

THE ABIDING GIFT OF PROPHECY

Arthur G. Daniells



Foreword

For a third of a century it has been my privilege to present, with increasing fullness, certain of the evidences centering in the theme of this book, “The Abiding Gift of Prophecy.” Particularly is this true of those features treated in the early and latter sections, dealing, first, with the Biblical evidences concerning the continuance of spiritual gifts, but more especially of their latter-day bestowal upon the remnant church. For years, ministerial groups and General Conference Councils have gone on record asking that these studies be placed in book form. This was duly promised by the author, and the work has been pursued with much pleasure and satisfaction.

This volume deals with but one theme--The Abiding Gift of Prophecy. That prophetic gift has been God’s chosen method of revealing Himself to the human race after man had been ruined through sin. Before being estranged from God by this blighting, alien curse, he had free and open access to the presence of his Creator. But after the fall this

open way was closed. Since then, an obscuring veil has separated man from the presence of God.

Only through men chosen and called by His sovereign will has God clearly disclosed His purposes and fully revealed the future. The bestowal of the prophetic gift upon an individual has made that person a prophet. The operation of this gift, therefore, is wholly planned and utilized by the Lord Himself. Concerning those whom He calls to the prophetic office, He says: “Hear now My words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.” (Numbers 12:6)

At the birth of John the Baptist, the prophetic power of the Spirit came upon his father Zacharias. Being “filled with the Holy Ghost,” he “prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people.” In the midst of an outburst of joy over the advent of the long-expected Messiah, “to give knowledge of salvation” by the remission of sins

through faith in His name, Zacharias

testifies that God had spoken “by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began.” (Luke 1:67-70) This most expressive and significant statement of the early bestowal and continuance of the prophetic gift was repeated by the apostle Peter, who declared that God “hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:21)

This prophetic gift bestowed was to abide with the church from Adam to the second advent of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when He comes to take His redeemed people to Paradise. It did not cease with the apostles, but is traceable through the centuries to the last days of human history, just before the return of our Lord. When that supreme event of the ages shall occur, then--and not until then--shall come to pass that which is spoken of by the apostle Paul:

“Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there

be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.” (1 Corinthians 13:8-10, A.R.V.)

The tracing of the manifestations of this gracious gift through the ages has been a fascinating and most enlightening study. As may be surmised, it has required a vast amount of research. For much of this, and for the critical reading and improvement of the manuscript, I am greatly indebted to a number of my friends who have been deeply interested in the production of this volume.

Arthur Grosvenor Daniells

Humington Park, California,
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Introduction

Long has the church awaited the coming of this volume, and long has it been needed. Dealing, as it does, in a unique and larger way with the divine provision for the abiding of the gift of prophecy in God's true church in all ages and dispensations, it presents a full-rounded survey of the most misunderstood and maligned of the three great identifying marks of the true church of the last days. These are "the commandments of God," "the faith of Jesus," and "the spirit of prophecy." It is this remnant church which completes the arrested Reformation of the sixteenth century, which restores the fullness of apostolic faith and practice, and which, significantly enough, is to have as one of its distinguishing characteristics, the manifestation of the promised gifts of the Spirit.

The church has greatly needed this book, not only for the uniqueness and largeness of its concept, but for the comprehensiveness and adequacy of its treatment. It has needed it for the soundness and saneness of its conclusions, and for

the reasonableness and winsomeness of its approach. Serious misconceptions have obtained, in the minds of many, concerning all spiritual gifts, but especially as regards the gift of prophecy. Crude and distorted concepts have been formed and fostered by others. Deceptive counterfeits have appeared to simulate and harass the true bestowals, thus to bring the whole divine provision into doubt and disrepute.

It is truly refreshing, therefore, to have a presentation so conspicuous for soundness and balance. These basic qualities have been happily blended with unswerving loyalty to the word of truth, and fidelity to the facts of record. Dignified, chaste, scholarly, and Biblical,--these are terms that may fitly describe this presentation, destined, I believe, to be a classic in its field.

This volume lifts the gift of prophecy wholly above the strange, weird, and fantastic, and presents it as God's chosen, revealed, established, and uniform method of communicating with the people of His choice on earth, separated as they

have been from His presence, since the fall of man, by that dreadful thing--sin.

As the supreme claim to our acceptance of this gift, the author presents the character and content of the prophetic messages themselves. The internal evidence is set forth as the determining factor, subject to definite and well-defined moral tests. Physical phenomena--which may, or may not, accompany the giving of visions and revelations from God--may serve at times to arrest attention and to convince the beholder. These unquestionably have their time and place in the manifestation of the gift to the church, especially in the early exercise of the gift, before there are written records or a body of literature prepared and authorized by the chosen instrument. But when such appear as the fruitage of the gift, these then become, logically and inevitably, the supreme test of validity, and the criteria of truth or falsity.

The material phenomena, Satan can and has duplicated in connection with false prophets, to the harassing and bewilderment of those who would

judge chiefly by the physical tests. But neither man nor devil can simulate the exalted purity, the truth, and the consistency of the genuine, marked as it is by harmony with historic and scientific fact, fidelity to the principles of truth, the dictates of conscience, and the mandates of common sense,-- and, to crown all, insight into both the secrets of human hearts and the wisdom and foreknowledge of God. The author has given us satisfying evidence on the basis of these determining factors, particularly as relates to the manifestation of this gift in the last days.

It is this high concept that at once removes the gift in the remnant church from the realm of something new and strange; something heretofore unknown or inoperative, and therefore difficult for the conservative and the incredulous to receive. Such a comprehensive view takes away that instinctive and otherwise inevitable hesitancy about presenting the evidence of the latter-day manifestation of the gift to a materialistic and scoffing world. It banishes that very natural inclination to keep it in the background because of

the odium that commonly attaches to the name and thought of “prophet” in these skeptical and unspiritual--albeit professedly advanced and highly enlightened--days.

One of the distinct contributions of this volume is the section spanning the centuries between the death of the apostles and the gracious bestowal of the prophetic gift upon the remnant church. No one, so far as I am aware, has before attempted so comprehensive a survey. The presentation here given is not offered as an exhaustive and final statement, but rather as an introduction. It is designed to establish, upon evidence, the fundamental principle and attested fact of the continuance of the prophetic gift beyond the death of the apostles through the present as well as all other ages and dispensations since the fall of man.

The fundamental premise of the writer is incontrovertible--that when sin had broken direct communion between heaven and earth, God gave the prophetic gift to men, vouchsafing it to His church, and that gift has never been permanently

withdrawn since its bestowal. There have, of course, been intervals when no prophetic voice was heard. But this, as well as the other spiritual gifts, has reappeared periodically through the centuries, to direct in crises, to instruct and to warn, and at times to predict, as God might elect and as the church might need.

Now a word as to the fitness of the author for preparing this work. No one has been better qualified by close and unique relationship both to the remnant church at large, and to the one whom God chose to be His special messenger and mouthpiece in these closing days of human history. For fifty years a minister in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, he was for twenty-one years president of our General Conference. And the time of his world leadership of the advent movement included the period not only of laying the foundations for its great expansion, but also the time of certain of its greatest crises. It embraced, likewise, the consummating years of Ellen G. White's wonderful witness to the advent movement, together with the cessation of her life

activities in the sleep of death,--though her writings live on, and speak forth increasingly the marvelous messages she was commissioned to impart to the remnant church.

The author's personal acquaintance with Mrs. White covered the last twenty-eight years of her life, which ended in 1915. For the last twenty-three years of this time--while he was president, first of the Australasian Conference and then of the General Conference--there existed, because of the official relationships involved, a close and continuous contact that afforded every opportunity of knowing her life, her character, and her work.

The episodes set forth by the author as illustrative of the conspicuous and satisfying evidence of this divine gift in the remnant church have been drawn from this large background of personal contact and observation, but have never before been written out in comprehensive form. The early incidents of Mrs. White's life, already available in print, are not stressed in this volume, but rather those larger, later experiences in which

mighty issues were involved, and in some instances wherein the very destiny of the denomination was at stake. These consequently form an invaluable record for our learning and admonition, and they constitute incontrovertible evidence for the confirmation of our faith.

Brought forth in the sunset of the author's life, this volume embodies the matured conclusions of long and effective study, strengthened by decades of oral presentation on every continent, and ripened by recent years of intensive review and research. Though profound as to principles involved, it is simple in style and direct in statement, as befits a theme of such lofty character. This treatise has attached to it, therefore, a maturity of appeal and a weight of utterance that is most satisfying. It is bequeathed as a sacred legacy to the church so greatly beloved by our veteran leader, and in whose ministry he so long and fruitfully served. It is sent forth with his benediction to bless and to enlighten, to comfort and to strengthen, the church of God's tender choice and care.

LeRoy Edwin Froom.

Los Angeles, California,
February 24, 1935.

Chapter 1

The Prophetic Gift Bestowed

The gift of prophecy is one of God's choicest gifts to the human family. Indeed, it ranks next to the supreme gift of His only-begotten Son and of His Holy Spirit to a world estranged and separated by sin.

But the giving of His Son made necessary the bestowal of another gift--the gift of prophecy. This was imperative. It was required as a medium of communication through which the Lord might tell a lost, perishing world why He gave His only Son. Through this channel--the prophetic gift--God has held communion with man since the fall. By this method of communication He has ever given messages of information, guidance, warning, and entreaty to the entire human family.

In doing this the Lord has mercifully lifted the curtain that separates His world of light from our world of darkness. Through the opening thus made,

the glorious light of His sinless world pours into our world enshrouded in moral darkness. The coming in of that light has brought the new vision, the new hope, and the transformed life God purposed in the giving of His Son.

The revelations that have come from God to men through the prophetic gift have, in part at least, been recorded and preserved for the benefit of the whole world through all time. It has made possible the Bible--that sacred and divine record bearing the name, "The word of God."

The Marvelous Origin of Man

That Inspired Record throws a flood of light on all that we behold--above, below, and around us. It takes us back to the beginning. It reveals the origin of things--of our world, of the human race, and of that mysterious disorder we call sin. It sheds a floodlight on the meaning of the present situation in which we find ourselves. It foretells the future to the end of time.

In the Inspired Word there is given a brief, rational account of the origin of man and the beginning of the history of the human family,-- indeed, the only authentic and satisfactory account that men possess. The opening statement reads:

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)

Then follows the record of creation week. The account of the sixth day of that week describes the origin of man:

“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.” (Genesis 1:27)

According to this Inspired Word, man was created by Him who made the myriads of mighty worlds that fill the universe. As related to this world, man was the crowning work of the Creator, grander, nobler, and more marvelous than all else that God had created. Endowed with perfect physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual qualities,

he occupied the highest place in the world over which he was given dominion by his Maker.

Adam and his companion, Eve, were, before the intrusion of sin, honored and blessed with free, direct association with their Creator and other members of the heavenly family. They were permitted to behold the glory of God, and to hold communion with Him “without a dimming veil between.” In this close association with their Creator, it is but reasonable to believe that they received from Him the information they needed regarding His great purpose in creation, also their relationship to their Creator and to the world in which they were placed.

The Beginning of Human History

“The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed.” (Genesis 2:8)

This perfect man and woman were placed in a perfect environment, with the most alluring and

glorious possibilities. Paradise was their home. They were to be the parents of the human family. They were to have dominion over the whole earth, and it was to be a glorious dominion. In it there was to be not one inharmonious note. There was to be no sin; hence the dire results of sin as we know them today--disease, pain, suffering, sorrow, and death--would be unknown. The earth was to be filled with a sinless race, and everything in that realm was to give joy to the inhabitants throughout all eternity.

“God’s first man, then, was perfect; he was put in a perfect environment and he had perfect fellowship with God. Harmony reigned within himself, within all his relationships both with the inferior creatures beneath him and with the sovereign Creator above him. There was everything within and without his life to foster complete submission to the sovereignty of God and perfect obedience to His will.” “Life on the Highest Plane,” [1]

The Tragic Entry of Sin

Such was the wonderful future that the Lord planned for the human family. But our first parents tragically failed to appreciate their glorious prospect. There, in their Paradise home, in the possession and enjoyment of all that God had bestowed upon them, they proved untrue to Him. They gave a listening ear to the base insinuations of one who had become the archenemy of their beneficent Creator. Yielding to the influence and suggestions of that enemy, they disobeyed the command of God. Their sin had brought a terrible tragedy upon the world.

After they had sinned, Adam and Eve “heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.”

“And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

“And he said, I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid.”

“And the Lord God said, ... What is this that thou hast done?”

“And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast ... eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake.”

“Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden.” (Genesis 3:8-10,13,17,23)

Thus “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” “By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.” “Death reigned from Adam to Moses.” (Romans 5:12,19,14)

This wrongdoing brought incalculable woe upon Adam and Eve. They lost the sweet, satisfying innocence that had been theirs. They lost the beautiful garment of the righteousness of God, which had clothed them. The virus of sin entered their hearts, and they were “filled with all unrighteousness.” (Romans 1:29) All the deadly

evil into which the human race has plunged during six thousand years existed in embryo at that fatal hour of disobedience, ready to give birth to the mightiest effort possible for the defeat of the divine purpose.

“The fall of man filled all heaven with sorrow. The world that God had made was blighted with the curse of sin, and inhabited by beings doomed to misery and death. There appeared no escape for those who had transgressed the law. Angels ceased their songs of praise. Throughout the heavenly courts there was mourning for the ruin that sin had wrought.” [2]

“That,” writes J. W. Westphal, “was the gloomiest hour this world has ever seen. Never has there been a moment since when the star of hope has not been shining to pierce even the midnight darkness. But at that moment there was not one ray of light to cheer the bewildered, sinful, grief-stricken pair. They had experienced the first pangs of death, and although much was still hidden, they well knew that in the course they had taken there

was no hope of relief. Separated from God, they had no rest. They had become one with the archenemy of God.”

The Banishment From Eden

To Adam and Eve the situation was dark, tragic, unsolvable. A great change had taken place in man himself, and this involved a change in his environment, in his relationship to God, and in his communication with his Maker. Sin tragically terminated the personal association and open communion with God that had been granted to the first pair. It became the veil which separated man from God. This separation was inevitable, for of the Creator it is said: “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.” (Habakkuk 1:13) Plainly it is declared to fallen man: “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you.” (Isaiah 59:2)

Man must now be separated from direct fellowship with his heavenly, sinless associates. He

can no longer dwell in the presence of God, or remain in Paradise. “Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden.... And He placed at the east of the Garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” (Genesis 3:23-24)

“In humility and unutterable sadness they bade farewell to their beautiful home, and went forth to dwell upon the earth, where rested the curse of sin.” [3]

A Ray of Light and Hope

But this grief-stricken pair were not banished from their Eden home without a ray of light and hope. Before they were sent forth, they, with Satan, were summoned before the Lord to hear the terrible sentence that must be declared. But in the sentence that God pronounced upon Satan, who had wrought their ruin, they heard these cheering words: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; it [He] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.” (Genesis

3:15)

“To man the first intimation of redemption was communicated in the sentence pronounced upon Satan in the garden.... This sentence, uttered in the hearing of our first parents, was to them a promise.” [4]

This brief foretelling of a great conflict between Christ and Satan, and the promise of the ultimate, absolute triumph of Christ and the utter defeat of Satan, must have assuaged somewhat the grief of Adam and Eve as they left forever their once happy home. Yes, there was light and hope in that prophecy, in that promise. In His abounding mercy and infinite wisdom God had provided the solution of the terrible problem that disobedience had created. God had decided upon a plan by which mankind could be redeemed from the very worst that sin could bring upon the race. This was dimly revealed in the sentence pronounced upon the malign instigator of evil.

To effect the reconciliation of man to God, to

redeem him from the curse of sin, and to restore him to the Paradise home from which he was banished, was a plan which had long been determined upon, and that plan was now announced to the tempter in the hearing of the guilty pair. Satan might indeed bruise Christ's heel, but Christ would bruise the serpent's head. He would ultimately put an end to sin in its entirety.

Here a momentous question presses for answer. How could God be true to His righteous law, and yet justify its transgressors?

Christ the Way Back to Paradise

The answer is Christ, "the light of the world." "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. Again: "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Galatians 1:3-4)

These statements are a revelation of God's marvelous plan for the salvation of the sinner from his sins, and his restoration to the Paradise home that had been lost through sin. God gave His Son. The Son gave Himself. God "hath made Him [the Son] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Thus was provided for sinners, restoration full and complete. The atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross not only made the sinner's reconciliation with God possible, but it also made possible, for every sinner who might choose to accept the offer, restoration to Adam's glorious state before he sinned.

The great gulf made by sin that separates man from God and heaven has been spanned by the cross of Calvary. Christ became our substitute. He took our place, that He might deliver us from condemnation and death. What cause for adoration!

But another baffling question requires an answer. It is this: How can this marvelous provision for man's redemption be communicated to him? By what process, in what way, can God now talk to and instruct those who can no longer see Him or have direct converse with Him? This problem could never have been solved by man. Its solution belonged to Him whose wisdom and whose provisions are infinite. He alone knew how to make Himself, together with His divine purposes, known to man separated from Him by sin. Here is the method that was devised:

“If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.” (Numbers 12:6)

This is a divine method of communication,--a method chosen and declared and used by the Lord Himself. It is a vital, inseparable part of the plan of redemption. It is a divinely designated means by which God's messages are to come to the human family. Through all time the Lord would, in this way, communicate with men. It was an abiding

provision. What amazing condescension! He who was so grievously wronged by man established a plan for a clear, reliable revelation of Himself to a world in active, determined rebellion against Him!

The Method of Communication

O wondrous provision, whereby Adam, although an exile in the land of sin, might still receive the Father's messages of love and forgiveness, and be made to understand the plan of salvation for a world plunged into sin by his willful act of disobedience! O wondrous provision, whereby messages from the throne of God have been transmitted to men in all ages, and whereby are brought even to us, "upon whom the ends of the world are come," divine assurances, yea, and evidences, of the complete and imminent triumph of the plan of redemption!

This beneficent arrangement calls for the deepest gratitude from its unworthy beneficiaries. Yet more, it calls for the humble, grateful recognition and acceptance of the instruction,

reproof, and demands that come from God through this merciful and gracious arrangement. More still, the plan is so vital and so imperative, as it relates to the sinner's salvation through the gospel, that it should receive the sincere, earnest study necessary to make it clearly understood.

Notes:

1. Ruth Paxson, Vol. I, p. 38. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1928
2. Patriarchs and Prophets, 63
3. Patriarchs and Prophets, 61
4. Patriarchs and Prophets, 65, 66

Chapter 2

Prophetic Terms Defined

“Hear now My words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.” (Numbers 12:6)

This statement explains the operation of what the Scriptures elsewhere call “the gift of prophecy.” (1 Corinthians 13:2) It also explains the following scripture: “The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Peter 1:21)

“The gift of prophecy” is one of the special gifts of God extended through the Holy Spirit to the human family. (1 Corinthians 12:4-11) This gift is also called “the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12:17), which is defined by the same inspired writer to be “the spirit of prophecy.” (Revelation 19:10) The term, the prophetic gift, which we shall

constantly employ, is thus clearly identical in meaning with the several Biblical expressions here cited.

God's purpose in providing and bestowing the prophetic gift is clearly to re-establish and maintain communication with man, who has been estranged and separated from Him through sin. This gift operates through prophets, by means of visions, dreams, inspiration, and revelation. The product, prophecy, is a divine message from God to the human family. The great Book called "the word of God" (Hebrews 4:12) and the "Holy Scriptures" (Romans 1:2) came to mankind through the gracious operation of the prophetic gift (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21)

The prophetic gift is not the message itself, nor is it the gospel; neither is it the Bible. Rather, it is the method, the process, the means, by which the divine message comes from God to man. It is an essential and inseparable part of the great plan of redemption. The gift, therefore, dates back to the day when the Lord resumed communication with

Adam after his banishment from Eden. This gift has never been withdrawn; it still remains God's abiding gift to the human family. Through this channel He has been revealing Himself and giving His messages to the world, ever since our first parents left their Eden home. There have been periods, some short and some long, when the gift has not been manifested in "open vision" (1 Samuel 3:1), but the gift has never been permanently withdrawn. At such times as God has deemed best, the manifestation of the gift has reappeared, and through the medium of visions and dreams prophets have brought divine messages to the Lord's needy people.

Operation of the Gift

In the operation of the prophetic gift, it is the Lord who must call the prophet. He must give the vision or speak through the dream. He must impart the inspiration, and make the revelation of His divine will and purpose. In the days of Moses He promised that He would do so, and centuries later He said, "I have also spoken by the prophets, and I

have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.” (Hosea 12:10)

It is freely acknowledged that while the meaning of the statements regarding this plan of communication is plain, the varied and manifold processes of the plan are well-nigh impossible for the mind to grasp. Just how God makes Himself known to the prophet in a vision and speaks to him in a dream is one of the many mysteries in the great plan of redemption. Yet He does this with the greatest clearness and certitude to the prophet; and the genuineness of the revelation thus made is confirmed.

That the operation of the method used is mysterious and beyond the grasp of the human mind does not constitute evidence that the revelations are not made just as the prophet claims. The world is full of mysteries. Everywhere we behold effects, the causes of which we do not understand and cannot explain. The incarnation and the resurrection of the Son of God, who had created the worlds, are baffling mysteries to our

finite minds; yet our very hope of redemption is built upon them.

The call to the prophetic office, the character and responsibilities of the prophet, the visions, dreams, inspiration, revelation, and authority of the messages revealed, are all questions of vital importance and of deepest interest. Says one:

“The importance of this subject [prophecy in the Old Testament] cannot well be overestimated, for a proper conception of it is necessary to a clear understanding of the very basis of Christianity. This fact has been so fully recognized that Christian scholars in all ages have found this a profitable and an almost inexhaustible field for research.”--“The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia and Scriptural Dictionary,” [1]

The Call to the Prophetic Office

The call to the prophetic office comes from God to the individual chosen. It comes in different ways, but always with convincing power and

authority. Of the prophet it may be truthfully said: “No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.” (Hebrews 5:4) Men may be chosen by men to fill official positions in the church of God, but they cannot be made prophets by men. Another writer has appropriately said: “The prophets did not inherit the office nor receive it by human appointment, but were chosen, prepared, and called of God; and the call was often heart-searching.”

It is a serious and perilous thing for one whom the Lord has not called to this sacred office to attempt to place himself there. Yet through the centuries some have done this daring thing, as we know from the following statement: “I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.” “Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith.” (Jeremiah 23:21,31) Of one who presumptuously assumed this very sacred responsibility we read: “Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah: The Lord hath not sent thee; but

thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the Lord: Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die.” (Jeremiah 28:15-16)

It is likewise perilous for one called to that high office to be disobedient to the instruction given him. This is clearly revealed by the following account:

“Behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the Lord unto Bethel... And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward. And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: for so was it charged me by the word of the Lord, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest. So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel.” (1 Kings 13:1-10)

But while pursuing his journey homeward, this

“man of God” was again tempted to disobey the divine orders, and he yielded to the urgent appeal of another to go to his home and eat bread. (Verses 15-19) Having accepted this hospitality in disobedience to the instruction of the Lord, he departed for his home. “And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcass was cast in the way.” And it was said by those who found the dead prophet: “It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord.” (Verses 24,26)

The prophet Jeremiah gave a most impressive account of the call that came to him:

“The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, ... I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations... Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak... Then the Lord put forth His hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth.” (Jeremiah 1:4-9)

Of his call to the prophetic office, Amos declared:

“I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was a herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel.” (Amos 7:14-15)

In only one instance recorded in the Scriptures was the divine call sent through a messenger instead of being given directly by the Lord Himself, and that was through direct, divine instruction. It was the call to Elisha. To the prophet Elijah the Lord said:

“Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.” “So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, ... and ministered unto him.” (1 Kings 19:16,19-21)

It is therefore obvious that in whatever way the call came to men, it was clear, convincing, and imperative. Paul, who was a prophet, an apostle, and an evangelist, was so deeply impressed by the call that came to him that he cried out: “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16)

Meaning of the Word “Prophet”

The word “prophet,” as used in the Old Testament, comes from two Hebrew words which have different shades of meaning. One of these words is roeh, which means “to see.” It is rendered “seer” in 1 Samuel 9:9. “Let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.”

“The word ‘seer,’ by which the ‘prophet’ was originally called, implies that visions were the original mode of revelation to the prophets. These visions, in the case of the prophets of the Old Testament, were almost always presented in

images peculiarly appropriate to the age or the person to whom they appear, and almost always conveying some lofty conception of the divine nature.” [2]

According to the meaning of this Hebrew word, a prophet is one who “sees,” “one whose sight pierces through the veil that hides the world of divine things, or one for whom this veil is lifted occasionally so that he obtains an inner knowledge of the realities beyond.” [3]

The lifting of the veil, then, that hides the world of divine things, and so brings to the prophet an inner knowledge of the realities beyond, is the essential purpose of the prophetic gift. What a marvelous and precious boon for mankind!

But the prophet’s sight, or seeing, of the divine realities of the world beyond is not sufficient for poor, blind, confused humanity. What is revealed to the prophet must be declared to others, if they are to be benefited. This further essential part of the prophet’s responsibility is clearly expressed by

another Hebrew word, nabi, which means “to speak forth.” Hence the prophet is also “a man of speech, one who gives forth words.”

The difference, then, between those two Hebrew words from which we get our word “prophet” is clear. The first relates to the way the prophet gets his message; the second relates to the impartation of the message he receives. The two shades of meaning of these Hebrew words are united in our English word “prophet,” which is itself spelled over from the Greek, meaning literally for-speaker, or forth-speaker. Hence the word “prophet” has a twofold meaning,--“seer” and “proclaimer.” These are the two distinctive and essential phases of the prophetic gift, and they are both very clearly set forth in the Scriptures, as will be observed from the following statement by the prophet Daniel:

“In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters. Daniel spake and said, I saw in my

vision by night.” (Daniel 7:1-2)

Daniel was a prophet. The Lord appeared to him in a vision, and spoke to him in a dream. What he saw and heard he wrote in a book. In this way he made known what was revealed to him; and even the generation now living is being greatly blessed by the messages that came to him through the prophetic gift.

Many Aspects of Service

The special and responsible service to which a prophet is called is very clearly and forcefully expressed in the instruction given the prophet Ezekiel: “Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee; for to the intent that I might show them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.” (Ezek. 40:4)

Thus “the central idea of the word [prophet] is, one to whom God reveals Himself and through

whom He speaks. The revelation may or may not relate to the future. The prophet is a forth-teller, not necessarily a fore-teller. The essence of the prophetic character is immediate intercourse with God.” [4]

Volumes have been written by eminent Christian scholars who have given exhaustive study to the prophetic gift and its varied manifestations. Their writings present very clearly and fully the many aspects of the service to which prophets have been called. Helpful articles by these writers abound in standard reference works, from which we draw freely in this volume. Note the following:

“The true prophet is one who is lifted up by the Spirit of God into communion with Him, so that he is enabled to interpret the divine will, and to act as a medium between God and men.” [5]

“The prophet is a speaker of or for God. His words are not the production of his own spirit, but come from a higher source. For he is at the same

time, also, a seer, who sees things that do not lie in the domain of natural sight, or who hears things which human ears do not ordinarily receive.” [6]

“In both the Old and the New Testament the prophet is the divine messenger who communicates to man the revelation which he has received from God. Peter and Paul and John are ‘among the prophets’ as well as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, while our Lord Himself stands at the head of the glorious company.” [7]

The following passage sets forth the great service the prophets rendered mankind wherever their lot was cast and in whatever generation they acted as mouthpieces for God.

“The prophets were the moral and religious teachers of their nation, authoritative preachers of righteousness. Statesmen who guided the religious life which lay at the foundation of the nation’s welfare, the counselor of kings, revivalists and reformers who awakened the religious life of the people, forewarners of the certainty of the divine

judgment on sin, proclaimers of the divine ideals, the golden age toward which the nation was to move.” [8]

“I the Lord will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.” This direct statement by the Lord in Numbers 12:6 gives visions and dreams an approved place in the revelation of the gospel, and also in its proclamation and ultimate triumph.

God's Plan Designates Visions

Back in the patriarchal age, this method of communication between the Lord and the human family was known to the patriarch Job, who said:

“God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and his pride from man.” (Job 33:14-17)

Much has been written by students of the Scriptures about prophetic visions and dreams,-- what they were, how they came to the prophets, how they were treated by the people, and how they were tested as to their verity and genuineness. One writer says:

“The visions recorded in the Bible stand alone, in the history of religions, for purity and righteousness. They were never vain; never meaningless vagaries or lying wonders. They always have a clearly discernible moral and didactic content. They were often predictive, upon which fulfillment has set the seal of truth. They belong to an age of revelation and came to men who in manifold manner proved themselves to be vehicles of revelation.” [9]

Just what distinction exists or should be drawn between visions and dreams is not very clear. Thus:

“It does not seem possible to draw any very precise distinction between the prophetic ‘dream’

and the prophetic ‘vision.’ In the case of Abraham (Genesis 15:1) and of Daniel (Daniel 7:1), they seem to melt into each other.” [10]

Regarding the action of the mind of the prophets when in vision, this writer says further:

“In the case of visions the scenery passed before their mind, something like a panoramic view of a landscape, gradually unfolding, in symbolical imagery, forms of glory or of gloom; accompanied with actions of a corresponding character, not infrequently exhibiting, as in actual occurrence, the future and distant events.” [11]

The Place of Prophetic Dreams

The Lord says of the prophet: “I will speak unto him in a dream.” Of this way of communication between God and man, one expositor says:

“Whatever may be the difficulties attending the subject, still we know that it has formed a channel

through which Jehovah was pleased in former times to reveal His character and dispensations to His people... How God revealed Himself by dreams, and raised up persons to interpret them, the Scriptures abundantly testify. Under the three successive dispensations we find this channel of communication with man adopted.” [12]

This carefully worded analysis is given by W. Morgan:

“In early Hebrew religion the vision had its closest affinity with the dream,--by which probably the conception of its character was determined,--and the two are usually coupled as the ordinary sources of prophetic oracles... In both dream and vision what carried religious significance was the fact that the presentation did not come through the ordinary sense channels, or as a product of the mind’s conscious activity. On this account it was accepted as a revelation from God... At such moments an issue becomes clear, a truth breaks on the mind, a resolution is formed. The result is sometimes presented as if it had come to the

prophet in a manner analogous to sense experience,--the prophet sees, hears, questions, replies,--but the broad sense in which vision is used makes it clear that the pictorial image was not the source of his knowledge or resolution, but rather that the truth, having taken possession of his mind and heart, created the vision as its imaginative clothing. Even a Verbal message, with no reference to a voice or appearance, is spoken of as a vision.”
[13]

The practical working of this plan of helping poor, faulty, misguided humanity was remarkably fulfilled on one occasion in the life of Abraham. Without being aware of it, Abimelech, king of Gerar, was about to do Abraham and Sarah his wife a great wrong. Although Abimelech was not a prophet, God came to him “in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man.” Abimelech answered, “In the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this. And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against Me... Now

therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet.” (Genesis 20:3-7)

David, under divine inspiration, evidently referred to this experience when reciting the Lord’s care for His people: “When they went from nation to nation, and from one kingdom to another people; He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, He reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm.” (1 Chronicles 16:20-22)

How the Gift Operates

The following is a clear statement of how the prophetic gift operates on the mind of the prophet in vision or dream:

“To us, visions and dreams may appear ill-fitted to serve as vehicles for divine communications. We may not be able to discern God’s reasons for choosing them. But that He has chosen them is certain... In a vision or divinely given dream, images or ideas, either filling the

mind or passing in procession before the consciousness, completely engage the attention of the person without admixture of other thoughts. The mind is thus entirely in the control of the agency making the revelation. And it should be pointed out in this connection that such revelations, together with their contents, are determined by a power outside the recipient's own will. The intellectual or spiritual quality of a revelation thus received is not derived from the recipient, but from its divine Giver...

“When the mind is unoccupied by the cares of waking consciousness, when it is quietly at rest, untroubled by the thoughts that fill it at other times, then the Spirit of God takes full and complete possession, and causes to pass before it the ideas or the images of thought that constitute the divine revelation to be made... This control is always complete and compelling. Under it, the prophet becomes the one moved, not the mover, in the formation of his message. This is what Peter means in his well-known declaration: ‘For no prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from

God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.’ (2 Peter 1:21, A. R. V.)

“As these messages given through the gift of prophecy are produced by the operation, and determined by the control, of the Spirit of God, the result is raised above anything that could by any possibility be achieved by mere human powers or human wisdom. Its origin, and the Spirit-controlled method of its transmission, constitute it entirely a supernatural product... The instruction given through the gift of prophecy originated in heaven, and is the voice of God to His people. It was given to the church to be heeded and followed, and it came to us under the full direction and control of the Spirit of God. It is a most wonderful privilege to have this gift, and it results in most wonderful blessings to follow its instruction. Divine leadership and divine guidance are the happy lot of the movement that possesses the gift of prophecy.”

[14]

Meaning and Operation of Inspiration

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” (2 Timothy 3:16) This statement lifts the prophetic gift to the highest possible service for mankind. The apostle Peter declares: “No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Peter 1:20-21)

Another passage explains this matter more fully: “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” (1 Peter 1:10-11)

From these passages we must conclude that the prophets were inspired by “the Spirit of Christ;” that by this inspiration the purposes of God were revealed to them; and, that they testified to the

world that which had been revealed to them. The Scriptures came from God by this divine inspiration. Thus the supreme, incomparable word of God came to the world through the prophetic gift, operating through the prophets.

Volumes have been written regarding the inspiration by which the word of God came to prophets. One writer says: “By inspiration in the theological sense is meant that influence of the Spirit of God upon the mind of the sacred writers by which He communicated the knowledge of religious truths or future events, and guarded them against error in delivering these truths to others, either orally or by writing.”

The consciousness and the certainty of the prophets concerning the manifestation of the Spirit of God within them is explained in the following statement:

“Inspiration” is “a term employed to designate the divine origin of Holy Scripture... The interior process of the Spirit’s action upon the minds of the

speakers or writers was of course inscrutable (John 3:8) even to themselves. That they were conscious, however, of such an influence is manifest from the authority with which they put forth their words; yet, when they sat down to write, the divine and the human elements in their mental action were perfectly harmonious and inseparable (Luke 1:3).”
[15]

Another says:

“As an action of God, working through His Spirit, the communication of revelation to the human mind and His guidance of it to the moment of its expression in words, either oral or written, has been called inspiration. The fact of such inspiration is unmistakably presented in the Bible.”
[16]

Taken together, these paragraphs give a clear, comprehensive definition of inspiration.

Revelation is “a disclosure of something that was before unknown; and divine revelation is the

direct communication of truths before unknown from God to men. The disclosure may be made by dream, vision, oral communication, or otherwise.”
[17]

Revelation the Ultimate Purpose

The real, ultimate purpose of the prophetic gift--its prophet, vision, dream, and inspiration--is a revelation of God and His purposes to men. “I the Lord will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.” (Numbers 12:6) When this takes place, a revelation is made, as expressed in the following scriptures and comments:

“The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” (Deuteronomy 29:29)

“All things in the mind and purpose of God are inscrutable secrets to men until God reveals them. That He is pleased to make such revelation He

gives the assurance, ‘Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.’” (Amos 3:7)

“Besides this external or objective revelation, there was an inward revelation given in the mind of man. In this case the Deity possessed the man, inspired him, and spoke through him.” [18]

For example, we read as prefacing the full instruction regarding the Flood and the building of the ark: “God said unto Noah,” (Genesis 6:13)

Again, “The Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect... And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him.” (Genesis 17:1-3) This would appear, at first thought, to be a personal, visible appearance, and a direct oral conversation. Yet it may have been in a vision, for we have a similar statement in the fifteenth chapter; but there it is plainly stated that the interview was in a vision: “After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not,

Abram.” (Genesis 15:1) However, in the eighteenth chapter it is clearly recorded that angels came to Abraham in the form of men, partook of food, and revealed to him God’s purpose to destroy the city of Sodom.

Thus it appears that at times the Lord, and also angels, came to prophets in person, and held oral conversation with them when they were in their normal state. But the general method, the one used more than any other during the many centuries of human history, has been through visions and dreams.

From the evidence thus far considered it seems certain that the prophetic gift was imparted and set in operation just after the Lord had made known His merciful decision to give man, whom Satan had ruined, a chance to be redeemed. (Genesis 3:15) We can easily believe that Adam and Eve were not long left in the unutterable sorrow into which they had been plunged, without a message from God.

Thus we are led to the inescapable conclusion that the prophetic gift was chosen and ordained of God for the benefit of all the world, and for all time. It belongs to the church today, as much as in the ages gone by, and is sorely needed.

The Bible, the greatest and best of all books, came to the human race from God through the prophetic gift imparted to men of His choosing. The conception of the prophets regarding the divine product given to the world through them is clearly and truthfully presented in the following statement:

“The Bible writers do not conceive of the Scriptures as a human product breathed into by the divine Spirit, and thus heightened in its qualities or endowed with new qualities; but as a divine product produced through the instrumentality of men. They do not conceive of these men, by whose instrumentality Scripture is produced, as working upon their own initiative, though energized by God to greater effort and higher achievement, but as moved by the divine initiative and borne by the

irresistible power of the Spirit of God along ways of His choosing to ends of His appointment.” [19]

Notes:

1. Vol. III, art., “Prophecy,” p. 1391. Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1909
2. “History of the Jewish Church,” Dean (Arthur Penrhyn) Stanley, Vol. I, p. 380. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1891
3. “A New Standard Bible Dictionary,” art., “Prophet,” p. 739. New York and London: Funk & Wagnall’s Company, 1925
4. “Word Studies in the New Testament,” Vol. I, pp. 325, 326. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1906
5. “Dictionary of the Bible,” James Hastings, art., “Holy Spirit,” Vol. II, p. 403 (1899 edition)
6. “International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,” Vol. IV, art., “Prophecy,” p. 2459. Chicago: Howard-Severance Company, 1915
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9. "A Dictionary of the Bible," John D. Davis, art., "Visions," p. 766. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1903
10. "Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature," McClintock and Strong, Vol. VIII, art., "Prophet," p. 646. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1896
11. Patriarchs and Prophets, 648
12. "The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia and Scriptural Dictionary," Vol. I, art., "Dream," pp. 540, 541
13. "Dictionary of the Bible," James Hastings, art., "Vision," p. 871. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909
14. "The Gift of Prophecy," Carlyle B. Haynes, pp. 77, 78, 81, 82
15. "Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature," McClintock and Strong, Vol. IV, art., "Inspiration," pp. 611, 613
16. "A New Standard Bible Dictionary," art.,

- “Revelation,” p. 771
17. “Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature,” McClintock and Strong, Vol. VIII, art., “Revelation,” p. 1061
 18. “Dictionary of the Bible,” James Hastings, art., “Prophecy and Prophets,” p. 107
 19. “The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,” Vol. III, art., “Inspiration,” pp. 1479, 1480

Chapter 3

The Gift in the Patriarchal Dispensation

The centuries covered by the progress and development of the plan of redemption are marked off in Scripture into three great divisions.

The first is designated as the patriarchal dispensation, covering the time from Adam to Moses, a period of about two thousand five hundred years.

The second is known as the Mosaic dispensation, extending from Moses to the first advent, or about one thousand five hundred years.

The third is called the Christian dispensation, which began at the first advent, and is to continue to the close of time, or to the second coming of our Lord.

It is now our purpose to trace the presence and operation of the prophetic gift through these three dispensations. Naturally, the logical place to start is at the beginning of the race, which is the beginning of the patriarchal dispensation. “Patriarch,” says one writer, “is the name generally applied to the men of whose lives a record is preserved, before the time of Moses. It is applied more particularly to the great fathers of the Jewish race, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and to the sons of the last. The title is once given to David. (Acts 2:29)”

“By the ‘patriarchal system’ is meant the order of society which grew naturally out of the family before nations with ordered government arose. The ‘patriarchal dispensation’ refers to the fellowship with God vouchsafed to men before the choice of Israel.” [1]

Except in the Bible, no writings or records of any kind produced by the men who were in communication with God during the patriarchal age have been preserved. The information we have regarding the work of the gospel and the lives of

God's people in that long period of time has come to us only through the Bible, or through the subsequent writings of the spirit of prophecy. From these sources we learn that instruction and guidance were given to each generation from Adam down to the time of Moses.

While yet in Eden, before they were sent forth, Adam and Eve were given the cheering assurance that the Lord had made provision for their return to their lost Paradise home. How fully this provision may have been explained in the garden has not been disclosed. But in the brief statement they heard the Lord make to Satan, there was enough to assure them that they were not to be utterly abandoned by the Lord; that Satan was not to have undisputed control over them and their lost dominion; and that ultimately Christ, the Seed of the woman, would be triumphant in the great conflict.

Instruction to Our First Parents

With this comforting information and hope, our

first parents went forth from the presence of God and their heavenly associates. They were now in the enemy's land--in the dominion Satan had wrested from them, and in which he had established his kingdom of rebellion. Here they were to witness the cruel outworking of sin. Yet through the long dark night of the reign of sin there would be shining clear rays from the world of light from which they had been expelled. There was to be manifested in their behalf the mighty power of God, redeeming them from the power of sin. Thus they were "prisoners of hope." (Zechariah 9:12)

The purpose of God for their redemption they had heard declared in Eden, and, now outside its gates, they must have it clearly, fully, and promptly set forth. This was imperative if they were to start right and keep right. Surely the Lord would cause them to understand His great plan of salvation. He would not leave them in the enemy's land in ignorance, uncertainty, and peril, without communicating with them.

An abundance of evidence indicates that the

Lord began at once to unfold to this sorrowing pair His plan to redeem them, to bring them back to the beautiful Edenic home they had lost. How was this instruction given? The relation to their Creator was entirely changed. Consider the situation. They could no longer see Him face to face, nor have open communion with Him. Are we not driven to the conclusion that then, in their time of great need, the Lord began to make Himself and His purposes known through the divinely appointed gift of prophecy? Was it not at that time that the prophetic gift was graciously imparted to the human family? This appears evident from the following inspired statement by Zacharias at the birth of his son, John the Baptist: “Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David; as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; ... that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies

might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life.”
(Luke 1:67-75)

First Manifestation of the Gift

This inspired statement definitely locates the beginning of the manifestation of the prophetic gift, for it states that the purpose of the Lord to redeem man was made known as “He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began.” The following comment is illuminating and most helpful:

“Thus were revealed to Adam important events in the history of mankind, from the time when the divine sentence was pronounced in Eden, to the Flood, and onward to the first advent of the Son of God. He was shown that while the sacrifice of Christ would be of sufficient value to save the whole world, many would choose a life of sin rather than of repentance and obedience.” [2]

It is evident that the revelation of the gospel,

which Adam began to perceive in the garden, must continue with increasing fullness and clarity after Adam and Eve were separated from the immediate presence of their Creator.

“It was the Son of God that gave to our first parents the promise of redemption. It was He who revealed Himself to the patriarchs. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses understood the gospel. They looked for salvation through man’s Substitute and Surety. These holy men of old held communion with the Saviour who was to come to our world in human flesh.” [3]

Regarding the beginning of the operation of the prophetic gift and its continuity, the following statement, though brief, is very clear:

“It is the voice of Christ that speaks through patriarchs and prophets, from the days of Adam even to the closing scenes of time [*Italics mine*].” [4]

This harmonizes exactly with the inspired

declaration of the apostle Peter that it was the Spirit of Christ in the prophets of old that testified concerning the plan of salvation, “of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” (1 Peter 1:10-11)

Let us now trace briefly this early line of communication between God and man.

Abel's Understanding

The knowledge and observance of the sacrificial system by Abel is evidence that there must have been revealed to him the death of the Son of God for the sins of the human race. “Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering.” “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.”

(Genesis 4:4; Hebrews 11:4)

What this “excellent sacrifice” offered by Abel meant to him is beautifully presented in the following statement:

“Abel grasped the great principles of redemption. He saw himself a sinner, and he saw sin, and its penalty death, standing between his soul and communion with God. He brought the slain victim, the sacrificed life, thus acknowledging the claims of the law that had been transgressed. Through the shed blood he looked to the future sacrifice, Christ dying on the cross of Calvary; and trusting in the atonement that was there to be made, he had the witness that he was righteous, and his offering accepted.” [5]

Enoch's Prophetic Vision

Enoch was one of the great characters of the patriarchal dispensation. “All the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years.” (Genesis 5:23) “By faith Enoch was translated that he should

not see death; ... for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” (Hebrews 11:5)

That to Enoch was imparted the prophetic gift is revealed by the apostle Jude: “Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all.” (Jude 14-15)

The fullness of the revelation given to Enoch is indicated thus by another:

“He [Enoch] was one of the holy line, the preservers of the true faith, the progenitors of the promised Seed.” “In prophetic vision he was instructed concerning the death of Christ, and was shown His coming in glory, attended by all the holy angels, to ransom His people from the grave.” “God revealed to Enoch His purpose to destroy the world by a flood, and He also opened more fully to him the plan of redemption. By the spirit of prophecy He carried him down through the generations that should live after the Flood, and

showed him the great events connected with the second coming of Christ and the end of the world.”
[6]

Noah Warned of God

Noah was another great patriarch with whom God communicated through the prophetic gift.

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” (Hebrews 11:7)

“Amid the prevailing corruption, Methuselah, Noah, and many others, labored to keep alive the knowledge of the true God, and to stay the tide of moral evil. A hundred and twenty years before the Flood, the Lord by a holy angel declared to Noah His purpose, and directed him to build an ark.”
“Noah stood like a rock amid the tempest. Surrounded by popular contempt and ridicule, he distinguished himself by his holy integrity and

unwavering faithfulness. A power attended his words; for it was the voice of God to man through His servant. Connection with God made him strong in the strength of infinite power, while for one hundred and twenty years his solemn voice fell upon the ears of that generation in regard to events, which, so far as human wisdom could judge, were impossible.” [7]

Noah is classed in Holy Writ with two other great prophets of a later time: “Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it [the land], as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.” (Ezek. 14: 20)

Message to Abraham in a Vision

Abraham’s association and communion with the Lord were so intimate and unbroken that “he was called the Friend of God.” (James 2:23) In rebuking a king who was about to do Abraham a great wrong, the Lord said: “He is a prophet.” (Genesis 20:7) Upon Abraham was bestowed the

prophetic gift. We should especially observe how this gift operated:

“The word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” (Genesis 15:1) When the destruction of Sodom had been determined, the Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” (Genesis 18:17) The divine attitude has ever been: “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.” (Amos 3:7) So it was that “Abraham had honored God, and the Lord honored him, taking him into His counsels, and revealing to him His purposes.” [8]

Throughout the long, eventful career of this great man, God “communicated His will to Abraham, and gave him a distinct knowledge of the requirements of His law, and of the salvation that would be accomplished through Christ.... And to this was added the assurance, precious above every other to the inheritor of faith, that of his line the Redeemer of the world should come: ‘In thee shall

all families of the earth be blessed.’” [9]

Isaac Receives Communication

Although Isaac was one of the patriarchs, but little is revealed regarding his life. There is enough, however, to show that God communicated with him as He had with his forefathers. “The Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for My servant Abraham’s sake.” (Genesis 26:24)

Thus Isaac is clearly another in the line of instrumentalities through whom God revealed His will and purpose.

Jacob's Heavenly Dream

To Jacob were given many revelations through the divinely appointed prophetic channel. “Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran.... And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set

up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed.” (Genesis 28:10-13) As to the significance of this experience, we read:

“Up to the time of man’s rebellion against the government of God, there had been free communion between God and man. But the sin of Adam and Eve separated earth from heaven, so that man could not have communion with his Maker. Yet the world was not left in solitary hopelessness. The ladder represents Jesus, the appointed medium of communication.... All this was revealed to Jacob in his dream. Although his mind at once grasped a part of the revelation, its great and mysterious truths were the study of his lifetime, and unfolded to his understanding more and more.”

[10]

Joseph a Spokesman for God

When but a lad, Joseph was given prophetic dreams regarding future events in the history of his father's family. (See Gen. 37:5-10) Later, while being unjustly held in an Egyptian prison, the providence of God led the king of Egypt to call upon Joseph to interpret dreams that greatly troubled him. Before the king related his dreams, Joseph directed his mind to the true God, as the One from whom the wisdom must come to make known the meaning of the dream. He said: "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." (Genesis 41:16)

The interpretation was so clear and convincing that the king acknowledged that Joseph was "a man in whom the Spirit of God is." "Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art." (Genesis 41:38-39) Concerning Joseph's place in the line of human agents through whom God spoke in ancient times, this has been written:

“Called from a dungeon, a servant of captives, a prey of ingratitude and malice, Joseph proved true to his allegiance to the God of heaven. And all Egypt marveled at the wisdom of the man whom God instructed.” [11]

End of the Patriarchal Dispensation

With the death of Joseph the patriarchal dispensation is brought to a close. There are many subsequent statements in the Scriptures regarding it, but no other extended, connected account is given.

The record of that period covering the first two thousand five hundred years of the world’s history is very brief and fragmentary. However, the information given is of inestimable value to the human family. It reveals and explains some of the greatest events in the history of our world. Without this inspired record, the origin of the world, of man, and of sin would remain dark, baffling mysteries. But, thank God, they have been made luminous through divine revelation.

