker Letter" and other E. G. White comments to sustain the Melville position, and thus the book, SDA's Believe.... So what is Adams' conclusion? Read what he wrote carefully:

So He came among us as a human being - in every essential sense of the word, "in all things like unto us, sin only (experiential and inherited] excepted."

This interpreted quote is from the Creed of Chalcedon. So now we have it. We cannot reply on the Bible, it gives no definitive statement on the question. The Writings of Ellen G. White are contradictory on the subject. But we can depend on the Church Council of Chalcedon - interpreted by Roy Adams! This is human egotism at its height - tragic! And this is what the laity of the Church are being subjected to if they read the Adventist Review. If the Church hierarchy are really serious about receiving the "Latter Rain" of the Spirit of truth, shouldn't there be a "house cleaning" starting with this associate editor of the Adventist Review, and a recommendation to the College Board of Southern Adventist College of Seventh-day Adventists? Perhaps, this is ill advised, because if the "broom" really swept clean, there would be but few left, if any, to teach Bible in our universities and colleges - and what would we do with the book, SDA's Believe...?

It would be much easier to simply admit that the Bible does make clear definitive statements in regard to the human nature that Christ took upon Himself in the incarnation. Paul wrote

LET'S TALK IT OVER

In the latest issue of Ministry (May, 1990), Dr. Daniel Augsburg, retired professor of historical theology at Andrews University, writes the lead article on "The Minister as a Theologian." He tells of asking one of his theology classes to evaluate the spiritual impact of the class. One of the students answered tersely, "It is theology; it cannot be spiritual." This is false perception of theology, but too often true, if theology is kept in the abstract. But theology applied can be just as false as abstract theology.

Theology is simply the study of God. Christology is the study of Christ, who He is and what He taught. Soteriology is the study of salvation. All are involved in the study of the Incarnation. It need not remain in the abstract. If we have found the truth of the incarnation as revealed in the Scriptures, that truth received into the heart can change our lives.

The Holy Flesh advocates applied the doctrine of the incarnation as they perceived it. Actually, their perception differed little from the teaching of Melville, the Anglican clergyman, whose teaching on the incarnation is the basic concept in the book, SDA's Believe... Melville's concepts differentiating between "innocent infirmities" and "sinful propensities" were more neatly defined than were the teachings of the men who advocated the Holy Flesh doctrine in Indiana. Donnell wrote:

He [Christ] took a body which showed by its deteriorated condition, that the effects of sin was shown by it [innocent infirmities], but His life proved there was no sin in it [sinful propensities]. It was a body which the Father prepared for Him. Heb. 10:5. Christ's body represented a body redeemed from its fallen spiritual nature [sinful propensities], but not from its fallen, or deteriorated physical nature [innocent infirmities]. It was a body redeemed from sin, and with that body Christ clothed His divinity. ("The Nature of Christ and Man," an Essay written by Donnell and sent to S. S. Davis; see The Holy Flesh Movement, p. 31)

Those Holy Flesh men of Indiana believed that Christ in the flesh was our Example, and we are to realize that experience after "being born again." They believed that Christ "because being born of God" had "no lust" that is, evil propensities, in the flesh He assumed. Then they asked, "Does God want to make Gods

out of us?" To this they replied, "Yes that is just what He wants to do. He wants us to become Gods so that we cannot be tempted to sin." (Ibid.) This was related to the experience of the 144,000. Donnell wrote:

The 144,000 must attain in this life unto this high estate of perfection of character, as the sons of God, and the daughters of the Almighty, for they do not go through the grave, to leave their imperfections there. Like Christ they must become so related to God that they cannot even be tempted to sin. (Ibid.)

Those who today teach the Holy Flesh doctrine of the incarnation take two distinct avenues in application. Guley in his article, "Jesus Our Example" sets forth the example to the point where it is vicarious, that is, for us, but not in us. On the other hand, Spear who also teaches that Jesus took the nature that "one born again" receives comes very close in application to what the Holy Flesh men taught, righteousness "by us," which is now termed, "perfectionism." Both miss the mark of Romans 8:3-4, coming down on either side of it.

So how do we relate the theology of the incarnation as taught in the Scriptures to life? Christ came in "the likeness of sinful flesh" and "condemned sin in the flesh." (Rom. 8:3) This victory which He obtained, God gives to us. "Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (I Cor. 15:57) We overcome the evil one "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word [not works] of (our) testimony, and (we) love not (our) lives unto death." (Rev. 12:11)

Even as Christ was surrendered to the will of the Father, so we must be surrendered that God may work in us "both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Phil 2:13) The true doctrine of the incarnation as taught in the Scriptures causes us to realize, if applied, how helpless we are when confronted with our fallen natures, and how incomprehensibly great was the victory of Christ in that nature. It cause us to flee to Him, and trust Him alone, knowing that our works of righteousnesses are but filthy rags. We can feel with the individual who came to the sanctuary and placed his full weight upon the "substitute" and trusted the officiating priest to accomplish for him the atonement. With the sanctuary worshiper in affliction of soul we await the coming out of the High

Priest who alone on the Day of Atonement accomplished the cleansing. We sense now anew that "divine grace is needed at the beginning, divine grace at every step of advance, and divine grace alone can complete the work." (TM, p. 508) We see in the life of Christ that "the victory to be gained is not won by human power. The field of conflict is the domain of the heart. The greatest battle which we have to fight - the greatest battle that was ever fought by man - is the surrender of self to the will of God, the yielding of the heart to the sovereignty of love." (MB, p. 203, Sec., "Strive to Enter in at the Strait Gate.")

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that "the gospel of God... concerning His Son Jesus Christ" was that He "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh." (Rom. 1:1,3) Paul further indicated that Christ laid aside "the form of God" and in its place accepted "the slave form" of man. (Phil 2:6-7 Gr.) And to these, others could be added with much less interpretation than Adams gave the Creed of Chalcedon.

STUDY HELPS

On the Doctrine of the Incarnation

The History of the Doctrine of the Incarnation as Taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church - \$2.00 plus postage of \$1.00.

In the Form of a Slave - \$2.00 plus postage of \$1.00.

The Holy Flesh Movement, 1899-1901 - \$2.00 plus postage of \$1.00.

ALL THREE MANUSCRIPTS ORDERED TOGETHER - \$7.50 postpaid.

NOTE

The Next issue of "Watchman, What of the Night?" you will receive will be dated as XXIII - 8(90). For the month of July, you will receive our new tract - "Jerusalem in Bible Prophecy." Be looking for it, as it will be sent out earlier than the usual schedule.

"Christ did in reality unite the offending nature of man with His own sinless nature, because by this act of condescension He would be enabled to pour out His blessings in behalf of the fallen race. Thus He has made it possible for us to partake of His nature."

Review & Herald, July 17, 1900

"The religion of Jesus Christ we need daily. ... Though He had all the strength of passion of humanity, never did He yield to temptation to do one single act which was not pure and elevating and ennobling."

In Heavenly Places, p. 155

TECHNICAL ERROR

As we were checking the last issue of WWN [XXIII - 5(90)] just before sending it out, we noticed that in writing of the Roman Catholic Dogma of the Immaculate Conception (p. 2) we quoted instead of the Dogma, Cardinal Gibbons' exposition of the Dogma. The Dogma reads:

We define that the Blessed Virgin Mary in the first moment of her conception, by the singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from every stain of original sin.

Then Gibbons' amplification follows:

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

Last Call -

ANNUAL FELLOWSHIP

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