

**“GOD’S CHARACTER AND
THE LAST GENERATION”**

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“Watchman, what of the night ?”



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

Editor's Preface

In this issue of WWN, two crucial theological doctrines come to the forefront in our ongoing evaluation of "Last Generation Theology" (L.G.T.) as presented in the Andrews University sanctioned book of the aforementioned title under review. First, the essay by Martin Hanna in Chapter 3 attempts to address the subject of "sin". It is no mere happenstance that, following the Introductions and first two chapters which (allegedly) describe: "What is L.G.T.?", the very first related topic is a presentation on sin. The study of sin ("hamartiology") and one's corresponding *biblical* understanding of it is paramount regarding every aspect of the larger encompassing study of salvation ("soteriology"). The core of the problem concerning sin in Seventh-day Adventist theology has primarily centered in *how* it is to be defined.

Historically, Adventists have generally believed that "sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3: 4). Because of Adam's fall (transgression), all humanity became inherently sinful by inheriting from him the results of his sin - a weak, morally depraved nature subject to death. Beginning around the time of the SDA / Evangelical conferences of 1955-1956, the Adventist Church began to espouse the Augustinian doctrine of "original sin." This teaching stresses that humans not only inherit Adam's depraved nature, but they also inherit *the actual guilt* of his transgression. Effectually this means that all people are condemned sinners simply by being conceived / born into this world, irrespective of any actions or deeds they have committed whether deliberately or not. This con-



sequential aspect of Adam's "original" fall is not biblical. Concerning Augustine, *Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*, vol. 19, under the article Original Sin, states:

"In his controversy with the Romano-British monk Pelagius (c. 354-after 418) over the nature of sin and grace, Augustine was able to appeal powerfully and effectively to the Pauline-apocalyptic understanding of the forgiveness of sin. In his elaboration of the doctrine, however, Augustine imported an idea foreign to the Bible: the notion that the taint of sin is transmitted from generation to generation by the act of procreation. He took this idea from the 2d-century theologian Tertullian, who actually coined the phrase *original sin*." (pg. 442). ¹ Additionally, *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, under the article Original sin - 1 History of the doctrine / 1.2 Augustine, further reveals:

"Original sin, according to Augustine, consists of the guilt of Adam which all humans inherit ... Although earlier Christian authors taught the elements of physical death, moral weakness, and a sin propensity within original sin [*Note: roughly the Adventist position up to the 1950's.*], Augustine was the first to add the concept of inherited guilt [(Lat., *reatus* - "guilt")] from Adam whereby an infant was eternally damned at birth. Augustine held *the traditional view that free will was weakened but not destroyed by original sin* until he converted in 412 CE to the Stoic view that humanity had no free will except to sin as a result of his anti-Pelagian view of infant baptism." (note and emphasis added). ²

The implications of this have been far-reaching, particularly in how this has affected our salvational insight regarding the atonement and the second theological doctrine under review in the main article - the incarnation. The essay by Darius W. Jankiewicz in

Chapter 8 of the book addresses Jesus as Savior and Example. We will primarily focus attention on the biblical revelation of the incarnation as revealed through the sanctuary teaching and why a proper understanding of it is vital to L.G.T.

Due to space limitations, our ongoing continuation of *The Sanctuary Truth* will be resumed in an upcoming issue of WWN.

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Critique: Chapter 3 --

This chapter of the book is the beginning of the remaining series of expositions, through Chapter 13, on various theological motifs associated with L.G.T. Entitled: *What Shall We Say About Sin? A Study of Hamartia in Paul's Letter to the Romans*, author Martin Hanna explains in the first (of four) sections subtitled "Introduction: The Semantic complexity of sin" that "The topic of this chapter is derived from the following questions that Paul asks about sin (*hamartia*) in his letter to the Roman Christians. 'What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin?' (Romans 6: 1). 'What shall we say then? Is the law sin?' (Romans 7: 7) ... 'Has then what is good [the law] become death to me?' (verse 13); and 'Who will deliver me from this body of death?' (verse 24)." Since the bulk of the study is on the first 8 chapters of Romans, the author discusses the "semantic complexity" of "the subject of sin" in "Paul's teaching" derived from this portion of the letter. Hanna summarizes ["first"] chapters 1-4 as focusing "on salvation from sin (Romans 3: 9, 20; 4: 7, 8) through justification (Romans 3: 21-26; 4: 5, 6)" and ["second"] chapters 5-8 as focusing "on salvation from sin in terms of the relation of justification to sanctification and glorification (Romans 5: 1, 2, 5; 6: 20, 22;