It should be clearly observed that the most vital fact in this account of patriarchal affairs is the bestowal and gracious operation of the prophetic gift. That was of more value to the welfare of the men and women of that dispensation than anything else that was done for them. That gift restored and maintained communication between God and man. Through that channel the Lord talked with men, revealing to them the things they needed to know in order that their lives might be made gloriously triumphant. Those who responded wholeheartedly to the instruction given were victorious in the great conflict with the archenemy who assailed them. Once more we quote a helpful word:

“Notwithstanding the prevailing iniquity, there was a line of holy men who, elevated and ennobled by communion with God, lived as in the companionship of heaven. They were men of massive intellect, of wonderful attainments. They had a great and holy mission,--to develop a character of righteousness, to teach a lesson of godliness, not only to the men of their time, but for

future generations. Only a few of the most prominent are mentioned in the Scriptures; but all through the ages, God had faithful witnesses, truehearted worshipers.” [12]

The Irresistible Conclusion

Only a few, as this statement declares, of the most prominent are mentioned in the Scriptures. The prophetic gift was as clearly imparted, and as prominent and active during the patriarchal dispensation, as it was in the Mosaic dispensation that immediately followed. The patriarchal age was the beginning of man’s career after his separation from God. The battle between Christ and Satan for the domination of the human family was initiated, and must have been as intensive and determined as it has ever been. Satan’s influence and power were tremendous, for the degradation of the race was so swift and complete that in a comparatively short time after the fall, the whole race, with the exception of eight persons, was justly swept from the face of the earth. In this first contest for the control of man, Christ left nothing undone to

instruct, warn, influence, and save the race He had brought into existence by creative power.

The testimony assembled in this study leads, therefore, to the irresistible conclusion that the prophetic gift was imparted to Adam without delay after he and his companion were sent forth from the Garden of Eden. Through this gracious provision, Adam was kept in communication with God, and the gift was manifested just as effectively throughout the patriarchal period as it has been at any subsequent time. The evidence shows that the prophetic gift was used as fully and as widely as was necessary to meet the situation as it then existed.

What a wonderful blessing this abiding gift was to the people of that dispensation! But more, what an inestimable blessing its service in that age has been to all succeeding generations!

From the established fact that the prophetic gift is the method chosen by the Lord to make known the gospel message to mankind, it is evident that its

operation must parallel the gospel movement from its beginning to its close.

“As religion is the binding together of God and man, there must not only be the approach of man to God in adoration and worship, but also the approach of God to man, making known His will.”
[13]

Or, as stated by another writer whose words are appropriate: “The prophet was the mouthpiece of God, His ambassador to man, informing him what the divine will was in cases not met by the morality of custom.

Notes:

1. “The Temple Dictionary of the Bible,” Ewing and Thomson, art., “Patriarch,” p. 565. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1910
2. Patriarchs and Prophets, 67
3. Patriarchs and Prophets, 366
4. The Desire of Ages, 799

5. Patriarchs and Prophets, 72
6. Patriarchs and Prophets, 84, 85
7. Patriarchs and Prophets, 92, 96
8. Patriarchs and Prophets, 139
9. Patriarchs and Prophets, 125
10. Patriarchs and Prophets, 184
11. Testimonies for the Church 6:219
12. Patriarchs and Prophets, 84
13. “The Temple Dictionary of the Bible,” Ewing and Thomson, art., “Prophet, Prophecy,” p. 624

Chapter 4

Manifest From Egypt to Canaan

In passing from the patriarchal to the Mosaic dispensation, there was no essential change or modification of the plan of redemption, only a greater revelation of its scope and fullness. The good news of human salvation remained the same. Neither was there any change in the divinely imparted gift of prophecy, save that it likewise was employed more fully. The Lord continued to communicate with His people in the same manner and by the same method followed through the long patriarchal age. In fact, it was very soon after the opening of the Mosaic dispensation that He made this important declaration: “Hear now My words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.” (Numbers 12:6)

This statement makes clear the fact that the

prophetic gift was to continue as God’s method of communicating with His people. There was a prophet among the people of Israel when this statement was made. That prophet was Moses, the first prophet of the Mosaic dispensation, and one of the greatest prophets of all time. “There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face,” is the testimony of the Sacred Record. (Deuteronomy 34:10)

From the burning bush at the base of Mount Horeb, the Lord called unto Moses and said: “Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt.” His response to the call, we gather from the incident: “Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let My people go.” (Exodus 3:10; 5:1)

These events mark the end of the patriarchal dispensation and the beginning of the Mosaic dispensation, which continued to the first advent of our Lord—about fifteen hundred years.

While the great vital truths of these two dispensations are the same, their records, or histories, are very different. The account of the patriarchal dispensation, a period of two thousand five hundred years, is covered in one book of about forty-six pages in our English translation—a marvel of brevity, and yet composing a vast amount of information. On the other hand, the history of the Mosaic dispensation—but little more than half the length of the preceding period—fills thirty-eight books, seven hundred sixty-eight pages in my English Bible.

The history of the patriarchal age, was, of course, written after the people and events specified were all in the past, whereas the history of the Mosaic period was written while it was in the making—while the people were living and the events were taking place. Instructive details in large volume appear, therefore, in this record, whereas details of a similar character were left out of the account of the former dispensation.

Holy Spirit's Relation to the Gift

In the history of the people and events of the Mosaic dispensation, the prophetic gift occupies a very prominent place. From the record of its manifold operations we learn much regarding its purpose. Its great value to the human family is made clear. Here for the first time in the Sacred Narrative the important truth is disclosed that the Spirit of God is inseparably and actively connected with the bestowal and the operations of the prophetic gift. Thus we read:

“The Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him [Moses], and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the Spirit rested upon them, ... and they prophesied in the camp.” (Numbers 11:25-26)

When this was reported to Moses, he said:

“Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them.” (Verse 29) This statement recognizes, therefore, the fundamental truth regarding the relation of the divine Spirit to the prophetic gift. Let us note a few outstanding instances of its operation:

When the prophet Samuel told Saul that the Lord had chosen him to be king over Israel, Samuel said to him: “When thou art departed from me, ...the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy.... And the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied.” (1 Samuel 10:2-10)

Again, when Elijah was about to be translated, he said unto Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee.” 2 Kings 2:9. This was as much as to say, Elisha, I am now going to our Father in heaven. I shall soon be in His presence. What request shall I make to Him for you? Elisha answered, “I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.” To this earnest

request Elijah said, “Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee.” (2 Kings 2:9-10) Elisha obtained his desire. His request was granted, and through the Spirit’s leadership and power, he became a great blessing to God’s people.

Appropriately Called “Spirit of Prophecy”

The testimony of the prophet Ezekiel regarding the working of the Holy Spirit in his own case is: “The Spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me. Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that the Lord had showed me.” (Ezek. 11:24-25)

After the captivity, Nehemiah was commissioned to lead the people to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. In the midst of his difficulties and perplexities he said in his prayer to the Lord: “Many years didst Thou bear with them [Israel], and testifiedst against them by Thy Spirit through

Thy prophets.” (Nehemiah 9:30, A. R. V.)

Further testimony regarding the relation of the Spirit of God to the prophetic gift is given in the New Testament by the apostle Peter. He says: “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” (1 Peter 1:10-11)

Here it is declared that it was the Spirit of Christ in the prophets that revealed to them the prophecies they had written regarding the wonderful salvation Christ was to bring to the world, together with the plan of salvation that would follow. In harmony with this, the apostle further states that “the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” 2 Peter 1:21. These passages, and many others, show that the Spirit of God was the active agent in giving

the instruction through this gift.

Because of this very active participation by the Spirit of God in the working of the prophetic gift, that gift is very naturally and appropriately called “the spirit of prophecy.” Revelation 19:10. Fundamentally true it is, therefore, that “it is through the agency of the Holy Spirit that God communicates with man.” [1]

Extraordinary Manifestation Through Moses

At the opening of the Mosaic dispensation, as we have seen, the prophetic gift was manifested in an extraordinary measure through the great prophet Moses. This manifestation continued through the forty years of the journeyings of Israel from Egypt to the river Jordan. During that time both Aaron and Miriam, upon whom the prophetic gift had likewise been bestowed, had died. Joshua, who was to take Moses’ place as leader, had received the gift, as the following statement shows:

“The Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua

the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honor upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient.” (Numbers 27:18-20)

When they had reached the Jordan, and Moses had surrendered his commission to Joshua, the word says: “Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses.” (Deuteronomy 34:9)

This brings us to the end of Israel’s long journey from Egypt to Canaan. It closes what is undoubtedly the greatest and most unique movement in the history of the human family. It was begun, carried forward, and finished under the visible leadership of a prophet. “By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.” (Hosea 12:13)

This prophet was, of course, under the leadership of God, who, through the channel of the prophetic gift, gave the instruction, counsel, and direction necessary for the accomplishment of the task. Through this gift Moses was commissioned to deliver the nation of Israel from Egyptian bondage, and to lead them back to Canaan, the land of their forefathers. This, says M. G. Kyle, was “the most appalling commission ever given to a mere man (Exodus 3:10)—a commission to a solitary man, and he a refugee—to go back home and deliver his kinsmen from a dreadful slavery at the hand of the most powerful nation on earth.” [2]

Laws Given Through the Spirit

The constant revelations and continual instruction received through the prophetic gift enabled Moses to meet triumphantly the stupendous difficulties that arose at every stage of the Exodus and of the journeyings that followed.

Through the prophetic gift there was given to

Israel the ceremonial law, which clearly and impressively typified the atoning death of Christ for a lost world, and His subsequent ministry as the sinner's great high priest in the heavenly sanctuary, together with the final disposition of the sin problem. It was through the instruction given to Moses by means of the prophetic gift that the ancient church of God was organized and built up with marvelous perfection and efficiency.

Through his intercourse with God, this great prophet received and delivered to the world the immortal Decalogue, the principles of which to this day constitute the foundation of the laws of all civilized nations as well as the charter of the church. "The Decalogue is a moral miracle in ancient legislation, and retains its power in this day in all Christian lands."

Through this means of communication with God, Moses was directed to give to Israel civil laws and sanitary and health regulations equal to any that have ever been enacted in any succeeding legislation.

“In government as well as in religion, Moses is still mighty after three thousand years. The laws of the Christian world are traced to his lips, and millions who recognize no religious fealty to him or his God are still influenced in their legal loyalties, tremendously and inescapably, by his ancient pronouncements in the shadow of Sinai.” [3]

Our Debt to the Gift of Prophecy

To the gift of prophecy as manifest through Moses, we owe, as expressed by another, “that important portion of Holy Scripture, the Pentateuch, which makes us acquainted with the creation of the world, the entrance of sin and death, the first promises of redemption, the Flood, the peopling of the postdiluvian earth, and the origin of nations, the call of Abraham, and the giving of the law. We have, indeed, in it the early history of religion, and a key to all the subsequent dispensations of God to man.” [4]

“There is, therefore, no sphere of human life today in Europe or America where the influence of Moses is not overwhelmingly felt.... If Moses has been so immeasurably important to the human race, why is it that some scholars have questioned his historical existence? It is a strange and interesting fact that the greater a man is, the more probable will be the denial, some centuries after his death, that he ever existed at all.” [5]

Bible expositors and commentators are prone to point to the genius of Moses, and to his scholastic and military training in the royal family of Egypt, in accounting for his great achievements.

They enlarge upon his great gifts as statesman, organizer, administrator, and writer, implying, if not directly stating, that the great accomplishments accredited to him were the natural products of extraordinary human gifts lavished upon him by nature and training.

But this was not the view held by Moses

himself, nor is it the representation set forth in the Scriptures of truth. That word declares that Moses “endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.” (Hebrews 11:27) He lived, moved, thought, and acted through fellowship with Christ. He kept in close touch with his divine Leader, and through the revelation of the Holy Spirit received divine instruction and guidance in all that he attempted to do. The great accomplishments of his life were, therefore, the product of this instruction. He was God’s prophet, God’s ambassador to men. To him the prophetic gift was imparted in the highest and fullest degree. Kyle estimates the man Moses correctly when he says:

“The career and the works and the character of Moses culminate in the prophetic office. It was as prophet that Moses was essentially leader. It was as prophet that he held the place of highest eminence in the world until a greater than Moses came.... Moses’ revelation of God ever transcends the speculations of theologians about God as a sunrise transcends a treatise on the solar spectrum. While the speculations are cold and lifeless, the revelation

is vital and glorious.... Such was the Hebrew leader, lawgiver, prophet, poet; among mere men, ‘the foremost man of all this world.’” [6]

Notes:

1. Patriarchs and Prophets, 405
2. “The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,” Vol. III, art. “Moses,” p. 2085
3. “The Story of Religion,” Charles Francis Potter, p. 33. Garden City, New York: Garden Publishing Company, Inc., 1929
4. “The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia and Scriptural Dictionary,” Vol. II, art., “Moses,” p. 1189
5. “The Story of Religion,” Charles Francis Potter, p. 35
6. “The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,” Vol. III, art., “Moses,” pp. 2090, 2091

Chapter 5

From Joshua to Samuel

The history of God's people during the Mosaic dispensation presents four quite distinct divisions:

First, from Egypt to Canaan.

Second, from Joshua to Samuel.

Third, from Samuel to Jeremiah.

Fourth, from Jeremiah to John the Baptist.

During the long period of the Mosaic dispensation, the history of Israel, as recorded in the Old Testament, was indeed a checkered one. It is a record of apostasies from God, of subjugations by surrounding nations, of deliverances from captivity by the Lord. It was characterized by great prosperity and progress at certain times, and by great losses and privations at other times. Yet throughout their entire history Jehovah sent to His

people, through the prophetic gift, instruction that, if it had been heeded, would have given them safe guidance, prosperity, and triumph. But this instruction was not often appreciated or followed. Israel's oft-repeated attitude toward this heaven-sent instruction is revealed in a reproachful statement by the Lord as recorded by the prophet Jeremiah:

“Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: yet they hearkened not unto Me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.” (Jeremiah 7:25-26)

A brief survey of the first part of the Mosaic dispensation has been given in the preceding chapter. That review closed with the death of Moses.

Joshua Succeeds Moses as Leader

The beginning of the second part of the Mosaic dispensation—from Joshua to Samuel—was marked by the following important development:

“Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ minister, saying, Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.” “As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” (Joshua 1:1-2,5)

Thus through the prophetic gift the Lord continued to instruct and lead His people. Joshua was eighty-six years old when he received his commission to lead Israel across the Jordan into the Promised Land, and into the glorious consummation of the great exodus movement. From this time until his death, twenty-five years later, Joshua was in continual communication with

God. The Lord gave him detailed instruction regarding all the important parts of his work,— crossing the Jordan; taking Jericho, the great fortress at the entrance to Canaan; dealing with Achan in “the accursed thing;” the many conquests to be made; the allotting of the land to the tribes of Israel; the setting apart of the cities of refuge; and the loyal obedience Israel should forever render to all the just requirements of their Lord.

When Joshua had completed the tasks assigned him, and had finished his course, he “called for all Israel, ... and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age.” “I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.” “So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance. And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old.” (Joshua 23:2,14; 24:28-29)

What a marvelous experience God's people passed through from the day the Lord gave to His prophet Abraham the vision of their cruel bondage in Egypt and of their deliverance and return to the land of Canaan! What a revelation of God's faithfulness to remember and to fulfill His promises!

It should strengthen and cheer every heart to read and ponder the beautiful and impressive review of these events as given by the psalmist David:

“Remember His marvelous works that He hath done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth, O ye seed of Abraham His servant, ye children of Jacob, His chosen ones. He is Jehovah our God: His judgments are in all the earth. He hath remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations, the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath unto Isaac, and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a statute, to Israel for an everlasting

covenant, saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance; when they were but a few men in number, yea, very few, and sojourners in it. And they went about from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people. He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, He reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not Mine anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm.” (Psalm 105:5-15, A. R. V.)

“Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. And He increased His people greatly, and made them stronger than their adversaries. He turned their heart to hate His people, to deal subtly with His servants. He sent Moses His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen. They set among them His signs, and wonders in the land of Ham.” “He brought them forth with silver and gold; and there was not one feeble person among His tribes. Egypt was glad when they departed; for the fear of them had fallen upon them. He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light in the night.” (Verses 23-27,37-39)

In the Time of the Judges

From the death of Joshua until Saul was made king, the government of Israel was administered by different rulers, or judges, fifteen of whom are mentioned in Scripture. Of this time Paul says that the Lord “gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.” (Acts 13:20)

Of the service rendered by the judges one writer says:

“They were not merely deliverers of the state from a foreign yoke, but destroyers of idolatry, foes of pagan vices, promoters of the knowledge of God, of religion, and of morality; restorers of theocracy in the minds of the Hebrews, and powerful instruments of divine Providence in the promotion of the great design of preserving the Hebrew constitution, and, by that means, of rescuing the true religion from destruction.” [1]

From the death of Joshua to Samuel the prophet, Israel was many times overcome and taken into captivity by enemy nations, and subjected to hard servitude. Under the cruel oppression and suffering which they endured, they repented of their sins, turned to the Lord, and cried for deliverance. Although they had sinned against God very grievously, He had compassion on them, and raised up mighty deliverers for them. These deliverers became their judges.

Deliverance Under Deborah the Prophetess

To what extent the prophetic gift was used by the Lord in leading men to undertake the perilous task of breaking the power of the nations that had enslaved His people, is not clearly revealed, though some very specific instances are cited. Thus, on one occasion when they were being oppressed by the Midianites, “the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel” with a message of reproof for their sins, and with instruction regarding the course they should take. (See Judges 6:8-10) At another time “there came a man of God unto Eli,” and

delivered to him a terrible message regarding the judgments of God that were to be visited upon him and his house. (See 1 Samuel 2:27-36)

It is certain that the manifestation of this gift was prominent in some of these hard experiences through which Israel passed.

One of the marvelous deliverances wrought for the people was under the leadership of Deborah, a prophetess. The experience is recorded in the fourth and fifth chapters of Judges. This account reveals the great service the prophetic gift rendered the cause of God on that occasion.

“The children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, when Ehud was dead. And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan.... And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord: for he [Jabin] had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

“And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of

Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.”
(Judges 4:1-5)

To this woman, who had the gift of prophecy, there came a direct, clear-cut message from God.

“And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh Naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward Mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men? ... And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand.”
(Verses 6-7)

This must have been a startling, alarming message to Barak. Twenty years before this, Jabin’s army had defeated Israel. For twenty years he had kept them in bondage, and had “mightily oppressed” them. Up to the hour that Deborah

received the message through the prophetic gift, no effort, so far as the record shows, had been made to deliver Israel from their mighty oppressor. The task to which Barak was called seemed so impossible of success that he said to Deborah, “If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.” (Verse 8)

Without a moment’s hesitation Deborah replied, “I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.” (Verse 9)

Victory Against Great Odds

In the message given to Deborah, and passed on to Barak, they were told that the Lord would draw unto them “to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude.” But they were also told, “I will deliver him into thine hand.” Verse 7. Barak, it appears, was fearful because he looked at the mighty forces

that would come against him, while Deborah was courageous; she looked at the promise of the mighty God that He would be on their side and deliver Sisera and his great multitude into their hand.

When Sisera learned that Barak had come with ten thousand men for battle, he “gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river Kishon.” (Verse 13)

Here the armies met face to face. Human appearances indicated but one outcome,—the small, untrained, and poorly armed forces of Barak must surely go down in defeat before the superior and better equipped army of Sisera. So Barak had reasoned, and so Sisera now reasoned. But not thus did Deborah reason. She was in contact with God. She had held communion with Him. He had said to her, “I will deliver him into thine hand.” With this promise she knew full well what the issue would be—she knew that Sisera and all his chariots of

iron and his great army were in reality already defeated.

Deliverance Through the Gift

Therefore with utmost confidence she could say to Barak, “Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the Lord gone out before thee?” (Verse 14)

In prompt obedience to this quick, positive, assuring command from the prophetess, Barak led his men into action. “And the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet. But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword: and there was not a man left.” (Verses 15-16)

“So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel. And the hand of the children of Israel prospered, and prevailed

against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.” (Verses 23-24)

Deborah, Barak, and the ten thousand men they had led into the conflict returned with glad hearts to their people and their homes. This great deliverance brought rejoicing to all Israel. “Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying, Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.” (Judges 5:1-2)

Inspiration gave this detailed account of this historic experience for the benefit of succeeding generations to the close of time. From it, we today may obtain instructive lessons of very great importance that will be a blessing to us if we heed them.

The essential lesson to be emphasized in this study is the vital part contributed by the prophetic gift in the events that culminated in so great a victory.

Consider the situation: Through inexcusable and persistent apostasy, the nation of Israel had turned away from God to idolatry. In doing this they had removed themselves from the powerful protection that had been with them when they were true and loyal to Jehovah. Shorn of His power, they could not stand before their enemies, and were consequently brought into bondage by the Canaanites. For twenty long years they had been “mightily oppressed.” They had not been able to free themselves. Growing weaker with each year of servitude, their situation became more hopeless. In this helpless state they once more turned to the Lord for help. They confessed and repudiated their wrongdoing. They cried to God for mercy and deliverance.

In His great compassion the Lord responded to their appeal. Through that gracious and always helpful gift of prophecy, He gave to Deborah—His prophetess—the message of deliverance for His tardily penitent people. The instruction given in the message was carried out, and a great deliverance was wrought.

What a priceless gift! Such has been the purpose and the working of this abiding and continuing prophetic gift from the day when Adam was expelled from Eden to the present time.

Samuel Called to the Prophetic Office

After this wonderful deliverance from the oppressive hand of the Canaanites, “the land had rest forty years.” (Judges 5:31) Then, strange and deplorable as it surely was, the nation again “did evil in the sight of the Lord,” and this time “the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian.” (Judges 6:1) Thus the record recounts the repeated sinful and humiliating apostasies of the people, and the merciful deliverances the Lord wrought for them whenever they penitently appealed to Him.

“All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.” “And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.” (1 Samuel 3:20; 7:15)

With the leadership of Samuel the long period of the judges came to an end. The situation in the nation, when Samuel was called to the prophetic office and judgeship, was dark and turbulent. Israel was again in bondage, this time to the Philistines. Eli, Israel's judge, was an old man, unable to perform the duties of his office. His sons, Hophni and Phineas, were trusted by him with the affairs of government and the service of the priesthood. But they "were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord." "The sin of the young men was very great before the Lord." (1 Samuel 2:12,17)

This was indeed a dark hour in the history of Israel. Spiritual apostasy had brought the nation under subjection to the Philistines. "There was no open vision" no widely known manifestation of the prophetic gift. The expression "there was no open vision," as found in 1 Samuel 3:1, is rendered in the Jewish Version by Isaac Leeser as "prophecy was not extended." Other renderings are as follows: "A vision was not frequent" (Darby); "A word from the Eternal was rare" (Moffatt); "No vision broke forth" (Young). The original for the

word “open” is rendered in the Douay Version as “manifest;” by Rotherham as “well known;” in the Septuagint as “distinct;” and in the American Baptist Improved Version as “widespread.” That is, it was not widespread or public, in contrast to localized or individual. (1 Samuel 3:1) Plain instruction and stern reproof were needed. A great spiritual revival and reformation must take place before the nation could be delivered from the strong hand of the Philistines. But there was no one in Israel, it appears, to whom the Lord could consistently and safely impart the prophetic gift in a public, open way.

It was in the depths of this dark night of Israel’s history that the child Samuel was born. That he was a child of divine providence is very evident. After his birth his mother said: “For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him: therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord.” (1 Samuel 1:27-28)

These renderings—essentially one in intent and

spirit—are justified by the sequel to this verse. As the result of the significant experiences recorded in the chapter prefaced by the statement that “the word of the Lord was precious in those days,” it is stated that “all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.” (Verse 20)

This indicates that the “open vision” is “widespread,” or “well known.” Those who have open visions are established as prophets.

The phrase “no open vision” cannot mean no vision at all. It rather implies clearly that there was the exercise of the prophetic gift, but not in the public way characteristic of the work of one openly manifested and established as a prophet, as were Samuel and his successors.

Every recorded incident in the life of Samuel shows that the Lord brought him into the world to be used in the spiritual regeneration of Israel, in their deliverance from bondage to the Philistines, and to lead them to the exalted position they

subsequently reached under David. This revelation of God's resourcefulness to accomplish His divine purposes was placed by inspiration in the history of ancient Israel to give faith, courage, and steadfastness to His believing children at all times when the situation they face looks dark and forbidding.

During the whole history of the human race the Lord has been working out an "eternal purpose" for the redemption of all who care enough to be redeemed to respond to His offers. During this entire time Satan has countered Jehovah's purpose. This archenemy of God and man has created many difficult and indeed impossible situations to the man without divine aid. At times it has looked as if the Lord's plan must fail. But it has been at just such times—in the very darkest hours—that the Lord has broken forth with mighty power to overturn the plans of the enemy and bring glorious triumph to His cause.

One of the Greatest Prophets of All Time

“The child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord, and also with men.” And he “ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.” (1 Samuel 2:26,18) In due time “the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord.” “And the word of Samuel came to all Israel;” “all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.” (1 Samuel 3:21; 4:1; 3:20) Thus there was raised up by the Lord in the midst of apostate Israel one of the greatest prophets of all time. All his life this man seemed to be in the most intimate association with God. In his manifold labors, great and small, he received divine instruction and guidance through the prophetic gift.

The first definite responsibility laid upon him by the Lord was to bear to Eli, Israel’s judge, the terrible message regarding the punishment that must be administered to his “house.” “By faithfully delivering the divine warning to the house of Eli,

painful and trying as the duty had been, Samuel had given proof of his fidelity as Jehovah's messenger; 'and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.'" [2]

In order to bring about a spiritual revival and reformation, thus preparing the way for deliverance from subjection to the Philistines, Samuel went through the cities and villages of the land, teaching the people, praying with them, and appealing to them to turn from their sins to God. In this effort he was eminently successful, for in time "all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord." (1 Samuel 7:2)

Now the hour of triumph and deliverance had come. Recognizing this, Samuel said to them: "Prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only: and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only." (1 Samuel 7:3-4)

Quick action followed. Soon they found themselves faced by the hosts of the Philistines.

Israel was not armed for such a conflict. But the Lord wrought for them. He “thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.... So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.” (1 Samuel 7:10-13)

Founded the Schools of the Prophets

Thus this man of God, guided by the spirit of prophecy, led the whole nation from idolatry back to the true God, and to national freedom from all their oppressors. Who can adequately estimate the value of this service for the people and cause of God? The spirit of prophecy, if followed today, will accomplish like results for the church of God, for with God there is no difference in time.

Perhaps the greatest service rendered by Samuel during his long and eminent leadership in the nation was the founding of the institutions known as “the schools of the prophets.”

“From the earliest times, prophets had been recognized as teachers divinely appointed. In the highest sense the prophet was one who spoke by direct inspiration, communicating to the people the messages he had received from God. But the name was given also to those who, though not so directly inspired, were divinely called to instruct the people in the works and ways of God. For the training of such a class of teachers, Samuel, by the Lord’s direction, established the schools of the prophets.

“These schools were intended to serve as a barrier against the widespreading corruption, to provide for the mental and spiritual welfare of the youth, and to promote the prosperity of the nation by furnishing it with men qualified to act in the fear of God as leaders and counselors. To this end, Samuel gathered companies of young men who were pious, intelligent, and studious. These were called the sons of the prophets.... In Samuel’s day there were two of these schools,—one at Ramah, the home of the prophet, and the other at Kirjath-jearim. In later times others were established....

These schools proved to be one of the means most effective in promoting that righteousness which ‘exalteth a nation.’ Proverbs 14:34. In no small degree they aided in laying the foundation of that marvelous prosperity which distinguished the reigns of David and Solomon.” [3]

Such spiritual and temporal prosperity as is here portrayed was the fruitage of believing and following the counsels of the prophets of God, who in turn received their instructions from the living God. Such is the unalterable law of the spiritual universe.

Notes:

1. “The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia,” Vol. II, art., “Judges,” p. 1003
2. Patriarchs and Prophets, 589, 590
3. Education, 46-48

Chapter 6

During the Revolt of Israel

In the midst of the great achievements of Samuel's leadership—the spiritual revivals, the national reforms, and the deliverances from servitude to enemy nations—there was an open revolt by the people against God's plan of government. This revolt was followed by developments of serious moment to the nation. It produced contrasting and contradictory conditions. It developed situations radically opposed to one another, with prospects at once the brightest and the darkest. It brought forth the truest loyalty to God and the rankest apostasy, the height of prosperity and the extreme of adversity; the most satisfying tranquillity and the most devastating revolutions.

But notwithstanding the regrettable changes that took place and the perilous conditions that developed, the records of those years and events show that there was, during that period, a marked

manifestation of the prophetic gift, and that it exercised a powerful influence for good in movements that imperiled the welfare of the people and the cause of God. In order to know and to appreciate fully the great value of the services rendered by this heaven-sent gift in those momentous events, it is necessary to give them careful study.

Israel Rejects God as King

One of the most serious and far-reaching events for evil occurred in the closing years of the splendid leadership of the prophet Samuel. That was nothing less than a revolution in the government God had established for His people. It was conducted by the nation of Israel. The sinister though veiled purpose of this revolution was to get rid of divine kingship and the restraining influence of the prophetic gift.

The record of this serious affair is given by the prophet Samuel:

“Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” (1 Samuel 8:4-5)

This demand of Israel was alarming and displeasing to Samuel. It was so audacious, so revolutionary, so full of peril, that Samuel would return no answer until he had received direct instruction from the Lord. And “Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them... Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.” (1 Samuel 8:6-9)

The People Warned by the Prophet

Having received this definite instruction,

“Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king.” “Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, “Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.” (1 Samuel 8:10,19-20)

The seriousness of this revolt against the government of Jehovah was set forth with still greater emphasis at the time of the coronation of the king that had been chosen. On that occasion Samuel said to the people:

“When ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the Lord your God was your king.” “Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the Lord will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call unto the Lord, and He shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking you a king. So Samuel

called unto the Lord; and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.” (1 Samuel 12:12,16-19)

From Adam to the time of the prophet Samuel the Lord had been both recognized and gladly accepted by His people as their divine king. He had ordained a form of government for His loyal subjects which should continue to the end of time.

Although the details of administration may have been few and comparatively simple in the beginning, and even for generations, yet the plan of the government was, from the first, as perfect and complete as when later fully organized by Moses and administered by Samuel.

God's Plan of Government

That the Lord Himself should establish and

operate the government of His people as their king was imperative. But by yielding to sin, Adam had come under the dominion of Satan. He lost the power of self-restraint with which he had been endowed at creation. He was rendered incapable of governing himself, and by his sin this same ruin had been brought upon the whole human family.

Knowing the nature of sin and its terrible effects on the human heart, the Lord foresaw what would take place among men—the maladministration of government; the misconception and disregard of human rights; the enactment of unjust and oppressive laws; the bribery and corruption of courts; the devastating wars of nations. All this was open to His infinite mind. He saw that only His interposition could save the world from oppression, revolution, and anarchy. Therefore in great mercy and compassion He instituted a form of government which, if accepted and carried out, would insure to every subject equality, justice, and tranquillity. Thus mankind would be saved from the oppression, warfare, and continual revolution that would

otherwise surely come upon them.

That government was not a man-made monarchy, nor was it a democracy. It was a theocracy,—a government in which Jehovah was recognized and revered as king. His kingship was very definitely and gratefully accepted by His loyal people in olden times. Isaiah declared in clear, positive terms: “The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king.”

(Isaiah 33:22) The psalmist acknowledged God as king above all: “God is my king of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.” (Psalm 74:12) Said Jeremiah: “The Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting king.” (Jeremiah 10:10) Of that theocracy one has written:

“The government of Israel was administered in the name and by the authority of God. The work of Moses, of the seventy elders, of the rulers and judges, was simply to enforce the laws that God had given; they had no authority to legislate for the nation. This was, and continued to be, the condition

of Israel's existence as a nation. From age to age, men inspired by God were sent to instruct the people, and to direct in the enforcement of the laws." [1]

That was a theocracy, a theocratic government, a government which received its authority, power, laws, and administration directly from God. Regarding the method chosen by the Lord for the administration of His government, another says:

"In Him all the powers of the state, legislative, executive, judicial, were united... He exercised His governmental offices for the most part through men whom He raised up... The stability of the state under the theocratic form of government depended in the first instance and ultimately on the faithfulness of God to His election and His promises; but the success of the theocracy at any given period was conditioned by the attitude of the people toward God and toward the provisions of the covenant. Their obedience to God and reliance on Him were requisite." [2]

The Gift of Prophecy Essential

This theocratic government could not be administered by the Lord without a channel of communication between Himself and man. The gift of prophecy was that channel. It was the method by which Jehovah, the invisible King, revealed His will, made known His laws, selected His administrators, and raised up godly men to be His messengers, who were to receive from Him inspired messages for kings, princes, priests, and people. Following a clear statement regarding the nature of a theocracy and its administration, W. M. McPheeters says:

“The realization of such an idea was only possible within the sphere of what is known as special revelation. Indeed, special revelation of the divine will, through divinely chosen organs, to divinely appointed executive agents, is, itself, the very essence of the idea of a theocracy.” [3]

By the term “special revelation” the writer means the revelations given through the prophetic

gift.

During the time from Adam to Samuel, a period of nearly three thousand years, the divinely appointed leaders in God's ideal government were patriarchs, prophets, elders, and judges. Some of these great leaders were brought into the world by special providences of God for a definite and extraordinary service He wanted to have rendered. Among these were Isaac, Moses, Samuel, and later, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and Paul. Others were appointed by the Lord as occasion required.

Samuel Established as Prophet

It was while Samuel was administering the affairs of government for Jehovah that Israel rose in revolt. Samuel, it will be recalled, came into the world by divine providence. Said his pious, God-fearing mother, "For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him: therefore also I have lent ["returned," margin] him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord." (1 Samuel 1:27-28)

In due time the Lord imparted to Samuel the prophetic gift. “All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.” (1 Samuel 3:20)

By the providence of God Samuel became Israel’s upright, incorruptible judge and administrator of the theocracy.

“Since the days of Joshua, the government had never been conducted with so great wisdom and success as under Samuel’s administration. Divinely invested with the threefold office of judge, prophet, and priest, he had labored with untiring and disinterested zeal for the welfare of his people, and the nation had prospered under his wise control. Order had been restored, and godliness promoted, and the spirit of discontent was checked for the time... The days of Israel’s greatest prosperity had been those in which they acknowledged Jehovah as their king,—when the laws and the government which He had established were regarded as superior to those of all other nations.” [4]

What amazing ingratitude and blindness Israel manifested in rejecting God, their divine King, and choosing a faulty human being to take His place! Truly, this was, as Samuel declared, great wickedness. It was one of the supreme wrongs of the Israelites. By this desperate act Israel rejected God as their king. By the same act they also rejected the government God had established for the greatest possible benefit of His people.

Israel Rejects the Gift

Yet more than that, they rejected His prophetic gift, that open channel of communication between heaven and earth. Thus, on their part, Israel completely separated themselves from God and from all that He had put in operation for their safe guidance and protection. All this may not have been intended or even foreseen by them at the moment, but it was nevertheless all involved in their determination to have a man instead of God as their leader.

This was the hidden, subtle purpose of the mastermind back of the revolt against the theocratic government. Israel was then the only nation on earth that recognized the true God or had any communication with Him. Every other nation had turned from the Creator to false gods and to heathen worship. If, now, Israel's connection with Jehovah, their King, could be broken, the estrangement and separation of the human race would be complete. Satan would then gain his original purpose. This, he undoubtedly reasoned, would establish forever his sovereignty over man and the dominion given him at creation.

But Satan's ambitious, long-cherished scheme was not allowed to reach the full consummation he had purposed. True, the nation rejected Jehovah as king. They put a mere man in His place. They rejected the prophetic gift by spurning its messages. But the break—the separation of Israel from God—was not entire, for the Lord did not abandon the nation altogether. He did not refuse to take any part in governmental affairs, He did not abdicate in favor of their king. On the contrary,

while He allowed them to have a human, visible king, He continued to maintain a measure of authority over both king and people. He maintained at least a limited theocratic government for centuries. He overruled in the affairs of the nation as He saw fit and best. Nor was the prophetic gift withdrawn. This gracious channel of communication was kept open. Indeed, it was opened wider than ever to meet the new needs and dangers that had been created and multiplied.

At no other time in the history of God's people has there been a greater manifestation of the prophetic gift. The Scriptures record the names and the services of thirty different prophets from Samuel to Jeremiah. Besides these thirty who are named, several unnamed prophets are mentioned, to whom definite duties were assigned. The records also speak of the "sons of the prophets," and of companies of subordinate prophets. The records further show that nearly every one of the forty-two kings from Saul to Zedekiah was counseled by these prophets.

Thus in great compassion and kindness the Lord dealt with kings and people. Some of the kings welcomed the prophets and gave heed to their messages as from the Lord. For such He wrought marvelous deliverances in times of great peril. He sent messages of warning to kings whose evil ways were corrupting and destroying His people. In some cases the Lord brought severe punishment upon those who rejected His messages.

The Gift Continued

In the history of Israel's kings and prophets from Samuel to the final destruction of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah may be obtained the fullest and clearest understanding of the purpose, the service, and the value of the prophetic gift. Here are recorded the conditions which the prophets met, the messages given them to deliver, the reactions of those to whom the messages were delivered, and the fierce conflicts into which some of the prophets were drawn by kings, priests, and people. The results were often strange and unaccountable.

“And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah.” (1 Samuel 25:1) This is the brief word regarding the passing of this great prophet and eminent judge. His death marked the close of the time of the judges, for he was the last and the greatest in that class of the nation’s leaders.

A Tribute to Samuel

The following appropriate and beautiful tribute to the life of this man of God will be read with both profit and pleasure:

“The death of Samuel was regarded as an irreparable loss by the nation of Israel. A great and good prophet and an eminent judge had fallen in death; and the grief of the people was deep and heartfelt. From his youth up, Samuel had walked before Israel in the integrity of his heart; although Saul had been the acknowledged king, Samuel had wielded a more powerful influence than he, because his record was one of faithfulness,

obedience, and devotion. We read that he judged Israel all the days of his life...

“The nation had lost the founder and president of its sacred schools; but that was not all. It had lost him to whom the people had been accustomed to go with their great troubles,—lost one who had constantly interceded with God in behalf of the best interests of its people. The intercession of Samuel had given a feeling of security; for ‘the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.’ ...

“It was when the nation was racked with internal strife, when the calm, God-fearing counsel of Samuel seemed to be most needed, that God gave His aged servant rest. Bitter were the reflections of the people as they looked upon his quiet resting place, and remembered their folly in rejecting him as their ruler; for he had so close a connection with Heaven that he seemed to bind all Israel to the throne of Jehovah. It was Samuel who had taught them to love and obey God; but now that he was dead, the people felt that they were left

to the mercies of a king who was joined to Satan, and who would divorce the people from God and heaven.” [5]

Closing his review of the life and accomplishments of Samuel, A. S. Geden says:

“It is not without reason, therefore, that he has been regarded as in dignity and importance occupying the position of a second Moses in relation to the people. In his exhortations and warnings the Deuteronomic discourses of Moses are reflected and repeated. He delivers the nation from the hand of the Philistines, as Moses from Pharaoh and the Egyptians... In nobility of character and utterance also, and in fidelity to Jehovah, Samuel is not unworthy to be placed by the side of the older lawgiver. The record of his life is not marred by any act or word which would appear unworthy of his office or prerogative.” [6]

In one of his psalms, David makes significant reference to Samuel: “Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His

name; they called upon the Lord, and He answered them.” (Psalm 99:6)

Moses, Aaron, and Samuel were three of the greatest prophets of Old Testament history. Placing Samuel with Moses and Aaron, men who called upon the Lord and received marvelous answers, is a divine recognition of the great achievements wrought through the mighty intercessions of Samuel for Israel.

Another very remarkable statement concerning Samuel occurs in the book of Jeremiah:

“Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of My sight, and let them go.” (Jeremiah 15:1)

Israel had gone so far in rebellion against the Lord in rejecting the messages of His prophets that He said to Jeremiah: “Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble that passeth away by the wind of the wilderness. This is thy lot, the portion of thy

measures from Me, saith the Lord; because thou hast forgotten Me, and trusted in falsehood.” (Jeremiah 13:24-25)

Evidently on hearing this Jeremiah began to pray for the people, for he says: “Then said the Lord unto me, Pray not for this people for their good” (Jeremiah 14:11); and to show him how unalterable was the decision, the Lord said: “Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me,” even if those mighty intercessors should lift their voices in Israel’s behalf,—“yet My mind could not be toward this people” (Jeremiah 15:1)

Notes:

1. Patriarchs and Prophets, 603
2. “Dictionary of the Bible,” John D. Davis, art., “Theocracy,” pp. 773, 774
3. “The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,” Vol. V, art., “Theocracy,” p. 2965
4. Patriarchs and Prophets, 603-605
5. Patriarchs and Prophets, 663, 664

6. “The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,” Vol. IV, art., “Samuel,” p. 2678

Chapter 7

Prophetic Guidance to Kings

Although Israel turned away from the leadership of the Lord and His prophet Samuel, still God did not forsake His people. He continued to instruct, guide, and help them. Through the prophet Samuel He directed in the selection of Saul for their first king. “Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king.” (1 Samuel 10:24)

Saul entered upon his reign under the most favorable conditions possible. He was chosen by the Lord for the great responsibilities he was to bear. A special bestowal of the Holy Spirit was imparted to him. (See 1 Samuel 10:6-11) He was given every assurance of God’s presence and guidance—if he would only be true and loyal to the divine requirements. Withal, he had the prophet Samuel, an experienced and able statesman, as his

inspired counselor.

But Saul's reign was a tragic failure. He became independent, rash, and cruel. He openly disregarded the instruction the Lord gave him through the prophet Samuel. Soon after beginning his reign, when in a state of fear and perplexity, he rashly ventured to perform the sacred service that only the priests consecrated to that office were permitted to render. "Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering." (1 Samuel 13:9)

Because of this open disregard of the divine plan, Samuel said, "Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which He commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue." (1 Samuel 13:13-14)

Saul's loyalty was again put to the test when Samuel was sent to him with a message of instruction regarding the punishment of the

Amalekites for the great wrong they had done Israel on their way from Egypt. In the prosecution of this task, both the king and the people boldly disregarded some of the most important parts of the message.

Saul's Wrong Course Reproved

Again Samuel was directed to bear a sad message of reproof to Saul. This brought such grief to Samuel that “He cried unto the Lord all night.” “Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?” “Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king. And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words.” (1 Samuel 15:11,16-17,23-24) Even this acknowledgment of his wrong was not, however, a repentant confession, but was rather a plea for

leniency. (See verses 25,30)

But this did not end Saul's wrong course. He continued in transgression of divine counsel until he was entirely separated from God. At last, in desperation, he ended his life by falling upon his own sword. (1 Samuel 31:4) "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not." 1 Chronicles 10:13. This astounding apostasy proceeded to its tragic climax in spite of the fact that he had by his side his experienced and able predecessor to counsel, encourage, and support him in all that the Lord required of him as king.

In Saul, God had given to Israel a king after their own heart, as Samuel said when the kingdom was confirmed to Saul at Gilgal, "Behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired!" (1 Samuel 12:13) Comely in person, of noble stature and princely bearing, his appearance accorded with their conceptions of royal dignity; and his personal valor and his ability in the conduct of armies were the qualities which they regarded as

those best calculated to secure respect and honor from other nations.

They felt little solicitude that their king should possess those higher qualities which alone could fit him to rule with justice and equity. They did not ask for one who had true nobility of character, who possessed the love and fear of God. They had not sought counsel from God as to the qualities a ruler should possess in order to preserve their distinctive, holy character as His chosen people. They were not seeking God's way, but their own way. Therefore God gave them such a king as they desired,—one whose character was a reflection of their own. Their hearts were not in submission to God, and their king also was unsubdued by divine grace. Under the rule of this king, God permitted them to obtain the experience necessary in order that they might see their error, and return allegiance to God.

Samuel Anoints David King

“The Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt

thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided Me a king among his sons.” (1 Samuel 16:1)

Samuel came to Jesse, and requested to see his sons. When David was brought before Samuel, the Lord said, “Arise, anoint him: for this is he.” “Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.” (1 Samuel 16:12-13)

Thus David entered upon his career as had Saul, with the prophetic call and anointing. But how different was his later career from that of Saul! Of his death it is written: “He died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honor.” (1 Chronicles 29:28) As for his life and reign, the record states: “David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the

Hittite.” (1 Kings 15:5)

Like Saul he was favored with inspired counselors. During his early life, before being notified by Samuel that God had chosen him to be the king over His people, he had the godly example, instruction, and influence of the great prophet Samuel. From the time of his anointing for the kingship he had the privilege of association and intercourse with this same Samuel. “So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth.” (1 Samuel 19:18) In the home of the prophet he found comfort and encouragement when he was a fugitive from the malevolent wrath of King Saul. Until Samuel’s death David honored and respected him as God’s messenger.

Nathan the Prophet Counsels David

Samuel died before David began to reign. But David was not left without divinely inspired advisers in the administration of his government.

After setting in order the affairs of the kingdom, David came to Nathan the prophet with a proposal to build a house, or temple, for the Lord—a place for the services of the sanctuary. As the king spoke of his generous plan, it seemed good, and the prophet encouraged him to do all that was in his heart. But that night a message came to Nathan from the Lord, directing the prophet to tell David that he was not to build the house, though he might make preparation for the building, which would be erected by his son Solomon. David accepted the message, and carried out the instruction. (See 2 Samuel 7)

To this same prophet was committed a more painful duty that often constitutes an important part of the prophetic office. Following a divine revelation of David's double crime of adultery and murder, Nathan was sent with a message of stern, but tender, rebuke to the royal sinner. He brought into broad daylight that which David thought to keep secret, and he told of the divine penalty that was to follow. Bitter and sincere was David's repentance of his grievous sin. Though the heavy

punishment followed, yet he bowed his head and bent his back to the strokes, without resentment either against the Lord or against His prophet. (See 2 Samuel 12)

“The part,” says one, “which Nathan took against David shows how effective was the check exerted by the prophets; indeed, most of the prophetic history is history of the noblest opposition ever made against vices alike of royalty, priesthood, and people.”

With the view of increasing his army and extending his conquests, David directed his officers to go through the tribes and number the people. The motives back of the king’s ambitious project were wrong, and another prophet—Gad—was commissioned to bear the Lord’s rebuke, and to announce the penalty. Replying to the prophet’s message, “David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for His mercies are great.” (2 Samuel 24:14)

At the close of his long reign, we see the faithful prophet Nathan standing by him in his feebleness, and guiding him in arranging for Solomon to succeed him as king. (See 1 Kings 1:22-42)

These incidents reveal the practical working of the prophetic gift during the reign of David, and the powerful, guiding, saving influence of that gift with Israel's second king. From the time of his anointing to the close of his life he was favored with the presence and distinction of inspired prophets—a wonderful leadership which he greatly appreciated and gladly followed.

Nathan Anoints Solomon King

The prophet Nathan acted a leading part in the events connected with the succession of Solomon to the throne of his father David. For a long period it had been David's purpose that Solomon should succeed him. But when he had grown "old and stricken in years" and was about to die, his fourth son, Adonijah, through conspiracy, had himself

proclaimed king.

Knowing that this was contrary to the divine purpose, Nathan came to David and said, “My lord, O king, hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? For he is gone down this day, ... and hath called all the king’s sons, and the captains of the host, and Abiathar the priest; and, behold, they eat and drink before him, and say, God save King Adonijah.” (1 Kings 1:24-25)

Upon hearing this, David instructed Nathan the prophet and Zadok the priest to anoint Solomon to be “king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save King Solomon.” (1 Kings 1:34)

Solomon had been under the influence of the prophet Nathan from childhood until he became king. During his reign he was not left without the aid of prophetic guidance, although the history of his reign does not reveal the measure of activity by the prophets that was present during the reigns of Saul and David. The prophets Ahijah and Iddo

were raised up to give messages of instruction from the Lord. (2 Chronicles 9:29) Yet how closely these messengers may have been associated with Solomon is not revealed. There is no intimation that he recognized them or sought counsel from them during the days of the great prosperity and outward splendor that came to him.

But during the latter part of his reign, messages were sent to him through the prophetic gift to make known Jehovah's purpose to allow serious developments to take place in the kingdom. His departure from the ways of the Lord had brought great harm to the nation, and lasting reproach upon the cause of God. "Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant." (1 Kings 11:11) But the Lord added: "Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for

David My servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen." (Verses 12-13) The execution of this sentence was followed by turmoil, apostasies, revolutions, and general ruin.

Chapter 8

Ministry of Prophets to Israel

Before the death of King Solomon, the prophet Ahijah was given a message to convey to Jeroboam, one of Solomon's officers, "a mighty man of valor." The message was ominous: "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee... Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: ... I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes." (1 Kings 11:31-35)

It appears that this message became known to Solomon, for he sought "to kill Jeroboam. And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon." (1 Kings 11:40)

This experience must have seemed very strange to Jeroboam. Assured by the prophet that he would be made king over ten tribes of what was then

Solomon's kingdom, he was immediately compelled to flee from Solomon to Egypt, beyond that great southern desert, to save his life. While these circumstances made it seem impossible for him ever to rule over a large part of Solomon's kingdom, in due time the prediction was fulfilled. God had promised him a kingdom, and there could be no failure. It is interesting here, as frequently, to trace the changes and movements that culminate in the complete fulfillment of a promise conveyed through the spirit of prophecy.