8: 21, 30." He warns, referencing 2 Peter 3: 16, that failure "to appreciate the semantic complexity of Paul's teaching on sin ... facilitates spiritual 'destruction,'" and then categorizes "three dimensions of sin [*hamartia*]: involuntary corruption, voluntary carnality, and legal condemnation." Though all three "dimensions" are footnoted, it is the last footnote (# 12) that is of particular interest. It states:

"This threefold summary of the sin problem has some similarity to the fourfold summary proposed by Arthur W. Pink, *A Fourfold Salvation: Rescue From the Pleasure, Penalty, Power, and Presence of Sin* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2014)." The note then outlines the "overlap" between Pink's categorization of sin and the author's own categorization of it along with an explanation of why he "choose different terminology for the categories."

It is significant that Hanna has framed his exposition of Paul's writings on sin in a "[somewhat similar]" manner as Pink. Arthur W. Pink was a staunch, hard-lined ("5-point") Calvinist and an ardent opposer / polemicist of Arminian theology. And while this relatively short essay (8 pages) is heavily footnoted with 68 "endnotes" citing a wide range of information drawn from various theological backgrounds, the fact that Hanna's comprehension of Paul's teaching on sin is built on the "semantic complexity" of it which both he and Pink categorizes similarly, begs the question on whether he understands Paul's language (semantics) in Romans within the underlying context of the Augustinian doctrine of original sin (A.W. Pink certainly did, as do most Calvinists of varying degrees). This is hard to ascertain because the author nowhere in this article explicitly uses the term "original sin," nor is his treatment

of Romans 5: 12, on pages 47-48, (a key proof text passage for original sin advocates) a clear indication that he thinks guilt comes upon the human race due to Adam's sin. Again, however, this section contains a couple of footnotes (# 36 and # 37) which references an online work by Gerhard Pfandl, a Seventh-day Adventist writer, entitled "Some thoughts on Original Sin." In brief, Pfandl concludes his study on original sin with these observations:

"The term original sin is used by Adventist authors - 'not in the sense of inherited guilt, but of an inherited disposition to sin.' For the sake of clarity and to avoid confusion, I would suggest that we use the term 'original sin' for the Augustinian concept of imputed guilt and corruption; and the term 'original corruption' for the state of sin into which each member of the human race is born.

"There is a tendency on the part of some Adventists today to go back to the understanding of our early pioneers regarding original sin, in order to justify their opposition to our present understanding which they consider to be Calvinistic ...

"While some believe that sin is only a wilful or negligent violation of God's will, our study of Scripture has shown *that sin is also a state into which we are born (original corruption)*.

"A correct understanding of the nature of sin is also vital for a balanced view on the nature of Christ. While He became truly man, "made like unto his brethren" (Hebrews 2: 17), *he did not inherit the original corruption with which we are born* (Hebrews 4: 15)." (pg. 22, *emph. added*).³

These comments are highly insightful as they set forth the fact that "our present understanding" of sin (i.e., post-1950's) has broadened the definition of sin amply enough to include the results of sin as sin it-

self. Can there really be any doubt that the semantic gymnastics that Pfandl is engaging in here – exchanging of the term "inherited guilt" for the term "original corruption" – is still leading to the same conclusion "that sin is also a state into which we are born?" And, as the final sentence shows, by enlarging the meaning of sin sufficiently to define the fallen nature itself as sin, the way is paved to accept the Roman Catholic and apostate Protestant concept of the human nature of Christ, specifically a false Christ that was *not* born into this world "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8: 3).

Basically, the gulf between post-1950's ("contemporary") Adventism and pre-1950's ("historic") Adventism is over the continued and increasing confusion regarding the definition of sin. Historic Adventism had only one definition for sin (the biblical) – "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3: 4) – with the concepts of separation from God and the fallen nature, recognized as the *results* of the first sin. Continued transgression only intensified and broadened those results. Historic Adventists could understand clearly the results of sin as a separation from God (Isaiah 59: 2), but they had trouble with the second result – the fallen nature – as the Augustinian notion of original sin began encroaching into Adventist thought, largely through the Church's higher institutions of learning. As noted earlier in the Editor's Preface, this concept teaches that both the fallen nature and guilt of Adam's sin are imputed to the human race. Guilt and fallen nature need to be properly separated and differentiated. The Scriptures plainly declare – "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image" (Genesis 5: 3). We are not

only conceived in the heat of passion – the Hebrew is: גוֹרֵאֲבֵאוֹן (*henbeawon*) "behold in transgression" חוֹלֵאֲלֵטִי (*cholaletti*) "I caused labor pains" וְטֵרַף־שֵׁשֶׁׁע (*uvechefe*) "and by a sinner" יְנֵחַמַּת־הַשֵּׁרֵי (*yechemathni*) "she was in heat to conceive me" דְּמִמִּי (*immi*) "my mother" (Psalm 51: 5) – and receive by birth the fallen nature of our parents, even as Seth did from Adam; we also are born into the environment of sin. But the question is the imputation of guilt. Is the fallen nature which makes acts of sin inevitable for us, the basis of condemnation?