“And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.” (1 Kings 11:43)

When Jeroboam heard of the death of Solomon, he returned to Palestine. “And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.” (1

Kings 12:3-4)

Rehoboam asked for three days in which to seek counsel and make a decision. The old men in council advised him to “speak good words to them,” assuring them of considerate and just treatment. But the young men counseled Rehoboam to say to the people, “My little finger shall be thicker than my father’s loins... My father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.” (1 Kings 12:10-11)

Ahijah's Prophecy Fulfilled

When Rehoboam gave his reply to the people who returned for his answer, they shouted, “To your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David.” Then they called Jeroboam “unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel.” “So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.” (Verses 16,20,19) Thus the prediction which the prophet Ahijah had made to Jeroboam was fulfilled in every detail. “The cause was from the Lord, that He might perform His saying, which

the Lord spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam.” (Verse 15)

Thus the kingdom demanded and established by Israel in the days of Samuel began to disintegrate. It was divided. The ten tribes in the northern part of Palestine chose Jeroboam for their king, and established what was known as the kingdom of Israel. The two remaining tribes, Judah and Benjamin, in the southern part, took their stand with Rehoboam, and maintained the kingdom of Saul, David, and Solomon under the name kingdom of Judah.

The time of this period is somewhat uncertain. One of the dates fixed by chronologers of high repute is 976 B. C. As this appears to be supported by as reliable evidence as any other date, it will be used in the reckoning that follows.

The kingdom of Israel continued from 976 to 722 B. C., a period of over two hundred fifty years. Its history was stormy and tragic beyond expression. Revolutionary uprisings overthrew one

dynasty after another until nine different dynasties and nineteen different kings had ruled the kingdom. The last king was Hoshea, who, in the ninth year of his reign, was taken to Assyria and imprisoned. (See 2 Kings 17:3, 4.) Following this the people were “carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.” (Verse 23)

Israel might have been spared the terrible experiences that came to them. Times without number the Lord gave them counsel and assurance such as the following: The covenant that I have made with you ye shall not forget; neither shall ye fear other gods. But the Lord your God ye shall fear; and He shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.” (2 Kings 17:38-39)

Prophetic Counsel Rejected

This counsel and assurance of protection and triumph, the Lord says, “I sent to you by My servants the prophets.” (Verse 13) This great service of the prophets was given to Jeroboam, the first king of this new, independent kingdom. While

in private life a servant of King Solomon, he had received through the prophet Ahijah a message from the Lord to the effect that he was destined to be king over the ten northern tribes of Solomon's kingdom. This message was fulfilled to the letter. Thus far all was well, and Jeroboam began his reign with the brightest prospects that could possibly be desired. In the message sent through the prophet, the Lord said to Jeroboam:

“I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel. And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in My ways, and do that is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as David My servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.”
(1 Kings 11:37-38)

What great honor was bestowed upon this man Jeroboam by the Majesty of heaven! What deep gratitude and genuine loyalty to the Giver such assurance called for from the king! But it was not

thus appreciated. It is painful to read of the base ingratitude and disloyalty set down in the records of this man's life after being crowned king.

Having established his capital at Shechem in central Palestine, Jeroboam immediately proceeded to make provision for the religious worship of his subjects. He made two calves of gold, and set one up in Bethel and the other in Dan. To all the people he said, "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." 1 Kings 12:28. He built a high place of worship, made priests of the lowest of the people who were not of the tribe of Levi, and called the people together apparently for the dedication. Then he himself assumed the office of priest, and offered sacrifices to the calves he had made of gold. (See 1 Kings 12:31-33)

In the midst of these wicked proceedings, "there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the Lord unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense." (1 Kings 13:1) The prophet rebuked Jeroboam for his wickedness, and foretold sore punishment that would follow. At this

the king stretched forth his hand, and in anger commanded his officers to lay hold of the prophet. Instantly his arm dried up, so that he could not bring it back to his side. The altar was rent by his side. These manifestations of God's displeasure brought the king to serious thought. He then requested the prophet to pray for the restoration of his arm. The prophet prayed, and the arm was restored. (See 1 Kings 13:1-6)

Ahijah Warns Jeroboam

This is an example of Jeroboam's cruel ingratitude and of the Lord's compassion and earnest endeavor to save him. But the effort failed, for the record says: "After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way." He continued to lead the people into heathen worship. "And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth." (1 Kings 13:33-34)

After a time, Abijah, Jeroboam's son, became seriously ill, nigh unto death. Jeroboam knew that

he was under the displeasure of God, and undoubtedly feared that he was being visited with divine judgment. In his distress he remembered the good old prophet Ahijah, God's inspired messenger. The prophet would know if this sickness was a judgment from the Lord, and whether his son would die. AGP 86.1

“Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam; and get thee to Shiloh: behold, there is Ahijah the prophet, which told me that I should be king over this people... He shall tell thee what shall become of the child. And Jeroboam's wife did so, and arose, and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. But Ahijah could not see; for his eyes were set by reason of his age.” (1 Kings 14:2-4)

Jeroboam wanted help. He knew that God could restore his son, even as he had restored his own withered arm. He knew that Ahijah was in communication with God. He vainly hoped that his wife might secure the prophet's mighty

intercession for his son's recovery. But he feared to let Ahijah know that it was Jeroboam who was seeking this help. Hence the instruction to his wife to "disguise" herself.

A Prophecy of Doom

But the ruse did not succeed. While the queen was on her way to the prophet, "the Lord said unto Ahijah, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son; for he is sick: thus and thus shalt thou say unto her: for it shall be, when she cometh in, that she shall feign herself to be another woman. And it was so, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings." (Verses 5-6)

Then it became the painful duty of the disappointed old prophet to deliver to the queen a terrible message to take to her husband, King Jeroboam.

“Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over My people Israel, and rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and yet thou hast not been as My servant David, who kept My commandments, and who followed Me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in Mine eyes; but hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke Me to anger, and hast cast Me behind thy back: therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, ... and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone... Arise thou therefore, get thee to thine own house: and when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die.” “And Jeroboam’s wife arose, and departed, and came to Tirzah: and when she came to the threshold of the door, the child died.” (1 Kings 14:7-12,17)

This, apparently, was the last communication between Ahijah and Jeroboam. Swift judgment and

disaster fell upon the house of Jeroboam in fulfillment of the word of the Lord through the prophet Ahijah. Shortly after receiving the message, Jeroboam led the forces of his kingdom against the army of Judah, and suffered a crushing defeat. His army was destroyed “with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men. Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time... Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijah; and the Lord struck him, and he died.” (2 Chronicles 13:17-20)

Jeroboam was succeeded by his son Nadab, who “did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin.” (1 Kings 15:25-26) In the second year of Nadab’s reign, Baasha, a conspirator, slew him, and “smote all the house of Jeroboam; he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed him.” (Verses 28-29)

In less than two years after the death of

Jeroboam his dynasty was exterminated; and this was only twenty-four years from the day he had been crowned king by the Lord's choosing, and by the marvelous working of many divine providences.

Prophetic Messages Rejected

Such was the terrible beginning of the history of the kingdom of Israel, composed of the ten northern tribes, and this continued to be the history of this kingdom until it was utterly and forever destroyed. Eighteen kings reigned over this kingdom after the death of Jeroboam, and all wrought folly in Israel. Not one walked in the way of the Lord. Of every one of the eighteen except one, it is written: "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin." (2 Kings 13:11) The only one of whom this is not written was Shallum, who secured the throne by a wicked conspiracy, and reigned only one month. (See 2 Kings 15:10-15)

Through the prophetic gift Jeroboam was informed of his selection by the Lord to be king of Israel. Through this priceless gift he was instructed, warned, and reproved to the close of his life. No greater favor, no higher honor, could come to any man than those which came to him from the Lord. His ingratitude, his deliberate disregard of the Lord's wishes and designs for Israel, and his premeditated plans to ruin the nation he had been chosen to lead in triumph to a higher life, were a high-handed affront to God and a terrible wrong to the nation. They never recovered from the evil he had wrought; and this reveals how perilous it is to reject the messages of the spirit of prophecy.

Prophets Continue to Warn

Of Baasha, who usurped the throne after assassinating King Nadab, Jeroboam's son, and then exterminated the whole family of Jeroboam, it is written: "He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin." (1 Kings 15:34)

There was still need of the prophet, and of divine interference with the madness of man; and both came: “By the hand of the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani came the word of the Lord against Baasha, and against his house, even for all the evil that he did in the sight of the Lord, in provoking Him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam.” (1 Kings 16:7)

Baasha reigned twenty-three years, and was succeeded by his son Elah, whose reign was cut short by the conspiracy of “Zimri, captain of half his chariots.” Verse 9. In the second year of Elah’s reign “Zimri went in and smote him, and killed him, ... and reigned in his stead... He slew all the house of Baasha... Thus did Zimri destroy all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the Lord, which He spake against Baasha by Jehu the prophet, for all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son, by which they sinned, and by which they made Israel to sin.” (1 Kings 16:9-13)

Zimri was not allowed to enjoy the fruits of his conspiracy for long—only seven days—when he

was overthrown, and Omri was made king. During Omri's reign of twelve years he transferred the capital of the kingdom from Tirzah to Samaria.

“But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him.”
(Verse 25)

At his death he was succeeded by his son Ahab, who became notorious for his wickedness in Israel. This was in the year 932 B.C., fifty-eight years from the beginning of the kingdom under the reign of Jeroboam. The history is heartsickening. It was altogether unnecessary, for the kings and the people had faithful, inspired prophets with them from Jeroboam to Ahab. They were Ahijah, Iddo, “a man of God,” Shemaiah, Hanani, and Jehu. It seems that Jehu either joined Ahijah or followed him immediately; for soon after Jeroboam's death Jehu was sent to Baasha with a message of doom. From 2 Chronicles 19:2 we find this same prophet bearing a message of reproof to Jehoshaphat after the death of Ahab.

Thus the record shows that the prophetic gift was doing faithful, active, continued service for the welfare of rulers and people. But the results were very disappointing. In rejecting God as their king, Israel entered upon a road beset with perils they did not foresee. To the time of Ahab they suffered continual defeat, notwithstanding the presence and services of inspired prophets of God.

Chapter 9

In the Crises Over Heathenism

“Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.” (1 Kings 17:1)

This was the first meeting between Ahab, the king of Israel, and the prophet Elijah. The message delivered to Ahab, though very brief, was a most serious one. A sore judgment was to fall upon Israel—a dire famine that was to continue for years. The reason for such a visitation is given as follows:

“Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal,

and worshiped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.” (1 Kings 16:30-33)

This is a very heavy indictment. The course pursued by Ahab was destined to bring greater evil upon Israel than had been brought upon them by any of his predecessors.

The first great wrong mentioned was that of taking “to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians.” The Zidonians were idolaters. Their chief deity was Baal, the sungod of many ancient heathen nations. Ashtoreth was a goddess of the Zidonians. Baal and Ashtoreth were supposed to personify certain sexual attributes of fertility, and the worship of these idols in the temples was often accompanied by “licentious rites of the most abominable character.”

Jezebel’s father, Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians,

was a priest of Baal, and Jezebel appears to have been fanatically devoted to the worship of her father's sun-god, Baal. On the other hand, she was violently opposed to the worship of Israel's God, Jehovah.

Ahab was a descendant of Abraham, the friend of God. He was now king of Israel, God's chosen people. It was a great sin for him to choose as his wife a heathen woman from among the idolatrous Zidonians, and place her as queen over the people of God.

Apostasy of Ahab

His next step was but the natural, logical result of his apostasy—he built a temple in his capital for the heathen god, and “reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built.” This was followed by the appointment of priests to perform the services of the temple. He also appointed and maintained prophets of Baal in great numbers.

All this was done by the king and queen to lead

the nation of Israel away from the true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, to the worship of senseless idols of wood and stone. This was the first time in the long history of God's people that rank heathenism was established in their midst by the authority of the government.

Before Israel entered upon their inheritance, the Lord gave the command: "Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the Lord thy God, which thou shalt make thee. Neither shalt thou set thee up any image; which the Lord thy God hateth." (Deuteronomy 16:21-22)

In the time of the judges, Joash, the father of Gideon, had erected an altar to Baal, and built a grove by it. When Gideon was called to deliver the nation of Israel from the bondage of the Midianites, he first obeyed the divine command to "throw down the altar of Baal" which his father had built, and to "cut down the grove" that was by it. Then he undertook the great task of delivering his people from the cruel servitude of the Midianites. (See Judges 6:25-32)

But Ahab and Jezebel had determined to establish the idolatry of the Zidonians as the religion of Israel by putting the sun-god Baal in the place of Jehovah, and they appeared to be accomplishing their wicked purpose. With the king and queen entirely committed to idolatry, with temples and altars on every hand dedicated to the worship of Baal, with priests and prophets by the hundred performing the services of the heathen ritual, the whole nation was being rapidly led into idolatry.

This was a supreme crisis in the history of Israel. The change that was taking place was tragic. “All the bounties of heaven,—the running brooks, the streams of living waters, the gentle dew, the showers of rain which refreshed the earth and caused their fields to bring forth abundantly,—these they [the Baal worshipers] ascribed to the favor of their gods.” [1]

This strange, corrupting, destroying movement carried on by Ahab and Jezebel was viewed with

great alarm and distress by the loyal man of God, Elijah, who dwelt in the land of Gilead east of the Jordan. He was overwhelmed with anguish as he saw his people being led into idolatry. Elijah was a man of action.

Elijah Meets the Crisis

“He went before the Lord, and with his soul wrung with anguish, pleaded for Him to save His people if it must be by judgments. He pleaded with God to withhold from His ungrateful people dew and rain, the treasures of heaven, that apostate Israel might look in vain to their gods, their idols of gold, wood, and stone, the sun, moon, and stars, to water and enrich the earth, and cause it to bring forth plentifully.” [1]

This was no doubt the prayer of Elijah to which James refers: “He prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.” (James 5:17)

Having given Elijah full assurance that his

prayer had been heard, and that it would surely be answered, the Lord sent him as a prophet to deliver a message of woe and doom to Ahab. He met the king, gave him the message, and was gone as suddenly as he had appeared. He “had locked heaven with his word, and had taken the key with him, and he could not be found.” Testimonies for the Church 3:276. From that day on for more than three long years there was no dew and no rain in Ahab’s kingdom, and as a result “there was a sore famine in Samaria.” (1 Kings 18:2)

In his dire extremity, Ahab called Obadiah, who was the governor of his house, and said to him, “Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts. So they divided the land between them to pass through it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.” (Verses 5-6)

A Test of Gods

This sore famine was to be a test of true and false gods.

“There is an opportunity for apostate Ahab and pagan Jezebel to test the power of their gods, and to prove the word of Elijah false. Jezebel’s prophets are numbered by hundreds. Against them all stands Elijah, alone. His word has locked heaven. If Baal can give dew and rain, and cause vegetation to flourish, if he can cause the brooks and streams to flow on as usual, independent of the treasures of heaven in the showers of rain, then let the king of Israel worship him, and the people say that he is God.” [2]

In their great perplexity the priests and prophets of Baal “offer sacrifices to their gods, and call upon them night and day to refresh the earth by dew and rain. But the incantations and deceptions formerly practiced by them to deceive the people do not answer the purpose now. The priests have done everything to appease the anger of their gods;

with a perseverance and zeal worthy of a better cause have they lingered around their pagan altars, while the flames of sacrifice burn on all the high places, and the fearful cries and entreaties of the priests of Baal are heard night after night through doomed Samaria. But the clouds do not appear in the heavens to cut off the burning rays of the sun. The word of Elijah stands firm, and nothing that Baal's priests can do will change it." [3]

Jezebel seemed to grow more desperate and determined in her fanatical zeal for Baal, and in her hatred of Israel's God. In her frenzy she attempted to kill all the prophets of the Lord. But Obadiah saved one hundred of the Lord's prophets by hiding them in a cave, and secretly feeding them with bread and water. (See 1 Kings 18:4,13)

The situation was desperate. The scorching rays of the sun continued to pour down upon men, beasts, and land until it appeared that the destruction would be complete. Then "it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show

thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.” “And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim.” (1 Kings 18:1,17-18)

Contest of Prophets on Carmel

With an authority irresistible the prophet directed the king to gather all Israel together to Mount Carmel. The four hundred fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of the groves, who ate at Jezebel’s table, must also be there. They must meet Elijah in a great demonstration before the people. By a very practical test, it must be shown which is the true God,—Baal or Jehovah. All that Elijah commanded was faithfully performed by Ahab. Elijah stood alone before the eight hundred fifty prophets of Baal.

The famine with all its horrors was still on. The

whole nation was crying for rain. Now, said Elijah, let it be seen who can give rain, Baal or Jehovah. So he directed Baal's prophets to place their sacrifice on the altar, and call upon their god, in the presence of all the people, to demonstrate by sending fire, that he had control over the elements.

The prophets obeyed, and "called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon," and still on "until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice." But "there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." (1 Kings 18:26-29) Their frantic, exhaustive efforts witnessed by all the people were a dismal failure.

Then "Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord" that had been "broken down" by the worshipers of Baal. Verse 30. Now he subjected himself and his God, Jehovah, to a great test in the eyes of the people. Having placed his sacrifice on "the altar of the Lord," he had twelve barrels of water poured upon the sacrifice and the wood and the altar, until the

trench around the altar was filled with water.

The multitude, including the king and the prophets and priests of Baal, is now to witness the results of Elijah's appeal to his God.

“The people of Israel stand spellbound, pale, anxious, and almost breathless with awe, while Elijah calls upon Jehovah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. The people have witnessed the fanatical, unreasonable frenzy of the prophets of Baal. In contrast they are now privileged to witness the calm, awe-inspiring deportment of Elijah. He reminds the people of their degeneracy, which has awakened the wrath of God against them, and then calls upon them to humble their hearts, and turn to the God of their fathers, that His curse may be removed from them. Ahab and his idolatrous priests are looking on with amazement mingled with terror. They await the result with anxious, solemn silence.” [4]

The God of Elijah Vindicated

In a prayer remarkable for simplicity, brevity, and appeal, Elijah said:

“Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again.

“Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God.” (1 Kings 18:36-39)

The tremendous contrast between the true God of Israel and the false God of the pagans had been clearly revealed. On the one hand stood the lone prophet of Jehovah, and on the other the eight

hundred fifty prophets of Baal; and the great test had been made in the presence of the king and all Israel. The prophets of Baal had utterly failed. Their God gave them no answer. No fire came; the sacrifice remained untouched. But Elijah's prayer, offered in calm, quiet assurance, was answered. His God gave plain, open evidence that He was the living God, that He could hear, and that He was able and anxious to do great things for those who would choose Him.

Now that the heathen religion brought into Israel by Jezebel and Ahab was openly discredited, the prophets of Baal—those men of Israel who had wickedly sold themselves to do this great evil against God's people—were slain. Then, having executed this terrible penalty, Elijah said to Ahab, "Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain." (1 Kings 18:41)

Then Elijah gave the people further overwhelming evidence that Israel's God was the true and living God. He "went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth,

and put his face between his knees,” and prayed for rain. In answer to his thrice-repeated prayer there arose “a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand.” At this sight, Elijah said to his servant, “Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.”

The Prophet's Prayer Answered

“In the meanwhile, ... the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.” (1 Kings 18:42-46)

To those who believe the Bible to be the recorded word of God, this is a thrilling, faith-inspiring account of a great crisis. That great man of God, Elijah, gave the people abundant and impressive proof that their king and queen were leading them away from the true God into the rankest heathenism. This mighty, convincing manifestation of the power of God should have

turned the king and queen and all Israel from the worship of Baal back to the sincere worship of the living God. This was why the Lord wrought so mightily through His prophet.

But the king and queen cast aside all this evidence of the sovereignty of God. They turned a deaf ear to its appeal to turn from the Phoenicians' Baal to Israel's God. "Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." (1 Kings 19:1-2)

Elijah Given New Commissions

Such a murderous threat seemed too heavy for Elijah's exhausted body and mind, and "he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba." Leaving his servant there, he pressed farther on, "a day's journey into the wilderness." But he did not remain here. He traveled on yet forty days farther,

until he came to “Horeb the mount of God. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there.” (See verses 3-9)

Elijah might be now a long way from the wrathful queen, but not from the Lord, who came close to him, and said, “What doest thou here, Elijah?” Verse 9. How long Elijah remained at Horeb is not known; but while there, he was given another sad, heavy task. The Lord said unto him:

“Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

“So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him... Then he [Elisha] arose, and went after Elijah and ministered unto him.” (1 Kings 19:15-21)

During Elijah’s stay at Horeb, and elsewhere, the Lord sent other prophets with messages to Ahab.

“Ben-hadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it.” (1 Kings 20:1)

Samaria was a part of Ahab’s kingdom. This invasion by a great monarch, accompanied by thirty-two other kings and a great army, so terrified Ahab that he hastily said to Ben-hadad’s messengers, “My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have.” Verse 4. Ahab’s surrender was complete. But though Israel

was unworthy of His protection, the Lord was not ready to see His people, as they still were, go into Syrian captivity.

“And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord. And Ahab said, ... Who shall order the battle? And He answered, Thou.” (Verses 13-14)

This was surely the manifestation of great compassion toward a rebellious king and an ungrateful people. The Lord wrought for them mightily. “And the king of Israel went out, ... and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter.” (Verse 21)

Another Prophetic Message to Ahab

Immediately after this victory was gained, “the prophet came to the king of Israel, and said unto him, Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest: for at the return of the year the

king of Syria will come up against thee.” (Verse 22) The Syrian host came again, and were again utterly defeated. So great was their loss that Ben-hadad, the king, fled to the city of Aphek, and hid in an inner chamber. Later he sent some of his servants to the king of Israel, who said to him, “Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee, let me live.” (Verse 32)

This was just what Ahab should not have permitted. But utterly regardless of God’s purpose, Ahab said, “Is he yet alive? he is my brother... Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Ben-hadad came forth to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot.” (Verses 32-33)

This disregard by Ahab of the Lord’s instruction brought to a tragic end what had, up to this moment, been a time of truly wonderful experiences in Israel. No sooner had Ahab and Benhadad terminated their friendly conversation, gratifying to Ahab, than “a certain man of the sons of the prophets” intercepted Ahab with a weighty message:

“Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people. And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased, and came to Samaria.” (Verses 35,42-43)

This defiance of the prophetic instruction, and of the victorious deliverances the Lord had given, cost Ahab dearly, for he was subsequently slain in battle by the same Ben-hadad whom he had “let go.”

Elijah's Last Message to Ahab

Now there is written another dark chapter in the lives of Ahab and Jezebel.

“Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house...

And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.”

Naboth’s refusal to part with the inheritance that had come down to him was in obedience to the instruction the Lord had given Israel through Moses: “So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.” (Numbers 36:7)

But Ahab, having no regard for God’s plans, was angered by Naboth’s refusal. He went into his house so “heavy and displeased” that “he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.” (Verse 4) When Jezebel learned of Naboth’s refusal, she assured Ahab that he should soon have the vineyard. By foul conspiracy, the queen of the nation had this good man stoned to death. And “Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.” (See 1 Kings 21:1-16)

Then “the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it... And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord.” (1 Kings 21:17-20) Elijah then delivered to Ahab a message of doom—a message foretelling the utter destruction of the house of Ahab:

“Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, ... and will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked Me to anger, and made Israel to sin. And of Jezebel also spake the Lord, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat.

“But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel.” (1 Kings 21:21-26)

This appears to have been Elijah’s last meeting with Ahab. All that he had predicted in his last terrible message came upon Ahab and Jezebel and their house.

Inquiring of the Lord

Following the delivery of Elijah’s last message to Ahab, great events followed one another, bringing tremendous changes in Israel. There had been three years without war between Syria and Israel. Ahab broke this peace, and brought on another war. He determined to take from Syria certain cities which Ben-hadad had formerly taken from Israel. Feeling his need of help in this undertaking, Ahab persuaded Jehoshaphat, king of

Judah, to join him. But before entering upon the campaign, Jehoshaphat suggested to Ahab that he inquire “at the word of the Lord” in regard to the undertaking. In response to this, the king of Israel gathered four hundred of his prophets together, and said: “Shall I go up against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.” (1 Kings 22:6)

Jehoshaphat was not satisfied with this, for he said:

“Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him? And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.” (Verses 7-8)

Micaiah Prophecies

They hastened an officer to bring Micaiah. On their way to the kings, this officer told Micaiah what counsel Ahab's prophets had given, and suggested that it would be well for Micaiah to agree with them. But Micaiah, true man that he was, replied: "As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak." Verse 14. The counsel he gave the king was the opposite of that which the other prophets had given. "And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?" (Verse 18)

So angered was Ahab that he gave these orders:

"Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; and say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace." (Verses 26-27) To this Micaiah calmly replied: "If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken

by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you.” (Verse 28)

This is the last we hear of Micaiah. It is to be supposed that the king’s orders were carried out; and it is not difficult to believe that this good and true man, this man honored by the Sovereign of the universe as His spokesman, went to his death for his loyalty to God.

But that is not the last we hear of Ahab. In open defiance of the warning from God through Micaiah, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, went up to Ramothgilead. Ben-hadad, king of Syria, “commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel.” (Verse 31)

The battle was on. Ahab and Ben-hadad were face to face in another mighty struggle for supremacy. Ahab had twice before been victorious because he had acted in harmony with divine instruction given through the prophets of God.

Voice of the Prophet Unheeded

But in the present struggle he was going directly contrary to the voice of the prophet. The issue of the battle would be a test of the genuineness of the prophet. Action was swift. Early in the engagement, “a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness [armor]: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.”

“And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot... So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria.” (1 Kings 22:34-37)

“So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.” “And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way

of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin: for he served Baal, and worshiped him, and provoked to anger the Lord God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.” (Verses 40,52-53)

Ahaziah reigned only two years. By a fall “through a lattice in his upper chamber,” he was seriously injured,—“was sick.” “He sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, inquire of Baalzebub the God of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease.” (2 Kings 1:2) For this Elijah was sent with a severe rebuke:

“He said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to inquire of Baalzebub the God of Ekron, is it not because there is no God in Israel to inquire of His word? therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. So he died according to the word of the Lord which Elijah had spoken.” (2 Kings 1:16-17)

This was about the year 932 B. C., and closed

the stupendous work of the great prophet Elijah. Following the statement regarding the death of Ahaziah and the beginning of the reign of his son, Jehoram, the record continues: “It came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.” (2 Kings 2:1) Elisha, whom the Lord had previously selected to take Elijah’s place, accompanied Elijah from Gilgal to Bethel and Jericho. From this it appears that Elijah’s last work before his translation to heaven was to visit the three schools of the prophets; for they were located at the three places mentioned.

What wonderful occasions these must have been to the teachers and students in these schools! It was known that this great prophet was about to be taken alive to heaven. When the prophets came to the school at Jericho, “the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head today? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.” (Verse 5)

Elisha Succeeds Elijah

From this school Elijah and Elisha went to the Jordan. Elijah parted the waters with his mantle, and the prophets passed over. “And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off.” (Verse 7) The parting hour had now come. Elijah, who for long years had battled with the forces of evil in the nation, knew better than did Elisha what he was facing. As the unfinished task was now to pass from him to Elisha, the burden must have pressed upon him with all but crushing weight.

“With yearning heart Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee.’ And the young man looked up at him and saw the scars of all the fights, saw the lines upon his face, read the records of all his troubles in every furrow in his brow and every line upon his cheek, knew that it all meant peril and danger and hardship and suffering, and his heart swelled within his bosom as he turned to him and said, ‘I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon

me.’ ...

“It was a wise and noble request. It showed how true already was the spiritual insight of the new prophet... He thought of nothing better, he wished for nothing higher, than to follow with increased zeal in his steps. He longed only to pursue the labor which Elijah had begun—pursue it with the same steadfastness and the same resolute devotion. But if he inherited the sacred burden, he must also be heir of the blessing.” [5]

He therefore asked Elijah to leave with him far more for the finishing of the task than had been given Elijah for its beginning and its prosecution. To Elisha’s request, Elijah replied: “Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee.” (2 Kings 2:10) Then the chariot appeared, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. As Elisha saw his great master, his beloved Elijah, disappearing, he cried, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more.” (Verse 12)

A Great Prophet in a Great Crisis

Thus closed the earthly career of one of the greatest men that ever lived. His was not a comparatively long life of service. It was only about twenty-five years from the time he first appeared to Ahab until he was translated. But those were heartbreaking years to the prophet. They were strenuous, wearing years. He had done his work, and the Lord took him to Himself.

If Elijah's messages and methods seem stern and harsh, and at times cruel, it should be remembered that he was drawn into one of the most serious and perilous crises in the history of the people of God. The instigators of the movement to make Phoenician heathenism the religion of Israel were clothed with the authority and power of the government. They were determined and persistent in their purpose. As the record shows, no message from God, no judgment that fell upon them, caused them to halt in their mad career. Only death brought their evil work to a close. One writer

has well said:

“God’s revelations of Himself and His purposes to man have always been through men, and by His laws the medium always colors the light which it transmits. The splendor of the noonday sun cannot shine clearly through rough, imperfect glass; and so the conceptions of Deity and of the divine will, as delivered by the prophets, in every case show the nature of the man receiving and delivering the inspired message.”

The crisis brought upon Israel by Ahab and Jezebel called for a man of great courage and resolution—a man who would not fear to meet king and queen, and deliver to them stern and terrible messages. Elijah was chosen and strengthened by the Lord for that mission. He could not be placid, easygoing, and yielding. The situation forbade such an attitude. As another has said:

“Elijah was not a reformer of peace; the very vision of peace was hidden from his eyes, reserved

for later prophets for whom he could but prepare the way. It was his mission to destroy at whatever cost the heathen worship which else would have destroyed Israel itself, with consequences whose evil we cannot estimate. Amos and Hosea would have had no standing ground had it not been for the work of Elijah and the influences which at divine direction he put in operation.” [6]

The Gift Needed at All Times

The experiences of this perilous crisis in the history of Israel very clearly reveal the imperative need for the guidance of the prophetic gift at all times, even to the end of time in this strange old world. It was not sufficient for this gift to be manifested in a truly helpful and beneficial way in olden times only, through the prophets, Enoch, Moses, and Samuel. The generations in which these men lived needed the working of the prophetic gift. But that gift was needed as imperatively in the days of Elijah and Ahab as at any former time in the history of the people of God, and the gift was present, rendering a mighty

service, in harmony with the divine purpose as when first imparted.

Notes:

1. Testimonies for the Church 3:263
2. Testimonies for the Church 3:274
3. Testimonies for the Church 3:275
4. Testimonies for the Church 3:284
5. “The Greater Men and Women of the Bible,” James Hastings, Vol. III, pp. 416, 417. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons
6. “The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,” Vol. II, art., “Elijah,” p. 932

Chapter 10

Prophetic Work of Elisha

To elijah the Lord had said, “Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.” (1 Kings 19:16)

Thus Elisha was called to the prophetic office while Elijah was still active in the great work God had committed to him. Elisha immediately joined Elijah, and remained with him until they were separated by Elijah’s translation.

His intimate association with the great prophet Elijah, during the closing years of that reformatory movement in the nation, must have been of inestimable value to Elisha. It gave him the most favorable opportunity to gain a clear understanding of the grave crisis Ahab and Jezebel had brought upon God’s chosen people. It gave him a revelation of the subtle purpose and determination of Satan to break Israel’s connection with Jehovah, and turn them into debased heathenism like all the other

nations of earth.

It likewise gave him a revelation of God's purpose to defeat the forces of evil. He witnessed the operation of a greater power with Elijah to save than with Ahab to destroy. His experience also gave him a clear vision of the superhuman task that had been committed to Elijah, and a keen realization of his own utter inability to carry the work forward after Elijah's departure. Why should he not cry out, "My father, my father," when he saw the chariot bearing the mighty Elijah heavenward, thus parting "them both asunder," and leaving himself alone with apostate Israel?

This was a supreme hour for Elisha. The strong, fearless, Spirit-filled Elijah had gone, leaving a great work for Elisha to take up and carry forward. The task seemed too great to Elisha. But it was there, and with it was Elijah's mantle lying at Elisha's feet, where it had fallen from his departed leader. This was a token of assurance to Elisha. But before laying his hand upon it, "he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces,"

thus expressing, it would seem, entire separation from the world and utter renunciation of self.

He then gathered Elijah's mantle to himself, and went back and stood by the bank of Jordan. Apparently bewildered and fearful, he cried, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" Has He left this world and gone with Elijah? Or is He still here to direct and empower me in the prosecution of His work? Will He part the waters for me as He did for Elijah? "And when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over." Verse 14. Thus Elisha was given immediate and signal evidence that the God of Elijah was still on earth, and with him, and that the same divine power that had wrought so mightily through Elijah had been imparted to him.

Received as Elijah's Successor

With this comforting and inspiring assurance, Elisha crossed Jordan and directed his steps toward

the school of the prophets at Jericho. Before he reached the school, he was met by fifty “sons of the prophets” who had previously come part way to Jordan with the hope that they might witness the translation. When these students saw that Elijah had been taken, and that his mantle had been transferred to Elisha, and with it the power of God that had parted the river of Jordan, they said, “The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him.” (Verse 15) Thus Elisha was promptly recognized as Elijah’s successor.

Without delay Elisha entered upon the work of carrying forward the reform in Israel that Elijah had begun. The great wickedness of Ahab and Jezebel in leading Israel into idolatry had been widely exposed and sternly rebuked by Elijah. The judgments of heaven had fallen upon the land. The extermination of the house of Ahab had begun. The conscience of Israel had been awakened and alarmed. The schools of the prophets which Samuel established had been revived. The apostasy of Ahab and Jezebel had been checked. A

reformation had set in. All this Elisha was to foster and carry forward, and he did so with marked earnestness and success.

The marvelous change that had been wrought in the nation by Elijah called for a different manner of life and for different methods of service than those adopted by Elijah. The situation which Elijah met when he entered upon his work had been beyond the power of man to change. The word of the king and the queen was supreme.

The queen was of the Oriental type—despotic. She came from a people who despised Israel, and who were bent on their subjugation. What could not be done by force might be done by turning Israel away from the living God to Baal, the sun-god of the Phoenicians. The apostasy which Ahab and Jezebel had set on foot had made rapid progress. The complete substitution of Baal for Jehovah—of heathenism for the gospel of salvation—seemed so certain to Ahab and Jezebel that they treated Elijah's first warning with the utmost contempt. No voice, no argument, could

reach them. Evidence, even of a miraculous kind, availed nothing. Their reaction to the mighty manifestations of Jehovah that day on Mount Carmel was a threat to take the life of Elijah.

Some writers have criticized Elijah's methods, especially his isolation and the sternness with which he delivered his messages. But in what other way could he have dealt with those despotic rulers who would have ended his career at the beginning of his work if they could have laid hands on him?

Prophetic Method Adapted to Conditions

The situation was very different, however, when Elisha came from the scene of Elijah's translation. The violence of the rulers had abated. The people had been aroused to a realization of their peril. They felt the need of the presence and instruction of men of God. Hence Elisha received a welcome in all parts of the nation. He journeyed from place to place throughout the kingdom, associating with the people, instructing them in the way of the Lord, and ministering to them in their

varied needs.

Elisha's active work as prophet began at the school of the prophets in Jericho, where he went from his farewell with Elijah.

While he tarried at the school, the men of the city came to Elisha and pointed out a distressing situation that existed. They said, "The situation of this city is pleasant: ... but the water is nought, and the ground barren." Elisha's response was prompt. He took a cruse of salt, went to the spring, and cast the salt into the water. To those who accompanied him he said: "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake." (2 Kings 2:19-22)

Travelers who have visited Palestine in modern times find a spring at the place where it is believed this miracle was wrought. They describe it as "a large and beautiful fountain of sweet and pleasant water, and as 'scattering, even at the hottest season,

the richest and most grateful vegetation over what would otherwise be a bare tract of sandy soil.” [1]

From Jericho Elisha went to Bethel and then to Samaria, where he became known as a prophet—the successor of Elijah. By this time Jehoram, the son of Ahab, was reigning over Israel. He was in sore trouble because the king of Moab had rebelled and invaded his kingdom. The situation was so serious that Jehoram appealed for help to the king of Edom, and also to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. They joined him, and in leading their forces into the land of Moab, these kings found themselves in a place where “there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them.” The king of Israel said despairingly, “Alas! that the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!” (2 Kings 3:5-10)

But Jehoshaphat knew where to look for help. He said:

“Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him? And one of the

king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah. And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the Lord is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him." (Verses 11-12)

Elisha was not flattered by the presence of kings seeking information from him regarding their fate. Without fear he "said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father [Ahab], and to the prophets of thy mother [Jezebel]... Were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee." (Verses 13-14)

Then "the hand of the Lord came upon him. And he said, Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord: He will

deliver the Moabites also into your hand.” (Verses 15-18)

“And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.” (Verse 20) Then came the battle and “the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them: but they went forward smiting the Moabites, even in their country.” (Verse 24)

This was a most important experience; for it brought Elisha prominently before the kingdoms of Israel, Judah, Edom, and Moab, as the prophet of the Lord and the successor of Elijah.

The King Saved by the Prophet

Again, this same king of Israel (Jehoram) was brought into great peril, this time by the king of Syria, Ben-hadad, who invaded his kingdom. Once more the prophet Elisha was led to give the king of Israel counsel that saved him from his enemies.

The account is given in the sixth chapter of the second book of Kings.

In directing his campaign, the king of Syria gave orders to his officers to place ambushments where he had reason to believe the army of Israel would be surprised and captured. But Elisha warned the king of Israel regarding all the plans of Ben-hadad. The repeated failure of Ben-hadad to find Jehoram's army led him to suspect that he had a traitor among his own men, and he said to his officers, "Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel? And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber." (2 Kings 6:11-12)

Ben-hadad then determined to take the life of the prophet. He ordered his men to find Elisha and bring him to the camp. They departed with "horses, and chariots, and a great host." But they failed, for when they surrounded Elisha, he "prayed unto the Lord, and said, Smite this people, I pray Thee, with

blindness. And He smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.” (2 Kings 6:14-18)

In this helpless condition they were led by Elisha straight to the camp of the king of Israel. How impotent is puny man when warring against the purposes of God!

When this blind host had reached Israel’s camp, Elisha said, “Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria. And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them?” (Verses 20-21)

This was a great opportunity to win a decisive victory by the slaughter of this Syrian host. But Elisha said, “Thou shalt not smite them... Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master... And when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.” (Verses 22-23)

Thus repeatedly was clear and convincing evidence given to both Israel and Syria that there was One greater than man, who could protect His people against the evil plottings of their enemies, and that Elisha was His prophet—His personal representative. Thus, too, great benefits came to Israel through the services of the prophet of God.

Besides serving as counselor of kings in behalf of nations, Elisha gave sympathetic attention and helpful service to the people. He journeyed from place to place, forming close association with men and women in all ranks of life.

At one place the widow of one of the sons of the prophets appealed to him for help to protect her from a creditor who was about to take her “two sons to be bondmen.” His heart was touched by her appeal, and he expressed his sympathy by causing the small quantity of oil she had in a receptacle to continue flowing until all the containers in the house and all she could borrow were filled. Then “the oil stayed,” and Elisha said, “Go, sell the oil,

and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.” (2 Kings 4:1-7)

Ministrations of Love and Mercy

In his journeys Elisha often passed a house where there lived “a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread.” As time passed, this woman said to her husband, “Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God.” (Verses 8-9) She persuaded her husband to build a small room for Elisha to occupy when visiting them. In response to this kindness, Elisha asked what favor he could do for her. She answered, “I dwell among mine own people,” thus intimating that there was nothing she needed. After she had withdrawn, Gehazi suggested that God might bless her with a child. Elisha said, “Call her.” And when he had called her, Elisha said, “About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son.” (Verses 13-16)

The prediction was fulfilled. A son was born; but while he was still young, he died. In her grief,

the mother hastened to Carmel where Elisha was staying, and besought him to come and restore the lad to life. “When Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead.” In praying for the restoration of life, Elisha put his mouth to the child’s mouth, and his eyes to his eyes, and his hands upon the child’s hands, and breathed into him. Then life came into the child, and he “opened his eyes.” On being told that the child was restored to life, the mother went in, and fell at Elisha’s feet, and “bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.” (2 Kings 4:18-37)

This wonderful manifestation of the power of Israel’s God was a revelation of His love for His people, and of His great desire to save them to the uttermost.

On one occasion, when visiting the school at Gilgal, poisonous gourds had by mistake been cooked for the students. This wild gourd is supposed to have been the colocynth, which grows in abundance near the Dead Sea. It contains a “pulp intensely bitter, and, in any but minute quantities,

is extremely poisonous.” When it was discovered that these poisonous gourds had been cooked, the students cried out, “O thou man of God, there is death in the pot.” Verse 40. Elisha immediately cast some meal into the pot where the gourds were being cooked, and there was no more harm in the food.

During the same visit a man brought twenty loaves of barley and full ears of corn to the school. But this was not enough for the hundred men. In Elisha’s hands, however, the food was multiplied, as in the case, centuries later, when Jesus fed a multitude. Elisha said, “Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the Lord, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof. So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the Lord.” (Verses 42-44)

The Healing of Naaman

The healing of Naaman, the Syrian leper, was one of the most notable and impressive miracles wrought by Elisha. When Naaman finally

surrendered to the Lord's way, as declared by Elisha, he was healed. "His flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel." (2 Kings 5:14-15) And he "returned to his Syrian home, healed in body and converted in spirit." [2]

One devout writer says:

"The story of Naaman,' says Menken, 'is a worthy part of the history of those revelations and manifestations of the living God which, in their connection and continuation through many centuries, and in their tendency towards one goal and object, were designed to plant upon earth the knowledge and the worship of the true God! But it offers besides to our consideration a rich store of reflections, in which neither heart nor understanding can refuse a willing participation.'" [3]

Elisha succeeded Elijah as head of the schools of the prophets. He visited them, instructed the leaders and students, joined them in manual labor, and wrought miracles for them in their pressing needs and serious difficulties.

Elijah's Charge Fulfilled by Elisha

In addition to all this very pleasant, helpful service, there was given to Elisha a serious and painful duty. It appears that the instruction given Elijah to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, and “Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi” to be king over Israel, had been passed on to Elisha to be carried out.

The career of Hazael, as recorded in the Scriptures, begins in 2 Kings 8:7. Hazael was sent to Elisha by Ben-hadad, king of Syria, who was seriously ill, to inquire of the prophet whether he would recover from his sickness. When Elisha met Hazael, the prophet wept because of the evil he knew that Hazael would do unto the children of Israel. (See 2 Kings 8:7-13) By cruel conspiracy,

Hazael murdered his king, Ben-hadad, on his sick-bed, and usurped the throne of Syria. He then entered upon a relentless and destructive warfare against the kingdom of Israel. “In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel.” (2 Kings 10:32) Of this, due warning had been given kings and people, and the way of escape through repentance and reformation had been made plain. But they rejected the messages sent to them.

The record of the punishment inflicted upon the house of Ahab and the prophets of Baal by Jehu is given in 2 Kings 9 and 10. Jehu was anointed to be king by one of the sons of the prophets, sent by Elisha. He then began the execution of the sentence of Jehovah upon the house of Ahab. He slew the king of Israel, and usurped the throne. He then hastened to Jezreel, where the heathen consort of Ahab lived. At the command of Jehu, Jezebel was thrown from an upper window, and shortly afterward it was reported that the prediction by Elijah had been literally fulfilled: “In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel: and the

carcass of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel.” (2 Kings 9:30-37)

The account of the execution of Jezebel makes sad, hard reading; but it reflects in some degree the great evil Ahab and Jezebel had brought upon the nation of Israel. No warning from God, no judgment He could inflict, could change their purpose to turn Israel away from Jehovah to Baal.

Besides carrying into effect this terrible sentence against Jezebel, “Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his kinsfolks, and his priests, until he left him none remaining.” (2 Kings 10:11)

He also cut off all the priests and prophets of Baal. “And they brought forth the images out of the house of Baal, and burned them. And they brake down the image of Baal, and brake down the house of Baal, and made it a draughtouse unto this day. Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel.” (Verses 26-28)

Changed Attitude Toward the Prophet

Such was the terrible judgment that came upon the house of Ahab and Jezebel for their defiant, determined purpose to establish heathenism in the hearts of God's chosen people.

“It is not to be supposed that the relentless and savage Jehu was altogether moved by a zeal for Jehovah in these revolting slaughters. He was an ambitious and successful rebel; but like all notable forces, he may be regarded as an instrument of Providence, whose ways are ‘mysterious,’ because men are not large enough and wise enough to trace effects to their causes under His immutable laws. Jehu was a necessary consequence of Ahab and Jezebel.” [4]

When Jehu had carried through the regrettable part he was chosen to perform, the great task that had been committed to Elijah was finally and fully accomplished. The work he began when he first appeared before Ahab in the name of “the Lord

God of Israel,” was finished during the ministry of Elisha.

“Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.” (2 Kings 13:14)

How great is the change that has taken place! Ahab, king of Israel, compassed land and sea to take the life and end the career of the prophet Elijah, the immediate predecessor of Elisha. As Joash looks into the face of the dying prophet and realizes what a loss his death will be to the nation, he weeps over the prophet, and calls him by that endearing name, “My father.”

The king was in sore trouble. Ben-hadad, king of Syria, was warring against Israel. His father had already invaded the land and exacted heavy toll. King Joash needed, and sincerely desired, counsel from the prophet. This, Elisha, though near death, promptly and clearly gave him. “Thou shalt smite

Syria but thrice.” The fulfillment of this prediction is stated as follows. “Three times did Joash beat him [Ben-hadad], and recovered the cities of Israel.” (2 Kings 13:19,25)

With the counsel given Joash, the ministry of that great man closed. “And Elisha died, and they buried him.” 2 Kings 13:20. “What a peaceful deathbed Elisha’s was! He had long since made his choice. He had lived not for time, but for eternity; not under the fear of man, but under the fear of God; not for the favor of kings or their rewards, but so as to win the approval of his conscience and his Creator.” [5]

Seventy-five Years of Prophetic Service

It was a long, eventful, and triumphant life that was granted to Elisha. He lived to the ripe old age of ninety. Sixty-five years of this time was entirely devoted to the cause of God. He was associated with Elijah during the last years of Ahab’s reign, and also through the two years of the reign of Ahab’s son, Ahaziah. It was in the first years of the

reign of Jehoram king of Israel that Elijah was translated, and then Elisha entered upon his work alone. His ministry continued through the reigns of Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and the first years of Joash. As nearly as can be determined, Elisha was associated with Elijah six years before his translation, and from that event filled the prophetic office for a period of fifty-nine years. How impressive is the difference in the record of the life, the service, and the influence of this prophet and the record of the lives of the kings whom he counseled for a lifetime!

“Elisha’s single aim is to complete the reforms begun by Elijah—to re-establish the ancient truth, and repel heathen superstition. He is a statesman as well as a prophet. Among all the prophets, none intervene in the highest national affairs more boldly than Elisha, and none so successfully. For many years he eagerly watches every turn of events. When the nation is ripe for revolution, he summons the destined man at an opportune moment, puts an end to the Tyrian domination, and extirpates the base Tyrian superstition. After the

fall of the Omrite dynasty, he is the trusted friend and sagacious adviser of the house of Jehu, and the strength and inspiration of Israel in all its trials.”
[6]

The following comparison of the services rendered to the nation by these prophets of God should be helpful to those who are called to take up the work of talented predecessors:

“Elisha was greater yet less, less yet greater, than Elijah. He is less. We cannot dispense with the mighty past even when we have shot far beyond it. Those who follow cannot be as those who went before. A prophet like Elijah comes once and does not return. Elisha, both to his countrymen and to us, is but the successor, the faint reflection, of his predecessor. Less, yet greater; for the work of the great ones of this earth is carried on by far inferior instruments, but on a far wider scale, and it may be in a far higher spirit.

“The life of an Elijah is never spent in vain. Even his death has not taken him from us. He

struggles, single-handed, as it would seem, and without effect; and in the very crisis of the nation's history is suddenly and mysteriously removed. But his work continues; his mantle falls; his teaching spreads; his enemies perish. The prophet preaches and teaches, the martyr dies and passes away; but other men enter into his labors. What was begun in fire and storm, in solitude and awful visions, must be carried on through winning arts, and healing arts, and gentle words of peaceful and social intercourse; not in the desert of Horeb, or on the top of Carmel, but in the crowded thoroughfares of Samaria, in the gardens of Damascus, by the rushing waters of Jordan." [7]

Notes:

1. "The Pulpit Commentary," on 2 Kings 2:1, p. 23
2. Prophets and Kings, 252
3. "The Pulpit Commentary," on 2 Kings 99
4. "Beacon Lights of History," John Lord, First Series, "Jewish Heroes and Prophets," p. 314. New York: Fords, Howard, and Hulbert, 1888

5. "The Pulpit Commentary," on 2 Kings, C. H. Irwin, p. 270
6. "Dictionary of the Bible," James Hastings, art., "Elisha," p. 694 (1908)
7. "The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia," Vol. I, pp. 590, 591

Chapter 11

The Last Prophets of Israel

Through the loyal and long-continued efforts of Elijah, Elisha, and other contemporary prophets, the Lord prevented Ahab and Jezebel from establishing Syrian idolatry fully and permanently in Israel. The stern messages delivered by Elijah, the judgments of God that fell upon the house of Ahab, and the inspiring messages and beneficent miracles of Elisha, made a profound impression upon the nation. Great numbers were awakened and saved from idolatry and eternal ruin.

Kings, princes, high officials, priests, and people gave the prophets more respectful consideration than they had received for two centuries. Elisha traveled throughout the kingdom with the greatest freedom. Rulers conferred with him regarding their serious problems. The people welcomed him wherever he journeyed. Many gave heed to his instruction. The general esteem in which he was held is revealed by King Joash when

he heard that “Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died.” (2 Kings 13:14) The king hastened to the bedside of the dying prophet, and when he came into his presence, he “wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.” (Verse 14)

This high regard manifested by King Joash for the dying prophet, so vastly different from the former violent opposition of Ahab and Jezebel to Elijah, shows that the way had been prepared for a great reformation, and for the complete restoration of Israel to their true Sovereign and loving Lord. Elijah’s sacrificial life had not been spent in vain. It had arrested the apostasy, and turned the nation in the right direction.

But the response was not full. The stand for entire reformation was not firm, not absolute. King Joash, who had expressed so clearly his sense of the great loss Elisha’s death would be to the nation, failed to make the reformation in his own life that Elisha’s messages called for. He could not, therefore, like good King Hezekiah of Judah, lead

the people into the glorious reformation for which full preparation had been made.

King Joash survived the death of Elisha ten or twelve years. During that time he gained the three victories Elisha said he would win in his conflicts with Ben-hadad, king of Syria. (See 2 Kings 13:19,25) Of his reign it was written: “He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin: but he walked therein.” (2 Kings 13:11)

Three Prophets on Duty

Jeroboam II succeeded his father Joash as king, and Jonah, Amos, and Hosea followed Elisha in the prophetic office. Thus the Lord continued, through the prophetic gift, to provide divine counsel and guidance for Israel, and to give them success in repelling invaders of the land. Of Jeroboam II, we read:

“He restored the coast of Israel from the

entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He spake by the hand of His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher. For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: ... but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.” (2 Kings 14:25-27)

The road to the reformation called for by Elijah and Elisha was still wide open. Those prophets were on duty. Jeroboam, the king, acted promptly upon the prediction of the prophet Jonah, that the coast of Israel which had been taken from the nation would be restored. What a wonderful opportunity Jeroboam had for leading the nation back to the Lord, who led the first Jeroboam to establish the kingdom!

But Jeroboam failed in plain sight and within short distance of the goal. This failure proved to be far more than a mere failure; it developed into utter disregard of God’s requirements. Jeroboam arrayed himself against the Sovereign of the universe. This

was a most serious offense in the sight of God. Elisha had been the counselor of Jeroboam's father and grandfather. He had undoubtedly instructed Jeroboam in the way of the Lord from his youth. But all this had little weight with the king and his advisers. They made it plain that they wanted not the Lord's way in the affairs of the kingdom. It was now two hundred years after the establishment of the kingdom of Israel. During the entire time the Lord had kept His prophets close to the rulers and in the midst of the people. Jeroboam II was the thirteenth king that had come to the throne, and every one had been counseled and warned by prophets of God. The ingratitude and defiance of Jeroboam and the nation reached the limit of God's forbearance and protection. The prophet Hosea, who was then God's messenger to Israel, was bidden to write:

“The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of ... Jeroboam the son of Joash... The land that committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord... For yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel

upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel... I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away.” (Hosea 1:1-6)

Hosea’s startling message of doom was supported by a like message from the prophet Amos “which he saw concerning Israel ... in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel.” Amos 1:1. The warning of Amos was very serious:

“The high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.” (Amos 7:9)

Israel Doomed by Defying the Prophets

These messages were not pleasing to the nation’s leaders, and their displeasure was expressed as follows:

“Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath

conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.

“Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: but prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king’s chapel, and it is the king’s court.” (Amos 7:10-13)

What a sad situation is here revealed! Although in the magnificent temple at Bethel, priests had been chosen who were not Levites, although a sacred calf was the visible symbol of adoration, yet the worship of Jehovah still remained as the nominal state religion. Therefore in his office as a priest, Amaziah was supposed to be God’s representative. As such, the people looked to him to bear to them messages from the prophets.

But Amaziah joined the king in rejecting the message of warning sent by the Lord through His

prophets. They ordered the prophet to leave the kingdom, and to prophesy no more against the nation. But this defiant attitude did not silence the prophet. He was in duty and conscience bound to discharge the responsibility placed upon him.

“Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel. Now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord: Thou sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac. Therefore thus saith the Lord; ... Thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.” (Amos 7:14-17)

God’s messages stand. They cannot be set aside by puny man except at his peril. Thus are the history and the fall of the church bound up with the messages of the prophets,—obedience meant life; disobedience, death.

From this time Israel's doom was sealed. No further triumphs in Jeroboam's reign are recorded. Although it extended over a period of forty-one years, the record of that long reign is given in a paragraph of less than a hundred words, one third of which reads as follows: "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." (2 Kings 14:24)

Jeroboam's death occurred 793 B. C. From this time on one disaster after another befell the kingdom of Israel. Zachariah, Jeroboam's son and successor to the throne, was assassinated within six months after beginning his reign. His assassin, Shallum, usurped the throne; but in thirty days he was slain by one Menahem, who took the throne and reigned ten years. His son, Pekahiah, succeeded him; but in two months he was assassinated by Pekah, who in turn was slain by Hoshea. (See 2 Kings 15:8-30; 17:1-6)

This assassin, Hoshea, who usurped the throne, was Israel's last king. "Against him came up

Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents,” or, as the margin reads, “rendered” him “tribute.” 2 Kings 17:3. But after the king of Assyria had returned to his own kingdom, Hoshea broke his covenants with him, formed a conspiracy with So, king of Egypt, and ceased to pay tribute to Assyria.

“Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.” (Verses 5-6)

Abundant Ministry of Prophets

Thus ended the kingdom of Israel, founded by the first Jeroboam 990 B. C. It came to its end 720 B. C., after an evil and stormy career of two hundred seventy years. Of every one of its nineteen kings it is written: “He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.” But while these kings were

reigning and doing their evil deeds, the Lord raised up fourteen prophets to counsel, assist, warn, and restrain them as developments required. Besides the fourteen especially called to be messengers to these rulers, there were schools of the prophets and companies of prophets. Obadiah hid one hundred by fifties in caves, to save them from being put to death by Jezebel, queen of Israel. (See 1 Kings 18:3-4)

Every one of Israel's kings was given divine instruction through God's messengers. (See 2 Kings 17:13) There was no good reason, therefore, for missing the right way. Every king might have had a prosperous reign, and have left a good record; together they might have brought the kingdom of Israel to a glorious consummation. Instead, they wrought evil. They led the people away from God, and brought one disaster after another upon the kingdom until it finally ended with an assassin on the throne.

Israel's Tragic End

A truly sorrowful review of Israel's experience from the establishment of the kingdom until its tragic end is given in the second book of Kings:

“So it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt...

“And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the Lord their God...

“And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: ... for they served idols, whereof the Lord had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing...

“Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God.

“And they rejected His statutes, and His covenant that He made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them...

“And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger.” (2 Kings 17:7-17)

Ministry of Prophets to the End

This is a terrible record of ingratitude and disregard of God, who was all the while showering blessings upon them. But the Lord treated them with great love, mercy, and forbearance. For two hundred seventy years He did all that infinite wisdom, love, and power permitted Him to do to save them. But at last He gave them up.

“The Lord rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of

spoilors, until He had cast them out of His sight... So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.” (Verses 20-23)

The marvelous ministry of Elisha in the kingdom was the supreme hour for the full reformation and restoration of Israel. But they failed, and from that hour they departed fast and far from God.

It was only one hundred twenty-five years from the death of Elisha to the overthrow of the kingdom of Israel. During that time, eight kings occupied the throne. But while the kingdom was disintegrating in the hands of these kings, there were three prophets in Israel giving messages of guidance from the Lord. These were: Jonah, Amos, and Hosea. There were also contemporary prophets in Judah, such as Isaiah and Micah, who sent messages to the northern kingdom. Thus to the day of their utter ruin the Lord left not His people without inspired messengers.

Of their sad end the Lord exclaims: “O Israel,

thou hast destroyed thyself.” (Hosea 13:9)

Kingdom of Israel Never Restored

The destruction of the kingdom of Israel was a tragic affair in the history of God’s chosen people. In the first place, large numbers of the people were carried as captives into heathen lands. They were separated into companies, and placed in different cities. Here they remained until death. The kingdom was never restored. In the second place, the Assyrian rulers carried back to the land of Israel inhabitants of the same heathen lands in which Israel had been placed. “The king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.” (2 Kings 17:24)

From this time forward the inhabitants of the northern territory were called Samaritans. (See 2 Kings 17:29) They were never taken back to their

native lands. Although they suffered great cruelties at times from despotic rulers who gained possession of Palestine, they remained in the land. It was their descendants that were known as Samaritans during the ministry of Christ and the apostles. The contempt in which they were held by the Jews is revealed in the accusation the Jews made against Jesus: “Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?” John 8:48. This antagonism is also revealed by the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well in Samaria: “How is it,” she said to Jesus, “that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.” (John 4:9)

But the Master never shared or approved of this bitterness against the Samaritans He went among them. expressed His love for them, taught them the gospel of salvation and received them into His fold. After His ascension, when through persecution the members of the church at Jerusalem were scattered abroad, some went to Samaria. There Philip preached Christ unto them. “And the people with

one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake... And there was great joy in that city.” (Acts 8:6-8) A great work of salvation followed. Thus blessings of infinite worth came to the remnant of the Samaritans.

Chapter 12

The Prophets of Judah

Having traced the sad history of Israel down to the time of their captivity,—a judgment from heaven because of their persistent rejection of the messages of the prophets,—we turn to the record of the southern kingdom, whose regal line descended unbroken from the great rulers, David and Solomon. Here, too, we shall find that the tender heart of God yearned over His people, whose rulers sat in the palace at Jerusalem, the city which He “had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there.” (2 Chronicles 12:13)

Boldly and fearlessly did divinely appointed prophets bear messages of stern reproof and warn of impending judgments in times of apostasy. Faithfully and tenderly did they encourage and support the efforts of some of Judah’s noble kings who sought to turn the people back to the worship of Jehovah. These royal reformers, by retarding the strong current of apostasy, prolonged the life and

independence of the kingdom of Judah, which outlasted the northern kingdom by one hundred thirty-five years.

To Rehoboam of Judah, as to Jeroboam of Israel, prophetic messages were borne. In marked contrast, however, to the anger manifested by Jeroboam against the prophet who bore his testimony at Bethel was the obedient submission of Rehoboam early in his reign.

With a natural heritage of martial courage and skill, and assured of an unbroken dynasty by the divine promises to his grandfather David, it is not strange that Rehoboam confidently expected that he could, by force of arms, reduce the rebellious ten tribes to submission. His first act, therefore, was to muster an army of one hundred eighty thousand men of war. He was about to lead them forth against the ten tribes, when there came to him “Shemaiah the man of God,” who addressed him and the assembled army, saying:

“Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor

fight against your brethren [the children of Israel]: return every man to his house: for this thing is done of Me.” (2 Chronicles 11:4)

So fully did the king and his followers accept this as counsel from God that, without demur or hesitation, “they hearkened therefore to the word of the Lord, and returned to depart, according to the word of the Lord.” (1 Kings 12:24)

Rehoboam did not, however, always maintain this attitude of loyalty to God. He became inflated by success. Despite the wars initiated against him by Jeroboam, he was able to establish and strengthen himself. But he then fell beneath the subtle temptation to pride and self-exaltation, and “he forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him.” (2 Chronicles 12:1)

At length, a great Egyptian army, under Shishak, appeared before the walls of Jerusalem. Flushed with his success in having captured a number of fortified cities in Judah, he confidently expected to take the capital also.

A Solemn Judgment and Warning

In this hour of peril and anxiety, Shemaiah again appeared to Rehoboam and his princes, to bring them “the word of the Lord.” He told them plainly that these calamities had come upon them because the Lord, whom they had forsaken, had withdrawn His protection. This message led them to humble their hearts before God, and they freely acknowledged His justice in bringing trouble upon them. Then another message came, assuring them that God was merciful, that He had changed His purpose to pour out His wrath upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. He would “not destroy them,” but would grant them deliverance for “a little while.” (2 Chronicles 12:7, margin)

The invading army entered Jerusalem; but, having taken the treasures from the temple and from the king’s house, Shishak departed without destroying the city, dethroning Rehoboam, or taking captives.

This experience was a solemn object lesson, early in the history of Judah, of the relation of God to His people. It served as a reminder that national success and prosperity come through the favor of Jehovah. In announcing the partial deliverance from the king of Egypt, the prophet stated God's purpose in the experience,—“that they may know My service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.” 2 Chronicles 12:8. If they were to refuse obedience and loyalty to God, there was no alternative save subjection to the nations about them, which were growing in power.

This lesson was not forgotten by Rehoboam. During the rest of his reign, the record states, “In Judah things went well,” and he “strengthened himself in Jerusalem.” (Verses 12-13)

Asa Heeds the Prophet's Message

God's favor and prospering hand rested upon Judah during the reign of Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, and through the greater part of the succeeding reign of Asa, who for a time “did that

which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord.” (2 Chronicles 14:2) Divine help was sent to him in answer to his earnest prayer when faced with an invasion by a mighty army from Ethiopia. He was granted a signal victory over his enemies; and on his return from the campaign, the Lord sent Him a message intended to keep him from becoming self-exalted.

“The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Obed: and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you.” (2 Chronicles 15:1-2)

So profoundly was Asa impressed by this message that he assembled the people of Judah, and led them in a great service of consecration to God. Many of the idols were destroyed. He even deposed his own mother from acting as queen, because she persisted in idolatry.

A long period of peace followed, until there was a hostile move on the part of Baasha, the king of Israel, who began to erect a strong fortress on the border, with the intention of stopping all who would enter or leave the kingdom. Now, instead of looking to the Lord, who had so mightily delivered him from the Ethiopians, Asa sent costly presents of gold and silver, taken from his own house and from the temple, to Ben-hadad, king of Syria, with the request that he lead the Syrian armies in an invasion of the northern kingdom.

The plan was successful. The Syrians captured a number of cities. Baasha ceased work on the fortification, and Asa, with a band of workmen, removed the material that had been gathered for its erection. But his elation over this diplomacy was shortlived. Hanani, another prophet, here enters the picture, bringing to him a rebuke from the Lord for relying on a heathen king for deliverance, while neglecting to look to the Lord for His guidance and help. The Lord's desire to deliver all who trust in Him was beautifully stated in these words:

“The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.”
(2 Chronicles 16:9)

Because of his folly, he was sentenced, not only to be deprived of the honor of conquering the Syrians, but to be troubled with constant war for the rest of his reign. Dearly did he pay for putting dependence in a heathen king instead of in Jehovah.

Angered at this message, King Asa manifested a shocking disregard for the authority of Jehovah, and of His messenger. He ordered the prophet seized and cast into prison. Later, his defection was further indicated when, being afflicted with sickness, he consulted magicians instead of inquiring of the Lord through one of His prophets.

In the Days of Jehoshaphat

Jehoshaphat, the next king of Judah, was one of her best rulers. He carried forward the work of

reform that had lapsed during the latter part of Asa's reign. But he entered into an unfortunate alliance with Ahab, the wicked king of Israel, in a campaign against Syria. The account of this, with the message from the prophet Micaiah, has already been related in Chapter IX, in noting the experiences of Ahab.

On his return to Jerusalem from this war,—where Ahab had been killed and he himself had been saved only by divine interposition,—he was met by the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani the seer, who brought him words of reproof because of his alliance with Ahab, yet commended him for his piety. He said:

“Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord. Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.” (2 Chronicles 19:2-3)

The king accepted this reproof, and continued

to lead his people in the way of the Lord.

Jehoshaphat Believes the Prophets

One of the most remarkable instances of divine interposition and deliverance from overwhelming danger that has ever been recorded occurred a little later in the reign of Jehoshaphat. A great army of three nations—the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the inhabitants of Mount Seir—was invading the land of Judah. In great distress and anxiety, Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast throughout the land. Before a large congregation assembled in the courts of the temple, he cried mightily to God for deliverance. An assuring response came at once from heaven, through the Lord's established method of communication with His people:

“Then upon Jahaziel ... came the Spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation; and he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou King Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not

yours, but God's... Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you." (2 Chronicles 20:14-17)

This message was accepted by the king and all the people, as from the Lord. As they proceeded to carry out the prophet's instruction, the king declared to them this fundamental truth: "Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper." (Verse 20)

As they demonstrated their belief that God had spoken through the prophet upon whom the Spirit of the Lord had come, the Lord wrought a marvelous victory for them on the battlefield. Their enemies, being thrown into confusion, destroyed themselves.

When the army of Israel came within sight of the battlefield, "they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the

earth, and none escaped.” (Verse 24)

This experience made a profound impression upon the triumphant army of Jehoshaphat, and upon all Israel who witnessed their return. So we read:

“Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies... And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel. So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about.” (Verses 27-30)

Still later King Jehoshaphat brought upon himself another reproof from a prophet of the Lord. He allied himself to Ahaziah, a “king of Israel, who did very wickedly,” and together they attempted to revive the great maritime trade of the time of Solomon. They built a large fleet of merchant ships at the northern end of the Red Sea.

“Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.” (2 Chronicles 20:37)

Not Heeding the Prophets Brings Captivity

Another instance of prophetic communication of great import to the nation occurred in the later years of the kingdom. The national apostasy had progressed so far that retribution seemed imminent. Manasseh, the king, had put to death many of the people of God, and had attempted to establish idolatry firmly in the land. He made his own son to pass through the fire. He seduced the people “to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel.” (2 Kings 21:9)

“The Lord spake by His servants the prophets, saying, Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done

these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, ... I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down. And I will forsake the remnant of Mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies.” (2 Kings 21:10-14)

The direct relation of the captivity to the rejection of the Lord’s messages, as delivered by His prophets, is clearly indicated in the following statement:

“The Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken. Wherefore [for this reason] the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.” (2 Chronicles 33:10-11)

As has happened to many others, affliction led him to seek the Lord. In Babylon as a captive he

“humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him.” (Verses 12-13)

The Lord heard his prayer, and restored him to his land and his kingdom. He sought—in vain, however—to stem the current of evil that he had started in the earlier part of his reign.

After Manasseh died, his son Amon ruled wickedly for two years, and was followed by the youthful Josiah. He had been brought up by a godly mother, who feared the Lord. In the eighteenth year of his reign he appointed workmen to repair and clean out the temple, which had fallen into decay through disuse. Here was found by Hilkiah, the priest, a dusty, aged parchment, which proved to be the scroll of the book of the law as given to Moses, and which had long been unused.

The Prophetess Huldah

It was a momentous discovery. Tidings of the find were carried to the king; and he asked that the book be read to him. As he heard the blessings

promised to Israel if they would be obedient to the law of God, and the curses that would result if they should disobey, he became greatly distressed and anxious. Calling the priest and others, he said to them:

“Go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book.” (2 Chronicles 34:21)

So well was the prophetic gift understood by the people that when Josiah said, “Inquire of the Lord,” those appointed by him went at once to a “prophetess,” by the name of Huldah, who was living, probably as an instructor, “in the college.” Through her God gave this answer:

“She answered them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this

place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah.”

To the king this message was added:

“Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest His words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before Me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before Me; I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place.” (Verses 23-28)

Relation of Prophet and King

We have here related typical instances, plainly indicating the important relationship existing between the prophet and the king. Though Israel had demanded a successive, visible, regal leadership, that they might be like the nations

around them, yet God did not permit the new form of government to supplant the theocracy entirely. Though no longer the nominal ruler, yet the attitude of the prophet, as a mouthpiece for Jehovah, was that of counselor and director to the king. Let us note this most important relationship:

He might restrain the king from carrying out an unwise plan that had been decided upon, as when the prophet bade King Rehoboam desist from attacking the ten tribes.

He might set before the king the principles by which divine favor would be retained, as was clearly outlined in the message from Azariah to Asa.

He might give reproof for mistakes that the king had made, and specify the resulting punishment therefor.

He might give detailed instruction to the king in a time of crisis, as when Jahaziel directed Jehoshaphat to send a band of singers before the

army, in the face of seemingly invincible foes.

When in perplexity, the king, by inquiring of the prophet, might receive an answer that would reveal God's will to him.

Whereas in Israel there was, with no exception, a line of kings whose apostasy and wickedness made them ever hostile to the prophetic messengers, in Judah there were a number of kings who were responsive to the messages that God sent through His prophets, and who, more or less successfully, led the people back to the worship of Jehovah.

Yet there were times when the exercising of the prophetic gift was subject to as real a peril in Judah as in Israel. Some of the prophets were imprisoned. It was by a king of Judah that Zechariah, a son of the high priest, who protested against the sins of the people, was "at the commandment of the king," stoned to death, even in the sacred precincts of the temple court. 2 Chronicles 24:21. Jeremiah bore his testimony in the valley of the shadow. Isaiah was,

it is generally believed, sawn asunder in a hollow log, among those who perished in the great persecution under Manasseh.

Chapter 13

Seven Prophetic Writers

The messengers of God mentioned in the preceding chapter were prophetic men and women whose names and deeds find incidental reference in connection with the very condensed historic outline of the three and a half centuries of Judean independence. Besides these, there belong to this period seven prophets, a part of whose writings are preserved in the Sacred Scriptures. These are Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and Habakkuk. A tracing of the prophetic gift would be incomplete without brief mention of each of these; for not only did they bear a message for their own time, but passed on for the benefit of future generations illuminating contributions to the Messianic promises, and principles of universal application. Some of them looked even farther forward into the future day of the complete restoration from sin. Our own times are greatly illuminated by the record of this prophetic outlook.

Joel—“the Day of the Lord”

The date of the writing of the book of Joel has occasioned much speculation. Many expositors believe that the internal evidence indicates that the country had been successively devastated by locusts, drought, and fire. The prophet, who lived in Jerusalem, graphically pictures the suffering of man and beast, and summons the inhabitants to fasting and prayer that God might send them relief. In answer to their repentance and prayers, God again blessed the land, sending the early and the latter rain in their season, and granting abundant harvests of fruit and grain.

But there was a deeper message in the book for future generations. In describing the revival and refreshing which occurred in his own day, he used language that clearly foretells the pouring out of God's Spirit upon all flesh, bringing to the church of Christ the early and the latter rain. These words were quoted by Peter as partly fulfilled at Pentecost. (Acts 2:16-21)

“The day of the Lord” is an expression used by Joel, as a time of divine retribution, imminent and present in his own day. But his prophetic eye also took in that great “day of the Lord” when the nations of earth are to assemble in “the valley of Jehoshaphat,” and where they will be destroyed by God’s “mighty ones.” For these awful times, the assurance is granted that “the Lord will be the hope of His people.” (Joel 3:16)

This prophecy closes with a picture of the peaceful scenes of the new earth, when God’s people, cleansed and purified, shall “dwell forever, ... from generation to generation.”

Isaiah—the Messianic Prophecies

Isaiah is regarded as the greatest prophet of the Old Testament. Because of his messianic visions, he is often called the “gospel prophet.”

He received his call through a vision of God’s glory, which led him to bemoan his own sinfulness. Then, being assured of divine forgiveness, he was

led to respond to the call of God for a messenger to speak for Him. A disheartening prospect was open before him. His teachings were to fall on deaf ears. He was to meet with willfully blinded eyes and a refusal to understand God's gracious message, or to be converted.

Anxiously he queried, "Lord, how long?" The answer was given, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate." Yet a gleam of hope is seen. His work should not be without fruit. A remnant—"a tenth" should return. There should remain "the holy seed." (Isaiah 6:10-13)

This vision was given to Isaiah in "the year that King Uzziah died." The first message of the book, addressed to a people spiritually blinded by outward prosperity, arraigns them not only as rebellious against their divine Sovereign, but as ungrateful children. Spiritually they were sick, covered from head to foot with "wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." With pathetic, pleading words, Isaiah urges them to put away the

evil of their doings, to come and reason together with the Lord, who promises, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isaiah 1:18)

Through the successive reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, the prophet sought to lead the people back to loyalty to God, and thus save them from the imminent destruction of their nation. But they were deaf to his counsels and entreaties.

Ahaz was one of the most wicked kings of Judah. Isaiah was bidden to bear him a message of assurance, however, that the combined forces of Syria and Israel against Jerusalem should fail. He also definitely predicted the overthrow of both these kingdoms by the Assyrians.

In connection with this message occur two passages, illustrative of the double, or repetitive, application of many of the prophecies. Upon the refusal of Ahaz to ask a sign for the fulfillment of this assurance, the prophet said:

“The Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” (Chapter 7:14)

Again, speaking of a ruler who would be raised up to deliver God’s people from these enemies, he used the following language, couched in words of hyperbole common to Jewish speech, yet by no means extravagant when applied to Christ:

“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end.” (Chapter 9:6-7)

Counselor to Hezekiah

King Hezekiah, the successor of Ahaz, gave heed to the counsels sent through Isaiah. In the first year of his reign, he and his people witnessed the

beginning of the siege of the city of Samaria, by the army of Assyria. For three years, they heard of the horrors, suffering, and death of the beleaguered inhabitants, and finally of its capture. They saw their brethren of the northern kingdom carried away as captives to a heathen land. Their tragic fate must have sobered the minds of the people of Judah; for in it they saw the fulfillment of the prophetic warnings. The certainty of a similar judgment upon their own nation, if they persisted in their evil ways, had been clearly foretold by the prophets. Naturally, the king and the people were more responsive to Isaiah's words. Of Hezekiah it is said:

“He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him... And the Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth.” (2 Kings 18:5,7)

Isaiah's Message to Hezekiah

In the fourteenth year of his reign, the king of

Assyria came against the kingdom of Judah. He had taken “all the fenced cities,” and was threatening Jerusalem. Hezekiah offered submission and tribute, and stripped the treasuries to pay what was demanded by the invader. But this did not avail. The king demanded the surrender of the city, boastfully enumerating his successful campaigns, and defying the God of Israel to deliver it out of his hands. Hezekiah spread the king’s letter before the Lord, and prayed earnestly for deliverance. God answered him through the prophet Isaiah, regarding the king of Assyria:

“He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city, to save it, for Mine own sake, and for My servant David’s sake.” (2 Kings 19:32-34)

The very night following the delivery of this message to Hezekiah, thousands of the hosts of Assyria mysteriously perished. Their king,

Sennacherib, and the rest of the army returned to Nineveh. The same God who gave the prophecy through Isaiah, wrought the deliverance that was promised.

Yet Hezekiah was not free from wrong. When he erred, the prophet was the messenger of reproof. Ambassadors from Babylon had come to congratulate the king upon his recovery from a serious illness with which had been associated a remarkable sign in the heavens. To these representatives of a far country, Hezekiah had shown all the treasures of his house. Thus, instead of directing their minds to the power of the God who had wrought so mightily for him, he manifested a regal pride in his royal possessions.

Soon the prophet appeared with a message of reproof for this vain display of wealth, naming for the first time the kingdom of Babylon as Judah's future oppressor. Some of Hezekiah's posterity were to "be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." (2 Kings 20:18)

The story of Isaiah and his prophecies is of itself worthy of an entire book. In concluding this brief sketch of his work, we shall refer only to the well-known fact that he saw in the distant future the advent and saving work of Him who was to be “wounded for our transgressions” and “bruised for our iniquities.” Far past His advent, the prophet beheld also His eternal peaceful reign, amid the glories of the earth made new.

Micah—Messiah's Birthplace

While Isaiah was declaring the word of the Lord in Jerusalem to the king and princes of the people, there was living in the sea plains of Philistia a humble peasant, Micah by name, who was called to bear his testimony to the rank and file of the people. Like the prophet Isaiah, he foretold the captivity both of Israel and of Judah; and, in the case of the former, saw its fulfillment.

To him is given due credit for the reformation of King Hezekiah and the postponement of Judah's day of doom. Jeremiah 26:18, 19. With a wider

sweep of prophetic vision, he beheld the restoration of “the first dominion” (Micah 4:7-8), and specified the birthplace of the promised Messiah (chapter 5:2). His book closes with a reference to the God who “pardoneth iniquity,” and who is to fulfill the promises made unto Abraham and to “our fathers from the days of old.”

Nahum—His Message of Doom

About two centuries after Jonah delivered his message of doom to Nineveh, which resulted in a temporary reformation and a postponing of the divine fiat of destruction, the prophet Nahum wrote, pronouncing a sentence of final destruction upon the city for her accumulated sins. At the time he wrote his prophetic scroll, the Assyrian Empire was seemingly at the height of its power. Although Assyria was the scourge in the hand of the Lord for the punishment of His own people, yet the day of her own reckoning was at hand.

“Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke,

and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.” (Nahum 2:13)

Thus was emphasized the truth that the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men. He might use other nations, even heathen powers, to afflict His own backslidden people; but these nations, in turn, would not escape His judgments when they had filled up their cup of iniquity.

Zephaniah—“the Day of the Lord”

“I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord. I will consume man and beast... I will also stretch out Mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place.” (Zephaniah 1:2-4)

With these startling words the prophet Zephaniah, who lived in the days of Josiah, added his testimony regarding the judgments that would

come upon an impenitent people. Fourteen times in this brief prophecy occurs the expression, “day of the Lord.” It is therefore worthy of the careful study of those today for whom the antitypical “day of the Lord is near, ... and hasteth greatly.” (Verse 14)

“His prophecies of impending judgment upon Judah apply with equal force to the judgments that are to fall upon an impenitent world at the time of the second advent of Christ.” [1]

But mingled with the portrayal of the terrors of God’s wrath are many expressions of His tenderness and love. We today may well heed the counsel given by Zephaniah to those of his own time:

“Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger.” (Chapter 2:3)

Jeremiah—the Millennial Desolation

Jeremiah was called of God to the prophetic office at an early age. He prophesied during the reigns of the last five kings of Judah. Vainly he hoped that the reformation begun under Josiah might be permanent. For forty years he stood as a living example of truth and righteousness. He shared in the perils and hardships incident to the siege of Jerusalem. His counsel to the king of Judah to submit to Nebuchadnezzar was made the basis of a charge of treason.

He suffered imprisonment by command of the king, and was often threatened with death by his own countrymen. When about 586 B. C. the city was finally taken by the Babylonian king, and most of the inhabitants of the land were carried into captivity, Jeremiah was treated kindly by the victors. Given his choice of remaining in the land or of being treated with honor in Babylon, he preferred to remain with the company of his people left in Judea.

When his fellow countrymen insisted on going down to Egypt, contrary to the divine counsel, he went with them.

His prophecy is remarkable for the pathos of its language, even while faithfully declaring the purpose of God to afflict His people. His prediction that they should be permitted to return to their land after the expiration of seventy years brought comfort and hope to the exiles in Babylon.

“The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel... Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things.” (Jeremiah 31:3-5)

Jeremiah cried out in anguish as he witnessed the terrible wars of the last days, as he saw “the slain of the Lord” from “one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth.” Chapter 25:33. He

saw also the desolated earth as it will appear after the coming of Christ, when the wicked shall be destroyed by the glory of God, and the righteous shall reign for a thousand years in heaven. He says:

“I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light... I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by His fierce anger.” (Chapter 4:23-26)

But he was permitted to look still farther down the stream of time to the final restoration, when Christ, the King of spiritual Israel, shall reign forever.

“In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name

wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.” (Chapter 33:15-16)

Habakkuk—the Triumph of Righteousness

Written in the most beautiful Hebrew language is a book of only three chapters, but truly worthy of its place in the canon of Scripture. The author, the Judean prophet Habakkuk, was unable to understand why the evils which he saw in the land, and over which he mourned, were unchecked. The Lord, in vision, answered the question in his mind, and declared that the evil should not go unpunished. The Chaldeans, “that bitter and hasty nation,” were soon to come as a scourge against Judah.

But this answer raised another question: Why should a nation even more wicked than Judah be permitted to triumph over them? In His reply to this perplexity, the Lord not only sets forth the principle that punishment will come upon the transgressor, but He also proclaims the great central truth of the gospel, that “the just shall live

by his faith.” (Habakkuk 2:4)

In the prayer with which this book closes is a description of the coming of Christ. The prophet trembled as he contemplated “the day of trouble,” but closes with a paean of triumphant faith and trust which may well sustain God’s people today:

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” (Chapter 3:17-18)

The Consummation

“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand.” (Daniel 1:1-2)

The city was not yet destroyed. Vessels from the house of God were taken to be placed in the temples of Babylon. The prediction made to Hezekiah by Isaiah was now fulfilled. Certain of the royal seed were taken to Babylon, as eunuchs in the king's palace. From this time is reckoned the seventy years of Jewish captivity, though it was not till twenty-two years later that the folly of the kings of Judah in resisting the kingdom of Babylon resulted in the final overthrow of the nation, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the wholesale captivity of the people of the land.

The prophet Jeremiah stayed in Judah, and continued to witness for God to those who remained. He also wrote letters of encouragement to the captives in Babylon, reminding them of the promises of God for their restoration. He warned them against sedition, and gave them the following wise counsel:

“Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; ... that ye may be

increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.”
(Jeremiah 29:5-7)

Note:

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Chapter 14

Prophets During the Captivity

Not all who were carried away into Babylonian captivity by the great king Nebuchadnezzar had been condemned and rejected by the Lord. This the records very clearly show. How many innocent, faithful ones were among the captives is not known. But of the devotion and loyalty of some, we have this beautiful testimony:

“By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept,
When we remembered Zion.
Upon the willows in the midst thereof
We hanged up our harps.
For there they that led us captive required of us
songs,
And they that wasted us required of us mirth,
saying,
Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
How shall we sing Jehovah’s song
In a foreign land?”

(Psalm 137:1-4, A. R. V.)

Although in captivity in a heathen kingdom, with small prospect of living long enough to return to their cherished land and city and sacred sanctuary, they declared their eternal loyalty to their Lord:

“If I forget thee,
O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her skill.
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
If I remember thee not;
If I prefer not Jerusalem
Above my chief joy.”
(Verses 5-6, A. R. V.)

How could love and loyalty be more ardently expressed?

We have dwelt upon the punitive purpose of the captivity. It was brought upon God’s people as a punishment for their sins. It was designed to bring them to repentance. But this was not the only

reason why God permitted or ordained it.

It had been His design that Israel, with an experimental knowledge of the true God, should be a light to the world. He placed them on a national highway, that the worshipers of other gods might behold the greatness and piety of the nation whom He had chosen for Himself. But when Israel failed to act her part as a witness for Jehovah; when contrariwise she made it her ambition to become like the other nations, then God must choose some other way of extending the knowledge of His sovereign majesty.

Daniel in Babylon

Therefore among the captives were men and women who were true and loyal. These bore faithful witness for God during the time of their captivity. While light was thus diffused through the dispersion of the captives, there were some whom God placed as His representatives in the national metropolis, even in the very court of the king of Babylon.

Among these the records give the names of four—Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Daniel 1:6. The steadfast loyalty of these men to God was tested to the limit, and they were triumphant. Moreover, of them we read:

“As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” (Daniel 1:17)

Thus these witnesses for Jehovah demonstrated that He is the God who can impart wisdom. Those who served Him were manifestly wiser than the most learned and trained men of Babylon.

Like the king of Egypt in the days of old, Nebuchadnezzar was given an impressive dream. As the captive Joseph was called before Pharaoh to give the meaning of his dream, so Daniel was brought by a train of circumstances to relate to Nebuchadnezzar not only the interpretation, but the very dream itself. Little did he imagine, as he stood

before the monarch and outlined the successive kingdoms of earth that were symbolized by the various parts of the metallic image, the far-reaching influence of that experience. Who can estimate the uncounted thousands who have been convicted of the reliability of the prophetic word, as they have noted the exact correspondence of history with its marvelous foretelling by the prophet Daniel as he interpreted the king's dream?

The failure of the wise men of Babylon, whom Nebuchadnezzar first called, was due to the fact, as they acknowledged, that no one could interpret the dream except the gods, "whose dwelling is not with flesh." In contrast to these vain gods of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar was forced to the admission—"Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret." (Daniel 2:47)

This experience resulted in the appointment of Daniel and his companions to high positions in the kingdom. Daniel "sat in the gate of the king." God

gave him wisdom as a statesman and counselor to Nebuchadnezzar.

Witness of the Three Hebrews

There were still lessons for Nebuchadnezzar to learn about the great God. In anger he called before him the three faithful Hebrews who had disobeyed a command to worship the inanimate image on the plains of Dura, and defiantly asked, “Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?” (Daniel 3:15) To which these heroic witnesses replied:

“We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.” (Verses 16-17)

God vindicated their faith in Him. They came forth unharmed from their ordeal of fire, and the king by royal proclamation yielded homage to the God of the Hebrews, declaring, “There is no other

God that can deliver after this sort.” (Verse 29)

Jehovah had yet one more lesson for the proud king of Babylon to learn for himself, and to make known by another decree. In teaching this lesson the prophetic gift acted an important part.

Through another dream and its interpretation by the prophet Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar was warned against magnifying himself above the God of heaven. When later this spirit of pride in his own achievements led him to glorify himself, the judgment of which he had been warned came upon him. After seven years of humiliation, with a deranged mind, he was restored, and gave glory to the God of heaven. In a remarkably frank narrative of the entire experience, he concluded with the statement:

“Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.” (Daniel 4:37)

A Great Prophet and Statesman

The magnitude of the work of Daniel cannot be measured by the few recorded narratives of his long life, remarkable as these are. Much that is unrecorded is implied in the testimony borne by the queen mother, who said of him to Belshazzar:

“There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; ... forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel.” (Daniel 5:11-12)

Daniel received his call to the prophetic office soon after his exile to Babylon, following the first siege and capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. During the entire seventy years of captivity, he bore witness for his God, influencing the affairs of the Babylonian Empire, and he “continued even

unto the first year of King Cyrus.” (Chapter 1:21) Of his later life, further mention will be made in the next chapter, dealing with the times of the restoration.

We can only mention the well-known prophecies of this remarkable prophet, to whom the angel Gabriel brought the message from the courts of glory, “Thou art greatly beloved.” Chapter 9:23. Their interpretation or exposition is outside the province of this book. But they throw light upon the times in which we are living, “the time of the end” and they look forward to the happy day when “the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.” (Chapter 7:27)

Ezekiel—Foreteller of Strange Things

Some nine years after Daniel and his companions had been carried to Babylon, Ezekiel, a priest of Judah, was carried away to the land of Chaldea. When he was thirty years of age, he was

called to the prophetic office. Like Isaiah, he was first given a vision of the glory of God, and bidden to bear testimony against the “rebellious” house of Israel. In words of most solemn import the fearful responsibilities of the prophetic call were set forth:

“Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at My mouth, and give them warning from Me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.” (Ezekiel 3:17-18)

Ezekiel was bidden not only to bear testimony to the captives in Chaldea, but to send messages to his fellow countrymen in Judah. In vision he seemed to be in the city of Jerusalem beholding the iniquities of the inhabitants, particularly of the priests and princes. Some of these were called by name. (Chapter 11:1)

Of the prince, Zedekiah, he declared that he would be brought to Babylon, yet should not behold the city. (Chapter 12:13) This was later fulfilled; for his eyes were put out by the king before he left his native land.

Messages of stern rebuke were sent to the prophets who were falsely predicting peace, also to those who were saying, “The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth.” (Verse 22) They were assured that the judgments spoken of by the prophets were imminent.

“It shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God.” (Chapter 12:25)

In the book of Ezekiel are found many very striking passages. Here a message is addressed to the prince of Tyre; but it is couched in such language as to give a graphic description of the glories of Lucifer in the courts of heaven, of his fall through pride, and of his final destruction.

Naming seven nations of his day, the prophet describes the future judgments that are to come upon them, not in general or ambiguous terms, but distinctive and detailed. These foretellings, compared with the fate of the city or country described, constitute remarkable examples of the accuracy of the divine prophecy. Much of the prophecy was fulfilled in the lifetime of those then living; but the fulfillment of some of it was not realized for Centuries.

There are also mysteries connected with the latter chapters of this remarkable prophecy. It may be reasonably maintained that in harmony with the principles of conditional prophecy (see Jeremiah 18:7-10) the prophet was bidden to write out a picture of the future history of Israel as it might have been, had they wholeheartedly accepted the opportunity granted them of returning to their land and re-establishing their kingdom and worship, and had they then continued in faithfully serving the Lord.

The closing chapters, speaking of the broad river, the great temple, and the city with its walls and twelve gates, are shown by the prophecy of John in Revelation (chapters 21-22) to find their fulfillment in the new earth, with its capital city, New Jerusalem, which will come down from heaven to supplant the ancient city that was destroyed.

Chapter 15

Prophets After the Captivity

The promised time of deliverance from captivity was nearing. The fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy of restoration necessitated an event unusual in the history of nations. Not only must there be royal permission for the captives of Judah to return to their own land, but the material necessities for their journey and the rebuilding of their ruined cities and homesteads must be provided.

In 538 B. C., two years before the termination of the captivity, the aged prophet Daniel studied and "understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." Daniel 9:2. With prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes, Daniel besought the Lord to remember and keep His promise. The prayer, recorded in the ninth chapter of Daniel, is a model

of eloquence, yet of simplicity and earnestness, in pleading his cause. In concluding his petition, he said:

“O my God, incline Thine ear, and hear; open Thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by Thy name: for we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousnesses, but for Thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God: for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name.”
(Verses 18-19)

Had the successors of Nebuchadnezzar heeded the light that came through Daniel and his faithful associates, they, as kings of the Babylonian Empire, might have been the instruments for the fulfillment of God’s word. But they sank lower in vice and degradation, until their corruption of heart and their contempt for Jehovah were signally illustrated in the impious feast of Belshazzar. Not content with a drunken orgy, coupled with debauchery, the king sent for the vessels of

Jehovah's house, that he might use them as receptacles for the wine they drank while praising the inanimate gods of Babylon. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom." (Daniel 5:30-31)

In the new government of Babylon, after its conquest by Cyrus, Daniel was given prominent office. Here he had opportunity to bring to the attention of the rulers of Media and Persia the prophetic scrolls of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and to impress their minds with the remarkable fact that the work of Cyrus had been foretold more than a century before his birth. Of him the Lord had declared through the prophet Isaiah:

Cyrus Forenamed in Prophecy

"He is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid." (Isaiah 44:28)

“I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build My city, and he shall let go My captives, not for price nor reward.” (Isaiah 45:13)

In a direct address to “His anointed, to Cyrus,” the Lord ascribes the success of his campaigns to the divine purpose and guidance:

“For Jacob My servant’s sake, and Israel Mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me: I girded thee, though Thou hast not known Me.” (Verses 4-5)

Truly here is a remarkable portrayal. Writing even long before the captivity itself, the prophet was given a message concerning the restoration, calling the Persian ruler by name, and assigning to him his work. Then, two centuries later, the Lord uses another prophet, bringing him by a series of providences to the side of the king named and addressed, that he may make known to him the

expressed will of God.

No less remarkable is the fact that this proud heathen king should, at the zenith of his power, bow in humble acknowledgment before the God of a despised and captive race.

Two years after the capture of Babylon the new ruler, Darius the Mede, died, and Cyrus, the great Persian general and king, succeeded him. One of his first recorded acts is as follows:

“In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, “Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house

of the Lord God of Israel, (He is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.” (Ezra 1:1-3)

Exiles Return to Jerusalem

As this royal proclamation was heralded in all the provinces of the Persian Empire, it brought great joy to the hearts of many who, like Daniel, had been praying that God would remember His promise to restore His people. True, there were a large number who preferred the comforts of the homes they had acquired in the land of their dispersion to the weary journey across the desert to a land of desolation and ruin. Nevertheless, that “remnant” of which the prophets had spoken, did return—“the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised.” (Ezra 1:5)

Zerubbabel, a descendant of David, was appointed by Cyrus as governor of the returning exiles, and Jeshua, the high priest, was associated with him in leadership. The company of about fifty thousand who followed these leaders back to their

homeland did not go empty-handed.

“All they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things.”
(Verse 6)

They also carried with them more than five thousand of the vessels of the temple that had been taken by the king of Babylon seventy years before.

Recognizing the worship of God as of prime importance, immediately upon their arrival at Jerusalem the altar of burnt offering was erected, the Feast of Tabernacles was observed in its season, and soon the work of restoring the temple was begun.

But not for long were they permitted to work unhindered. Angered by being denied a part in the work of erecting the temple, the Samaritans determined to halt the enterprise. They did everything in their power to weaken the hands of the builders; and they did not stop there. In an

attempt to induce the king of Persia to repent of what they alleged was an unwise favor to the Jews, they “hired counselors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius.” (Ezra 4:5)

The presence of these hostile embassies from the land of Israel caused the aged prophet Daniel grave concern. The controversy was far more extensive than between visible human agents. For three weeks, while Daniel was engaged in earnest, agonizing prayer, the mighty angel Gabriel wrestled with the forces of darkness that were seeking so to influence the mind of Cyrus that he would stop the work of the restoration of Jerusalem and the building of the temple.

At the end of this period, Christ Himself came to Gabriel’s aid, and the angel appeared to Daniel in a vision, to quiet his anxiety. This was the occasion for the last prophecy recorded in the book of Daniel,—a prophecy setting forth, not in symbols but in literal narrative form, a line of history reaching down to the end of time.

Rebuilding of the Temple Hindered

But though a divine restraint was exercised upon the enemies of Israel at the court of Babylon, and they were unable to accomplish their sinister purpose, the builders at Jerusalem became disheartened at the magnitude of the task before them. They yielded to suggestions of doubt, as to whether it was an opportune time to build the temple. Many left the work, and went to build comfortable homes for themselves.

Thus the work on the temple dragged on slowly for a number of years. At length a usurper—the false Smerdis, called Artaxerxes in Ezra 4:7—seized the throne of Persia, and the Samaritans succeeded in their purpose. A royal decree was secured forbidding the Jews to complete their temple or city. Then for more than a year no sound of a tool was heard at the temple site. Its unfinished walls stood in mockery of their decadent ambitions.

The people, on the other hand, having built and beautified their own homes, sought earnestly to attain temporal prosperity for themselves. But, try as they might, they could not succeed. Their crops were blasted with drought, and they were facing starvation and ruin.

Haggai Rallies the People to Their Task

At this crisis, after a long period of quiescence, God again spoke to His people through the gift of prophecy. It was, as we are told with remarkable exactitude, “in the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month,” that “the word of the Lord” came to Zerubbabel and Joshua. The prophet, or spokesman for Jehovah, was Haggai. (Haggai 1:1)

In this message, God gave them the reason for the adversity and calamity that had come upon the people. They had abandoned their work on the Lord’s house, and were selfishly seeking to enrich themselves. The drought was God’s response to their neglect of the service which should have

rested first upon their hearts.

This prophetic message brought a hearty response. The people rallied to their unfinished task, and the prophet brought them the promise, “I am with you, saith the Lord.” (Verse 13)

By the twenty-fourth day of the month, three weeks after the vision of Haggai, all hands were working energetically to complete the house of the Lord.

About a month later, a second prophetic message was delivered by Haggai, assuring the people—some of whom had wept at the memory of the glories of Solomon’s temple—that “the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former.” He referred not to the physical glory, but to the fact that the courts of this temple would be trodden by the feet of the long-promised Messiah,—“the Desire of all nations.” (Chapter 2:9,7)

Thus encouraged, the people went forward

heartily with their task. Soon the prophet gave them a further message from heaven, assuring them of God's blessing "from this day and upward." Verse 15. His frown, long indicated by years of adversity, was now to be changed into His favor, and marked by bountiful harvests of field and tree. A personal and special assurance of God's favor was addressed by the prophet to Zerubbabel. Thus we see the profound and determining influence exerted upon the ancient people of God through the prophets of His choosing.

Zechariah's Visions of the Last Days

The writer of the prophecy of Zechariah was a man of priestly lineage, called of God to assist the prophet Haggai in his work of arousing the people to build the temple. His first message was delivered soon after Haggai's second pronouncement. Briefly, but forcefully, he emphasizes the need of turning to the Lord wholeheartedly, reminding the people of the dire results of refusal by their fathers to heed the appeals of the former prophets.

Because of its symbolism, the book of Zechariah has been called the apocalypse of the Old Testament. The first series of visions deals primarily with the experiences connected with the rebuilding of the temple, and references are made to the leaders Zerubbabel and Joshua. The promise is made to the former that as his hands have laid the foundation of the temple, “his hands shall also finish it.” (Zechariah 4:9)

In a view of Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, the gracious pardon of the sinner is graphically illustrated. Joshua is “clothed with filthy garments,” a symbol of sin. Isaiah 64:6. The adversary, Satan, stands at his right hand to resist the work of grace that God would perform in behalf of the penitent sinner. But Satan is rebuked by “the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem,” and the divine command is given, “Take away the filthy garments from him.”

Then to Joshua are addressed the sweet words: “Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of

raiment.” (See Zechariah 3:2-4)

The latter part of the prophecy of Zechariah portrays events connected with the coming of Christ and the setting up of His everlasting kingdom. Here are suggested the descent of Christ at the close of the millennium, and the cleaving of the Mount of Olives to make place for the eternal city of God that comes down from Him out of heaven. Then is portrayed the gathering of all nations before Jerusalem, and their destruction, following which “the Lord shall be king over all the earth.” (Chapter 14:9)

Rebuilding and Restoration Completed

The injunction of the prophet to arise and build, would naturally call to mind the royal decree from the king of Persia, and the punishment that would result if they were to disobey. As if in answer to this fear, the following words were addressed to the governor:

“This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel,

saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.” (Chapter 4:6-7)

No sooner was work on the temple resumed than the Samaritans appeared and protested. They demanded the names of the men who were responsible for this plain act of rebellion against the king of Persia.

“But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this matter.” (Ezra 5:5)

In response to this letter of complaint sent by the Samaritans, Darius gave commandment to search the record of the royal decrees. When he was shown the proclamation issued by Cyrus, he issued a proclamation in confirmation of it. To the

complainants he said:

“Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place.” (Ezra 6:7)

Thus, in this crisis, when there seemed no human way out of the difficulties before them, when the people had become disheartened and had abandoned the work of God, He sent them, through His prophets, messages of encouragement. He sent them prophetic assurances to quiet their fears. He who turns the hearts of kings, wrought for them, as they went forward in faithful obedience to His word. In recording this event in history, the completion of the work is thus stated:

“The elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.” (Ezra 6:14)

Thus the mountains of difficulty were removed. The power of God to make possible the fulfillment of His commands and the importance of the work of His prophets as the medium of His communication to His people were once more demonstrated.