God does not condemn us because of what we are through no choice of our own. Condemnation results when we sin willfully (see Ezekiel 18: 20) and do not take advantage of the grace provided through the love of God, and the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Original sin proponents attempt to make Romans 5 teach that guilt comes upon the race due to Adam's sin. But the text reads in both instances that Adam's offence worked upon all men "to condemnation" because of the effect of sin, "for that all (men) have sinned," and therefore are condemned. (Romans 5: 16, 18, 12). To teach that God condemns us because of our fallen nature is to cast aspersions upon the character of God and echo the accusations of Satan that God is not a just God.

In retrospect concerning this chapter, Martin Hanna does not explicitly address the pivotal issue on the topic of sin: the Augustinian concept of original sin. While his presentation on the subject of sin is, for the most part, biblically based and helpful in understanding the far-reaching problem of sin, there is no overt discussion as to whether the "dimensions of sin" (which he categorizes as three spheres that sin operates in), brings Adam's actual guilt upon us thereby con-

demning all humanity irrespective of any actions / choices made, consciously or not. Any discussion of sin, in the context of determining the biblical truthfulness of L.G.T. that does not directly address this question, will be limited in the resolution of the issue.

Critique: Chapter 8 --

The essay for this chapter is entitled: *Jesus Christ: Savior and Example*. Its author, Darius W. Jankiewicz, primarily sets forth an exposition of Jesus in His dual earthly roles as both Substitute and Example. As such, this work generally attempts to present the relationship between these two facets of Christ's salvific work. The chapter is divided into 8 subtitled sections. Since the last two sections of this chapter especially deal with the human nature/incarnation of Christ, subjects that crucially affect the validity of L.G.T, we thought it was prudent that this chapter should follow our review of sin. Accordingly, this critique will focus attention chiefly on the material written on pages 167-169.

Under the subtitle "Some theological implications," the author engages in a series of "A + B = B + A" type of rhetorical questions to reason out the feasibility – "to insist that Jesus' human nature was exactly like ours." The conclusion that he finally draws from this particular line of reasoning is that – "Thus, the question of whether Jesus' nature was exactly like ours must be answered both Yes and No." This would be biblical if "Yes" means that Christ in the incarnation assumed the *same* fallen, sinful nature as is common to all humanity through "the great law of heredity". Likewise, it would be biblical if "No" means that Christ, in humanity's *sinful* nature, lived a sinless life free from all cultivated sin due to never having a *sinning* nature:

"It would have been an almost infinite hu-

miliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. *He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life.*" (DA, pg. 49, *emph. added*).⁴

The heart of the issue with Christ as our example centers directly in the understanding / teaching that the fallen nature (sinful nature) is sin itself. Jankiewicz, under the last subtitle "Did Jesus' human nature really need to be exactly like ours?", states – "He (Jesus) did not, however, need to be exactly like us, *burdened with inherited inclinations to sin.*" (*emph. added*). Furthermore, the result of this basic denial of Christ's true human nature in the incarnation leads to the often heard concept that if Christ in His humanity assumed such a nature, He would thus be a sinner, in need of a savior Himself, and therefore could not be a holy "Substitute." However, this erroneous position is contradicted by the typological symbolism of the sanctuary service. The law of the sin offering reads:

"This is the law of the sin offering: In the place where the burnt offering is killed shall the sin offering be killed before the Lord: *it is most holy*. The priest that offereth it for sin shall eat it: in the holy place shall it be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation. Whatsoever shall touch the flesh thereof *shall be holy*" (Leviticus 6: 25-27, *emph. added*). Consider the force of the law of the sin offering. By the confession of the individual upon the head of the sacrifice, it became not only a sin bearer, but the very

symbol of the sin itself. It was to be killed – "For the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6: 23). The ministering common priest was to eat it in the court, a symbol of earth where the great antitypical Substitute would be offered. But note, that symbol which became truly the sinner was declared to be "most holy." The priest, though having partaken of the flesh wherein the nature of sin resides, was *not* declared unholy. Why? Because he did not *do* the sin. Failure that in any way blurred the significance of this ritual was condemned. Moses chided the sons of Aaron:

"Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin offering in the holy place, seeing it is most holy, and God hath given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord?" (Leviticus 10: 17).