Malachi the Last National Prophet

The temple was completed under Ezra and Nehemiah, who later acted their part in leading more groups of Jewish exiles to the homeland. The streets of Jerusalem were built in troublous times. Civil government was established, and order was maintained. Israel had forever learned one lesson: Never again did they substitute idol worship for the worship of the God who had so wondrously wrought for them in restoring them from the land of the captivity.

Yet there were other evils that needed to be corrected. There were mixed marriages, that might lead them back to the idol worship of their

unbelieving companions. There were oppressions by some in positions of authority. Others were neglectful of supporting the house of God and the worship of Jehovah, by withholding tithes and offerings. Some were questioning whether, after all, it paid to serve Jehovah. There was grave danger of formalism and pride in their worship.

To meet these dangers and evils, there was need of another message from heaven. Accordingly, as a final flush of light before the sunset of direct Hebrew prophecy, before the dawn of the Christian era nearly four hundred years later, the last national prophet appeared in the person of Malachi.

Malachi was the coadjutor of Ezra and Nehemiah in the work of reformation. The ninth and tenth chapters of Ezra and the thirteenth chapter of Nehemiah form the background of his prophecy.

At this time, when the first enthusiasm had waned, when faith was sinking in the mire of

callousness and skepticism, when the priests were conniving at the lukewarmness of the people, the prophet Malachi was raised up to revive the national spirit. He denounced the social evils of the time. He foretold the sudden coming of God's Messenger to the temple, and of His work of judgment. To those who questioned the benefits of serving God, he pointed prophetically to a time when it should be clearly distinguished between those who served God and those who served Him not. Their minds were carried forward to the day that should "burn as an oven," when the proud and wicked should be as stubble, and the Sun of Righteousness should rise upon those that fear His name.

With a closing injunction, "Remember ye the law of Moses," and the foreshadowing of the coming of Elijah before "the great and dreadful day of the Lord" should come, this prophet closes the canon of the Old Testament. (See Malachi 4)

Inspired Men After Malachi

The records of history mention no more great prophets in this higher sense and sphere, until the advent of John the Baptist. That there were prophetic men and women who kept alive the work of teaching the will of Jehovah during this time is, however, certain. With the absence of the national prophets, more heed was given to the multiplication of the writings of the former prophets. Synagogues were established, in which were read from Sabbath to Sabbath the words of inspiration that had been preserved through the centuries. Ample instruction had been given them in the writings of the Old Testament prophets, until another crisis should arise, when God would again visit them with remarkable manifestations of the prophetic gift.

Before we leave this Old Testament division, and face the dreary gap between Malachi and John the Baptist, let us note these marvelous words recorded for our learning and admonition:

“As the Jews had departed from God, faith had grown dim, and hope had well-nigh ceased to illuminate the future. The words of the prophets were uncomprehended. To the masses of the people, death was a dread mystery; beyond was uncertainty and gloom.”

“In ‘the region and shadow of death,’ men sat unsoled. With longing eyes they looked for the coming of the Deliverer, when the darkness should be dispelled, and the mystery of the future should be made plain.

“Outside of the Jewish nation there were men who foretold the appearance of a divine instructor. These men were seeking for truth, and to them the Spirit of inspiration was imparted. One after another, like stars in the darkened heavens, such teachers had arisen. Their words of prophecy had kindled hope in the hearts of thousands of the Gentile world.

“For hundreds of years the Scriptures had been translated into the Greek language, then widely

spoken throughout the Roman Empire.... Among those whom the Jews styled heathen, were men who had a better understanding of the Scripture prophecies concerning the Messiah than had the teachers in Israel. There were some who hoped for His coming as a deliverer from sin. Philosophers endeavored to study into the mystery of the Hebrew economy.... The true Interpreter must come.” [1]

“It is true that in every generation God had His agencies. Even among the heathen there were men through whom Christ was working to uplift the people from their sin and degradation. But these men were despised and hated. Many of them suffered a violent death.” [2]

Truly these are significant words! They sustain the premise maintained throughout this work; namely, that the prophetic gift bestowed upon the race after the fall of man was never permanently withdrawn. This continuing gift was not limited to the indicated Hebrew prophets, and did not cease with Malachi. Let these words be engraved as with

a pen of steel upon the tablets of the mind, never to be forgotten:

“Outside of the Jewish nation” there were men who “foretold” the coming of Christ, and to whom “the Spirit of inspiration [mark it!] was imparted.” Such were denominated “teachers,” of whom it is soberly declared, “Their words of prophecy [again note it!] had kindled hope in the hearts of thousands in the Gentile world.”

Without doubt, the “wise men from the East,” whose visit to the Babe in the manger is recorded in the Scriptures, came from this class of teachers in the Gentile world to whom “the Spirit of inspiration was imparted.” They knew the time of Jesus’ birth. They were guided by a heavenly star to Bethlehem. They were warned in a dream to return home by another route than Jerusalem, to avoid the wicked Herod.

Of such a class of men it is said that they “had a better understanding of the Scripture prophecies concerning the Messiah than had the teachers in

Israel.” This being true, how tragic! Yet how miraculous, and how gracious of the Lord!

Here is enunciated a profound truth and a mighty covering principle: Every generation has had its inspired witnesses, could we only find them, and could we but read the records as does our heavenly Father. This great truth we are to remember and to apply as we pass into and through the Christian era, wherein the apostle-prophets called by Christ Himself cease with John. But the spiritual gifts that God “gave” to men in the fullest, highest, and newest sense, passed not from the world, but truly appear through the passing centuries to guide and to instruct, to warn and to comfort, the people of God in times of unparalleled spiritual peril and apostasy. These will be found if we but diligently seek them.

Notes:

1. The Desire of Ages, 32, 33, Mrs. E. G. White
2. The Desire of Ages, 35

Chapter 16

In the Apostolic Age

We have traced the history and the operations of the prophetic gift through the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations,—a period of some four thousand years. We now enter the Christian dispensation, and find that it opened with the most remarkable manifestation of the prophetic gift in the record of the Scriptures. This gift was revealed in its clearest meaning and its greatest degree of efficiency in the opening century of this new era. Jesus, the source of this gift, then appeared among men in the fullness of divine wisdom and power, and possessing all the spiritual gifts.

It is worthy of note that the final words of Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament, foretell the appearance of the first prophet in the New Testament. Following Malachi comes John the Baptist. We have no record of any prophet between them. Here are the last words of the prophet Malachi:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” (Malachi 4:5-6)

Here is the appearance of the first prophet in the Christian dispensation:

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 3:1-2) This was the opening statement of the first sermon given in the new dispensation. That this preacher, John, was a prophet, we know: for of him Jesus said:

“What went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.” “And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.” (Matthew 11:9,14)

John the Baptist was brought into the world by the special providence of God, and the angel Gabriel clearly indicates his work in the very words of Malachi. While “a certain priest named Zacharias” was ministering in the temple of the Lord, “there appeared unto him an angel,” who said unto him, “Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John... He shall be great in the sight of the Lord; ... and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost... And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.” (Luke 1:5-17)

The One Infallible Prophet

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus. About six months after he began his public ministry, Jesus came to him, and received baptism at his hands. In the descent of the Holy Spirit and the voice from heaven, John was assured that this

was indeed the promised Messiah. After Jesus returned from His forty days of temptation in the wilderness, John pointed Him out to the assembled multitude, and said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29. A little later, he was led to say of Jesus, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” John 3:30. John was faithfully fulfilling the supremely sacred closing of his lifework, as Jesus, whom he introduced to the human race, was entering upon His glorious mission.

“In Jesus Christ Himself the prophetic office reached its highest stage of development, as He stood in a more intimate relation than any other being to His heavenly Father and spoke His word entirely and at all times. In the Christian congregation the office of prophecy is again found, differing from the proclamation of the gospel by the apostles, evangelists, and teachers.” [1]

Christ was that great Prophet of whom Moses, through the prophetic gift, said, “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of

thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken.” (Deuteronomy 18:15)

Jesus was recognized during His public ministry as a “great prophet.” Note the clear evidence: “The multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth.” (Matthew 21:11) “There came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited His people.” (Luke 7:16) It was thus that His disciples described Him: “Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.” (Luke 24:19) Referring to Himself, Jesus said unto them, “A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house.” (Matthew 13:57)

To this relationship, Dean Stanley in his “History of the Jewish Church,” Volume 1, pages 378,379, bears this clear testimony:

“It was ‘in the days of Herod “the king”’ that the voice of a prophet was once more heard. We shall never understand the true appearance of the

Baptist, or of Him whose forerunner he was, nor the continuity of the Old and New Testaments, unless we bear in mind that the period of the Christian era was the culminating point of the prophetic ages of the Jewish church. ‘The word of God came unto John the son of Zachariah,’ as it had come before to Isaiah the son of Amoz. ‘The people counted him as a prophet.’ ‘He was a prophet; and more than a prophet.’ In appearance, in language, in character, he was what Elijah had been in the reign of Ahab. And yet he was only the messenger of a Prophet greater than himself. The whole public ministry of our Lord was that of a prophet. He was much more than this. But it was as a prophet that He acted and spoke. It was this which gave Him His hold on the mind of the nation. He entered, as it were naturally, on an office vacant but already existing. His discourses were all, in the highest sense of the word, ‘prophecies.’”

Spiritual Gifts Renewed and Re-established

He was the one divine, infallible prophet. He

exercised every possible manifestation of the prophetic gift. He revealed the past, back into eternity, with perfect ease. He showed infinite wisdom regarding every detail of teaching and of events during the time when He was upon earth. The future was clearly an open book to Him. Indeed, He was, and is still, the source of the prophetic gift by which He has communicated with the human family from the day Adam was sent from his Eden home.

When the Saviour had accomplished all that He came to our world to do, He returned to the glorious realm from which He had come. But before leaving His disciples and His church, He made provision for such gifts of the Spirit as He saw they would need to carry forward with success the work He was committing to them. That work was not a new work, unknown to the church before. Nor were the supernatural gifts new, nor unknown to His messengers of earlier times. It was the same everlasting gospel that was to be proclaimed. The gifts were the same as had been bestowed upon chosen prophets, priests, and

people through the ages. The message had been placed in a new setting. The gifts were, perhaps, to be more generally bestowed upon the church. All this was renewed and re-established, and all was designed to abide with the church to the close of time. These gifts are very definitely and specifically set forth in the New Testament.

To Continue Till the End of Time

In Paul's epistle "to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ," he tells of the bestowal of the spiritual gifts upon the church; or, more exactly, the renewal of the spiritual gifts in the New Testament church. He says:

"When He [Christ] ascended up on high, He ... gave gifts unto men." "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." (Ephesians 4:8,11)

These were the gifts which were reimpacted and permanently established in the apostolic

church. For what purpose or service were they given?—“or the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying [“building up,” A. R. V.] of the body of Christ.” (Verse 12)

This is the great, all-comprehensive service these gifts are to render. Now arises the important question: For how long, until what time, were they to continue in the church for the very necessary service for which they were given? The answer is clear and final: “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:13)

There should be no misunderstanding of this statement. The church of Christ is still here in the world. Her Lord is still gathering into the fold faulty, imperfect men and women. They still need the effectual ministry of these spiritual gifts to bring them into the unity of the faith of Christ. They will continue to need them until they attain to the full knowledge of Christ,—until they reach that full measure of development found in their divine

Lord. There is not the slightest intimation that these gifts were for the church during the days of the apostles only, or that they were to cease at the time of the death of the last apostle, or that they were to be altogether withdrawn at any time before the end of the gospel dispensation.

It should be particularly observed that one of these gifts is the prophetic gift. This gift was bestowed by the same Lord, for the same purpose, and for the same time that all the other spiritual gifts were imparted,—namely, until the work of the gospel closes, and the church militant becomes the church triumphant.

To Characterize the Remnant Church

This same great truth regarding the bestowal of the spiritual gifts is recorded in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. In chapter 12, verses 4 to 31, they are set forth at considerable length, and with great clearness. One of the gifts named in this list is that of prophecy (verse 10); that is, the prophetic gift. After enumerating the gifts, and clearly explaining

their purpose, the apostle admonishes the church to “covet earnestly the best gifts,” to “desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.” (Verse 31; 14:1)

Paul had already written in his earlier epistle to the Thessalonians, “Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings.” (1 Thessalonians 5:19-20) These two expressions are in a list of exhortations that cannot be otherwise than continual in their application to the church. As truly as we are to “rejoice evermore” and “pray without ceasing” so are we evermore to “quench not the Spirit” and without ceasing to “despise not prophesyings.”

The teaching is very clear, that to the church has been given assurance that the spiritual gifts, which are so greatly needed, are to remain as long as the church is in the world. Moreover, the gift of prophecy is specifically mentioned as the gift to be desired and cherished above all others.

The book of Revelation contains several distinct lines of prophecy. Some give a brief

outline of the political history of the world from the first advent of Christ to the close of time, while other prophecies trace the history of the church during the same period. The prophecy of the twelfth chapter of the book of Revelation begins with the apostolic church, and ends with the “remnant” church. Of the latter it is declared:

“The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Revelation 12:17)

The “dragon” represents Satan. The “woman” represents the church. The “remnant” indicates the last period of the church. The “commandments of God” are, of course, the ten great moral precepts of the Decalogue. “The testimony of Jesus,” as infallibly interpreted by the angel to John, is “the spirit of prophecy,” when he says, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Revelation 19:10)

The Prophetic Gift a Channel

According to this scripture, then, the church of Christ in the last generation will be known and recognized by these two distinguishing characteristics: loyalty to the law of God and possession of the prophetic gift. To these the apostle adds in subsequent prophecy, “the faith of Jesus.” (Revelation 14:12) From this it appears that the remnant church will place special emphasis upon three fundamental doctrines of the gospel,—the law of God, the faith of Jesus, and the spirit of prophecy. The law of God is the changeless standard of the righteousness which God requires of all responsible beings. The faith of Jesus is the means provided whereby man may receive power to keep that law. The spirit of prophecy is the channel through which the Lord will give instruction, warning, and guidance to the remnant church for the work assigned, and for the preparation required at the second coming of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To this evidence of the divine plan to continue

the operation of the prophetic gift to the close of the Christian dispensation should be added the remarkable prophecy of Joel, which says:

Pentecost Only the Beginning

“It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.” (Joel 2:28-32)

The expression, “It shall come to pass,” shows that the event was a future one. The word

“afterward” implies that the fulfillment was to follow some definite point of time or some definite experience.

This prophecy was interpreted by the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost. He declared that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that day was in direct fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Joel said, “It shall come to pass afterward.” Peter said, “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.” Acts 2:16. This is the event, then, which clearly marks the beginning of the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy.

The apostle enlarges on the idea contained in the word “afterward,” used by Joel. Peter says, “It shall come to pass in the last days.” That the apostle understood the Pentecostal visitation to be only the beginning of the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days, is made clear by his statement near the end of his sermon, that “the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Verse 39. Both Joel and Peter connect the pouring out of the Spirit closely with the signs and event of

“the great and the terrible day of the Lord,” showing that the latter marks the closing event of the period covered by the prophecy. We must conclude, therefore, that the prophetic gift, which is the subject of the prophecy, is to be with the church from Pentecost to the return of Christ for His people.

Now, what was that which was to come to pass afterward, that which was to follow the abundant bestowal of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost? It was this: “I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh,” or “all mankind,” as some translations read. Before Pentecost the prophetic gift was practically confined to the Hebrew nation, as far back as Abraham. From Pentecost on it was not to be limited to any one nation. It was to be imparted to the true followers of Christ in all nations—to whomsoever the wisdom, purpose, and good pleasure of God may choose.

The Latter-Day Gifts Enumerated

The manifestations of the gift were to be as

follows:

“Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.” True, devout, loyal members of the church, the body of Christ, will exercise this gracious gift.

“Your old men shall dream dreams.” Valiant soldiers of the cross, veterans in the great conflict with the forces of evil, will be given special information and encouragement sorely needed in times of perplexity and peril.

“Your young men shall see visions.” To some in the strength of manhood, called to great tasks, will be revealed broad, comprehensive views of God’s purposes and plans for the accomplishment of His work in the earth.

“And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit.” God will not pass by even the lowly in the bestowal of His gifts.

A truly Spirit-filled church!

Pentecost was the beginning of the fulfillment of this prophecy. It marked the beginning of a great spiritual movement in the church and in the whole world.

“The testimony of the first Christian church is entirely of a prophetic character. The first effect of the Pentecostal spirit is the prophesying of the believers who were so suddenly and miraculously filled with His power (Acts 2:4): their word is followed by signs and wonders (3:6; 4:30; 5:12, 15-16; 9:34,40). The judicial power of their prophecy reveals itself in the history of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11). The Church as such, in her appearance and condition, as well as in her activity, stands like a prophet of God in the midst of the people; and in the consciousness of this her office she abandons every worldly avocation. She has a charge committed to her by the Lord; through her, God will give ‘repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins’ (5:31); she is the Zion that bringeth good tidings, and which says unto the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God’ (Isaiah 40:9)

“From this church proceed the different prophets, such as Stephen, who experienced what the Lord prophesied (Matthew 23:34). At his death the Pentecostal church for the first time comes in conflict with the carnal-minded Israel: her testimony is resisted with blood, but she does not cease. Those who were scattered abroad (Acts 8:4) founded the diaspora, to which St. James addresses his Epistle: they are the prophets (James 5:10) who went about in Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and preached the word of God to the Jews.” [2]

What a remarkable body of men and women! That was the apostolic church. It was the church Christ founded. It was the church Paul called the body of Christ. It was the kind of church which Christ desired should continue through the centuries until His return. That church was represented in the book of Revelation thus:

“I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to

conquer.” (Revelation 6:2) Or, following Goodspeed’s translation, “He was given a crown, and he rode forth a victor to conquer.” The might and the triumphs of that church came through the gifts dispensed by the Holy Spirit, who came at Pentecost in fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy and the promise of the Father.

Embraces the Last Days of Time

But the prophecy of Joel reaches to the last days of time—to “the remnant whom the Lord shall call.” Joel 2:32. It includes “the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ;” and this “testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Revelation 12:17; 19:10)

Thus it is clear that the manifestations of this prophetic gift were not to be limited to the apostolic age or to any one century. The prophecy extends to the special signs of Christ’s coming, to the remnant of His people, and to the great and terrible day of the Lord. A remnant is

incontrovertibly the last. The remnant church is therefore the last period of the church of Christ that will live on this earth—the people of God who will be living and waiting for translation when He comes.

If this understanding of the prophecy is correct, we may reasonably look for, and expect to find, the prophetic gift manifested here and there among the followers of Christ from Pentecost to the end of time.

Notes:

1. “The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,” Vol. IV, art., “Prophets,” p. 2464
2. “Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge” (three-volume edition, 1889), Vol. III, p. 1940

Chapter 17

The Witness of the Second Century

Thus far we have pursued the study of the prophetic gift as it is revealed in the records of the Sacred Scriptures. We have traced its manifestations through men and women of God's choosing from the time of Adam's banishment from Eden to the death of John, the apostle-prophet, who wrote the book of Revelation, the last book of the Sacred Canon.

From the close of the apostolic period onward, information regarding the manifestation of this gift in the church must be sought in the records of history, particularly of church history. As we enter this field, however, we discover a decided difference of opinion on whether or not the prophetic gift continued after the death of the first apostles and the close of the New Testament canon. One view, held and advocated by certain Christian

scholars and writers, is that the operation of the prophetic gift ceased with the close of the first century. Regarding this view, Dr. A. J. Gordon, in his excellent volume, “The Ministry of Healing,” published in 1883, says: Unless otherwise noted, the italics, marks of parenthesis, and brackets in this and the following quotations in this section are the author’s.

“A call recently put forth in one of our religious journals, asking the opinion of ministers, teachers and theological professors on this point was very largely answered; and the respondents were well-nigh unanimous in the opinion that the age of miracles passed away with the apostolic period... There were only one or two replies which gave countenance to the view, that miracles are possible in all ages and have appeared more or less numerous in every period of the church’s history.” [1]

But notwithstanding this general uncertainty and disbelief, in theological circles, in the continuance of the spiritual gifts bestowed by our

Lord and highly prized by His disciples, there have been through the centuries, not only believers in these gifts, but grateful receivers of their benefits. The evidence supporting this view appears substantial. Here are two declarations of great confidence in the continuity of the spiritual gifts:

“Witnesses who are above suspicion leave no room for doubt that the miraculous powers of the apostolic age continued to operate at least into the third century.” “The Conflict of Christianity With Heathenism,” Dr. Gerhard Uhorn, p. 169. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1899.

Commenting on this statement, Dr. Gordon argues thus:

The Church Needs the Gifts

“This concession is a very important one in its bearings on this whole subject. Prove that miracles were wrought, for example, in the second century after Christ, and no reason can be thereafter urged why they might not be wrought in the nineteenth

century.” [2]

Regarding the imperative need of the continuance in the church of all the spiritual gifts bestowed by our Lord at His ascension, the following forceful statement is made by the Reverend Wm. Eddy, of the Methodist Church:

“It will not do to say that these gifts were restricted in their bestowment to the apostles and early Christians. All will allow that what Paul says of ‘charity, or love,’ ‘the more excellent way,’ in 1 Corinthians 13, applies to Christians in all subsequent time, and yet he immediately exhorts to ‘covet earnestly the best gifts.’ The truth is, the church needs these gifts at this day to battle against error in its various forms. She needs them to preserve in her own mind the idea of the spiritual, the supernatural. She needs them as ornaments to supersede her jewelry. Let her ‘covet earnestly’ these gifts, and there would be less covetousness of worldly display... We should covet the gift of prophecy. It is a New Testament endowment.” [3]

This statement is in full harmony with Paul's exhortation in 1 Corinthians 14:39, "Covet to prophecy." All the context in chapters 12 to 14 makes it unquestionably clear that the gift of prophecy is to abide in the church to the end of the gospel dispensation as truly as "abideth faith, hope, charity." In fact, verse 1 of the 14th chapter urges the church to "follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophecy." Cultivating love and desiring spiritual gifts are to continue together in the church, without any limit of time on either. Of the gifts, that of prophecy is most to be desired, and therefore to be confidently expected. AGP 177.1

That the prophetic gift, as well as the other gifts with which it was associated, continued indeed in the church after the apostles had gone to their graves is certified by reliable testimony in history, supported by theological scholarship and opinion. A brief survey of the testimony pertaining to this subject now engages our attention.

In an extended review of this question a writer

in the Encyclopedia Britannica says:

“The most important facts known at present about the manner of life, the influence, and the history of the early Christian prophets are the following: (1) Until late in the second century the prophets (or prophetesses) were regarded as an essential element in a church possessing the Holy Ghost. Their existence was believed in, and they did actually exist... Not a few Christian prophets are known to us by name: as Agabus, Judas, and Silas, in Jerusalem; Barnabas, Simon Niger, etc., in Antioch; in Asia Minor, the daughters of Philip, Quadratus, Ammia, Polycarp, Melito.” [4]

The Testimony of Gibbon

All who are acquainted with the religious views of Edward Gibbon, writer of the monumental “History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,” must admit that whatever he wrote regarding the early church was written without any bias of favor toward the church. Of the Christian church during the second century, Gibbon, writing

in the eighteenth century, gives this very clear and impartial testimony:

“The Christian church, from the time of the apostles and their first disciples, has claimed an uninterrupted succession of miraculous powers, the gift of tongues, of vision, and of prophecy; the power of expelling demons, of healing the sick, and of raising the dead...

“The divine inspiration, whether it was conveyed in the form of a waking or of a sleeping vision, is described as a favor very liberally bestowed on all ranks of the faithful, on women as on elders, on boys as well as upon bishops. When their devout minds were sufficiently prepared by a course of prayer, of fasting, and of vigils, to receive the extraordinary impulse, they were transported out of their senses and delivered in ecstasy what was inspired, being mere organs of the Holy Spirit, just as a pipe or flute is of him who blows into it. We may add, that the design of these visions was, for the most part, either to disclose the future history, or to guide the present

administration, of the church.” [5]

Such are the frank statements of this great historian, regarding a phase of history which it is understood he regarded rather distasteful to himself. Though he presents the possession of the spiritual gifts by the church as only a claim, yet he does not refute the claim, and recites the exercise and aims of the gifts with greater clearness and impartiality than do some of the theologians. His statements are definite and positive, and are of much value in our present study. They are well supported by other accredited writers.

The Christian church, says Gibbon, from the time of the apostles onward, claimed a succession of miraculous powers, such as the gift of tongues, of vision, of prophecy, and of healing the sick. He also states that the object of the visions—the prophetic gift—was “either to disclose the future history or to guide the present administration of the church.” *The Advocate*, 107. This is precisely the purpose for which the prophetic gift was ever bestowed. The historian’s word harmonizes,

therefore, with the Biblical specifications concerning the operation of this gift, and really constitutes a fitting comment on Paul's definition of its purpose, "for the edifying of the body of Christ."

The Testimony of Mosheim

The significant testimony placed on record by Gibbon is fully supported by Mosheim, a church historian of high repute, who wrote with candor and certainty regarding the manifestation of the spiritual gifts in the primitive church during both the second and the third centuries:

"That what are called the MIRACULOUS gifts Of the Holy Spirit, were liberally conferred, not only in this but also in the following century, especially on those engaged in propagating the gospel; all who are called Christians, believe, on the unanimous and concordant testimony of the ancient writers. Nor do we, in my opinion, hereby incur any just charge of departing from sound reason. For, as these witnesses are all grave men,

fair and honest, some of them philosophers, men who lived in different countries, and relate not what they HEARD, but what they SAW, call God to witness the truth of their declarations [6], and do not claim for themselves, but attribute to others, these miraculous powers; what reason can there be, for refusing to believe them?” [7]

It is to the presence of these gifts in the church that Mosheim attributes the marvelous power that attended the proclamation of the gospel in pagan lands.

But more than the manifestations of power attended these gifts. The rapid progress of the gospel among the nations, and the stability of this work, are attributed by Mosheim to “the extraordinary divine gifts which the Christians exercised.” His statement is very clear:

“It is easier to conceive than to express, how much the Miraculous Powers and the Extraordinary Divine Gifts which the Christians exercised on various occasions, contributed to extend the limits

of the church The gift of foreign tongues appears to have gradually ceased, as soon as many nations became enlightened with the truth, and numerous churches of Christians were everywhere established; for it became less necessary than it was at first. But the other gifts with which God favored the rising church of Christ, were, as we learn from numerous testimonies of the ancients still conferred on particular persons here and there.” [8]

It should be noted that Mosheim’s statements are based “on the unanimous and concordant testimony of the ancient writers,” who, as he affirms in the context, were “grave men, fair and honest, some of them philosophers, men who lived in different countries, and relate not what they HEARD, but what they SAW.” Surely the testimony of these eyewitnesses contributes reliable information.

The Testimony of Eusebius

One of the outstanding sources of authentic

history of the Christian church during the second century is a volume, entitled “Ecclesiastical History,” written by Eusebius, Bishop of the Christian church in Caesarea, Palestine. Eusebius was one of the most learned men of his age. He is referred to in the “Encyclopedia Britannica” (14th edition, art., “Eusebius”) as having recorded the experiences of the church during the second century, “in the belief that the old order of things was passing away.” His history covers the first and second centuries of the Christian era, and was completed about 324 or 325. Its value lies in “the wealth of the materials which it furnishes for a knowledge of the early church.”

Of this “Ecclesiastical History,” written by Eusebius, Philip Schaff, a modern historian of note, says:

“Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, in Palestine, and contemporary with Constantine the Great, composed a church history in ten books [9], by which he has won the title of the Father of church history, or the Christian Herodotus. Though by no

means very critical and discerning, and far inferior in literary talent and execution to the works of the great classical historians, this Ante-Nicene church history is invaluable for its learning, moderation, and love of truth; for its use of sources since totally or partially lost; and for its interesting position of personal observation between the last persecutions of the church and her establishment in the Byzantine Empire.” [10]

The publisher’s note on “Eusebius” in “Bohn’s Ecclesiastical Library” says of his history:

“The ‘Ecclesiastical History’ of Eusebius, which succeeds immediately to the Acts of the Apostles, and is for a considerable period the only work of the kind, possesses a value to subsequent ages which belongs to no other uninspired document.” [11]

In his “Ecclesiastical History” Eusebius records the names, with brief information, of a number of leading messengers of the church in the second century, who, he says, were endowed with spiritual

gifts, including the gift of prophecy. One of these was Quadratus of Athens, of whom Eusebius wrote in these words:

“Of those that flourished in these times, Quadratus is said to have been distinguished for his prophetic gifts. There were many others, also, noted in these times, who held the first rank in the apostolic succession. These, as the holy disciples of such men, also built up the churches where foundations had been previously laid in every place by the apostles. They augmented the means of promulgating the gospel more and more, and spread the seeds of salvation and of the heavenly kingdom throughout the world far and wide... The Holy Spirit, also, wrought many wonders as yet through them, so that as soon as the gospel was heard, men voluntarily in crowds, and eagerly, embraced the true faith with their whole minds.”
[12]

Both True and False

Recognizing along with the true the presence of

the false who came to harass the church, the same writer adds:

“After stating other matters, he [Miltiades, the historian] enumerates those who had prophesied under the New Testament. Among these he mentions one Ammias and Quadratus. ‘But the false prophet,’ says he, ‘is carried away by a vehement ecstasy, accompanied by want of all shame and fear. Beginning, indeed, with a designed ignorance, and terminating, as beforesaid, in involuntary madness. They will never be able to show that any of the Old, or any of the New Testament, were thus violently agitated and carried away in spirit. Neither will they be able to boast that Agabus, or Judas, or Silas, or the daughters of Philip, or Ammias in Philadelphia, or Quadratus, or others that do not belong to them, ever acted in this way... For the apostle shows that the gift of prophecy should be in all the church until the coming of the Lord.’” [13]

Quadratus, here named, was a man of considerable influence. He wrote an Apology and a

defense to Emperor Adrian in behalf of the Christians. It seems to have been existent as late as the seventh century (Photius: Cod., 162). Concerning Quadratus, Dean (Frederic W., D. D., F. R. S.) Farrar writes:

“Nothing is really known of the writer of the Apology, of which an interesting fragment is preserved by Eusebius, in which the writer says that some were still living in his day on whom Christ had performed His miracles of healing.”
[14]

Eusebius says of this Apology, extant in his day, the fourth century:

“The work is still in the hands of some of the brethren, as also in our own, from which anyone may see evident proof, both of the understanding of the man, and of his apostolic faith.

“This writer shows the antiquity of the age in which he lived, in these passages: ‘The deeds of our Saviour,’ says he, ‘were always before you [the

emperor] for they were true miracles; those that were healed, those that were raised from the dead, who were seen, not only when healed and when raised, but were always present. They remained living a long time, not only whilst our Lord was on earth, but likewise when He had left the earth. So that some of them have also lived to our own times.’ Such was Quadratus.” “The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus,” [15]

This is instructive and valuable testimony. It connects us up closely with the apostles. It expresses confidence in the possession and working of the spiritual gifts at that period, it tells us of the great power that attended Christian workers, and of the marvelous results that followed. It should be observed that “Quadratus is said to have been distinguished for his prophetic gifts.” This was in the early part of the second century after the apostles had gone to their rest.

The Testimony of Justin

After we leave the inspired writers of the New

Testament, we must obtain our information concerning the church in the second, third, and fourth centuries, from early church historians, and contemporary ecclesiastical writers. Drawing from these sources, we turn first to the testimony of Justin Martyr, who was among the earliest converts from paganism in the second century. Born of pagan parents in Flavia Neapolis, Samaria, about 114 A.D., he was well educated, and was said to be a true lover of “sound philosophy,” ever seeking for knowledge that would satisfy the longings of his soul. At last the account of the life and death of Christ made a deep impression upon his mind, and, pagan philosopher though he was, Justin was constrained to accept the Saviour as his Lord and Master, and united with the hated and persecuted Christians, whose extraordinary fearlessness in the presence of death had greatly impressed him. He soon became one of the most influential defenders of the gospel and the church.

His writings are among the most important that come down to us from the second century. He wrote able replies to critics and opposers of all

classes. He also wrote defenses and appeals to emperors in behalf of the gospel and the persecuted Christians. One writer declares that Justin Martyr was a valuable authority on the life of the Christian church in the middle second century.

Concerning Spiritual Gifts

One of the books written by Justin was known as his “Dialogue With Trypho, a Jew,” in which there is found a valuable statement regarding the manifestation of spiritual gifts in the church at that time, reading as follows:

“Daily some (of you) are becoming disciples in the name of Christ, and quitting the path of error; who are also receiving gifts, each as he is worthy, illumined through the name of this Christ. For one receives the spirit of understanding, another of counsel, another of strength, another of healing, another of foreknowledge, another of teaching, and another of the fear of God.”

“To this Trypho said to me, ‘I wish you knew

that you are beside yourself, talking these sentiments.’

“And I said to him, ‘Listen, O friend, for I am not mad or beside myself; but it was prophesied that, after the ascent of Christ to heaven, He would deliver us from error and give us gifts. The words are these: “He ascended up on high; He led captivity captive; He gave gifts to man.” Accordingly, we who have received gifts from Christ, who has ascended up on high, prove from the words of prophecy that you, “the wise in yourselves, and the men of understanding in your own eyes,” are foolish, and honor God and His Christ by lip only. But we, who are instructed in the whole truth, honor them both in acts, and in knowledge, and in heart, even unto death.’” [16]

He says further in the same dialogue:

“For the prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time. And hence you ought to understand that (the gifts) formerly among your nation [the Jews] have been transferred to us. And

just as there were false prophets contemporaneous with your holy prophets, so are there now many false teachers amongst us, of whom our Lord forewarned us to beware; so that in no respect are we deficient, since we know that He foreknew all that would happen to us after His resurrection from the dead and ascension to heaven. For He said we would be put to death, and hated for His name's sake; and that many false prophets and false christs would appear in His name, and deceive many: and so has it come about.'” [17]

Transferred From Jews to Christians

That the reader may have an insight into Justin's precise attitude regarding these matters, we here quote from his own words, preserved for us:

“For after Him [Christ] no prophet has arisen among you [the Jewish nation]. Now, that (you may know that) your prophets, each receiving some one or two powers from God, did and spoke the things which we have learned from the Scriptures, attend to the following remarks of mine.

Solomon possessed the spirit of wisdom, Daniel that of understanding and counsel, Moses that of might and piety, Elijah that of fear, and Isaiah that of knowledge; and so with the others: each possessed one power, or one joined alternately with another; also Jeremiah, and the twelve (prophets), and David, and, in short, the rest who existed amongst you. Accordingly He (that is, the Spirit,) rested, i. e., ceased, when He [Christ] came, after whom, in the times of this dispensation wrought out by Him amongst men, it was requisite that such gifts should cease from you [the Jews]; and having received their rest in Him, should again, as had been predicted, become gifts which, from the grace of His Spirit's power, He imparts to those who believe in Him, according as He deems each man worthy thereof. I have already said, and do again say, that it had been prophesied that this would be done by Him after His ascension to heaven. It is accordingly said, 'He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, He gave gifts unto the sons of men.' And again, in another prophecy it is said: 'And it shall come to pass after this, I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh, and on My servants, and on

My handmaids, and they shall prophesy.’”

“Now, it is possible to see amongst us women and men who possess gifts of the Spirit of God.”
[18]

This is testimony from a witness associated with the early Christian believers in the great activities of the gospel. Justin does not himself claim to be endowed with any of these gifts. He states that “the prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time,” and that some are “illuminated through the name of this Christ.” For one receives the spirit of understanding, another of counsel, another of strength, another of healing, another of foreknowledge (gift of prophecy), another of teaching. This accords fully with Paul’s statement on the operation of the spiritual gifts. The apostles were now all dead. A new generation was carrying on the work nearly a century after Paul wrote his epistle to the Corinthian church. But Christ in heaven was alive, and according to this testimony was still dispensing His gifts to the members of His body, the church.

The Testimony of Irenaeus

Valuable testimony regarding the presence of spiritual gifts in the church during the second century was also borne by Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, in France, thus leading us to the western outposts of the church. The birth and death of Irenaeus are not definitely recorded in any of the ancient documents. He is believed, however, to have been born in Smyrna, or Syria, about 120 A. D., and that he perished with other martyrs about the close of the second century.

It appears that, as a young man, Irenaeus was a pupil of that godly man, Polycarp of Smyrna. In an epistle written later in life to Florinus, Irenaeus says:

“I saw thee when I was yet a boy in Lower Asia with Polycarp... I remember the events of those times much better than those of more recent occurrence... I can tell also the very place where the blessed Polycarp was accustomed to sit and

discourse; and also his entrances, his walks, the complexion of his life, and the form of his body, and his conversations with the people, and his familiar intercourse with John [the apostle], as he was accustomed to tell, as also his familiarity with those that had seen the Lord.” [19]

This record, declares one discerning writer, establishes a chain of testimony (John-Polycarp-Irenaeus) which is “without parallel in early church history.” Dean Farrar says that Irenaeus was “the earliest church writer who quotes from almost every book of the New Testament.” [20]

On the value of his writings, we read: “The writings of Irenaeus are invaluable to us as an index of the views which the primitive church of Christ held on many very important points that have become matters of controversy between the different branches of the Christian church up to our own day.” [21]

Irenaeus wrote extensive works against the licentious practices and foolish doctrines that

sought a foothold in the church. His great task was to lay bare the real character of the many forms of Gnosticism, and to show their essential unity with the old pagan mythology and heathen philosophy. Farrar declares that he “frequently refers to elders who were pupils of the apostles.”

Such is the man who, as an eyewitness, bears positive testimony concerning the presence and operation of spiritual gifts in the church during the latter half of the second century. He says:

“Wherefore, also, those who are in truth His disciples, receiving grace from Him, do in His name perform (miracles), so as to promote the welfare of other men, according to the gift which each one has received from Him. For some do certainly and truly drive out devils, so that those who have thus been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe (in Christ), and join themselves to the church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions, and utter prophetic expressions. Others still, heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they

are made whole. Yea, moreover, as I have said, the dead even have been raised up, and remained among us for many years. And what shall I more say? It is not possible to name the number of the gifts which the church, (scattered) throughout the whole world, has received from God, in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and which she exerts day by day for the benefit of the Gentiles, neither practicing deception upon any, nor taking any reward from them (on account of such miraculous interpositions). For as she has received freely from God, freely also does she minister (to others).

“Nor does she perform anything by means of angelic invocations, or by incantations, or by any other wicked curious art; but, directing her prayers to the Lord, who made all things, in a pure, sincere, and straightforward spirit, and calling upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, she has been accustomed to work miracles for the advantage of mankind, and not to lead them into error.” [22]

After quoting this same passage from Irenaeus,

Eusebius says:

“We hear many of the brethren in the church who have prophetic gifts, and who speak in all tongues through the Spirit, and who also bring to light the secret things of men for their benefit, and who expound the mysteries of God.” [23]

False Appears With the True

These are calm, frank statements, open to challenge by any of the contemporary opponents of Christianity if not true to fact. Those who were truly the disciples of Christ are represented as possessing special gifts for healing, casting out of evil spirits, and leading men and women from paganism to the acceptance of Christ, the Saviour of men.

It should be observed that Irenaeus makes special mention of visions and prophetic communications. This account of the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is in full accord with the one Justin Martyr left on record. Moreover, in his

work “Against Heresies,” Irenaeus, like Justin, recognizes the existence of false prophets in his day, as well as declares the presence of the true. It may be appropriately observed here that whenever the genuine gift is to be found, the spurious will nearly always make its appearance to counterfeit and discredit the true. An example of the workings and character of a false prophet in those days is given in Chapter XIII in Irenaeus’ work, headed “The Deceitful Arts and Nefarious Practices of Marcus.” After describing the method of Marcus in dealing with one of his woman dupes, and telling of the uncleanness of life that accompanied such frauds, Irenaeus adds this word concerning the attitude of “the most faithful“:

“But already some of the most faithful women, possessed of the fear of God, and not being deceived (whom, nevertheless, he did his best to seduce like the rest by bidding them prophecy), abhorring and execrating him, have withdrawn from such a vile company of revelers. This they have done, as being well aware that the gift of prophecy is not conferred on men by Marcus, the

magician, but that only those to whom God sends His grace from above possess the divinely bestowed power of prophesying; and then they speak where and when God pleases, and not when Marcus orders them to do so.” [24]

The statements reproduced in this chapter furnish impressive evidence that the Christian church of the second century was still endowed with spiritual gifts such as had been bestowed upon the apostles and their converts in the first century.

Notes:

1. Pages 1, 2. Boston: Howard Gannett, 1883
2. The Ministry of Healing, 58
3. Northwestern Christian Advocate, 1855
4. Volume XXII, art., “Prophet,” p. 448, 11th edition
5. Milman’s “Gibbon’s Rome,” chap. 15, “The Progress of the Christian Religion, and the Sentiments ...and Condition of the Primitive Christians,” Vol. I, sec. 3, pp. 539, 540, par. 26
6. See Origen, contra Celsum, l. i., p. 35, ed.

Spencer

7. "Institutes of Ecclesiastical History," John Lawrence von Mosheim, D. D., Book I, cent. 2, part 1, chap. 1. Notes on par. 8. New York: Robert Carter & Bros
8. The Advocate, 107.8
9. From the incarnation of the Logos to the year 324
10. "History of the Christian Church," Vol. I, "Apostolic Christianity," p. 28. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887
11. London: Bell and Daldy, 1872
12. "The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus," translated from the Greek by Rev. C. F. Crusé, A. M., Book III, chap. 38, pp. 111,112. London: George Bell and Sons, 1879
13. Id., Book V, chap. 17, p. 187
14. "Lives of the Fathers," chap. 4, p. 129. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1907
15. Book IV, chap. 3, p. 118
16. Justin Martyr's "Dialogue With Trypho," "The Ante-Nicene Fathers," Vol. I, chap. 39, p. 214. Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885

17. Id., chap. 82, p. 240
18. Id., chaps. 87 and 78, p. 243
19. “The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus,” Book V, chap. 20, p. 192
20. “Lives of the Fathers” Vol. I, chap. 3, sec. 2, p. 100
21. “Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature,” McClintock and Strong, Vol. IV, art., “Irenaeus,” page 649
22. “Ante-Nicene Christian Library,” Vol. V, “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” Book II, chap. 32, pp. 245, 246. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1868
23. “The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus,” Book V, chap. 7, p. 175
24. “Ante-Nicene Christian Library,” Vol. V, “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” Book I, chap. 13, p. 53

Chapter 18

Evidences in the Third and Fourth Centuries

That the presence and operation of the heavenly gifts were needed to meet the mighty forces of evil that were arrayed against the cause of God after the ascension of our Lord will be readily admitted. In the first centuries of the Christian era, Jews and pagans alike were bent on the utter annihilation of the Christian church. To meet this powerful opposition successfully, the disciples required superhuman wisdom, grace, and power. That need was supplied through the spiritual gifts imparted to the messengers of the cross by their Lord who sent them forth. The mighty deeds wrought by these gifts through the apostles, and then by the godly men of the second century, as we have seen, were still continued to some extent in the third century. This is attested by modern church historians who have given the subject exhaustive investigation, and by the testimony of pious men who were

eyewitnesses of what took place in those ancient times.

After reviewing the evidence left on record by writers of this period, the historian Robert Miller says:

“Now from all these testimonies it plainly appears that the miraculous powers bestowed on the church, and as a remainder of the apostolic spirit, did continue till toward the end of the third century, which did very much tend to overthrow the heathenish idolatry, and to promote the success of the gospel, notwithstanding all opposition.” [1]

This testimony accords with the view of Ulhorn that “witnesses who are above suspicion leave no room for doubt that the miraculous powers of the apostolic age continued to operate at least into the third century.”

No search for the presence of the gifts between the second and fourth centuries would be complete if it failed to include mention of claims to the

possession of the gift of prophecy made by the Montanists. Unfortunately, the meager records available have been preserved chiefly by those opposed to the gifts. These gifts have, in turn, ever been misunderstood and maligned by the opposers of God's gracious provision; therefore, too much reliance cannot be placed upon the testimony of its rejecters.

The Claims of the Montanists

There are many who are persuaded that the Montanists represent a line of God's true witnesses paralleling the growing apostasy that later became the "man of sin," dominant throughout the Middle Ages. Others, impressed by evidences of fanaticism, at certain times and places, have questioned all Montanist claims to spiritual gifts, and have placed the Montanists among the sectarian heretics.

Without attempting to settle the point, it is sufficient here to point out that historical evidence reveals the fact that claim was made by this group

to the manifestation of the gifts,—especially the gift of prophecy,—and that such was regarded neither inconsistent nor impious by those who sought seriously to determine its genuineness.

The earliest ecclesiastical synods were called to discuss the Montanist movement. The leaders of the church were not slow to mark the serious consequences of recognizing the uncontrolled authority of prophets who might arise among the lay members of the church. Prominent men in the church opposed Montanism, the records tell us. One sect, later known as the Alogi, in opposing the claim of prophecy, went so far as to reject the book of Revelation, and even the Gospel of John, because of its promise of the Paraclete.

Whatever conclusion one may reach, therefore, regarding the genuineness of the claims of Montanism to the prophetic office, historians generally agree that the controversy resulted in a definite action taken by the ecclesiastical dignitaries of the church to discredit all such claims for the future. The full significance of this action

should impress itself upon us, for it has a bearing upon the future course of the church that is far-reaching:

“The most immediate and striking result of Montanism was its effect upon the final formation of the New Testament canon. The church met the proclamation of a new era of prophecy with the authoritative declaration that revelation was closed and prophecy was at an end.... The channel of truth is not to be the lonely individual in communion with God, but the supernaturally ordained hierarchy of the church.”—“The Church’s Debt to Heretics,” Rufus M. Jones, p. 143. New York: George H. Doran Company; London: James Clarke & Co., Limited.

Of the cessation of prophecy, H. B. Swete says:

“The church herself did not at once resign herself to the loss of prophecy. But the exigencies of controversy, added to the growing officialism of the church, succeeded in silencing this conviction, and the church ceased to prophesy, leaving

Montanism in possession of a claim which rightly belonged to the church.” [2]

Pronouncement Against Prophecy

Let us note clearly the subtle danger to the church involved in this official pronouncement against prophecy. The “supernaturally ordained hierarchy,” might and actually did, as we know, in later days depart so far from God as actually to assume to speak for Him. Communication from heaven must, they declared, be made through men and women of ecclesiastical appointment. But we know that fitness for such a mission is by no means regulated by official position. Furthermore, acceptance of the dogma that the gift of prophecy, as manifest through visions or dreams, was at an end, would make impossible in future days any direct communication from heaven in the manner that had been in operation from the days of Adam. There was thus an attempt in connection with this issue to make the “hierarchy” the infallible interpreter of the Scriptures, and the only source through which added light might come to the

church. This very attitude is sufficient to account for the future hostility of church leaders toward any manifestation of the prophetic gift, and for the seeming rarity of its presence in the church during the centuries that followed.

In our study of the doctrine and history of the prophetic gift, we have now reached the fourth century. Momentous changes in both the church and the Roman government have taken place during the preceding three centuries. The few hundred believers at the time of the ascension of our Lord have grown to millions and in the face of most determined opposition.

Developments in the Fourth Century

In three centuries of desperate effort by the Roman government to blot out the church of Christ from the face of the earth, it has discovered itself to be at war with an omnipotent power—something vastly more than a mere earthly force. It has also come to a realization of its own utter impotence in this direct warfare. It has seen the spread of the

gospel into every part of its vast domain. Everywhere it has witnessed the upspringing of churches composed of Roman citizens, won from the pagan gods of the state, to Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of men.

But during these three centuries other changes of a very serious character have developed. The church itself has suffered a marked deterioration. It has lost seriously in what Christ called its “first love;” or, as rendered pointedly by Weymouth, “You no longer love Me as you did at first.” Revelation 2:4. Love for the Master had not been extinguished, but it had lost a measure of its fervor and glow. That loss opened the door for serious evils to come into the church. Doctrinal heresies and jealousies, dissensions and degeneracies, gained a foothold in the congregations. These evils, boring from within, accomplished what all the opposition and persecution from without had failed to effect. It resulted in weakening the great evangelistic endeavor of the believers, and in general deterioration and worldliness throughout their ranks. Indeed, we read the solemn words:

“A moral and intellectual paralysis had fallen upon Christendom.” [3]

Another great peril that befell the church at the close of the third century was the seeming surrender of the pagan state to the Christian church. In the early part of the fourth century, Constantine, the Roman emperor, professed to have abandoned the pagan gods of the empire and to have accepted Christianity.

He canceled the cruel edicts for the persecution of the Christians, and issued others in their favor.

“The nominal conversion of Constantine, in the early part of the fourth century, caused great rejoicing; and the world, cloaked with a form of righteousness, walked into the church. Now the work of corruption rapidly progressed. Paganism, while appearing to be vanquished, became the conqueror. Her spirit controlled the church. Her doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions were incorporated into the faith and worship of the

professed followers of Christ.” [4]

But Constantine went to greater lengths. The historian says:

“He prohibited by law the worship of idols in cities and country, commanded that no statues of the gods should be erected, nor any sacrifices offered upon their altars, and sent into all the provinces Christian presidents, forbidding the pagan priests to offer sacrifice, and confirming to the former [the Christian presidents], the honors due to their characters and stations.” [5]

Establishment of the Papacy

This was surely an amazing change. Apparently the pagan empire had surrendered to the Christian church.

“The fall of paganism, which may be considered as having begun to take place in the reign of Constantine, and as nearly consummated in that of Theodosius, is probably one of the most

extraordinary revolutions that ever took place on the theater of this world. Their own writers have described it as ‘a dreadful and amazing prodigy, which covered the earth with darkness, and restored the ancient dominion of chaos and night.’”
[6]

But no, it was not the fall of paganism that made this change a great calamity—one that “covered the earth with darkness, and restored the ancient dominion of chaos and night.” It was that which grew out of it, namely, the establishment of the papacy. It was this that assuredly “covered the earth with darkness,” and brought “chaos and night” upon the earth.

The secret hand that brought about this great disaster is clearly disclosed in this authoritative word:

“Satan ... laid his plans to war more successfully against the government of God, by planting his banner in the Christian church.... The great adversary now endeavored to gain by artifice

what he had failed to secure by force. Persecution ceased, and in its stead were substituted the dangerous allurements of temporal prosperity and worldly honor. Idolaters were led to receive a part of the Christian faith, while they rejected other essential truths. They professed to accept Jesus as the Son of God, and to believe in His death and resurrection; but they had no conviction of sin, and felt no need of repentance or of a change of heart. With some concessions on their part, they proposed that Christians should make concessions, that all might unite on the platform of belief in Christ. Now the church was in fearful peril. Prison, torture, fire, and sword were blessings in comparison with this. Some of the Christians stood firm, declaring that they could make no compromise. Others were in favor of yielding or modifying some features of their faith, and uniting with those who had accepted a part of Christianity, urging that this might be the means of their full conversion. That was a time of deep anguish to the faithful followers of Christ.” [7]

Perilous Changes Foreknown and Revealed

To know, however, that these perilous changes were all foreknown to the Lord, and that they were revealed to the prophets and apostles long before they were made, together with the glorious truth that the church of God's planting would ultimately triumph, affords Christian believers abiding confidence in the God of all wisdom and love. In Paul's farewell interview with the elders of the church at Ephesus, he said to them:

“I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” (Acts 20:29-30)

It must have given the great apostle a heavy heart to foresee the serious evils that would come upon the church he had labored so earnestly to upbuild. But his predictions given by inspiration were fulfilled. Grievous wolves did indeed enter in among the innocent sheep, causing the spiritual

ruin of multitudes. Moreover, from within the church itself men arose introducing heresies and speaking perverse things, and they turned many disciples away from the truth of the gospel. Gradually and almost imperceptibly this took place during the first two or three centuries after Christ. In the fourth, the tide is well-nigh resistless.

The same deplorable apostasy was foretold by Peter:

“There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not.” (2 Peter 2:1-3)

Corruptions Brought In

Along with these clear prophetic predictions there may well be placed the statement made by Mosheim regarding the corruptions brought into the church during the fourth century:

“An enormous train of different superstitions were gradually substituted in the place of true religion and genuine piety. This odious revolution was owing to a variety of causes. A ridiculous precipitation in receiving new opinions, a preposterous desire of imitating the pagan rites, and of blending them with the Christian worship.”

“From these facts, which are but small specimens of the state of Christianity at this time, the discerning reader will easily perceive what detriment the church received from the peace and prosperity procured by Constantine, and from the imprudent methods employed to allure the different nations to embrace the gospel.” [8]

All this is very greatly deplored by those who

established the pure and triumphant apostolic church. One writer puts it:

“Worship, and that idle propensity, which the generality of mankind have towards gaudy and ostentatious religion, all contributed to establish the reign of superstition upon the ruins of Christianity....” The reins being once let loose to superstition, which knows no bounds, absurd notions, and idle ceremonies multiplied every day.... The virtues that had formerly been ascribed to the heathen temples, to their lustrations, to the statues of their gods and heroes, were now attributed to Christian churches, to water consecrated by certain forms of prayer, and to the images of holy men.”

Popery the Consummation of Apostasy

But the most alarming of the predictions of the change destined to take place in the church is the one recorded by Paul in his second letter to the Thessalonians:

“Let no man deceive you by any means’ for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-10)

This, we understand, foretells seeming rejection of the pagan gods and religion of Rome, and the

establishment in their place of the papal church—with the thinly disguised principles and practices of that selfsame paganism. This was accomplished during the first six centuries of the Christian era. Just what was involved in this transition—this substitution of a masked Christianity for the stark paganism of the empire—is very clearly explained by Wylie. How the dire inroads of centuries of almost imperceptible but nevertheless steady progress were made toward this satanic achievement, is condensed into this one comprehensive statement:

“Popery, then, we hold to be an after-growth of paganism, whose deadly wound, dealt by the spiritual sword of Christianity, was healed. Its oracles had been silenced, its shrines demolished, and its gods consigned to oblivion; but the deep corruption of the human race, not yet cured by the promised effusion of the Spirit upon all flesh, revived it anew, and, under a Christian mask, reared other temples in its honor, built it another Pantheon, and replenished it with other gods, which, in fact, were but the ancient divinities under

new names. All idolatries, in whatever age or country they have existed, are to be viewed but as successive developments of the one grand apostasy. That apostasy was commenced in Eden, and consummated at Rome.” [9]

Attempts to Restrain the Prophetic Gift

In harmony with this brief statement is the tragic picture painted by Lawrence:

“The fourth century brought important changes in the condition of the bishops of Rome. It is a singular trait of the corrupt Christianity of this period that the chief characteristic of the eminent prelates was a fierce and ungovernable pride. Humility had long ceased to be numbered among the Christian virtues. The four great rulers of the church (the Bishop of Rome and the patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria) were engaged in a constant struggle for supremacy. Even the inferior bishops assumed a princely state, and surrounded themselves with their sacred courts. The vices of pride and arrogance descended to the

lower orders of the clergy; the emperor himself was declared to be inferior in dignity to the simple presbyter, and in all public entertainments and ceremonious assemblies the proudest layman was expected to take his place below the haughty churchman. As learning declined and the world sunk into a new barbarism, the clergy elevated themselves into a ruling caste, and were looked upon as half divine by the rude Goths and the degraded Romans. It is even said that the pagan nations of the West transferred to the priest and monk the same awe-struck reverence which they had been accustomed to pay to their Druid teachers. The Pope took the place of their Chief Druid, and was worshiped with idolatrous devotion; the meanest presbyter, however vicious and degraded, seemed, to the ignorant savages, a true messenger from the skies.” [10]

This situation produced a crisis in the ranks of the true followers of the Master. Their firm decision is disclosed in these significant words of Mrs. E. G. White:

“After a long and severe conflict, the faithful few decided to dissolve all union with the apostate church if she still refused to free herself from falsehood and idolatry. They saw that separation was an absolute necessity if they would obey the word of God.” [11]

So the true dissenters from the dominant church began to form a line that was to span the Middle Ages. They were soon to flee “into the wilderness” for the prophesied period of 1260 years.

This apostate Christian power—the papacy—having assumed the name not only of a church, but of the one and only true church, then began to hold sway, to a growing degree, over the minds, rights, liberties, and earthly destinies of the human race for over a thousand years. That period has been fitly called “the Dark Ages,” and “the world’s midnight.”

As the church began to depart from the standards of the doctrines and Christian experience of the first and second centuries, it also began,

consistently enough, to attempt to restrain and to terminate the operation of the prophetic gift. While the restraining process was going on, there was decided opposition to it by loyal believers. “The church herself,” says Swete, as previously quoted, “did not at once resign herself to the loss of prophecy. But the exigencies of controversy, added to the growing officialism of the church, succeeded in silencing this conviction and the church ceased to prophesy.”

Ecclesiastical Stand Against the Gift

The apostolic church had the gift of prophecy, and profited by it greatly. The gifts were continued after the death of the apostles, as we have seen. But when the ecclesiastical leaders wanted it no more, they lost it,—as a church. After that, it appeared here and there among true, humble believers. Reviewing a controversy regarding the prophetic gift, which continued in the church through the greater part of the second and third centuries, a discerning writer declares:

“It was now taught that prophecy in general was a peculiarity of the Old Testament (“lex et prophetae usque ad Johannem”); that in the new covenant God had spoken only through apostles; that the whole word of God so far as binding on the church was contained in the apostolic record—the New Testament; and that, consequently, the church neither required nor could acknowledge new revelations, or even instructions, through prophets. The revolution which this theory gradually brought about is shown in the transformation of the religious, enthusiastic organization of the church into a legal and political constitution. A great many things had to be sacrificed to this, and amongst others the old prophets. The strictly enforced episcopal constitution, the creation of a clerical order, and the formation of the New Testament canon accomplished the overthrow of the prophets. Instead of the old formula, ‘God continually confers on the church apostles, prophets, and teachers,’ the word now was: ‘The church is founded in the (written) word of the prophets (i.e. the Old Testament prophets) and the apostles (viz. the twelve and Paul).’ After the beginning of the

third century there were still no doubt men under the control of the hierarchy who experienced the prophetic ecstasy, or clerics like Cyprian who professed to have received special directions from God.” [12]

Such a decision by the bishops, presbyters, and other leaders in the church could have no other influence than to discount, restrain, and attempt to suppress the manifestation of that gracious gift so greatly needed by the very ones who opposed it.

It will, of course, be evident to all that reference is here made to two churches, or rather to the church at two different periods. The first is the primitive church; the other is the church drifting into apostasy. It was the latter that endeavored to silence conviction regarding the continuance of the gift of prophecy. But that conviction was never entirely silenced. The canon of Scripture is indeed closed, but the gift of prophecy has never ultimately ceased. There were times when the gift seemed to have disappeared forever; but another has well said:

“In spiritually aroused eras in the history of the church, prophecy again puts in its appearance. It has never ceased altogether.” [13]

Not until the gospel ceases on earth will the gift of prophecy finally “cease,” to use the authoritative term of Holy Writ.

Notes:

1. “History of the Propagation of Christianity and the Overthrow of Paganism,” Vol. I, Cent. III, pp. 318, 319
2. Biblical World, September, 1905
3. “The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan,” p. 60
4. The Advocate, 49, 50
5. “The History of the Christian Church,” William Jones (two-volume edition), chap. 3, sec. 1, 168. Louisville: Norwood & Palmer, 1831
6. The Advocate, 193
7. “The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan,” pp. 42, 43

8. "An Ecclesiastical History," Vol. I, Cent. IV, pp. 355, 356. Charlestown: Printed and published by Samuel Etheridge, Jr., 1810
9. "The Papacy; Its History, Dogmas, Genius, and Prospects," J. A. Wylie, Book I, chap. I, pp. 12, 13. Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1852
10. "Historical Studies," Eugene Lawrence, pp. 20, 21. New York: Harper Brothers, 1876
11. "The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan," p. 45
12. "Encyclopedia Britannica," Vol. XXII, art., "Prophet," 11th edition
13. "The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia," Vol. IV, art., "Prophecy," p. 2464

Chapter 19

Separations From the Church

We now take up the search for manifestations of prophetic light during the blackness of that long, harsh night that began to settle down upon the religious world during the fourth century. That spiritual night grew fearfully dark and dismal. The dominant church had hidden the Bible behind a mass of tradition. She had turned from God's holy law. She had substituted a human priest and an earthly ministry for our great High Priest and His heavenly ministry. The nominal church had become "the synagogue of Satan" (Revelation 2:9), even where "Satan's seat" was (verse 13), and from it the true church, symbolized by the "woman," later had to flee "into the wilderness" where God had prepared a "place" for her (Revelation 12:1-6).

Withdrawal From the Main Body

As the church began to depart more and more from the true doctrines of the Bible, and to turn

from the high spiritual and moral standards of the apostolic church, devoted, loyal believers were first grieved, and then alarmed, and finally aroused to determined opposition. In vain they appealed and protested to bishops, priests, and other leaders. Receiving no friendly response assuring them of a reformation, and seeing the apostasy expanding steadily and becoming entrenched, some of the zealous, courageous leaders, together with their churches, began to withdraw from the main body of the professedly Christian church, as has been stated in the preceding chapter:

“After a long and severe conflict, the faithful few decided to dissolve all union with the apostate church if she still refused to free herself from falsehood and idolatry. They saw that separation was an absolute necessity if they would obey the word of God.” [1]

It was this opposition to the growing apostasy, and this withdrawal of loyal groups from the dominant church, that marked the beginning of the long series of protests and conflicts which kept the

true light shining through the long, dark night. The great Reformation of the sixteenth century and the marvelous light of the gospel that floods the whole world today form the climax to the service of those loyal, suffering believers through the struggles of a thousand years. It is fitting, therefore, that we should acquaint ourselves with some of these courageous leaders and their loyal churches, for this acquaintance will reveal the forces that culminated in the glorious Reformation.

Novatian's Separation From Rome

Open conflict, begun by the Montanists, continued under Novatian, or Novatianus, the ordained minister of a church in the city of Rome. Let us now trace the secession of the Novatians, which took place a century or so before the sharp, general division that came throughout Christendom. Says Jones:

“Long before the times of which we now treat [370-400 A.D.] some Christians had seen it their duty to withdraw from the communion of the

Church of Rome. The first instance of this that we find on record, if we except that of Tertullian [the Montanist], is the case of Novatian, who, in the year 251, was ordained the pastor of a church in the city of Rome.” [2]

As this separation was a drastic step, and was followed by that of other devout leaders and their followers through the centuries, it should be clearly understood why these separations seemed imperative. It becomes necessary, therefore, to survey rather specifically some of the historical aspects that form the background to the object of our study.

Of the time and the conditions when the Novatians withdrew, Mosheim says:

“The face of things began now to change in the Christian church. The ancient method of ecclesiastical government seemed, in general, still to subsist, while, at the same time, by imperceptible steps, it varied from the primitive rule, and degenerated toward the form of a

religious monarchy.”

“This change, in the form of ecclesiastical government, was soon followed by a train of vices, which dishonored the character and authority of those to whom the administration of the church was committed. For, though several yet continued to exhibit to the world illustrious examples of primitive piety and Christian virtue, yet many were sunk in luxury and voluptuousness, puffed up with vanity, arrogance, and ambition, possessed with a spirit of contention and discord, and addicted to many other vices that cast an undeserved reproach upon the holy religion, of which they were unworthy professors and ministers.” [3]

Evils That Forced Separation

Novatian was a kind of minister who refused to take any part in the apostasy. His character, and some of the evils that forced him to separate from the main body, are set forth by Robinson: Novatian was “a man of extensive learning, and held the same doctrine as the church did, and published

several treatises in defense of what he believed. His address was eloquent and insinuating, and his morals were irreproachable. He saw with extreme pain the intolerable depravity of the church. Christians, within the space of a very few years, were caressed by one emperor and persecuted by another. In seasons of prosperity, many rushed into the church for base purposes. In times of adversity, they denied the faith, and ran back to idolatry again. When the squall was over, away they came again to the church, with all their vices, to deprave others by their examples. The bishops, fond of proselytes, encouraged all this, and transferred the attention of the Christians from the old confederacy for virtue, to vain shows at Easter, and other Jewish ceremonies, adulterated too with paganism.... In the end, Novatian formed a church, and was elected bishop. Great numbers followed his example, and all over the empire Puritan churches were constituted and flourished through the succeeding two hundred years. Afterward, when penal laws obliged them to lurk in corners, and worship God in private, they were distinguished by a variety of names, and a succession of them

continued till the Reformation.” [4]

Of the surprising extent of this body, we read:

“With respect to the extension of the schismatic (Novatian) church, notice, for Spain, Pacian; for Gaul, the polemical work of Bishop Reticus of the fourth century; for Upper Italy, Ambrose (*De poenitentia*); for Rome, where in the fifth century, the Novatians had a bishop and many churches, Socrates (*Hist. Eccl.*, V. 14, VII, 1, 11); for Mauritania, Alexandria (where they also had a bishop and several churches), Syria, Paphlagonia, Phrygia, Bithynia, Scythia, etc., Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret. In Constantinople they had three churches; and Socrates gives the list of their bishops, with the principal events of their lives. At the Council of Nicaea the Novatian bishop Arius was present. He accepted the decisions of the council concerning the faith and the Easter controversy, and was treated with much regard by the council. But the emperor did not succeed in alluring him (the Novatian bishop) and his party back into the bosom of the church. Ten years later,

however, (after the Council of Nicaea) when Constantine had somewhat changed his theological views, he placed the Novatians in rank with the Marcionites and Valentinians, forbade them to worship in public, closed their (heretical) churches, and ordered their books to be burnt. During the Arian controversy the relation between the Novatians and the Catholic Church was generally good, as the former showed no inclination towards that heresy. But the danger was hardly over, before the Catholic Church began persecutions. In Rome, Innocent I closed their churches, and Celestine I forbade them to worship in public.” [5]

The Novatian Doctrines

Of the Novatian doctrines and discipline, Jones says:

“The doctrinal sentiments of the Novatians appear to have been very scriptural, and the discipline of their churches rigid in the extreme. They were the first class of Christians who obtained the name of (Cathari) Puritans, an

appellation which doth not appear to have been chosen by themselves, but applied to them by their adversaries; from which we may reasonably conclude that their manners were simple and irreproachable.” [6]

Robertson adds this:

“As to the chief doctrines of the gospel, however, the Novatianists were and continued steadily orthodox, and many of them suffered, even to death, for the faith. The Council of Nicaea attempted to heal the schism by conciliatory measures; but the Novatianists still regarded the laxity of the church’s discipline as a bar to a reunion with it, although they were drawn into more friendly relations with the Catholics by a community of danger during the ascendancy of Arianism. The sect long continued to exist.” [7]

Of the conflict with Catholic Church discipline, and the challenge of arbitrary church authority by Novatian, Neander has written:

“With regard to the second main point of the controversy, the idea of the church, Novatian maintained that, purity and holiness being one of the essential marks of a true church, every church which, neglecting the right use of discipline, tolerates in its bosom, or readmits to its communion, such persons as, by gross sins, have broken their baptismal vow, ceases by that very act to be a true Christian church, and forfeits all the rights and privileges of a true church. On this ground the Novatianists, as they held themselves to be alone the pure immaculate church, called themselves. ... the Pure.” [8]

“Novatian, on the other hand, laid at the basis of his theory the visible church as pure and holy, and these qualities were, in his view, the essential conditions of the truly catholic church. The catholic (universal) church, though carried on by the succession of bishops, ceases, in his opinion, to be a truly catholic one as soon as it becomes stained and desecrated through fellowship with unworthy men.” [9]

The Novatians gained the confidence and sympathy of people everywhere who saw the peril and “groaned for relief.” When this one man, Novatian, showed the courage to break away from the professing Christian church, the crisis was on, and thousands took their stand with these Reformers. Truly he was led of God. It was such courageous loyalty to the teachings of Christ and the apostles that kept the channel open for the manifestation of the prophetic gift. It should likewise be remembered that a succession of the Novatians under different names continued till the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

Donatists Break With Rome

In the early part of the fourth century the Novatians were joined, or perhaps followed, by another company of sincere Christians who broke away from the Catholic Church. These were the Donatists, receiving their name from Donatus, their leader, who had been elected Bishop of Carthage about the year 306 A. D. The reader will recall that it was in this century in which the emperor and the

bishops joined hands, and organically united church and state. Of this time Mosheim says:

“An enormous train of different superstitions were gradually substituted in the place of true religion and genuine piety.” “When we cast an eye toward the lives and morals of Christians at this time, we find, as formerly, a mixture of good and evil; some eminent for their piety, others infamous for their crimes. The number however of immoral and unworthy Christians began so to increase, that the examples of real piety and virtue became extremely rare.” [10]

Separation Inevitable

With such a departure as this from the high standards of the apostolic church, it is not surprising that true spiritual leaders and their followers separated from the dominant church. Indeed, it was inevitable. Regarding Donatus and his followers Jones says:

“He [Donatus] was a man of learning and

eloquence, very exemplary in his morals, and, as would appear from several circumstances, studiously set himself to oppose the growing corruptions of the Catholic Church. The Donatists were consequently a separate body of Christians for nearly three centuries, and in almost every city in Africa, there was one bishop of this sect and another of the Catholics. The Donatists were very numerous, for we learn that in the year 411, there was a famous conference held at Carthage between the Catholics and Donatists, at which were present 286 Catholic bishops, and of the Donatists, 279.”
[11]

The Donatists, like the Novatians, remained separate from the main body, and worked untiringly for the maintenance of the true teaching and spiritual living of the people of God. Thousands of the devout in all parts of northern Africa joined them. Of course, they were not without imperfections and marked limitations. They must be studied and judged in the light of comparison with the apostasies and degeneracies of the time. As was always the case with dissenters,

the Catholic Church endeavored to exterminate them. They continued, however, until the middle of the sixth century. Says George Waddington:

“The Donatists have never been charged, with the slightest show of truth, with any error of doctrine, or any defect in church government or discipline, or any depravity of moral practice.” [12]

The Waldensian Protestants

Historians have brought to light a vast amount of information about the people and events that center in the Christian church, or churches, known as the Waldenses, or Vaudois. It is now certain that the Waldenses were not a single, isolated class of one nation only. In their broadest and most comprehensive history, they embrace and represent, under variant names, many of the protesting, reforming groups of Christians from early centuries to the Reformation of the sixteenth century, and on for a hundred years later. Concerning their antiquity and origin, Alexis Muston in his monumental work, based on sources,

says:

“The Vaudois of the Alps are, in my opinion, primitive Christians, or descendants and representatives of the primitive church, preserved in these valleys from the corruptions successively introduced by the Church of Rome into the religion of the gospel. It is not they who have separated from Catholicism, but Catholicism which has separated from them by changing the primitive religion.” [13]

The noted Waldensian authority, William S. Gilly, M. A. states the same essential fact in these words:

“The terms, Vaudois in French, Vallenses in Latin, Valdesi, or Vallesi in Italian, and Waldenses in English ecclesiastical history, signify nothing more or less than ‘Men of the Valleys;’ and as the valleys of Piedmont have had the honor of producing a race of people, who have remained true to the faith introduced by the first missionaries, who preached Christianity in those

regions, the synonyms Vaudois, Valdesi, and Waldenses, have been adopted as the distinguishing names of a religious community, faithful to the primitive creed, and free from the corruption of the Church of Rome.

“Long before the Roman Church, (that new sect, as Claude, Bishop of Turin in 840, called it,) stretched forth its arms, to stifle in its Antæan embrace the independent flocks of the Great Shepherd, the ancestors of the Waldenses were worshiping God in the hill countries of Piedmont, as their posterity now worship Him. For many ages they continued almost unnoticed.” [14]

Speaking further of these relationships, he adds:

“The Waldenses of Piemont are not to be regarded as the successors of certain reformers, who first started up in France and Italy at a time, when the corruptions of the Roman Church and priesthood became intolerable, but as a race of simple mountaineers, who from generation to

generation have continued steadily in the faith preached to their forefathers, when the territory, of which their valleys form a part, was first Christianized. Ample proof will be given of this, as I proceed, and without attempting to fix the exact period of their conversion, I trust to be able to establish the fact, that this Alpine tribe embraced the gospel as it was first announced in all its purity, and continued true to it, in the midst of almost general apostasy. Nothing is more to be regretted than the mistakes which have been made upon this point, even by Protestant authors.” [15]

Early Protesters Against Rome

The leading territory, or headquarters, of the Waldenses was in the region of the Alps, in northern Italy and southern France. The most central and prominent place of location seems to have been in the valleys of Piedmont along the southern foothills of the Alps. According to these authorities, the gospel had first been preached, and churches established, in all that region by preachers of the early centuries. From the churches in

northern Italy the Church of Rome met decided protests. Says Wylie:

“The country in which we find the earliest of these protesters is Italy. The See of Rome, in those days, embraced only the capital and the surrounding provinces. The diocese of Milan, which included the plain of Lombardy, the Alps of Piedmont, and the southern provinces of France, greatly exceeded it in extent. It is an undoubted historical fact that this powerful diocese was not then tributary to the papal chair. ‘The bishops of Milan,’ says Pope Pelagius I (555), ‘do not come to Rome for ordination.’” [16]

That there were flourishing churches in northern Italy in the fourth century is evident, for Ambrose was elected Bishop of Milan in 374 A. D. Wylie comments:

“His [Ambrose’s] theology, and that of his diocese, was in no essential respects different from that which Protestants hold today.... Rufinus, of Aquileia, first metropolitan in the diocese of Milan,

taught substantially the same doctrine in the fifth century.” [17]

Withstood Rome a Thousand Years

But the bishops in the region of Piedmont and the adjoining provinces did more than decline to go to Rome for ordination.

“In the year 590, the bishops of Italy and the Grisons (Switzerland) to the number of nine, rejected the communion of the pope, as a heretic.” [18]

About a century later, Paulinus, Bishop of Aquileia, in Italy, stood firmly against the domination and the innovations of the papacy, and was joined by other bishops in condemning the worship of images as idolatrous.

Turin, an important city a short distance to the west of Milan, was the center of an important diocese at the beginning of the ninth century. About the year 817 A. D. Claudius was appointed

Archbishop of Turin, by Emperor Louis. Of him we read:

“This man beheld with dismay the stealthy approaches of a power which, putting out the eyes of men, bowed their necks to its yoke, and bent their knees to idols. He grasped the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and the battle which he so courageously waged, delayed, though it could not prevent, the fall of his church’s independence, and for two centuries longer the light continued to shine at the foot of the Alps.”
[19]

This is all supported by Lawrence, the learned essayist, who writes:

“Here, within the borders of Italy itself, the popes have never been able, except for one unhappy interval, to enforce their authority. Here no Mass has been said, no images adored, no papal rites administered by the native Vaudois. It was here that Henry Arnaud, the hero of the valleys, redeemed his country from the tyranny of the

Jesuits and Rome; and here a Christian church, founded perhaps in the apostolic age, has survived the persecutions of a thousand years.” [20]

“Soon after the dawn of Christianity, they assert, their ancestors embraced the faith of St. Paul, and practiced the simple rites and usages described by Justin or Tertullian. The Scriptures became their only guide; the same belief, the same sacraments they maintain today they held in the age of Constantine and Sylvester. They relate that, as the Romish Church grew in power and pride, their ancestors repelled its assumptions and refused to submit to its authority; that when, in the ninth century, the use of images was enforced by superstitious popes, they, at least, never consented to become idolaters; that they never worshiped the Virgin, nor bowed at an idolatrous Mass. When, in the eleventh century, Rome asserted its supremacy over kings and princes, the Vaudois were its bitterest foes. The three valleys formed the theological school of Europe. The Vaudois missionaries traveled into Hungary and Bohemia, France, England, even Scotland, and aroused the

people to a sense of the fearful corruption of the church. They pointed to Rome as the Antichrist, the center of every abomination. They taught, in the place of Romish innovations, the pure faith of the apostolic age. Lollard, who led the way to the reforms of Wycliffe, was a preacher from the valleys; the Albigenses of Provence, in the twelfth century, were the fruits of the Vaudois missions; Germany and Bohemia were reformed by the teachers of Piedmont; Huss and Jerome did little more than proclaim the Vaudois faith; and Luther and Calvin were only the necessary offspring of the apostolic churches of the Alps.” [21]

With these illuminating statements may be placed this interesting and significant sentence:

“In lands beyond the jurisdiction of Rome, there existed for many centuries bodies of Christians who remained almost wholly free from papal corruption.” [22]

Waldo—Bible Translation and Persecution

Two centuries after the death of Claudius of Turin, the Waldenses were greatly blessed and strengthened by the coming to them of the great preacher and leader, Peter Waldo. He had been a wealthy merchant in the city of Lyons, France. After his conversion to Christianity, he became a most successful opponent of the papacy. He secured the translation of the New Testament into the Latin tongue, the common language of the people in Southern Europe at that time.

“This Romaunt version was the first complete and literal translation of the New Testament of Holy Scripture; it was made ... not later than 1180, and so is older than any complete version in German, French, Italian, Spanish, or English. This version was widely spread in the south of France, and in the cities of Lombardy. It was in common use among the Waldenses of Piedmont, and it was no small part, doubtless, of the testimony borne to truth by these mountaineers to preserve and circulate it.” [23]

Inquisition in Full Force

Through the extraordinary devotion and flaming zeal of Waldo, the Waldenses were aroused to greater missionary activity. Their young men traveled everywhere, making known to the people the truth of the gospel. These sincere, devout people of the Lord continued through centuries of seclusion, suffering, and persecution, to hold up the torch of light and truth to millions in superstition and darkness. They were living and active throughout the years spanned by Wycliffe, Huss, and Luther, thus preparing the way for the great Reformation.

We include here a somewhat extensive quotation, again from the moving words of that gifted writer, Lawrence:

“The fable of a united Christendom, obeying with devoted faith a pope at Rome, had no credence in the period to which it is commonly assigned; and from the reign of Innocent III to the

Council of Constance (1200-1414) the Roman Church was engaged in a constant and often doubtful contest with the widely diffused fragments of apostolic Christianity.

“The popes had succeeded in subjecting kings and emperors; they now employed them in crushing the people. Innocent III excited Philip of France to a fierce crusade against the Albigenses of the south; amidst a general massacre of men, women, and children, the gentle sect sunk, never to appear again. Dominic invented, or enlarged, the Inquisition; and soon in every land the spectacle of blazing heretics and tortured saints delighted the eyes of the Romish clergy. Over the rebellious kings the popes had held the menace of interdict, excommunication, deposition; to the people they offered only submission or death. The Inquisition was their remedy for the apostolic heresies of Germany, England, Spain—a simple cure for dissent or reform. It seemed effectual. The Albigenses were perfectly extirpated. In the cities of Italy the Waldenses ceased to be known. Lollardism concealed itself in England; the

scriptural Christians of every land who refused to worship images or adore the Virgin disappeared from sight; the supremacy of Rome was assured over all Western Europe.”

Resist the Tyranny of Rome

Lawrence then discusses the Alpine church, in its stand against the furious destroying tyranny of Rome. He continues:

“Yet one blot remained on the fair fame of the seemingly united Christendom. Within the limits of Italy itself a people existed to whom the Mass was still a vain idolatry, the real presence a papal fable; who had resisted with vigor every innovation, and whose simple rites and ancient faith were older than the papacy itself. What waves of persecution may have surged over the Vaudois valleys in earlier ages we do not know; they seem soon to have become familiar with the cruelty of Rome; but in the fifteenth century the popes and the inquisitors turned their malignant eyes upon the simple Piedmontese, and prepared to exterminate

with fire and sword the Alpine church.

“And now began a war of four centuries, the most remarkable in the annals of Europe.... For four centuries a crusade almost incessant went on against the secluded valleys. Often the papal legions, led by the inquisitors, swept over the gentle landscape of Lucerna, and drove the people from the blazing villages to hide in caves on the mountains, and almost browse with the chamois on the wild herbage of the wintry rocks. Often the dukes of Savoy sent well-trained armies of Spanish foot to blast and wither the last trace of Christian civilization in San Martin or Perouse. More than once the best soldiers and the best generals of Mazarin and Louis XIV hunted the Vaudois in their wildest retreats, massacred them in caves, starved them in the regions of the glaciers, and desolated the valleys from San Jean to the slopes of Guinevert.

“Yet the unflinching people still refused to give up their faith. Still they repelled the idolatry of the Mass; still they mocked at the Antichrist of Rome.

In the deepest hour of distress, the venerable barbes gathered around them, their famine-stricken congregations in some cave or cranny of the Alps, administered their apostolic rites, and preached anew the Sermon on the Mount. The Psalm of David, chanted in the plaintive melodies of the Vaudois, echoed far above the scenes of rapine and carnage of the desolate valleys; the apostolic church lived indestructible, the coronal of some heaven-piercing Alp.” [24]

Paulicians Protest Eastern Apostasy

In closing this chapter, we again go back to the seventh century to note briefly the remarkable story of the Paulicians in the territory of the Eastern church.

“While the Christian world, as it has been the fashion to call it, was thus sunk into an awful state of superstition—at a moment when ‘darkness seemed to cover the earth, and gross darkness the people’—it is pleasing to contemplate a ray of celestial light darting across the gloom. About the

year 660, a new sect arose in the east under the name of Paulicians.” [25]

The name of this body of zealous Christians seems to imply that they claimed to be followers of the great apostle Paul, through faithfulness to the instruction contained in his epistles. Be that as it may, the Paulicians appear to have been the descendants of those churches established in the earliest centuries in the region of Armenia. Wylie says concerning their origin:

“Some obscurity rests upon their origin, and additional mystery has on purpose been cast upon it, but a fair and impartial examination of the matter leaves no doubt that the Paulicians are the remnant that escaped the apostasy of the Eastern church, even as the Waldenses are the remnant saved from the apostasy of the Western church.” [26]

A great awakening, and a new spiritual life, courage, and zeal came to these Christian people in the latter part of the seventh century by the

conversion and preaching of one Constantine, an Armenian. They carried on an extensive missionary enterprise, and gained great numbers of adherents in many countries.

The Paulicians protested against the immoralities that were permitted among the clergy and the churches. They also opposed the worship of the Virgin Mary, the adoration of saints and images, and reverence for so-called sacred relics. Infant baptism they rejected as unscriptural.

“It appears, from the whole of their history, to have been a leading object with Constantine and his brethren, to restore, as far as possible, the profession of Christianity to all its primitive simplicity.” [27]

Thus they were branded as heretics by the leaders of the Eastern church in which they were located territorially, and became the victims of “the most deadly persecution which ever disgraced the Eastern church.” But they withstood all the imperial edicts and penal cruelties that were

brought against them. They increased in numbers, and traversed great regions in their missionary activities. The Paulicians form another of those connecting links between the primitive Christian church and the Reformation of Wycliffe, of Huss, and of Luther, that followed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

With this historical picture of the Novatians, Donatists, Waldenses, and Paulicians before us, we are now prepared to seek further for evidences of God's endowing with the power of the Spirit men of His choosing as leaders in reform.

Notes:

1. "The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan," p. 45
2. "History of the Christian Church," William Jones, chap. 3, sec. 2, p. 180
3. "An Ecclesiastical History," Vol. I, Cent. III, pp. 258, 259
4. "Ecclesiastical Researches," Robert Robinson, p. 126. Cambridge: Francis Hodson, 1792

5. "Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge" (three-volume edition, 1889), Vol. II, art., "Novatian," p. 1672
6. "The History of the Christian Church," William Jones, chap. 3, sec. 2, p. 181
7. "History of the Christian Church," James C. Robertson, M. A., Vol. I, p. 170. London: John Murray, 1907
8. "General History of the Christian Religion and Church," Augustus Neander, Vol. I, p. 343. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853
9. The Advocate, 344, 345
10. "An Ecclesiastical History," Vol. I, Cent. IV, pp. 355, 372
11. "The History of the Christian Church," William Jones, chap. 3, sec. 5, p. 222
12. "A History of the Church From the Earliest Ages to the Reformation," p. 153. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1834
13. "History of the Waldenses," Vol. I, p. 17, 1875
14. "Waldensian Researches During a Second Visit to the Vaudois of Piemont," p. 6. London: Printed for C. J. G. & F. Rivington, 1831
15. The Advocate, 8, 9

16. "The History of Protestantism," J. A. Wylie, LL.D., Vol. I, pp. 18, 19. London, Paris, and New York: Cassell Petter & Galpin
17. The Advocate, 20
18. Dr. Allix's "Remarks on the Ancient Churches of Piedmont," chap. 5, p. 32, quoted in "The History of the Christian Church," William Jones, chap. 4, sec. 1, p. 244
19. "The History of Protestantism," J. A. Wiley, Vol. I, p. 21
20. "Historical Studies," Eugene Lawrence, p. 199
21. The Advocate, 200, 201
22. "The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan," p. 63
23. "History of Protestantism," J. A. Wylie, Vol. I, p. 29
24. "Historical Studies," Eugene Lawrence, pp. 202-204
25. "The History of the Christian Church," William Jones, chap. 3, sec. 5, p. 239
26. "History of Protestantism," J. A. Wylie, Vol. I, p. 33
27. "The History of the Christian Church," William Jones, chap. 3, sec. 5, p. 239

Chapter 20

Light Penetrates the Darkness

From the beginning of the Montanist and Novatian protests and separations, in the second and third centuries, on to the great Reformation of the sixteenth, there were many godly men and women who joined in the movements for reform, and raised up large bodies of earnest, witnessing Christians. Prominent among these courageous Reformers were Montanus, who flourished about 170 A. D.; Novatian, about 250 A. D.; Donatus, about 305 A. D.; Ambrose, about 374 A. D.; and Constantine of the Paulicians, about 700 A. D. Claudius, Bishop of Turin, preached in the valleys of Piedmont from 817 to 839. Peter Waldo, the dauntless leader of the Waldenses, labored from 1160 to 1179. Joachim of Italy lived between the years 1145-1201; and Wycliffe, scholar and reformer in England, between 1320-1384. Miltiz of Bohemia made himself known about 1363-1374; and Matthias of Janow, Bohemia, between 1381-1394. John Huss of Bohemia lived from 1369-

1415; Savonarola of Italy, 1452-1498; and Martin Luther of Germany, 1483-1546.

During the whole of this long, tragic period there was an irrepressible conflict between the papacy and the Reformers. Divine light was penetrating the hearts of sincere men and women who longed for salvation, and who walked in the faint rays of the light that had already shone upon them. The Lord had “a few names” that had not defiled their garments. They walked with Him in white, for they were worthy. (Revelation 3:4)

The Lord knew and loved these people, even in their manifest errors and mistakes. He vindicated them, and led them by many marked providences. He gave them fortitude to endure numberless persecutions inflicted upon them. There is historical witness that, even in this long, dark period, He made Himself known to some in visions and spoke to them in dreams, as He made promise through the prophet Joel, and confirmed it through the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost. As we have found in the preceding centuries, men and

women appeared from time to time as divinely called teachers and leaders of the people. Many were alluded to by Christian writers and historians of the times.

Reliable information concerning the work of some of those who thus became God's spokesmen is not available. On others the testimony is very meager, and is often biased or conflicting. The presence of the false was often intermingled with the true, bringing odium upon all to whom the prophetic office was imputed or by whom it was claimed. The attitude of the Roman Church was not only to restrain the exercise of the gift, but also to declare officially that the prophetic office had ceased with the close of the Scripture canon. For this reason it sought to destroy the writings of the reformers and testimony concerning them.

“The history of God's people during the ages of darkness that followed upon Rome's supremacy, is written in heaven, but they have little place in human records.” [1]

The Prophetic Gift Through the Centuries

While holding to our conviction that the bestowal of the prophetic gift was, in the purpose of God, to abide through the centuries to the end of the gospel dispensation, we do not deem it advisable to undertake in this brief treatise to establish the genuineness of the calling of this individual or that to the prophetic office. There is historical testimony through the centuries from the fourth to the eighteenth that seems convincing enough in a considerable number of instances; but we regard it unwise to introduce names about which there might be some legitimate question, and thus obscure the larger principle we are pursuing.

We shall therefore content ourselves at this juncture, first by reaffirming our belief that light from heaven shone here and there all through the darkness of this benighted period, not only from the Holy Scriptures themselves, but also from God's chosen way of communicating with His spokesmen through the prophetic gift; and, second, by presenting testimony of a general character in

support of this conviction.

God's way of dealing with His messengers of light in every generation is pointedly set forth in the words of another: "In every generation God has sent His servants to rebuke sin, both in the world and in the church. But the people desire smooth things spoken to them, and the pure, unvarnished truth is not acceptable. Many reformers, in entering upon their work, determined to exercise great prudence in attacking the sins of the church and the nation. They hoped, by the example of a pure Christian life, to lead the people back to the doctrines of the Bible. But the Spirit of God came upon them as it came upon Elijah, moving him to rebuke the sins of a wicked king and an apostate people; they could not refrain from preaching the plain utterances of the Bible,—doctrines which they had been reluctant to present. They were impelled to zealously declare the truth, and the danger which threatened souls. The words which the Lord gave them they uttered, fearless of consequences, and the people were compelled to hear the warning." [2]

Pre-Reformation Times

As we near the great Reformation of the sixteenth century, we find preparatory movements springing up in many parts of the world. These were led by zealous Christian men to whom there came a clear view of primitive Christianity, together with great alarm concerning the fallen state of the Catholic Church.

“In the different countries of Europe men were moved by the Spirit of God to search for the truth as for hid treasures. Providentially guided to the Holy Scriptures, they studied the sacred pages with intense interest. They were willing to accept the light, at any cost to themselves. Though they did not see all things clearly, they were enabled to perceive many long-buried truths. As Heaven-sent messengers they went forth, rending asunder the chains of error and superstition, and calling upon those who had been so long enslaved, to arise and assert their liberty.” [3]

The unusual experiences that came to these leaders led them to believe that God was speaking to them and laying upon them the responsibility of proclaiming the need of a great spiritual revival and reformation. Such a movement was begun in England during the fourteenth century.

Of all who gave their lives to lead the human race out of the darkness, superstition, and cruelty of the “world’s midnight,” none, perhaps, contributed more than John Wycliffe of England.

He was born in Yorkshire, in the year 1320, and died a peaceful death in his rectory on the last day of December, 1384. Wylie, one of the very readable historians of the beginnings, developments, and triumphs of Protestantism, left on record a remarkable statement regarding Wycliffe. He says:

“Wycliffe stands apart, distinctly marked off from all the men in Christendom. Bursting suddenly upon a dark age, he stands before it in a light not borrowed from the schools, nor from the

doctors of the church, but from the Bible. He came preaching a scheme of reinstitution and reformation so comprehensive, that no reformer since has been able to add to it any one essential principle. On these solid grounds he is entitled to be regarded as the Father of the Reformation. With his rise the night of Christendom came to an end, and the day broke which has ever since continued to brighten.” [4]

Wycliffe's Work Appointed of God

Concerning Wycliffe’s work of reform, Mrs. E. G. White makes this significant statement:

“God had appointed to Wycliffe his work. He had put the word of truth in his mouth, and He set a guard about him that this word might come to the people. His life was protected, and his labors were prolonged, until a foundation was laid for the great work of the Reformation.

“Wycliffe came from the obscurity of the Dark Ages. There were none who went before him from

whose work he could shape his system of reform. Raised up like John the Baptist to accomplish a special mission, he was the herald of a new era. Yet in the system of truth which he presented there was a unity and completeness which reformers who followed him did not exceed, and which some did not reach, even a hundred years later. So broad and deep was laid the foundation, so firm and true was the framework, that it needed not to be reconstructed by those who came after him.” [5]

While the Reformation was under way in England during the time of Wycliffe, seeds of reform were springing up also in Bohemia. Of the beginnings of the work there, Neander says:

“The great reformatory movement in Bohemia dates back to Miltitz, the individual who gave the first impulse to it. We see his influence continuing still to operate through his disciples, Matthias of Janow and John Huss.” [6]

The experience of these early reformers is thus summed up:

“Before the days of Huss, there were men in Bohemia who rose up to condemn openly the corruption in the church and the profligacy of the people. Their labors excited widespread interest. The fears of the hierarchy were roused, and persecution was opened against the disciples of the gospel.” [7]

Rome had decreed that the light of God’s word should be extinguished, and forbade the conduct of worship in the Bohemian tongue. In the Chapel of Bethlehem in Prague, John Huss denounced these and other evils unsparingly, and appealed to the word of God to enforce the principles of truth and purity. Another citizen of Prague, Jerome, made a visit to England and brought with him the writings of Wycliffe. These had a profound influence on the work of Huss and Jerome as they later became intimately associated in the work of reform, in defense of which they both yielded up their lives in the flames of Romish persecution.

God's Purpose and Method

Concerning their work, the purpose and the method of God are revealed in these instructive words:

“God permitted great light to shine upon the minds of these chosen men, revealing to them many of the errors of Rome; but they did not receive all the light that was to be given to the world. Through these, His servants, God was leading the people out of the darkness of Romanism; but there were many and great obstacles for them to meet, and He led them on, step by step, as they could bear it. They were not prepared to receive all the light at once. Like the full glory of the noontide sun to those who have long dwelt in darkness, it would, if presented, have caused them to turn away. Therefore He revealed it to the leaders, little by little, as it could be received by the people.” [8]

That this is God’s method of dealing with His chosen leaders in other generations is made clear in

the next sentence:

“From century to century, other faithful workers were to follow, to lead the people on still farther in the path of reform.” [8]

It is easy to infer from these illuminating statements that we may not be too exacting of reformers in expecting or requiring that they should have and impart all the light as we have it now in the full blaze of gospel glory. God has many times used men to meet the exigencies of the period in which they lived, who may not have had a full knowledge of the truth as we know it today.

Notes:

1. “The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan,” p. 61
2. The Advocate, 606
3. The Advocate, 79
4. “The History of Protestantism,” Vol. I, p. 124
5. “The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan,” p. 93

6. “General History Of the Christian Religion and Church,” Vol. IX, part 1, p. 250, para. 1. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1858
7. “The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan,” p. 97
8. The Advocate, 103

Chapter 21

Reformation and Post-Reformation

The sixteenth century, to which we have come in this study, witnessed the great Protestant Reformation. This was one of the most profound spiritual revolutions in the history of the world. It was wrought in the purpose and by the power of God. For centuries He had been making preparation for this great change in the spiritual and moral conditions that had developed under the papacy. His providences had created and assembled the conditions, factors, and forces that, when the hour struck, brought about this amazing revolution with apparent suddenness.

Unbroken Line of Reformers

When the apostasy had developed to the union of church and state, there were protests and

withdrawals by loyal leaders and churches, which have been reviewed in previous chapters. Witness Montanus, Novatian, Donatus, the Paulicians, Constantine of Armenia, Claude of the Albigenses, Waldo of the Waldenses, Wycliffe of England, Huss and Jerome of Bohemia. At the climax also were to appear Luther, Melanchthon, Zwingli, and their numerous associates. At no time in those fifteen centuries was the Saviour of men without true witnesses to the saving power of the gospel. These witnesses He used in all manner of ways in preparation for the mighty work wrought by Luther and other true men who had been raised up for the hour.

One who has made a special study of these tragic times bears convincing testimony in these meaningful words:

“Amid the gloom that settled upon the earth during the long period of papal supremacy, the light of truth could not be wholly extinguished. In every age there were witnesses for God,—men who cherished faith in Christ as the only mediator

between God and man, who held the Bible as the only rule of life, and who hallowed the true Sabbath. How much the world owes to these men, posterity will never know. They were branded as heretics, their motives impugned, their characters maligned, their writings suppressed, misrepresented, or mutilated. Yet they stood firm, and from age to age maintained their faith in its purity, as a sacred heritage for the generations to come.” [1]

A careful study of the upright lives, the sound teaching, the safe guidance, the sacrificial spirit, of such outstanding characters, must profoundly impress those who believe in the doctrine of the providential shaping of destinies, that all along the way God was doing with these representatives far more than they understood.

Guidance by the Spirit

Just what measure of spiritual illumination they received, it is impossible for us to know and declare. From our knowledge of the limitations and

blindness of the minds of men at the present time, we cannot conceive how those leaders could see, and understand, and do as perfectly as they did without special guidance by the Holy Spirit. Perversion, darkness, and corruption were universal and supreme. Many of the spiritual leaders of the period sincerely believed that the Lord made Himself known to them in visions and spoke to them in dreams.

Many of God's servants and messengers in Old Testament times had similar experiences. Abraham's call to the land of Canaan, his journey to Egypt and back, his strange experience with Abimelech, king of Gerar, and many other providences must have been full of mystery to him. They could not be "understood by themselves." But when they were all brought together in the central purpose of God to establish a model nation for Himself in this ruined world, they could be understood.

But although Abraham could not understand the meaning of these single, detached events as

they came along one by one, he believed in God. He knew God had spoken to him. He obeyed by rendering prompt and full co-operation in carrying out the divine purpose. He wrote no prophecies. He worked no miracles. He made some mistakes. Yet of Abraham the Lord said, “He is a prophet.” (Genesis 20:7)

So it was with leaders in succeeding generations. They were called men of God, seers, prophets. The brief and seemingly ordinary service of some would not lead us to count them as prophets, but for the direct statement of the word of God. Evidently they had communications from the Lord of which there is no mention. They were given messages, however, which led them to meet the purpose of God in the gospel. Not all were called to foretell events or to work miracles. To them were revealed the purposes of God not known to others. Their mission was to bear these messages to their fellow men.

John the Baptist was brought into the world to bear a new message to the human race—to herald

the advent of the Son of God. He recognized God's purpose, he understood the mission of his very existence, and performed it exactly as God had planned. This is true greatness as God estimates greatness. The Saviour declared that there had been no greater prophet than John.

The great Reformation was in the purpose and plan of God. He allowed the apostasy to come, but He did not intend that it should forever fully eclipse the light of His glorious gospel. He did not intend that His light should shine no more, that the human race should end in the midnight blackness of papal ascendancy. Therefore, in His own time and way He visited men, spoke to them, illumined their minds, gave them messages to bear to their fellows, and inspired them to carry out His purposes and plans. Such a glorious company of messengers was raised up in the early part of the sixteenth century. Says Wylie:

“One thing has struck all who have studied, with minds at once intelligent and reverent, the era of which we speak, and that is the

contemporaneous appearance of so many men of great character and sublimest intellect at this epoch. No other age can show such a galaxy of illustrious names.” [2]

All the great reformers built on the same foundation. All placed emphasis on the great fundamentals,—the Christ, the Spirit, the word, the law, and the gospel, according to the Scriptures of truth.