The common priests bore it by partaking of it. Of Jesus as a common priest, the Scriptures teach that "forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." (Hebrews 2: 14). God "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5: 21).

In Romans 1: 1, 3, Paul sets forth what is part of the Gospel. The text reads: "... the gospel of God, ... Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh." The only body of flesh which Mary could form in her womb was a flesh with the nature she inherited from David through all the rest of her ancestors between herself and him. The body that Christ took was subject to the human inheritance of "the seed of David." There was, though, a Divine intervention in the formation of the body which was to be the human body of Jesus. The Scriptures plainly teach, putting the words as from Jesus Himself – "A body hast thou prepared me" (He-

brews 10: 5). For Mary to have conceived without the introduction of the male "seed" would have been impossible. The Bible declares that she knew no man. (Luke 1: 34). Miraculously, the victorious Christ is stated to be a "man child" – a male, sexually. (Revelation 12: 5; Greek, *αρσεν* (*arsen*) – "male child"). Mysteriously, the power of God introduced the Y-chromosome bearing "seed."

There is another key factor in the revelation of the God-man. *Jesus Christ was pre-existent!* In this He was indeed different from any other person of human origin. "The Word was God, ... and the Word was made flesh." (John 1: 1, 14). The Divine Identity who had co-existed with God throughout all eternity, by a painful process known alone to God and Himself, divested Himself of the "form" of God and united the body prepared in the womb of Mary to Himself. That body is declared to have been "the form of a slave" (Philippians 2: 7, Lit.).⁵ Again the picture emerges: The unfallen Adam did not have a slave form, but the fallen Adam so became. This "slave form" Adam passed to all his children through "the great law of heredity." From this law, Christ was not "exempt."

The reason for the nature that Christ assumed can be viewed from another perspective. The last enemy to be destroyed will be death. (1 Corinthians 15: 26). By Whom and through what means? We read "that through death" Jesus would "destroy him that had the power of death" and "deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Hebrews 2: 14-15). What risk was demanded of Jesus to achieve this objective? "Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren." (Ibid. 2: 17). Death is the result of our "slave form." Jesus could not by-pass this

and conquer death. But to be a sinless Substitute, He had to overcome the liabilities of that form, which had become to man an irresistible force and make it a conquered power. Jesus entered the house of the strong man, and bound him, then spoiled his goods providing for the release of his captives. (see Matthew 12: 29).

When Jesus prevailed, there was heard in Heaven "a loud voice" proclaiming - "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down" (Revelation 12: 10). Because He emptied Himself and took the slave form of man becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, ... God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." (Philippians 2: 7-9). Then why do we go about doing Satan's work seeking to denigrate that glorious name under the guise that we are seeking to have a holy "Substitute."

Why do we who profess to be God's "remnant church" want to rob Jesus of His great victory? Why are we so willing to adopt the unscriptural theories of men and pervert

truth to deny Him the full salvation His own arm wrought – not only over acts of sin, but over the very nature which in all the rest of humanity breaks forth into sin? He is not only holy, but He is also a "most holy" Sin Offering! Is Jesus not therefore a Brother to us in fallen humanity and truly our Saviour in the sacrifice of Himself and as our supreme Example? The Victorious One who alone gives us the victory too! >> *To be Continued.*

1. Leon L. Bram / Norma H. Dickey, *Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*, vol. 19 (New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls, Inc., 1986), 442.
2. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, *Augustine* (Article: Original sin, 1 History of the doctrine), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Original_sin#Augustine
3. Gerhard Pfandl, *Some Thoughts on Original Sin* (Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Research Institute), 22. <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/sinoriginal-web.pdf>
4. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), 49.
5. Jay P. Green, Sr., *The Interlinear Bible / Greek-English New Testament*, vol. 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985), 534-535.

* All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

"Watchman, what of the night?" is published by the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Iowa, Inc., P.O. Box 665, Nora Springs, IA 50458-0665, USA.

Founder	Elder William H. Grotheer
Editor, Publications & Research	Gary L. Patrick
Associate Editor	Dennis J. Tevis
Proofreader	William E. Caloudes

WEBSITES

www.alfiowa.com
www.adventistlaymen.com
www.adventistalert.com

E-MAIL

Editor - alfia@myomnitel.com

Webmaster - webmaster@adventistlaymen.com

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