The history of the post-Reformation times shows unquestioned evidence of the same imperative need of inspired leaders who had existed in the pre-Reformation centuries. The Reformation did not spring up in a day, nor was it finished in a day. The great events that took place between the nailing of Luther’s propositions on the church door at Wittenberg in 1517, and the signing of the Augsburg Confession in 1530, were the climax, the consummation, of centuries of study, preaching, persecution, and martyrdom of godly men. The maintenance, the holding of what had been gained, and its fuller development, have

required the same kind of men who, under God's inspired leadership, brought the Reformation to birth.

Men Divinely Prepared for Crises

There was the same satanic effort to crush the Reformation that there had been to prevent it from coming to fruition. Forbiddings, summonings, excommunications, interdicts, imprisonments, hangings, and burnings were continued by the papists as long and as fiercely as it was possible wherever there were reformers. For a full century and more there was need of men of clear vision, divine leadings, and dauntless courage.

Just such men in large numbers were raised up by the Lord in Germany, England, France, Italy, Switzerland, Bohemia.—indeed, in all nations where the Reformation took root.

It was in the providence of God that the princes of Germany were so entirely won to the Reformation, and were led at a critical moment to

sign the Protestant Confession of Faith, thus declaring their faith and purpose to the Diet of Augsburg, and through it to all Christendom. Thus the Lord, who foresaw the dangers, had made full preparation to meet them. What joy would have filled the hearts of the forerunners of the reformatory movement if they could have foreseen all that took place at this Diet!

This great triumph of the reformers, including the German princes, was a profound surprise to the emperor, the pope, and the whole papal hierarchy. It filled them with serious apprehension regarding the future of this strange movement. In three tests—the Diet of Worms, 1521; the Diet of Spires, 1526; and the Diet of Augsburg, 1530—that mighty hierarchy had utterly failed to accomplish what it had convoked those three formidable councils to do; namely, to rid the world of so-called heretics, and end the agitation.

But Rome never acknowledges defeat; she never quits. The emperor, the cardinals, the bishops, and the Catholic priests left Augsburg to

persecute more fiercely, to erect more scaffolds for hanging, and to light more fires for burning. In this they could and did succeed. The records are distressing and sickening. It seems impossible that human beings could mete out to other mortals such inhuman treatment.

It is appropriate to say again that the reformers during the post-Reformation years were in as great need of the divine Presence, of the guidance and instruction of the Holy Spirit, as were leaders in pre-Reformation times. It has been confidently declared by Christian writers and historians that the prophetic gift appeared among them at divers times and places.

Tracings Among the Huguenots

As we examine the records of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the later Huguenots bring to mind the valiant exploits of the earlier persecuted Huguenots of France. We mark the renewal of the spirit of John Huss in the Moravian Church, together with the great Methodist

awakening under the Wesleys. It is among such outstanding evangelical movements that we naturally look for the men and women through whom God could especially reveal Himself; and we are not disappointed in this field of study.

The derivation of the name Huguenot is somewhat uncertain. But it was used to designate the Protestants in France in the early part of the sixteenth century.

The Protestant Reformation began in France about the time that Luther started his work of reformation in Germany. That we may have a proper background for later prophetic tracings, let us return to the beginning of the century.

In the year 1512, Jacobus Faber published a volume on the doctrine of righteousness by faith as against righteousness by works. Eight years later, in 1523, appeared his French translation of the New Testament, thus placing that part of the word of God in the homes of the common people, in a language they could understand. This resulted in

many conversions to the new teaching. Without delay, persecution was set on foot by the papacy. As early as 1525, five Protestant martyrs were burned at the stake. These were the first of multiplied thousands martyred during the two centuries following.

Transforming Power of Huguenot Influence

In January, 1535, an edict was published ordering the extermination of all these “heretics” of the Reformation. While many of these godly Protestants left France for other countries, many remained to hold aloft the torch of truth. The Reformation lived and grew despite the persecutions. Indeed, before the close of the century it was claimed that the Protestants or Huguenots formed one tenth of the population of France.

Describing the transformation following this rise of the Huguenots, Lawrence speaks of the city of Meaux, where the New Testament was published:

“A swift and graceful transformation passed over the busy town. No profane word was any longer uttered, no ribaldry nor coarse jests were heard. Drunkenness and disorder disappeared; vice hid in the monastery or the cloister. In every factory the Gospels were read as a message from above, and the voice of prayer and thanksgiving mingled with the clamor of the shuttle and clash of the anvil. The rude and boisterous artisans were converted into refined and gentle believers, ever seeking for the pure and the true; and the sudden impulse toward a higher life awakened at Meaux by the teachings of Farel and Lefèvre stirred, like an electric shock, every portion of diseased and decaying France. A moment of regeneration seemed near, a season of wonderful advance.” [3]

By contrast, the blighting course of Rome and her priests, and their false visions to discount the true when they appeared, are graphically pictured:

“There now began a remarkable contest between the Romish Church and the Bible—

between the printers and the popes. For many centuries the Scriptures had been hidden in a dead language, guarded by the anathemas of the priests from the public eye, and so costly in manuscript form as to be accessible only to the wealthy. A Bible cost as much as a landed estate; the greatest universities, the richest monasteries, could scarcely purchase a single copy. Its language and its doctrines had long been forgotten by the people, and in their place the intellect of the Middle Ages had been fed upon extravagant legends and monkish visions, the fancies of idle priests, the fables of the unscrupulous. The wonders worked by a favorite image, the virtues of a relic, the dreams of a dull abbot or a fanatical monk, had supplanted the modest teachings of Peter and the narrative of Luke. Men saw before them only the imposing fabric of the Church of Rome, claiming supremacy over the conscience and the reason, pardoning sins, determining doctrines, and had long ceased to remember that there was a Redeemer, a Bible, even a God. A practical atheism followed. The pope was often a skeptic, except as to his own right to rule.” [4]

Huguenot Interest in Prophecy

On April 13, 1598, there was promulgated what was known as the Edict of Nantes,—a charter of religious and political freedom. But this charter was never respected by the Roman Catholics. Nameless persecutions continued until revocation of that edict, October 18, 1685. Terrible were the experiences of the heroic Protestants that followed this revocation. All this is the setting for tracings of the true prophetic gift.

In his account of subsequent experiences relating to the gift of prophecy, which are of deep interest, Baird says:

“The Huguenots remaining in France in the last years of the seventeenth century underwent the most startling change of fortunes. They were robbed by their king of the privilege of professing a religion which, whatever that king had been led by misrepresentation to believe to the contrary, they ardently loved. Their public worship in the use of

the Holy Scriptures, the familiar forms of Calvin's liturgy, and the no less familiar psalms of Clément Marot and Theodore Beza, was silenced, Their spiritual leaders were in exile. Their 'temples,' or sacred edifices, from one end of France to the other, had been razed to the ground: the ruins stared them in the face and daily reminded them of the happier hours of the past, as often as they walked through the town or suburb. Regret was rendered more poignant in the case of many by the pangs of wounded conscience.

“Men and women could not forgive themselves who in a moment of weakness, but not infrequently under a pressure of persecution which it is difficult for us to estimate, had made an insincere profession of another religion. To such no word of exhortation to repentance or of comfort came from living man or woman, save possibly from some layman in a secret and proscribed conventicle. Books of devotion and particularly the Bible, were all that remained; and of the Bible those portions seemed most appropriate to their condition, and were most eagerly read, that treat of the mysterious

realm of prophecy and under figurative terms hold forth promises of the future overthrow of the wicked and the ultimate triumph of the cause of the oppressed.” [5]

Then this authority, after recounting certain supernatural manifestations, leads us to the point of our search:

“More important ... and at once more permanent and far more intimately affecting the interests of Protestantism in its approaching efforts to rise into newness of life, was the appearance in the southeastern part of France of a number of persons, former adherents of the Reformed faith, who claimed the possession of an extraordinary gift of prophecy from heaven. The origin of the movement is obscure and uncertain.”

“A Protestant, M. Caladon, of Aulas, whose words are so much the more interesting as his account bears the impress of unusual impartiality, expresses himself in very similar terms: ‘I have seen a great number of these inspired persons,’ he

remarks, ‘of every age and of both sexes. They were all people without malice, in whom I perceived nothing that I could suspect of being their invention. They made very beautiful exhortations, speaking French during the revelation, some better, some worse. It should be remarked that it is as hard for the peasants of those regions to discourse in French as it would be for a Frenchman who had just landed in England to speak English.’” [6]

The salutary effect of the rise of prophecy is next set forth by this author. Its effect upon the “flickering flame of Protestantism” should be duly noted.

“The immediate effect of the rise of prophecy was a quickening of religious life. The dormant masses were startled from their torpor by the rumor and by the sight of a strange and incomprehensible movement.... In the entire destitution of an ordained ministry, the prophets believed themselves to have been raised up by an extraordinary call, laymen though they were, to fill

the gap and perform many of the functions of the former pastors.... They kept alive the flickering flame of Protestantism in the region of the Cévennes, at a time when it seemed about to be quenched.” [7]

It is most significant that the Roman Catholic adversaries of the Huguenots of the period do not deny the facts of which they themselves were witnesses many times; only they attribute the phenomena to Satan.

We do not suggest that all the experiences recounted of the Huguenots are to be explained as manifestations of the spirit of prophecy. It would be strange, indeed, if with the gentle exercise of the gift there should not also be many cases of fraud or fanaticism—as that is the way Satan always works. But that there were genuine manifestations of the gift through men and women of God’s own calling and direction, seems established to the open mind.

Notes:

1. "The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan," p. 61
2. "The History of Protestantism," Vol. I, Book 8, chap. 1, p. 410
3. "Historical Studies," Eugene Lawrence, pp. 250, 251
4. The Advocate, 254, 255
5. "The Huguenots and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes," Henry M. Baird, Vol. II, p. 180. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895
6. The Advocate, 183, 187, 188
7. The Advocate, 190

Chapter 22

Nearing the Great Consummation

We have now traced evidences of the prophetic gift through nearly six thousand years of time. The first four thousand years of this long period are covered by the Biblical record, during the latter half of which the Bible itself was written by well-recognized prophets and apostle-prophets. From their inspired writings we have made a survey of the manifestations of the gift of prophecy from the time of its bestowal upon Adam, on to the time of the apostle John, himself one of the greatest of the prophets. His death closes the Biblical record of this gracious gift.

For information regarding the manifestation of the prophetic gift since apostolic times, we have been compelled to delve into the history of the Christian church in its march through the centuries. After examining the history of this period, we have

likewise given a report of our findings. In the writings of devout men who lived in the early centuries of the Christian era, we found convincing testimony that the gift of prophecy, together with other spiritual gifts imparted to the church by our Lord, continued in the church for at least two centuries after the death of the apostles. These records likewise indicate clearly and unmistakably the tragedy of gradual yet steady departure from the high spiritual standards of the apostolic church. By the middle of the fourth century this “falling away,” foretold by the apostle Paul, had become so serious that the church had lost, to a considerable degree, these precious spiritual gifts.

We have duly noted various groups of loyal, protesting followers of Christ who from this time on separated themselves from the dominant, worldly church. We have stressed the fact that strange, fanatical, heretical groups are not to be confused with these defenders of truth who formed new church affiliations, with new names. Such separations have continued through the centuries down to the present time. It is among certain

groups of these separatists that we have found much of the evidence of spiritual gifts, bestowed as seemed best to the divine Giver. Of this, Dr. A. J. Gordon says:

“Whenever we find a revival of primitive faith and apostolic simplicity there we find a profession of the chaste and evangelical miracles which characterized the apostolic age. These attend the cradle of every spiritual reformation, as they did the birth of the church herself. Waldenses, Moravians, Huguenots, Covenanters, Friends, Baptists, and Methodists all have their record of them.” [1]

In the preceding chapters we have traced the history of these loyal, protesting, reforming bodies of Christians. Among these were some whom the testimony of history represents as endowed with the spiritual gifts that marked the apostolic age, manifest to a varying extent. We have now been brought down to the opening of the nineteenth century.

Nineteenth Century Begins New Era

So profound have been the changes in our world since that time, that students of history almost universally recognize it as marking the beginning of a new era. Not alone in the political, economical, and social realms, but in the religious world as well, have been seen tremendous revolutions and far-reaching changes. To the student of prophecy, all these trends of modern times are peculiarly significant, for they characterize a period of time incomparable in human history and divine provision, and all are foretold by numerous Bible writers.

The prophet Daniel has given us a remarkable series of outlines of secular and religious history through the centuries, all foreknown and foretold, in the providence of God, and each culminating with the approaching close of human history and the beginning of the eternal reign of Christ. In the last chapter of his book are found the words of an angel from heaven who reveals to the prophet certain outstanding events closely connected with,

and immediately preceding, the return of Christ. He says:

“At that time shall Michael stand up, the great Prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”

“And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.”

“But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.” (Daniel 12:1-4,9,13)

Identifying Marks of the Last Days

Here are phrases of solemn import to the inhabitants of earth,—“the time of the end,” “the end,” “the end of the days.”

It should be observed that “the time of the end,” here referred to twice, is not to be confused with “the end of time.” Rather, it is a period of preparation for that mighty climax called “the end.” In the period here spoken of as “the time of the end” are to be found conditions and events on earth that will prepare for, and usher in, “the end.” That we are now living in this momentous era, which began a little more than a century ago, is the conviction of a multitude of devout Christians. The

fitness of such a conclusion is seen by comparing the characteristics of our day with significant statements made by the inspired writers of prophecy.

It is evident that we have reached the “perilous times” foretold and described by the apostle Paul, as marking “the last days,” when grievous sins were to be found, not only in a pleasure-mad world, but even among those who have “a form of godliness.” (See 2 Timothy 3:1-5)

In the growing abandonment by the popular churches of some of the fundamental Christian verities, how strikingly do we see the fulfillment of the Spirit’s express declaration that “in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils”! (1 Timothy 4:1)

The class struggle that is sorely perplexing the statesmanship of the world today is graphically portrayed in the book of James, in a brief but remarkable passage which foretells the miseries of

the rich who have heaped treasure together “in the last days.” (See James 5:1-8, A. R. V.)

This “time of the end” is characterized by great national and international trouble, which is to swell into “a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation.” (Daniel 12:1)

Signs of Christ's Coming

Among the many striking signs of the coming of Christ to be witnessed by those living on the earth in this momentous period prior to that great event, we note the following cluster of signs, foretold by the Master Himself:

“Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.”

“Great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.”

“And upon the earth distress of nations, with

perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." (Luke 21:10,11,25,26)

During this time the prophecies of the seven seals and the seven trumpets, portrayed in the book of Revelation, are to culminate. Of the opening of the sixth seal, it is said:

"Lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth.... And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." (Revelation 6:12-14)

After delineating great wars that mark the overthrow of Rome and the conquests of Saracens and Turks,—included in symbols under the sounding of the first six trumpets,—the revelator declares that a message is due, which will affirm that—

“There should be time no longer: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery [the gospel] of God should be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets.” (Revelation 10:6-7)

Prophetic Measuring Lines Terminate

The period to which we here allude, “the time of the end,” is also noteworthy because of its marking the termination of the two longest time periods of Bible prophecy. The first of these is referred to both by Daniel and by John. It is spoken of variously, but identically, as “a time and times and the dividing of time” (Daniel 7:25); “a time, times, and an half” (Daniel 12:7); “a thousand two hundred and threescore days” (Revelation 12:6); “a time, and times, and half a time” (Revelation 12:14); and “forty and two months” (Revelation 13:5)

The basis upon which this prophetic period is reckoned involves, of course, the recognized

principle that the prophetic “day” represents a literal year in fulfillment. This is clearly indicated by a prophet contemporary with Daniel. (See Ezekiel 4:6) A “time” is equivalent to a year, consisting, according to Jewish reckoning, of twelve thirty-day months. Thus three and a half times, or years, is, in fulfillment, precisely the same as forty-two months, that is, 1260 prophetic “days,” or literal years.

A study of the statements regarding this prophetic period of 1260 years shows that it is the time during which the power typified by the “little horn” on the fourth beast (Daniel 7:8)—a symbol of Rome—is to have supremacy, especially as a persecutor of the saints of God, who are to “be given into his hand,” for this specified period (verse 25). In the twelfth chapter of Revelation, the church, under the symbol of a woman, is represented as fleeing from the wrath of the dragon (Satan). In the chapter following, the persecuting “beast” is said to have power “to continue forty and two months.” (Revelation 12:6; 13:5)

It is generally understood by Protestant commentators that the “little horn” of Daniel 7 and the leopardlike beast of Revelation 13, find a striking fulfillment in the rise and work of the papacy, during the period of its domination. But the singular characteristic of the papacy that marked her career of oppression was the union of the apostate Christian church and the Roman state. When that union was effected, with foreign, hindering influence removed, her dominance was assured. She was then able to use the arms of the secular power against those whom she condemned as heretics. As her union with, and control of, political governments was gradually broken toward the end of her period of dominance, so her power to control the consciences of men, and to persecute her opponents, likewise waned, until she was again brought into subjection by a foreign power.

Beginning and End of Civil Supremacy

Therefore, in determining the dates for the beginning and ending of the 1260 years allotted to her in prophecy, we should look for the events that

mark the beginning and the ending of her union with the civil government,—first with the Roman Empire, and, later, with those kingdoms of Europe that supplanted Rome. The accepted date for the beginning of this period is 538 A. D., for it marks the culmination of a series of events that effected such a union of church and state and such freedom from foreign, Arian restriction as made her mistress of Europe. Justinian, the Roman emperor, having personally recognized the Bishop of Rome as the head of all the churches, had actually used the arms of the empire to put down the last of certain powers regarded by the Bishop of Rome as unorthodox because of their Arian beliefs. The date 1798, exactly 1260 years later, strikingly marks the close of another series of events that so completely alienated the papacy from the civil government of Europe that in that year her ecclesiastical chief was violently taken captive by the French army, and carried a prisoner away from Rome.

This termination of the period of papal ascendancy was marked by the growth of general civil and religious liberty, thus making possible

great activity on the part of God's people. It resulted in a great missionary program, which in itself is also a fulfillment of the words of Jesus: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matthew 24:14)

The second great prophetic period terminating in this "time of the end," is that found in Daniel 8:14, wherein we read that "unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." The evidence that the cleansing of the sanctuary refers to the judgment work in heaven, and that this long period of prophetic time began in 457 B. C. and ended in 1844, will be given in later chapters. Suffice it to say here that the ending of this period is marked by the beginnings of a great religious movement on earth, as well as by the entrance of our great High Priest upon the closing phase of His ministry in the great antitypical sanctuary in heaven.

It is in this "time of the end" that there is to be proclaimed in all parts of earth the great threefold

message of Revelation 14:6-14, with its solemn announcement that the time has come for the hour of God's judgment, its pronouncement of the fall of "Babylon," and its warning against the worship of the "beast" and his "image." Under the proclamation of this triple message throughout the world there is to be gathered out a people who "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus,"—a people thus prepared for the coming of the Son of man on the white cloud to reap the harvest of the earth. "The harvest," says Jesus, "is the end of the world." (Matthew 13:39)

The Church in Need of Special Help

All the great events and world conditions heretofore listed, and others that space forbids mentioning, are last-day events and conditions. They are momentous and vital. They are related to the finishing of the gospel, and they are all to occur during "the time of the end." This being true, the time of the end, the time in which we are living, is surely the most momentous and the most dreadful in all the history of mankind.

It must not be forgotten that the church of Christ is vitally related to all these great events. She is deeply involved in the serious conditions that develop day by day. The present is, therefore, a time of peril, of perplexity, and of unparalleled need for the church. Grave responsibilities rest upon the people of God in this hour. They are in sore need of special help from their great Head, the living Christ.

This help has, moreover, been abundantly provided by the Lord, and in this abundant provision of help there is given a promise of the renewal of the operation of the prophetic gift.

Note the clear, positive statements of the prophet Joel: "It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." (Joel 2:28) That the "afterward" in this prophecy refers to the last days is made clear in Peter's use of this scripture in Acts 2:17: "It shall

come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh.”

The Prophetic Gift Restored

Here is clearly a most definite promise of a renewal of the prophetic gift to the church in the last days. Irrespective of earlier applications, it would include the literally last period of the church. Indeed, it is more than a promise of a renewal—it is rather a promise of a special, marked impartation of the gift of prophecy in this eventful period.

That this prophecy includes the last days of human history, and the last period of the church of Christ, is evident from the statements that follow what has been cited before: “I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath: ... the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come.” (Acts 2:19-20)

How could language be plainer, and promise be

more positive? There is coming, and coming soon, a “great and notable day of the Lord.” The days leading up to that great day will be “the last days.” During those days there will appear striking signs of the approach of the “great and notable day.” In connection with those signs, there will be the manifestation of the prophetic gift in “the remnant whom the Lord shall call.” (Joel 2:32) As a remnant is the last part, the remnant church must be the last period of the church of Christ on earth. Through that church the Lord has promised to make Himself known in visions and dreams.

The same assurance is found in the writings of the apostleprophet John, who in vision on the barren, rocky island of Patmos, saw the remnant church. He says:

“The dragon was wroth with the woman [symbol of the church], and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Revelation 12:17)

This entire twelfth chapter of Revelation is devoted to the history of the church of God in her conflict with her mortal enemy, the devil. At the close of the conflict, it is the remnant church that is involved, and this remnant is to be marked by “the testimony of Jesus Christ,” which is plainly defined elsewhere as “the spirit of prophecy.” (Revelation 19:10)

It is evident, therefore, that this wonderful gift has been especially promised to the remnant church for guidance and correction in her great work in the closing drama of the world’s history. The Scriptures plainly teach that the church will be deeply involved in the perils of the last days, and will be in sore need of this divine guidance.

Divine Provision for the Remnant Need

When “the day of the Lord,” and the coming of Christ “with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30) is “nigh at hand,” the remnant church is to give warning, to “sound an alarm” to all the world. (Joel 2:1)

It is through the remnant church that the “angel” seen by John in prophetic vision is to teach “to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” “the everlasting gospel,” and, in view of the arrival of “the hour of His judgment,” is to entreat the inhabitants of earth to “worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” (Revelation 14:6-7)

It is in the days when “darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people,” that the glory of the Lord is to rest

upon His church, when the Gentiles shall come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising. (See Isaiah 60:2-3)

Surely we should conclude that at such a time and for such a task, God will equip His church with divine power, and furnish them with every facility for witnessing for Him. We have seen that the prophetic gift has been manifested in the church of God in preceding ages. But never has the need

been greater than at this time. The enemy of all righteousness, knowing that his time is short, is to work with all deceivableness of unrighteousness. The church is called to a superhuman task. The prophetic word testifies that the remnant church should be especially blessed with the gift of prophecy, and we are glad to present the evidence, in the closing section of this volume, that God has fulfilled His word, and has granted in this “time of the end” the most remarkable manifestation of the prophetic gift since apostolic times.

For a better understanding of the appearance and manifestation of this gift in this period of the history of the church, it will be necessary to develop a picture of a great movement that occurred about the middle of the last century,—a movement and a spiritual awakening which prepared the way for God to choose an instrument as His mouthpiece, through whom to give counsel and instruction to His church, urging them to holy living, and guiding them in their final task of preaching the “gospel of the kingdom” in all the world.

Note:

1. The Ministry of Healing, 64, 65

Chapter 23

The Awakening Advent Hope

Throughout the long, dismal centuries of papal dominion, covering the Middle Ages, which we have traversed in these studies, the Bible was kept locked in the Latin tongue, or in the original Hebrew and Greek in which it had been written. Thus it was unavailable to the masses in their mother tongue. Its study was not encouraged, and especially was delving into its prophecies regarded unprofitable and improper.

The unspiritual ecclesiastics were baffled by the mystic symbolism of the prophetic books of Daniel and John. But this obscurity served as a divinely appointed means of preserving the prophetic word. The real intent of these messages from God was providentially concealed by these very symbols in the days when the truth of God was well-nigh suppressed among men.

But in time the Spirit-impelled Wycliffe began

to translate the Scriptures into the language of the people, and to encourage their reading and study. By the time of the flood tide of the Reformation, Luther and others brought forth the Bible in several of the common languages. Once again the Scriptures were lifted to their rightful place as the very word of God. They were accepted as the foundation of all true faith and doctrine, the arbiter for every theological difference, and the end of all controversy. They were exalted as revealing the mind and lofty purpose of God. They were received as recording the past without error, and as divinely portraying the present and the future.

As a result of the Reformation, the veil that had obscured the hallowed pages of Holy Writ began to be lifted. There soon came a wide rift in the cloud that concealed its divine symbols, and the simpler and more fundamental of the outlines of prophecy began to be understood and explained. Noted scholars like the illustrious Joseph Mede (1586-1638), who made long strides in reviving interest in prophecy and laying the foundations for sound interpretation; the celebrated dissenter, Thomas

Goodwin (1600-1680), who advocated the indispensable “year-day” principle of interpretation; the great philosopher and scientist, Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), whose understanding of the prophetic symbols was remarkably clear for the time in which he lived and wrote; and Johann Albrecht Bengel, the eminent German theologian—these were among the great pioneer students and interpreters of Bible prophecy in the seventeenth century, and on to the threshold of the eighteenth.

Slowly the list grows throughout the eighteenth century, until we come to the predicted “time of the end,” concerning which it was foretold that men should run “to and fro” in the “book” of Daniel that had been “sealed” until the hour should come for those features of its divine message, applicable to the last days, to be understood and applied. There then followed a most remarkable bursting forth of exposition of Bible prophecy. Thus it came literally to pass that men “ran” to and fro in the prophecy, comparing part with part and principle with principle.

Tidal Wave of Prophetic Study

With the dawn of the nineteenth century there came a spontaneous awakening in several continents, and in both hemispheres. This centered in the recovery of the lost expectation of Christ's second advent, as based on the predictions of these same prophets. In South America, under Lacunza, the pathfinding book, "The Coming of the Messiah," appeared, and was translated into the leading languages of Europe.

One compiler made an amazing list of twenty-one hundred writers whose articles or treatises on prophecy were issued in English, French, and German, during the years from the Protestant Reformation up to 1835,—with most of them appearing near the close, within the indicated "time of the end."

Thus the advent hope was revived in the hearts of multitudes by the predicted study of the prophecies. This, in turn, led to the deepest

searching of heart as people who understood and believed the prophecies prepared to meet their God. Hans Wood, Lewis Way, Archibald Mason, James Hatley Frere, Edward Irving, Joseph Wolff, Henry Drummond, Robert Chalmers, James Begg, and Matthew Habershon, McNeil, Pym, Hutchinson, Bayford, Frye, Noel, Vaughan, and Cuninghame are but a few out of the galaxy of names in Great Britain. Thus an amazing prophetic literature was developed in the Old World.

In North America, Miller, Litch, Hale, Himes, and many less conspicuous men wrote out and preached their convictions upon the prophecies. It was here that the advent movement came to its glorious culmination for the time, as setting forth the near return of Christ.

Albury Park Prophetic Conference

In Great Britain a remarkable event took place in connection with the names, mentioned in that country. More than a score of these godly, learned men—mostly ministers from the various

churches—had begun to study and to write upon the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation. Feeling the need of exchanging thought upon these subjects of common interest, and of counseling upon their common problems, a Prophetic Conference was called to meet in 1826, at the home of Henry Drummond, M. P., at Albury Park, Surrey. Over twenty of these expounders of prophecy were assembled there. They spent eight days in earnest study. Their conclusions were embodied in a remarkable three-volume report. They were united in expecting the Lord to come within a very few years. Representing, as they did, different denominational viewpoints on the topics under study, the united conclusions reached on the imminence of the second advent are nothing short of amazing.

Following the principle of interpretation laid down by Hans Wood of Rossmead, Ireland, in 1787, they concluded that the “seventy weeks” of Daniel 9:24 were indeed “cut off” from the beginning of the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14. In other words, they understood them to begin

simultaneously, the “seventy weeks,” or 490 literal years, comprising the first section of the full period, which they understood would terminate between 1843 and 1847. They further understood that the midst of the seventieth week—the cutting off of the Messiah for the sins of the people—sealed with divine certainty forever the beginning and, consequently, the ending of the full prophetic time period, the longest recorded in the Bible.

This principle of interpretation was accepted and proclaimed by a score or more of outstanding British students of prophecy during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Recent research has brought to light a literature remarkably penetrating and clear on the precise date of the ending of the 2300 years.

Advent Expectancy Reaches Its Culmination

In the second decade of the nineteenth century, William Miller came independently to essentially the same conclusion in North America. Miller began public presentation of his convictions about

1831. He was soon joined by Fitch, Litch, Bates, Himes, and Bliss.

This stalwart band in America, increased rapidly by others, began to witness with a power and to an extent that are an astonishment to all who learn the facts. Beginning in the smaller towns, their message soon permeated the great cities. Books, tracts, and then periodicals were published in increasing number until there were more than forty papers issued in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain, prior to October 22, 1844, devoted exclusively to heralding the approaching advent.

Public lecturers grew in number, drawn from the ministry of nearly all Protestant denominations. “Conferences” of Christians “expecting the advent” began to be held in 1840,—general conferences for the public representatives, and local conferences for the laity. There were nearly a dozen of the former, and about forty of the latter, which were in instances attended by as many as two thousand persons. Important actions were passed by these

general conferences that molded, unified, and greatly forwarded the whole movement.

Giant “camp meetings” were held, with thousands in attendance,—thirty-one being held within the space of four months, in 1842, including several in Canada. One hundred twenty-four of these were held during 1843 and 1844, fourteen of which were held in Great Britain. “Tabernacle” meetings and “grove,” or open air, meetings were also employed.

Then, resentment, ecclesiastical action, and persecution on the part of the nominal churches came into the picture to complicate and impede.

Thus we come to the end of Miller’s predicted time—March 21, 1844, the close of “the Jewish year 1843.” There was keen disappointment that the Lord did not appear at that time, and there was considerable shrinkage in numbers as the more superficial dropped out.

The advent movement then entered a period of

indifference called “the slumber time.” But in August, at the important Exeter, New Hampshire, camp meeting, evidence was presented that explained the error in time calculation by Miller. It was seen that 2300 full years would reach from the autumn of 457 B. C. to the autumn of 1844 A. D. The parable of the virgins helped to explain the nature of the disappointment. On the basis of the types in the sanctuary system of old, the antitypical Day of Atonement would fall on the tenth day of the Jewish seventh month,—or, according to modern reckoning, on October 22, 1844.

Revival of Hope

This gripping truth swept over the advent hosts with a compulsion that carried all before it. Louder and louder swelled the cry, “The Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.” By voice and pen, men told of the expected Saviour. Public lecturers increased to the number of two thousand.

The advent presses began to run day and night to turn out the literature that flooded the country.

Some of these periodicals were monthlies; others, weeklies; and, in instances, a few were published every other day, or even daily. They were hawked in the streets of the cities. They were sent in bundles to every post office in the country, and on shipboard to all the ports of earth.

The country was shaken by the mighty message. The Lord was expected. The dead were to be raised, the living saints translated, and the earth—then thought to be the sanctuary—was to be cleansed by fire, and so to become the abode of the saints forever. With holy joy men labored to spread the solemn warning and appeal. With deep searching they examined their own hearts for lurking sin and selfishness. They sold their possessions to obtain funds to spread the message of the expected King of kings. They believed so earnestly and honestly in their expectations that they left their crops standing unharvested, their potatoes in the ground undug. Such was the actual hope and sincere expectancy as October 22 drew on.

Never was there a more thorough preparation made to meet God. For ascension to meet their Lord they sought the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness; and for heart preparation, the forgiveness of God's grace. The great day drew on. The last paper was mailed out. The last sermon was preached. The last appeal was made. The last prayer was offered. Their work was done! Only the coming of their Lord, they thought, stood between them and their fondest expectations.

They waited,—hopefully, solemnly. But to their utter consternation, their anguish, and bewilderment, the appointed day passed.

Review of Prophetic Waymarks

Disappointment filled their souls. In a daze they sought their bearings. They earnestly reviewed the past. They resurveyed the prophetic waymarks. The date 457 B. C. stood supported by reverent scholarship in Ireland, Scotland, England, continental Europe, as well as in North Africa. They traced anew the conclusions of Wood,

Mason, Way, Frere, Irving, Wolff, McNeil, White, Pym, Cuninghame, Drummond, Habershon, Miller, and the many others who had declared the seventy prophetic weeks were cut off from the 2300 years, and, commencing together, constituted the first 490 years of that period with Christ's crucifixion in the midst of the seventieth week to seal the prophecy infallibly, and so to fix its termination.

On the basis of the types and the typical Day of Atonement, the great prophetic period must end on October 22, as they had calculated. But their Lord had not come. The future was a blank, and the present was a puzzle. Sneers and taunts, hostility and persecution, greeted them on every hand. It was a terrible disappointment, a dagger thrust into their hearts. The meaning of it all, and the emergence from their misunderstanding, must be held for consideration in another chapter.

But there was another factor to be logically anticipated in the advent movement at this point, in view of the uniform experience of the past. With the great revival of neglected truth there had early

come into the hearts of many a conviction that the apostolic gifts should appear with the renewal of the apostolic faith. Such persons prayed much about it, and wrote about it, but as yet they had no clear understanding of it.

Satan's Attempt to Thwart Acceptance

Let us pause, for a moment here, to look at another side of the picture. Satan, the relentless opposer of every truth and provision of God, not only knows well these uniform operations of the past as regards the gift of prophecy,—such as have been traced through the pages of this volume,—but he has long known and hated God's promised restoration of the gift to the remnant church. This bestowal by our heavenly Father was for the purpose of counseling, guiding, and steadying His loyal followers through the unprecedented perils and apostasies of the last hour.

The archenemy of God is, alas, a keener student of divine prophecy than are most men—even many within the church. He knows and fears

God's power from of old. His is the fury of desperation. He uses this evil knowledge and long experience in an attempt to thwart the acceptance of God's provisions, so far as lies within his power. This is attempted with the spirit of prophecy, for example, by anticipating its appearance according to promise, and producing preliminary counterfeits to deceive, if possible, the expectant ones. By extreme fanaticism and false manifestations, he seeks to disgust men generally, and thus to frustrate the purpose of the gift. In this way he causes disrepute to be cast upon all manifestations of the gift, true or false, and renders it difficult to credit the true when its appearance is made. It is his age-old scheme of opposition.

Thus it came literally to pass in the days of the English advent movement. When the expectation of the Saviour's appearance failed, a brilliant leader like Edward Irving, dissatisfied with the formalism of the nominal churches, and looking for the manifestation of the gifts, withdrew from the ecclesiastical body with which he had been connected. But he was faced with strange

manifestations in his own congregation, so that he died in bewilderment and disappointment.

But this enmity on the part of Satan, together with the object of his subtle attacks, and his final course of action, were not only all fully foreknown to God, but were foretold in prophetic outline for the knowledge and safeguarding of His people. Hence confusion or deception was neither necessary nor inevitable.

False Visions Bring Adverse Declarations

In North America the publication of alleged visions in certain of the advent journals led to recorded actions against all “visions.” Thus from Charles Fitch’s periodical, *The Second Advent of Christ*, published in Cleveland, Ohio, in a “Declaration of Principles” adopted “By the Adventists Assembled in Boston Anniversary Week, May, 1843,” and signed by “N. N. Whiting, S. Bliss, T. F. Barry, J. Litch, and C. Fitch,” we read:

“We have no confidence whatever in visions, dreams, or private revelations. ‘What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.’ We repudiate all fanaticism, and everything which may tend to extravagance, excess, and immorality, that shall cause our good to be evil spoken of.” Issue of June 21, 1843.

A little later, John Starkweather, well educated and able speaker—the ministerial associate of J. V. Himes in his Boston church—looked for the restoration of the gifts. But fanaticism came briefly, though locally, in the years 1843 and 1844, to deceive and disappoint his immediate followers.

Finally, in direct connection with the great expectation of October 22, 1844, an extremist on the fringes of Millerism, by the name of Dr. C. R. Gorgas, claimed that by “vision” God had “commissioned” him to call out the faithful from Philadelphia to a camp outside the city, and on printed handbills predicted that Christ would come at three o’clock in the morning.

Wild Move Repudiated

This wild move created disgust, and brought forth emphatic repudiation by the leaders of the movement, immediately following the disappointment, as these words testify: “The Encampment!!!—It seems to be a common impression that this was the result of our doctrine. By no means. Only from one to two hundred, out of nearly three thousand believers (at Philadelphia) were deluded by this. The rest felt that they were not required to do anything of the kind; but saw that those favorable to it were led astray, and were grossly perverting the Scriptures. The arrangements for the encampment were made so hastily that those opposed had no opportunity to consider and try to counteract it. Now for the origin of this measure a Dr. C. R. Gorgas of York County, in this State, pretended to have been inspired about three weeks ago, and that it was revealed to him that the advent would take place at three o’clock in the morning of the 22d. Charts to this effect were sent to Baltimore and to this city. The brethren in both places immediately opposed it. Dr. Gorgas

first went to Baltimore, but gained no converts. He then came to this city, and from that time the meetings here lost much of their solemnity and interest... Joshua V. Himes, the chief publisher of advent papers, came to this city and strongly opposed Dr. Gorgas, as also Josiah Litch, well known as one of the first and most prominent among the advent preachers... Brother Himes also went to New York and arrested the publication there of the Doctor's chart, which the New York brother, before mentioned, had commenced. The five or six converts here, were also distributing his charts very freely, and the public therefore receives the impression that these charts set forth the expectation of second advent believers generally, who on the contrary rejected in toto the pretended inspiration.

“Now this Dr. Gorgas professed to have a revelation that destruction was to be as in the days of Lot, and that all who would be saved must flee from the cities. The influence he had exerted over a few, and then their influence over others, led to the encampment—a most unhappy step —over which

none can grieve more bitterly than the advent preachers and advent believers generally. It was the result of following a mere man, instead of the inspired word of the living God. Thanks be to Him for His unerring word; and thanks be to Him also for keeping the great body of those who love His appearing from being led astray by such an unholy influence. Lewis C. Gunn.” [1]

Adverse Actions on “Visions”

At the Mutual Conference of Adventists at Albany, New York, called for April 29, 1845, a committee of twelve was appointed to draw up “a plan of future operations” and to “present a declaration of principles in the defense of which we have labored, and consult respecting our future association.” In the series of resolutions submitted and “adopted without a dissenting voice,” was this significant action, the import of which is very easily discernible:

“Whereas, In every great religious movement, there have been among the wise and sober-minded

advocates of the truth, others who have risen up, striving about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers, making great pretensions to special illumination ... and whereas, in connection with the doctrine of Christ's near appearing, as in all previous religious movements, some of this class have risen up, calling themselves Adventists, teaching for doctrines that with which we can have no sympathy or fellowship, with many unseemly practices, whereby the word of God has been dishonored, and the doctrine of Christ's appearing brought into contempt; therefore—
“Resolved, That we can have no sympathy or fellowship with those things which have only a show of wisdom in will worship and neglecting of the body, after the commandments and doctrines of men. That we have no fellowship with any of the new tests as conditions of salvation, in addition to repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and a looking for and loving His appearing. That we have no fellowship for Jewish fables and commandments of men, that turn from the truth, or for any of the distinctive characteristics of modern Judaism.” [2]

At the New York City Conference, May 6, 1845, the “Doings of the Mutual General Conference held at Albany, which commenced April 29th, 1845,” “were unanimously approved.” After Sylvester Bliss, who was a member of the Albany Committee of twelve, had declared that the “Gorgas affair” he “regarded nothing but mesmerism,” and had referred to it as “the delusion of the Gorgas vision,” the following action was passed at New York: “Resolved, That we have no confidence in any new messages, visions, dreams, tongues, miracles, extraordinary gifts, revelations, impressions, discerning of spirits, or teachings, etc., etc., not in accordance with the unadulterated word of God.” [3]

Finally at the important Boston Conference, May 26, Josiah Litch said:

“With regard to the state of things in Philadelphia. A portion had been induced, contrary to all his remonstrances, to obey the vision of Dr. Gorgas, and fled from the city on the 10th of the

7th month. And some of them had not yet been able to get the hallucination from their minds. The results had been most disastrous. It had served to disgust the mind of the community there, so that they were laboring under the greatest embarrassments.”—[4]

Then as a conference they declared:

“We are happy to accord our most hearty approval of the doings of the late Mutual Conference at Albany. The important truths there expressed, we regard as scriptural, and are the ones for the maintenance of which we have labored from the beginning.”—[4]

To Be Distinguished From Seventh-day Adventists

These actions were taken by the First-Day group of Adventists. This body stood in contradistinction to the group beginning to accept the seventh-day Sabbath truth and, shortly thereafter, the sanctuary light. It should be

distinctly understood in this connection that this minority group of Adventists, because of accepting the true Sabbath of the Bible, and because of their better understanding of the second advent of Christ through the ministration in the heavenly sanctuary, came to be known later, and now continue to be known, as Seventh-day Adventists. They should in no way be confused with the First-day Adventists, who were in the majority at that time, and who have continued to the present day, though now in far smaller number than the Seventh-day Adventists.

From the historical incidents recited above, it can be clearly seen that we are brought, amid unfavorable circumstances, to the divinely appointed hour when the true gift of prophecy was to be manifest in the remnant church that had just begun to stress “the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Its beginning was under the severe handicap of prejudice, adverse conference actions by the main body of Adventists, and popular disgust over manifestly false visions fostered by the evil one to hamper the true

manifestation that had just made its appearance. This true manifestation came at the appointed hour, to bear its early testimony of counsel and warning, instruction and entreaty, to the remnant church. It was submitted to the divinely appointed tests of the word and to examination by its fruits, as we shall see.

Accepted because it met every test specified by the Scriptures of truth, the spirit of prophecy was received by this Sabbath-keeping company as the third of the three great distinguishing marks disclosed in the word as identifying the true church for the last days. Its blessed influence upon the life and expansion of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the theme of the closing section of this book.

Notes:

1. The Midnight Cry, Nov. 7, 1844, p. 147
2. The Advent Herald, and Signs of the Times Reporter, May 14, 1845, p. 107
3. The Advent Herald, May 21, 1845, p. 118

4. The Advent Herald, and Signs of the Times
Reporter, June 4, 1845, p. 135

Chapter 24

Gift Renewed in the Remnant Church

The passing of the time of expectation, in 1844, left many thousands of God's faithful believers in the second advent in bitter disappointment and bewilderment. The very word of God itself seemed to have failed, and the foundations of their faith to have crumbled. Many of the advent host yielded to the seemingly logical conclusion that the rising of the sun on the morning of October 23—the day following the great disappointment—constituted unmistakable witness to the error of their prophetic calculations. Such soon renounced the entire movement as having been a fanatical delusion. Many who speak or write of that amazing experience are wont to impugn the sincerity or the sanity of those who, they aver, were so easily duped by fanatical teachers.

But this is not a necessary conclusion. The

student of Scripture will readily recognize that in the past God's people have repeatedly been disappointed in their expectations,—just because they have misunderstood God's providences. Many times they have been perplexed and discouraged, and often have passed through strange experiences,—all because of the failure of some hope based upon faulty understanding of the prophetic word. Some have even been perplexed by the direct word of the Lord.

By the command of the Lord, the prophet Jonah had warned the inhabitants of Nineveh that their great city would be destroyed in forty days. When the allotted time passed and no destruction came, the prophet was grievously perplexed. So great was his humiliation and confusion that he prayed: “O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.” Jonah 4:3. But the Lord did not leave him in darkness. He led him into an understanding of the secret of the divine providence that had in mercy spared the repentant sinners.

Again, picture the terrible sorrow and disappointment that came to the disciples of Christ when their Lord was actually crucified and buried, when they had fondly expected Him to ascend the throne. With blasted hopes they “communed together and reasoned” concerning the strange events that had taken place,—events so different from what they had hoped and had looked for. (Luke 24:15) “We trusted,” said they, “that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.” (Verse 21)

But in pitying love the risen Saviour appeared to them, and so clearly opened the Scriptures that they at last understood that in harmony with all prophecy Christ ought “to have suffered these things.” Still, they did not see things plainly, for a few days later as they communed with Jesus, “they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6) Only when He had opened “their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45), did they see for the first time that it had not been His purpose at that time to take the throne of

His earthly kingdom.

Cross and Commission Misunderstood

Yet more than this. For years after the ascension of Christ these same disciples labored under serious misapprehension concerning the teaching of the Scriptures and of the purpose of God. They believed that the gospel message they had been commissioned to proclaim was for the Jewish nation only. They did not include the Gentile world in the plan and purpose of God, nor in the commission given them. To this mistaken view they clung most tenaciously for several years. Not until a most impressive vision was given to the apostle Peter, followed immediately by a definite call to go to the home of a Roman centurion and preach Christ, would he venture to offer the cup of salvation to any save the Jews.

In obedience to the vision and the call, however, Peter, for the first time in his ministry, entered the home and preached Christ to a group of Gentiles who were present. When the preaching of

the word was accompanied by a demonstration of spiritual power, both he and the Jewish converts who accompanied him were greatly astonished “because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 10:45)

For this wide departure from the views of his associates the apostle had to give serious account. When he returned to Jerusalem, “they that were of the circumcision [the Jews] contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised [the Gentiles], and didst eat with them. But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them.” “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” (Acts 11:2-4,18)

Slow Emergence From Mistaken Views

These strikingly impressive experiences, with additional revelations and divine providences, finally led the disciples to abandon their mistaken

views and come into harmony with God's purpose. But so cautious and slow were they in making changes that it literally took years to comprehend the fullness of God's purpose, and to preach and teach accordingly.

These strange incidents, so clearly set forth in the Scriptures, did not merely happen. Nor were they merely mistakes of men. They were divine providences, the purpose of which we may not fully understand. But they show that God's accepted leaders and His chosen people may be right in the main, yet be sincerely mistaken—even regarding important truths. They also show that those who hold some mistaken views are not, therefore, necessarily wrong in other things. Limited views, or imperfectly understood truths regarding certain particulars, do not of themselves, therefore, set aside the fundamental verity of the movement with which they may be connected. If that movement holds to its basic principles, and continues to advance, increased light will eventually be given, the mistakes will be revealed and rejected, and correct views take their place.

Thus it has all worked out, as will hereafter be shown, in the great second advent movement of 1844. The movement in general, the disappointment in particular, and the full correction of the error were made subjects of divine prophecy. They were foretold in the tenth chapter of Revelation.

Here a message “that there should be time no longer” is represented as being proclaimed on land and sea by a “mighty angel come down from heaven.” Indicative of something not clearly understood, the heavenly messenger was “clothed with a cloud.” The joy of the expectation and the bitterness of the disappointment are symbolized by the “little book” that was eaten and that, after being sweet in the mouth, was turned into bitterness. That God had still a great work for those to do who had passed through this experience, is indicated by the divine commission, “Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.”

The details of this prophetic picture coincide in every particular with the experiences in the world-wide, advent movement just prior to 1844. The verses that follow in the eleventh chapter of Revelation show briefly but forcefully how by the reed given by an angel the prophecy was made clear through measuring “the temple of God,” or the sanctuary, in which they soon saw the closing ministry of Christ. They then discovered their mistake in supposing that the sanctuary to be cleansed at the end of the 2300 days was the earth. This explained the cause of their disappointment.

Israel Tested by a Prophet

It is well said that there is no crisis with God. He is never taken by surprise. He is never thrown into confusion, as we poor mortals often are. He knew all about the great awakening in regard to the coming of the Lord and the disappointment of 1844. At the right moment He sent a message through the prophetic gift to His sincere people. The manifestation of the gift of prophecy at this crisis was quite similar to the working of that gift

in a former crisis of God's people.

Word came to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, "There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria." Three powerful enemy nations had joined together against Israel, to crush them and drive them out of the land the Lord had given them to inherit. They knew not how to meet the situation, except to seek God for understanding and help.

In this crisis the king "set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord." (2 Chronicles 20:1-4) In the midst of this alarmed and bewildered gathering, Jehoshaphat offered mighty intercession to the Lord for help. In his prayer he said: "We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee." (Verse 12)

"Then upon Jahaziel ... came the Spirit of the

Lord in the midst of the congregation; and he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, ... Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's... Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you. And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshiping the Lord.” (Verses 14-18)

In obedience to the words of the prophet, the people “rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa” to meet the great multitude.

“And as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye

prosper.” (Verse 20)

Israel believed that God had spoken to them through the prophet, and they went forth to the battlefield. But while they were on the way, “the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. And when Judah came toward the watchtower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped.” (Verses 22-24)

The Lord allowed this crisis to come to Israel for their good. It alarmed them, and awakened them to a realization of their utter dependence upon God. It led them into His presence to make earnest supplication for help. It gave them fresh evidence of His willingness to hear, His readiness to help,

and His great power to save from their enemies. The experience brought to Israel a very helpful lesson.

God Chooses His Messenger

In the great crisis of 1844, an unbelieving world was arrayed against God's disappointed people. Some shunned them, some ridiculed them, and many were hostile to them. They were surely a forsaken and scattered flock, knowing not what to do. Among them were some who, like Jehoshaphat and Judah, kept their eyes upon God and offered importunate prayer for divine guidance. The Lord heard their prayers, and gave them a remarkable answer through the prophetic gift. He chose for His messenger Miss Ellen Gould Harmon of Portland, Maine,—one of the truly devout and sorely disappointed believers in the coming of the Lord in 1844. She gives the following interesting information regarding a part of her Christian experience prior to her call to act as the Lord's special messenger:

“At the age of eleven years [1838-9] I was converted, and when twelve years old was baptized, and joined the Methodist Church. At the age of thirteen I heard William Miller deliver his second course of lectures in Portland, Maine. I then felt that I was not holy, not ready to see Jesus. And when the invitation was given for church members and sinners to come forward for prayers, I embraced the first opportunity, for I knew that I must have a great work done for me to fit me for heaven. My soul was thirsting for full and free salvation, but knew not how to obtain it.

“In 1842, I constantly attended the second advent meetings in Portland, Maine, and fully believed that the Lord was coming. I was hungering and thirsting for full salvation, an entire conformity to the will of God. Day and night I was struggling to obtain this priceless treasure, that all the riches of earth could not purchase.” [1]

For four and a half years, therefore, during the most impressionable period of her life, Ellen Harmon’s all-absorbing interest had been in her

preparation for the coming of Christ, and in doing her part to make known to others the Saviour she had found. Delicate in health, and deprived of opportunities for an education and of worldly prospects by an accident that had befallen her when she was nine years old, she was providentially led to find her comfort and joy in the anticipation of the future glory, which to her was a living reality.

We may well believe that to such a one especially, the disappointment of October, 1844, came with crushing force. She did not lose her faith in the Saviour; but, in common with most of the advent believers in Portland, she feared that the advent movement, which had brought so much joy to her heart, had been a terrible mistake, from which could come only sorrow and regret.

Vision of Future Advent Experiences

But she was soon delivered from this state of uncertainty and sorrow. In the latter part of December, she, with a few other women, was visiting at the home of a Mrs. Haines in Portland.

While they were all bowed in prayer together, she became unconscious of her earthly surroundings, and was given in vision a view of the future experiences through which the believers in the second advent were yet to pass, and of the final coming of Christ. We relate a part of the vision in her own words:

“While I was praying at the family altar, the Holy Ghost fell upon me, and I seemed to be rising higher and higher, far above the dark world. I turned to look for the advent people in the world, but could not find them, when a voice said to me, ‘Look again, and look a little higher.’ At this I raised my eyes, and saw a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the advent people were traveling to the city, which was at the farther end of the path. They had a bright light set up behind them at the beginning of the path, which an angel told me was the midnight cry. During the summer of 1844, some of the leaders of the advent movement in New England, by a study of the types, came to the conclusion that the 2300-day period would end on the Jewish Day of

Atonement, which in that year fell on October 22. This expectation aroused those who, like the sleeping virgins, had become spiritually indifferent, and became a powerful movement called “the midnight cry,” because of its analogy to that part of the parable of the ten virgins. 3 This light shone all along the path, and gave light for their feet so that they might not stumble.

“If they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city, they were safe. But soon some grew weary, and said the city was a great way off, and they expected to have entered it before. Then Jesus would encourage them by raising His glorious right arm, and from His arm came a light which waved over the advent band, and they shouted, ‘Alleluia!’ Others rashly denied the light behind them, and said that it was not God that had led them out so far. The light behind them went out, leaving their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and lost sight of the mark and of Jesus, and fell off the path down into the dark and wicked world below.

“Soon we heard the voice of God like many waters, which gave us the day and hour of Jesus’ coming. The living saints, 144,000 in number, knew and understood the voice, while the wicked thought it was thunder and an earthquake. When God spoke the time, He poured upon us the Holy Ghost, and our faces began to light up and shine with the glory of God, as Moses’ did when he came down from Mount Sinai.

“The 144,000 were all sealed and perfectly united. On their foreheads was written, God, New Jerusalem, and a glorious star containing Jesus’ new name.” [2]

No Ordinary Message

Viewed in the light of all the circumstances, this was no ordinary message; indeed, it was most extraordinary. It gave light—not a noontide blaze, but a few faint rays, like those of the sun’s rising. It revealed a pathway straight ahead leading to a glorious destination—the city of God. The light behind the advent believers was to shine all along

the road the people of God were to travel until they should reach their Paradise home. Jesus would be the guide and leader of the travelers; and as long as they kept their eyes on Him, they would be safe. As they journeyed, the light would grow brighter, and others would join them until there would be a great company. Some would grow weary and distrustful. The journey would be longer than theyAGP 260.1

had thought it would be, and they would decide that God was not leading them, and would stumble off the path.

To the troubled, confused believers to whom the message was related, it was practical and appropriate. It gave them greatly needed information. Note particularly how it answered the questions that would naturally be uppermost in their minds.

Provided Answer to Many Questions

Should they give up their faith in God's

guidance in the past experience of expectation and disappointment? No; there was light in the message that had been proclaimed,—light that would illuminate their entire future pathway.

Should they go back into the world? No; those who were on their way to the city were traveling on a path high above the world.

Should they, because of their disappointment, cast away their confidence? By no means; Jesus had led them, would continue to lead them, and they would be safe while they kept their eyes fixed on Him.

Were they to look for the Saviour immediately, or would He tarry? They were told that there was some distance to travel before they would reach the end of the way. Those who grew weary because they expected to have entered the city sooner, and declared that it was “a great way off,” were to find courage and an incentive to persevere as Jesus beckoned them forward with His glorious right arm.

In the rest of the vision, there were other features of great interest. The saints would be persecuted, but God would deliver them from the wrath of those who sought to destroy them. The glorious appearing of the coming Christ was pictured. In graphic words was set forth the terror of the wicked as they should behold the Saviour descending from heaven in great glory, accompanied by the holy angels; also the anxiety of the saints, as they cried out, “Who shall be able to stand? Is my robe spotless?” After a time of “awful silence,” Jesus spoke, saying, “Those who have clean hands and pure hearts shall be able to stand; My grace is sufficient for you.”

The resurrection of the sleeping saints; the joy of the glad reunion with loved ones from whom death had separated them; the ascension to the sea of glass; the glad welcome into the city where were the throne, the river, and the tree of life—all this was calculated to cheer and gladden the hearts of those who were to remain longer in this world than they had expected, and to encourage them to

remain steadfast in their faith and service. It was in harmony with the words of the apostle:

“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” (Hebrews 10:35-39)

Welcomed as Messages From Heaven

After a great struggle against her natural feelings of timidity, Miss Harmon related this vision to the band of advent believers in Portland. Its fitness appealed to their hearts. Because of their intimate knowledge of the unique Christian experience of the messenger, they recognized that she was worthy of their confidence, and about sixty of them welcomed it at once as indeed a message

from heaven.

About a week later, in a second vision, she was bidden to relate to others what had been revealed to her. In connection with the call to public service, she was shown the trials, opposition, and anguish of spirit that would attend her, but was given the assurance, “The grace of God is sufficient for you; He will hold you up.” [3] Timidly she began her work among the companies of believers in neighboring towns.

Further revelations were given to her in relation to a system of truth that explained how the past advent movement, though ending in disappointment, had, nevertheless, been directed by God. In February, 1845, at Exeter, Maine, there was given her in vision a view of Jesus, our great High Priest, passing from His ministration in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary into the most holy place, where was the ark containing the Ten Commandments. AGP 263.1

Still later, through Bible study and revelation, it

was made clear that the time for the ending of the 2300 days, as given in the advent message, had been correct, but through a misunderstanding of what was represented by the “sanctuary,” in Daniel 8:14, there had been a mistake in supposing that Christ was to come to this earth at that time. It was seen that the great work of the investigative judgment was the antitypical fulfillment of the cleansing of the ancient sanctuary on the tenth day of the seventh Jewish month.

With this message, there came to Miss Harmon a conviction, which could not be silenced, that it was her duty to relate to the scattered groups of believers what had been shown her. Accompanied by some member of her family, or by some sister believer, she went from place to place endeavoring to cheer the hearts of others with the light and hope that had come to her.

Small and poor at first was the company who accepted the light sent from heaven through Miss Harmon. Fewer still were those who were able to give their time entirely to its dissemination. But,

fired with the conviction that God Himself had spoken, these few began to do their part in spreading the message that was to gather from all parts of the world that company seen in vision.

Early in her public labors Miss Harmon formed the acquaintance of James White, a young minister who had been a zealous preacher in the advent movement, but who was now with the rest of the believers in great perplexity. This acquaintance developed into a common sympathy and a warm friendship that resulted in their marriage. From that time on, through her long, active, public life, she was known, and will be referred to, as Ellen G. White.

Notes:

1. "Early Writings of Mrs. E. G. White," p. 11, 1920 edition
2. "Early Writings of Mrs. E. G. White," pp. 14, 15
3. "Early Writings of Mrs. E. G. White," p. 20

Chapter 25

A Sound Basis for Confidence

Two dangers, either of which may prove fatal, confront the seeker for truth as he is brought into contact with one who claims to have had revelations from God. On the one hand he may rashly reject the true; or, on the other, he may blindly accept the false. But God's message is, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1)

Those who maintain that the gifts of the Spirit, including the prophetic gift, ceased with the days of the apostles are thereby logically forced not only to turn a deaf ear to the claim of any present-day messenger for God, but to denounce such a one as an impostor.

Those who believe in the abiding gift of prophecy must recognize the force of the Saviour's

injunction: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” Matthew 7:15. Nor should they be unmindful of our Lord’s prediction that among the signs that were to herald the return of our Lord as imminent, is the appearance of “false christs, and false prophets,” who “shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” (Matthew 24:24)

In order that one may “quench not the Spirit,” the Holy Spirit, who has moved upon and inspired the prophets of all ages,—the apostle Paul enjoins the believers to “despise not prophesyings.” In order to avoid deception by a subtle counterfeit, he adds the injunction: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21)

To evaluate a life and work after its record has been made, when the fruitage has appeared and ripened, when the influences for good or ill have been manifest, is comparatively easy. The real test in forming a correct judgment rests upon those who are forced to weigh the individual worth of a

contemporary, especially before the success or failure has become apparent. This principle is notably true in testing the claims of a prophet.

To those who were rejecting Him, the greatest prophet of all ages,—yea, while they were plotting His death,—Christ declared:

“Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchers of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchers.” (Luke 11:47,48)

It is sad, but nevertheless true, that too few who have lived with these chosen men of God in any age have recognized them as His messengers. Those who rejected Christ also stoned Stephen; they rejoiced when Herod put James the apostle to death; they harried and persecuted Paul, the meanwhile outwardly honoring the ancient prophets with their lips. Nevertheless, there have always been some whose hearts have rejoiced as they have recognized the voice of God speaking

through these His chosen ones.

Evidence for Evaluating Claims

Miss Ellen Harmon, whose first vision we have related, and who later became Mrs. Ellen G. White, completed her life span twenty years ago (1915), at the age of eighty-eight. The rich fruitage of her life has been manifest. Her name is inseparably linked with the great last-day gospel movement that is world embracing in scope. The products of her pen are found in many lands and languages. The principles she enunciated are still made the subject of most earnest study by ministers, educators, physicians, and Christian laymen. All these facts will be brought forth as evidence in evaluating her claim to have received these teachings and these principles in the restored prophetic gift from the God of heaven.

But before weighing these claims in the light of what we now see, we should consider the evidences upon which her claims had to be evaluated by those to whom they were first made

known. What led the group of about sixty in Portland, Maine, to whom she related her first vision, to receive it as a divine communication? Were the circumstances such as to justify them in their conclusion?

Ellen Harmon-White's Christian Experience

Bear in mind that the members of this company had passed through a most unusual experience together. They had been united in their ardent expectations, and in their disappointment and bewilderment. The large crowds that had met in Beethoven Hall prior to the day of expectation were now scattered. Only a few continued to be united, and these met for evening meetings in the Harmon home. They were well acquainted with the daughter Ellen. In deciding upon the merits of her claim to have received a heavenly vision, they would naturally consider her Christian experience and character. This was of such an unusual nature that it must have been well known to them.

In view of the express declaration that it was

“holy men” who were moved by the Holy Spirit, we must expect to find a consistent Christian life in the one whom God chooses as His agent for revelation; therefore, brief mention should be made of Ellen Harmon’s spiritual experiences prior to the time of her choice as a messenger for God.

There had been two factors that affected her spiritual life. The first was an accidental injury received when she was nine years old. This resulted in severe suffering for a number of months, with an expectation of life-long invalidism if not, indeed, an early death. Then for two years she struggled against feelings of resentment against God for the blighting of her ambitions. Of this period she says:

“At times my sense of guilt and responsibility to God lay so heavy upon my soul, that I could not sleep but lay awake for hours, thinking of my lost condition and what was best for me to do... I seemed to be cut off from all chance of earthly happiness, and doomed to continual disappointment and mortification... My prospect of

worldly enjoyment was blighted, and heaven seemed closed against me.” [1]

Then the second advent proclamation reached the city of Portland. In the spring of 1840, William Miller delivered a series of lectures on the prophecies, and the city was stirred by his message of the nearness of Christ’s coming. The Harmon family attended the lectures, and Ellen listened with terror to the evidences presented. Not yet could she look with happiness and confidence to the coming of Christ as the Saviour of His people. She could only think of Him as coming in judgment to destroy sinners, including herself. Although seeking as a suppliant for mercy, yet she found little relief for a time. She says in her autobiography:

“When sinners were invited forward to the anxious seat, hundreds responded to the call, and I, among the rest, pressed through the crowd and took my humble place with the seekers. But there was a hopeless feeling in my heart that I could never become worthy to be called a child of God.” [2]

Months were spent in mental agony. Whole nights were passed in tearful prayers for pardon, but without clear assurance of acceptance with God. Like Bunyan, she suffered almost unbearable sorrow, depression, and despair.

But the day of relief came. It was at a Methodist camp meeting that she listened to a convincing discourse upon the pardoning love of Christ. She was impressed with the statement that “those who were waiting to make themselves more worthy of divine favor, before they dared venture to claim the promises, were making a fatal mistake. Jesus alone cleanses from sin; He only can forgive our transgressions. He has pledged Himself to listen to the petition and grant the prayer of those who come to Him in faith.” [3]

Of the lifting of the burden of despair, she says:

“While bowed at the altar with others who were seeking the Lord, all the language of my heart was: ‘Help, Jesus, save me or I perish! I will never cease

to entreat till my prayer is heard and my sins forgiven.' I felt my needy, helpless condition as never before. As I knelt and prayed, suddenly my burden left me and my heart was light. At first a feeling of alarm came over me and I tried to resume the load of distress again. It seemed to me that I had no right to feel joyous and happy. But Jesus seemed very near me; I felt able to come to Him with all my griefs, misfortunes and trials, even as the needy ones came to Him for relief when He was upon earth. There was a surety in my heart that He understood my peculiar trials and sympathized with me. I can never forget this precious assurance of the pitying tenderness of Jesus toward one so unworthy of His notice. I learned more of the divine character of Christ in the short period when bowed among the praying ones than ever before."

[4]

Soon after this Ellen was baptized, and was received as a member of the Methodist Church. By her own request she was immersed, as she was persuaded by her own experience and study that this was the scriptural mode of baptism.

Distressed Over Problems and Duties

This, her conversion, was the beginning of an unusual Christian experience for a child. There were further lessons for her to learn, however. She was confused by the theological discussions she heard regarding justification and sanctification, intimating that there was some experience characterized by great joy, which she despaired of reaching. She was troubled because some who made the greatest claims to sanctification manifested a bitter spirit toward those who believed in the soon coming of Jesus, and because some ministers opposed this scriptural hope.

The preaching of an eternally burning hell was a source of anguish to her mind. She could not reconcile this doctrine with the love and tenderness of God. Of this she says:

“I thought that the fate of the condemned sinner would be mine, to endure the flames of hell forever, even as long as God Himself existed. This

impression deepened upon my mind until I feared that I would lose my reason. I would look upon the dumb beasts with envy, because they had no soul to be punished after death...

“Total darkness settled upon me and there seemed no way out of the shadows. Could the truth have been presented to me as I now understand it, my despondency would have taken flight at once, much perplexity and sorrow would have been spared me. If the love of God had been dwelt upon more and His stern justice less, the beauty and glory of His character would have inspired me with a deep and earnest love for my Creator.” [5]

An impression that it was her duty to offer public prayer in one of the prayer meetings added to her distress of mind. So timid and shrinking was she that she suffered keenly at the thought. Fearful of becoming confused, she shrank from it as a dread ordeal. But so strong was the impression that she felt she was willfully displeasing God in refusing to pray. This led to another period of utter despair, of which she says:

“For three long weeks no ray of light pierced the gloom that encompassed me about. My sufferings of mind were intense. Sometimes for a whole night I would not dare to close my eyes, but would wait until my twin sister was fast asleep, then quietly leave my bed and kneel upon the floor, praying silently with a dumb agony that cannot be described. The horrors of an eternally burning hell were ever before me. I knew that it was impossible for me to live long in this state, and I dared not die and meet the terrible fate of the sinner. With what envy did I regard those who realized their acceptance with God. How precious did the Christian’s hope seem to my agonized soul.” [6]

Her First Public Prayer

From this pitiful anxiety she was at length relieved through a comforting dream and the counsel and prayers of a godly minister. But again came the impression of duty to take part in the prayer meeting. That evening the opportunity came. Tremblingly she bowed with the little group,

and soon she lifted up her voice in prayer. Of this act of obedience to the voice of the Spirit she says:

“As I prayed, the burden and agony of soul that I had endured so long, left me, and the blessing of the Lord descended upon me like the gentle dew. I praised God from the depths of my heart. Everything seemed shut out from me but Jesus and His glory.” [7]

The following night, in the meeting of the advent believers, she very impressively bore testimony to her experience. This was the beginning of her public acknowledgment of Christ, coupled with earnest appeals for consecration.

Not long after this she was invited to relate her experience at the Christian church in Portland, at a conference of believers. As she told in a simple way of her wonderful deliverance from the bondage of doubt and despair, “the melting power of the Lord came upon the assembled people. Many were weeping and praising God. Sinners

were invited to arise for prayers, and many responded to the call.” [8]

Begins Public Labors for Christ

Nor were Ellen Harmon’s efforts for Christ limited to these public testimonies. She arranged meetings with her friends and related her experience to them, then exhorted and prayed for them individually. Night after night she prayed for these souls for whom she bore a burden, and her soul-winning efforts were marvelously blessed.

It was at this period in her life that James White, a young man who was on fire with a burning zeal to lead his fellow men to prepare for the coming of Christ, which he believed to be near, visited Portland. He speaks thus of his first meeting with the one who was later to share his labors as his wife:

“She was then a Christian of the most devoted type. And although but sixteen, she was a laborer in the cause of Christ in public and from house to

house. She was a decided adventist, and yet her experience was so rich and her testimony so powerful that ministers and leading men of different churches sought her labors as an exhorter in their several congregations. But at that time she was very timid, and little thought that she was to be brought before the public to speak to thousands.”
[9]

With such a background of experience, is it strange that the little company of believers in Portland, in their perplexity and trouble following the disappointment, should have confidence in the integrity of this girl who, with fear and trembling, told them of the vision that had been given to her? Could they well doubt her sincerity? Sweet water does not flow from bitter fountains.

The nature of the message, its fitness to their needs, its satisfying answers to the questions that were in their minds, its encouragement for confidence in their past experience, and for divine guidance for the future surely must have impressed those who heard Ellen Harmon relate it. As this has

been covered in the preceding chapter, we shall not further enlarge on it here.

It is, however, worthy of note that this vision was not of such a nature as to confirm them in what they already believed. Not only they, but Ellen Harmon herself, prior to this vision, had become persuaded that the “midnight cry” movement, through which they had passed, was a mistake. This was the general conclusion that had been reached by most of the leaders in the movement. It seemed logical to accept the fact that Jesus had not come as proof positive that the calculation of the prophetic period of 2300 years as ending on October 22 had been in error.

But in the vision, instead of the “midnight cry’s” having been a mistake, lo, it was a light that was to illuminate the pathway of the adventist people all the way to the city of God.

Therefore the substance of this vision cannot be accounted for as in anywise springing from the personal belief of Ellen Harmon, or that of her

associates. That it served to change that belief is a strong evidence of its having been given to her by an intelligence outside of her own consciousness.

Reluctance to Relate the Vision

From what has been related, it is evident that Ellen Harmon was not a bold, forward person. To go forth as a messenger for God was not a path of her choosing. When in a later vision she was bidden to go and relate to others the things that God had shown to her, the trials and hardships of her future life were laid open before her. Of her reluctance to do this work, she says:

“My health was so poor that I was in actual bodily suffering, and, to all appearance, had but a short time to live. I was but seventeen years of age, small and frail, unused to society, and naturally so timid and retiring that it was painful for me to meet strangers. I prayed earnestly for several days and far into the night, that this burden might be removed from me and laid upon someone more capable of bearing it. But the light of duty never

changed, and the words of the angel sounded continually in my ears, ‘Make known to others what I have revealed to you.’

“I was unreconciled to going out into the world, its sneers and opposition rose before my mind in formidable array. I had little self-confidence... How could I, a child in years, go forth from place to place unfolding to the people the holy truths of God! My heart shrank in terror from the thought.”
[10]

When we remember the terrible mental struggle connected with the impression that she should take part in a prayer meeting, we can better appreciate the agonizing fear with which she contemplated traveling and meeting a world with its natural skepticism regarding present-day divine revelations. But when she finally surrendered, she found that added strength was given her for the call to which she responded.

Phenomena in Vision Scriptural

That there was a supernatural power connected with the visions of Ellen Harmon cannot be gainsaid. There are hundreds of witnesses who have testified to having seen certain physical phenomena during these occasions. Some of these are strikingly parallel to those mentioned in Scripture. Thus the apostle Paul, referring to his own experience, says:

“I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) ... how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible for a man to utter.” (2 Corinthians 12:1-4, margin)

So Ellen Harmon, who later became Mrs. Ellen G. White, while in vision was entirely unconscious of everything about her. That at times she seemed to be viewing heavenly scenes was evident to those present, for she would describe that which she was

viewing. At such times, after returning to consciousness, the world seemed dark, as if she had been in celestial glory.

Another striking manifestation of supernatural power was the fact that during the visions, though they might last for hours, there was absolutely no respiration, even though words were spoken. So, says Daniel, speaking of himself while in vision, “There remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me.” (Daniel 10:17)

Immediately following these words is the statement:

“Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me.” (Verse 18)

So, in a number of Mrs. White’s visions, there were manifestations of great strength. In fact, in a vision given to her at her own home in Portland, she picked up the large family Bible, weighing over eighteen pounds, and held it on her extended

left hand for approximately half an hour.

These Phenomena Not Conclusive

These phenomena are here mentioned as accompaniments in this connection, but not as in and of themselves constituting conclusive evidence of divine power. Those who would accept such physical phenomena as the determining evidence may be deceived, for the enemy of righteousness may produce similar conditions in persons subject to his control.

In the beginning of Mrs. White's work, the miraculous was sometimes apparent to arrest the attention of the personal beholder, and to make apparent locally to those who witnessed it that they were in the presence of a supernatural power. Whether from God or from Satan was to be determined by the character of the messages themselves, and by that of the messenger.

In later years when it was possible to judge her claims by the character and content of her

published works and labors, wholly apart from the physical evidence, these physical phenomena were no longer necessary to faith, and her public visions became less frequent, and finally ceased.

That the revelations given to counsel and guide the church did not cease with them, but that on the other hand they continued unabated till near the close of her life, will be apparent as more of her work is noted.

As the early part of Mrs. White's public work has been quite fully covered in her autobiography, further details need not be given here. Her work for the first few years of this period was confined to the New England States. By the messages she had to give, a company was established, and held to the integrity of the mighty spiritual experience of the great advent message. While the foundations of that message were being abandoned by many, she identified herself with those who maintained that God had led them. The light did not break upon them fully at once. But step by step they advanced in the providences of God, taught by the word of

God, until a clear, systematic structure of truth was established.

Steadying Influence Amid Confusion

The thousands of adventists who had passed through the trying experiences of 1844, had come out from many different churches, or had been converted by the message itself. They were united in their expectation of Christ's coming; but when that failed of realization, the bond of unity was broken. They were unorganized. A period of chaos and confused ideas followed. Many fanatical teachers arose to distract and annoy. Discordant voices, expressed in conflicting publications and on lecture platforms, were heard on every hand.

Under these circumstances, how providential it was that the prophetic gift was so manifestly revived! It was not in the order of God to teach new truths by this means. Rather, the gift served to rebuke false and fanatical teachings, and to place the divine endorsement upon those truths that had first been found from the word by diligent,

prayerful study by groups of earnest seekers for light.

The following statement by Mrs. White regarding her firm and uncompromising stand against fanaticism, and her positive message regarding the setting of any specific time for the coming of Christ, is fully borne out by the facts:

“Visions were given me to correct the errors of those who had taken extreme views of some texts of Scripture, and refrained wholly from labor, and rejected all those who would not receive their views on this point and some other things which they held to be religious duties. God revealed these errors to me in vision, and sent me to His erring children to declare them; but many of them wholly rejected the message, and charged me with conforming to the world.

“On the other hand, the nominal adventists charged me with fanaticism, and I was falsely, and by some, wickedly, represented as being the leader of the fanaticism I was laboring constantly to arrest

by bearing the testimony given me of God.

“Different times were set for the Lord to come, and were urged upon the brethren. But the Lord showed me that they would pass by, for the time of trouble must come before the coming of Christ, and that every time that was set, and passed, would only weaken the faith of God’s people.” [11]

The fact that the distinctive truths that gave rise to the Seventh-day Adventist Church were reached by diligent, prayerful Bible study, and not by a credulous following of the visions, is worthy of emphasis. In those pioneer days, as today, these doctrines were preached with convincing power from the Bible alone. After men had done all in their power to find the truth for themselves, then God graciously sent them messages through the gift of prophecy to assure them of their conclusions, or to correct mistaken interpretations of Scripture. The doctrines did not come from the visions, though the visions confirmed the doctrines. Thus a wonderful unity was effected, and assured confidence was maintained by those who accepted

the manifestations of the gift.

Not a Substitute for Bible Study

When, some years later, the opponents of Seventh-day Adventists sneeringly called their doctrines “vision views,” James White, writing in the Review and Herald, pointed to the fact that every doctrine was preached from the Bible, and sustained entirely by scriptural arguments. He maintained that divine revelation was not intended as a substitute for Bible study and prayer for light. He further stated:

“The revival of any, or of all the gifts, will never supersede the necessity of searching the word to learn the truth... It is not God’s plan to lead out His people into the broad field of truth by the gifts. But after His people have searched the word, if then individuals err from Bible truth, or through strife urge erroneous views upon the honest seekers for truth, then is God’s opportunity to correct them by the gifts. This is in harmony with our entire experience on this subject.” [12]

Light Revealed Little by Little

That the light given from heaven was revealed no faster than God's people were prepared to follow, subsequent to the advent experience, is but a modern application of the same principle already referred to, in its relation to the Reformation, as follows:

“There were many and great obstacles for them to meet, and He led them on step by step, as they could bear it. They were not prepared to receive all the light at once. Like the full glory of the noontide sun to those who have long dwelt in darkness, it would, if presented, have caused them to turn away. Therefore He revealed it to the leaders little by little, as it could be received by the people.”
[13]

With this brief statement regarding some of the experiences connected with the early manifestations of this gift through Mrs. White before her writings were widely known, we are

now prepared to make an analysis of some of the features of her life work. Our own conclusion—based upon a study of her writings, and upon personal observations covering a period of over fifty years—is that never in the history of the church has God more manifestly spoken to His people, warning them of dangers, elevating the standard of righteousness, and directing in the work committed to His church on earth, than has been manifest through this instrument of His choice. If we can bring forward supporting evidence that this is not an extravagant conclusion, then, indeed, do we have cause for profound gratitude to Him who has in these last days so graciously visited His people.

Notes:

1. “Life Sketches: Ancestry, Early Life, Christian Experience, and Extensive Labors of Elder James White and His Wife, Ellen White,” pp. 135, 136. Battle Creek: Steam Press of the S. D. A. Publishing Association, 1888.
2. The Ministry of Healing, 137, 138

3. The Ministry of Healing, 140
4. The Ministry of Healing, 142, 143
5. The Ministry of Healing, 153
6. The Ministry of Healing, 154
7. The Ministry of Healing, 159
8. The Ministry of Healing, 162
9. The Ministry of Healing, 126
10. The Ministry of Healing, 194
11. The Ministry of Healing, 220
12. The Review and Herald, February 26, 1856
13. “The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan,” p. 103

Chapter 26

Claims Tested by the Word

The claim of anyone to possess the prophetic gift, to receive instruction from heaven through visions and dreams, is not in itself inconsistent, superstitious, or fanatical. It is indeed a very proper claim, fully approved by the Scriptures, whenever and upon whomsoever this gift may actually be bestowed. The words of the Lord are no less true to-day than when uttered three thousand years ago, “Hear now My words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.” (Numbers 12:6)

No man can make himself a prophet. No body of men, however authoritative in the church, can elect another to that sacred office. He must receive the prophetic gift—a gift which only God can bestow. Hence a person becomes a prophet only when the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, imparts to that person the prophetic gift. The gift of prophecy,

bestowed from the beginning, has never been withdrawn from the race. There have been times when it has not been openly or widely manifested. But following periods when it has appeared to be inoperative, it has reappeared, and often in a very pronounced manner.

In view of the fact that it was Mrs. Ellen G. White's sincere, unwavering conviction that from the year 1844 to the close of her life divine revelations were given to her through visions and dreams, it is fitting that her claim to the prophetic gift should be tested. It is inconsistent to dismiss the claim as preposterous.

The right thing to do, and the Biblical course to pursue, with Mrs. White's claim to the prophetic gift is to examine candidly the evidence upon which those claims are based, for from the earliest times there have been both true and false prophets.

She herself has candidly and fearlessly urged the most thorough investigation of her claims. Of her work, she wrote in 1876:

“God is either teaching His church, reproofing their wrongs and strengthening their faith, or He is not. This work is of God, or it is not. God does nothing in partnership with Satan. My work, for the past thirty years, bears the stamp of God or the stamp of the enemy. There is no halfway work in the matter. The Testimonies are of the Spirit of God, or of the devil.” [1]

Predictions Fulfilled and Fulfilling

How shall we test the claim of an individual to the prophetic gift? The word of God itself tells us how we may distinguish the true from the false.

“If thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.” (Deuteronomy 18:21,22)

Not all the utterances of a prophet are predictive. But when one arises assuming to have the gift of prophecy and, in the name of the Lord, depicts future events or conditions, then the failure of such a prediction is sufficient to indicate that he has spoken falsely.

As already set forth, in Mrs. White's first vision she saw briefly the experiences of the advent people on to the time when they should enter the city of God. That view was later repeated and given with added details. Fifty years and more ago she brought out a book entitled "The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan." In this are portrayed such vivid pictures of the present, and such predictions of future conditions in the world, that, with no alteration of its fundamental teachings, it is still circulated widely today. It grips the hearts of the readers with a conviction that leads many of them to seek for such a preparation of heart as will fit them for their soon-coming Lord.

Considering the tremendous changes—

political, social, and religious—that have come over our world during the last half century, what human mind unilluminated by the Spirit of God, could have penned fifty years ago hundreds of pages of detailed and accurate description of future conditions? The first views given Mrs. White regarding the future of spiritism were given at a time when only a few outside of Rochester, New York, had even heard of the mysterious knockings that marked the rise of modern spiritism.

The almost universal departure of the churches from the fundamentals of Christianity, as seen today, seemed almost incredible when it was first foretold by Mrs. White in “The Great Controversy.” In this volume is to be found a convincing portrayal of the very final acts in earth’s drama,—the mighty triumph of the gospel message, the close of probation, the time of trouble, the last great conflict of God’s people with the hosts of darkness, and their final deliverance. All this is in harmony with momentous statements of Scripture, yet given in the detail needed by those

who must pass through these experiences.

The diligent and candid reader of Mrs. White's predictive writings must admit that they pass the test of having been fulfilled, or of being in process of fulfillment.

Harmony With the Word Imperative

Another vitally important test is given by the prophet Isaiah. Referring to claimants of supernatural gifts, he says: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20. That is very explicit, and very conclusive. The law and the testimony represent the Scriptures of truth, given "by inspiration of God," the truths which "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21)

The tests just enumerated are vital and fundamental. The utterances of one who claims direct instruction from God by visions and dreams must be true, and they must be in harmony with the

inspired word of God.

The giving of the first vision to Mrs. White in December, 1844, was the beginning of a long period of most intimate communion with God on her part. She passed away July 16, 1915,—almost seventy-one years after receiving this first view. During that long life of service she remained true to God, an untiring student of His word, and marvelously loyal to the light revealed to her in that first vision of the travels of the advent people to the holy city. The light given at that time was greatly increased through the years. The instruction then given was enlarged a thousandfold through many subsequent visions and dreams. At the close of her life she left a library of more than twenty major volumes of her writings, devoted largely to the various phases of the central truth revealed to her in that first vision. These writings are permeated with Scripture quotations, interpretations, and other evidences of her constant study of the word. Indeed, they are so true to the teachings of the Bible that they challenge the reader to discover any lack of harmony with the

Inspired Word. It can be truthfully said that they furnish a vast amount of material by which to test her claims to the possession of the prophetic gift.

Sovereign Facts of the Gospel

The views set forth in Mrs. White's writings are not presented in the form of a church creed; neither are they given as categorical statements of belief. Instead, they are clear, confident expositions of the very heart of the vital truths set forth in the word of God.

Students of the Bible readily discover that it constantly enunciates great fundamental truths for which no argument is made, and for which no source reference is given credit. They are just definitely and positively declared. Note carefully the following statements:

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)

“God created man in His own image, in the

image of God created He him.” (Genesis 1:27)

“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men.” (Romans 5:12)

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” (Acts 16:31)

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” (2 Timothy 3:16)

No more profound example of unqualified, declarative teaching is found anywhere than in the Saviour’s immortal Sermon on the Mount.

To such sovereign facts of the gospel are related the thousands of details recorded in the Scriptures. Differences of opinion in the

interpretation of minor matters may be allowed; but without the greatest peril, there can be no departure from the plain, positive fundamentals. Were that permitted, the divine plan would be rent in shreds by the foolishness of human reasoning.

Wherefore, to all expounders of the Scripture it is declared: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (Isaiah 8:20)

The Bible is the supreme, infallible revelation of God to all men in all nations, and for all time. By this book all theories, teachings, and doctrines are to be tried. By it all men’s characters are to be weighed, and their destiny decided. Next to the gift of Christ to redeem the human race, the Bible, God’s holy word, is God’s best gift to instruct and guide mankind through the journey of life. Theories, whether of religion, science, or morals, that plainly contradict this divine Book are false. They are not of God. They must, therefore, be rejected.

Teachings Tested by Ten Principles

We have a right to expect, then, that if Mrs. White had the prophetic gift, her life and her teachings should be in full accord with the Bible on all matters vital to salvation. She herself recognized this clear principle in the following words:

“True Christianity receives the word of God as the great treasure house of inspired truth, and the test of all inspiration.” [2]

For such a test we have chosen ten fundamental doctrines of the Bible,—ten basic facts of the gospel:

1. The inspiration, authenticity, and infallibility of the Bible.
2. The true and only reliable account of the origin of the human race.
3. The divine explanation of the origin of sin and

death.

4. The gospel plan for the redemption of the human family from sin and death.
5. The incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God.
6. The coming of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, Christ's representative on earth.
7. The universal and unchangeable authority of the moral law.
8. God's abounding grace toward a world in rebellion.
9. The free gift of the righteousness of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
10. The certain, final, glorious consummation of the great plan of redemption in which our hopes are centered.

In applying this test, we shall first give a plain statement from the Scripture, followed by a few statements from the writings of Mrs. White, typical of many others that abound in the thousands of pages in her printed volumes:

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”
2 Timothy 3:16. “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” 2 Peter 1:21.
“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”
(Matthew 4:4)

1. Exalts the Word of God

In her personal life, in her public ministry, and in her writings, Mrs. White humbly gave reverence to the word of God. Of that great Book she wrote:

“The word of God includes the Scriptures of the Old Testament as well as of the New. One is not complete without the other.” “The Old Testament sheds light upon the New, and the New upon the Old. Each is a revelation of the glory of

God in Christ. Both present truths that will continually reveal new depths of meaning to the earnest seeker.” [3]

“In His word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience.” [4]

“God designed the Bible to be a lesson book to all mankind, in childhood, youth, and manhood, and to be studied through all time. He gave His word to men as a revelation of Himself... The study of the Scriptures is the means divinely ordained to bring men into closer connection with their Creator, and to give them a clearer knowledge of His will. It is the medium of communication between God and man.” [5]

“The Bible presents a perfect standard of character; it is an infallible guide under all circumstances, even to the end of the journey of

life. Take it as the man of your counsel, the rule of your daily life.” [6]

“One sentence of Scripture is of more value than ten thousand of man’s ideas or arguments.” [7]

“Let the word of God stand just as it is. Let not human wisdom presume to lessen the force of one statement of the Scriptures.” [8]

2. Affirms Creation, Denies Evolution

Of the origin of man the Bible gives a plain, authentic account: “God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.” (Genesis 1:27) Mrs. White’s writings are in full accord with this inspired statement.

“The Bible is the most ancient and the most comprehensive history that men possess... It lights up the far-distant past, where human research seeks

in vain to penetrate. In God's word only do we behold the power that laid the foundations of the earth, and that stretched out the heavens. Here only do we find an authentic account of the origin of nations. Here only is given a history of our race unsullied by human pride or prejudice." [9]

“After the earth with its teeming animal and vegetable life, had been called into existence, man, the crowning work of the Creator, and the one for whom the beautiful earth had been fitted up, was brought upon the stage of action. To him was given dominion over all that his eye could behold; for ‘God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over ... all the earth.’ ‘So God created man in His own image; ... male and female created He them.’ Here is clearly set forth the origin of the human race; and the divine record is so plainly stated that there is no occasion for erroneous conclusions. God created man in His own image. Here is no mystery. There is no ground for the supposition that man was evolved, by slow degrees of development, from the lower forms of animal or vegetable life.

Such teaching lowers the great work of the Creator to the level of man's narrow, earthly conceptions. Men are so intent upon excluding God from the sovereignty of the universe, that they degrade man, and defraud him of the dignity of his origin. He who set the starry worlds on high, and tinted with delicate skill the flowers of the field, who filled the earth and the heavens with the wonders of His power, when He came to crown His glorious work, to place one in the midst to stand as ruler of the fair earth, did not fail to create a being worthy of the hand that gave him life. The genealogy of our race, as given by inspiration, traces back its origin, not to a line of developing germs, mollusks, and quadrupeds, but to the great Creator." [10]

Thus it is seen that Mrs. White takes a firm, courageous, fearless stand on the plain declarations of the word of God regarding the origin of the human race. Note the certainty revealed in her statements: "God created man in His own image. Here is no mystery. There is no ground for the supposition that man was evolved, by slow degrees of development, from the lower forms of animal or

vegetable life.”

3. Satanic Origin of Sin and Death

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men.” Romans 5:12. Of this tragic event Mrs. White gives a clear, rational, and very helpful explanation in full accord with the word of God:

“To many minds, the origin of sin and the reason for its existence are a source of great perplexity. They see the work of evil, with its terrible results of woe and desolation, and they question how all this can exist under the sovereignty of One who is infinite in wisdom, in power, and in love. Here is a mystery, of which they find no explanation. And in their uncertainty and doubt, they are blinded to truths plainly revealed in God’s word, and essential to salvation...

“It is impossible to explain the origin of sin so as to give a reason for its existence. Yet enough may be understood concerning both the origin and

the final disposition of sin, to make fully manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all His dealings with evil. Nothing is more plainly taught in Scripture than that God was in nowise responsible for the entrance of sin; that there was no arbitrary withdrawal of divine grace, no deficiency in the divine government, that gave occasion for the uprising of rebellion. Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it, is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin. Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is ‘the transgression of the law;’ it is the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government...

“Sin originated with him [Lucifer] who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God, and who stood highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven.” [11]

“No longer free to stir up rebellion in heaven,

Satan's enmity against God found a new field in plotting the ruin of the human race. In the happiness and peace of the holy pair in Eden, he beheld a vision of the bliss that to him was forever lost. Moved by envy, he determined to incite them to disobedience, and bring upon them the guilt and penalty of sin." "Satan represented to the holy pair that they would be gainers by breaking the law of God."

"It was not the will of God that the sinless pair should know aught of evil. He had freely given them the good, and had withheld the evil. But, contrary to His command, they had eaten of the forbidden tree, and now they would continue to eat of it—they would have the knowledge of evil—all the days of their life. From that time the race would be afflicted by Satan's temptations. Instead of the happy labor heretofore appointed them, anxiety and toil were to be their lot. They would be subject to disappointment, grief, and pain, and finally to death." "The sin of our first parents brought guilt and sorrow upon the world, and had it not been for the goodness and mercy of God, would have

plunged the race into hopeless despair. Let none deceive themselves. ‘The wages of sin is death.’”
[12]

4. The Divine Plan of Redemption

“If through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one Man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.” (Romans 5:15) The divine plan whereby fallen man might be redeemed is emphasized and glorified in the writings of Mrs. White.

“The fall of man filled all heaven with sorrow. The world that God had made was blighted with the curse of sin, and inhabited by beings doomed to misery and death. There appeared no escape for those who had transgressed the law. Angels ceased their songs of praise. Throughout the heavenly courts there was mourning for the ruin that sin had wrought... But divine love had conceived a plan whereby man might be redeemed... Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law, and

bring him again into harmony with heaven... The plan by which alone man's salvation could be secured, involved all heaven in its infinite sacrifice." [13]

"The crucified Messiah is the central point of all Christianity." [14]

"Redemption is that process by which the soul is trained for heaven. This training means a knowledge of Christ. It means emancipation from ideas, habits, and practices that have been gained in the school of the prince of darkness." [15]

"The great plan of redemption will reach its accomplishment in the final eradication of sin, and the deliverance of all who have been willing to renounce evil." [16]

These statements show plainly that Mrs. White taught clearly the doctrine that the gospel, as revealed in the Sacred Scriptures, presents the sole means of salvation. None of the moral philosophy of India or the ethical codes of Burma and China

are given any place whatsoever with the gospel of the Son of God. It alone is the hope of a lost world.

5. Redemption Solely Through Christ

“When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.” (Galatians 4:4,5) We find also that on this widely controverted and frequently abandoned truth the teachings of Mrs. White agree with the word.

“That we might become acquainted with His divine character and life, Christ took our nature, and dwelt among us. Divinity was revealed in humanity; the invisible glory in the visible human form. Men could learn of the unknown through the known; heavenly things were revealed through the earthly; God was made manifest in the likeness of men.” [17]

“He who was one with God has linked Himself with the children of men by ties that are never to be broken... He is our Sacrifice, our Advocate, our

Brother, bearing our human form before the Father's throne, and through eternal ages one with the race He has redeemed,—the Son of man.” [18]

“He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews 7:25) In full agreement with this, Mrs. White says:

“Christ is the connecting link between God and man. He has promised His personal intercession. He places the whole virtue of His righteousness on the side of the suppliant. He pleads for man, and man, in need of divine help, pleads for himself in the presence of God, using the influence of the One who gave His life for the life of the world. As we acknowledge before God our appreciation of Christ's merits, fragrance is given to our intercessions. As we approach God through the virtue of the Redeemer's merits, Christ places us close by His side, encircling us with His human arm, while with His divine arm He grasps the throne of the Infinite. He puts His merits, as sweet incense, in the censer in our hands, in order to

encourage our petitions. He promises to hear and answer our supplications. Yes; Christ has become the medium of prayer between man and God. He has also become the medium of blessing between God and man. He has united divinity with humanity.” [19]

In her teaching, as in the Bible, Christ is recognized and exalted as the only Saviour of sinners. Emphasis is placed upon the bold and unqualified announcement of the disciples that “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Acts 4:12. The power to redeem from the power and effects of sin is in Him alone, and to Him all men are directed.

6. The Holy Spirit Makes Salvation Effectual

“I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth.” “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all

things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:16,17,26) Here again there is remarkable clearness, fullness, and harmony with the word revealed in her writings:

“The Holy Spirit is Christ’s representative, but divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof. Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally. Therefore it was for their interest that He should go to the Father, and send the Spirit to be His successor on earth. No one could then have any advantage because of his location or his personal contact with Christ. By the Spirit the Saviour would be accessible to all. In this sense He would be nearer to them than if He had not ascended on high.” [20]

“Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought

out by the world's Redeemer." [21]

“The Holy Spirit is the breath of spiritual life in the soul. The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ.” [22]

The Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Godhead, and Christ's representative on earth, is thus set forth and exalted by Mrs. White as the heavenly teacher and guide sent to this world by our Lord to make real in the hearts and lives of men all that He had made possible by His death on the cross.

7. Law of God Ever Exalted

“The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” (Romans 7:12) “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” (Romans 3:31) Here is a vital phase of correspondence and harmony with the Bible on the part of Mrs. White. In no other feature is adherence to the word more conspicuous—in a world that is largely confused

upon this point.

“Everything in nature, from the mote in the sunbeam to the worlds on high, is under law. And upon obedience to these laws the order and harmony of the natural world depend. So there are great principles of righteousness to control the life of all intelligent beings, and upon conformity to these principles the well-being of the universe depends. Before this earth was called into being, God’s law existed. Angels are governed by its principles, and in order for earth to be in harmony with heaven, man also must obey the divine statutes.” [23]

“God had set fast the mountains, and girded them with strength; no arm but that of Infinite Power could move them out of their place. In like manner He had established His law, the foundation of His government in heaven and upon earth. The arm of man might reach his fellow men and destroy their lives; but that arm could as readily uproot the mountains from their foundations, and hurl them into the sea, as it could change one precept of the

law of Jehovah, or blot out one of His promises to those who do His will. In their fidelity to His law, God's servants should be as firm as the unchanging hills." [24]

"He who becomes a partaker of the divine nature will be in harmony with God's great standard of righteousness, His holy law. This is the rule by which God measures the actions of men. This will be the test of character in the judgment." [25]

Mrs. White's books fairly teem with passages exalting the law of God, in full accordance with the Scriptures.

8. Abounding Grace the Basis of Salvation

"By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8) "God is able to make all grace abound toward you." (2 Corinthians 9:8) On this theme, Mrs. White's writing stands as true as the needle to the pole. Yet this is the issue that separates the true

from the false.

“Grace is an attribute of God exercised toward undeserving human beings. We did not seek for it, but it was sent in search of us. God rejoices to bestow His grace upon us, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our only claim to His mercy is our great need.” [26]

“In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace, as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live, and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus... Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness,—all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly,—by abiding in Him,—that we are to grow in grace. He is not only the author but the finisher of our faith. It is Christ first and last and always.” [27]

“Through the grace of Christ every provision

has been made for the salvation of the human family.” [28]

“It is His grace that gives man power to obey the laws of God. It is this that enables him to break the bondage of evil habit. This is the only power that can make him and keep him steadfast in the right path.” [29]

“The Lord Jesus is making experiments on human hearts through the exhibition of His mercy and abundant grace. He is effecting transformations so amazing that Satan, with all his triumphant boasting, with all his confederacy of evil united against God and the laws of His government, stands viewing them as a fortress impregnable to his sophistries and delusions. They are to him an incomprehensible mystery.” [30]

Thus we find her declaration on this important subject likewise in full accord with the word.

9. Gift of Righteousness in Christ

“Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” (Romans 3:21,22) Observe here also the full accord of Mrs. White’s words with the Scriptures:

“Christ has become our sacrifice and surety. He has become sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Through faith in His name, He imputes unto us His righteousness, and it becomes a living principle in our life.” [31]

“The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.” [32]

“The law demands righteousness, and this the sinner owes to the law; but he is incapable of rendering it. The only way in which he can attain to righteousness is through faith.” [33]

“The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed. The righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven; the second is our fitness for heaven.” [34]

10. The Glorious Consummation Depicted

“Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” (Revelation 22:12) The controversies of the ages have clustered about this issue. But here, likewise, Mrs. White is notably harmonious with the word:

“The great plan of redemption results in fully bringing back the world into God’s favor. All that was lost by sin is restored. Not only man but the earth is redeemed, to be the eternal abode of the obedient. For six thousand years, Satan has struggled to maintain possession of the earth. Now God’s original purpose in its creation is accomplished. ‘The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom

forever, even forever and ever.” [35]

“The work of redemption will be complete. In the place where sin abounded, God’s grace much more abounds. The earth itself, the very field that Satan claims as his, is to be not only ransomed but exalted. Our little world, under the curse of sin the one dark blot in His glorious creation, will be honored above all other worlds in the universe of God. Here, where the Son of God tabernacled in humanity; where the King of glory lived and suffered and died,—here, when He shall make all things new, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, ‘and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.’ All through endless ages as the redeemed walk in the light of the Lord, they will praise Him for His unspeakable Gift,—Immanuel, ‘God with us.’” [36]

“Restored to His presence, man will again, as at the beginning, be taught of God... There, when the veil that darkens our vision shall be removed, and our eyes shall behold that world of beauty of which

we now catch glimpses through the microscope; when we look on the glories of the heavens, now scanned afar through the telescope; when, the blight of sin removed, the whole earth shall appear ‘in the beauty of the Lord our God,’ what a field will be open to our study! There the student of science may read the records of creation, and discern no reminders of the law of evil. He may listen to the music of nature’s voices, and detect no note of wailing or undertone of sorrow. In all created things he may trace one handwriting,—in the vast universe behold ‘God’s name writ large,’ and not in earth or sea or sky one sign of ill remaining.” [37]

It should be borne in mind that the claims of Mrs. Ellen G. White to divine inspiration are on trial in this study. We are testing them by the word of God. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (Isaiah 8:20)

Fullest Accord With Basic Truths

The reading of the selections we have reprinted from the writings of Mrs. White must convince any open, reasonable mind that they are in fullest accord with the ten great basic doctrines we have selected from the word. They are more than in passive agreement with these doctrines; they most positively affirm each and all of them.

The simple and obvious truth is that Mrs. White's dealing with these fundamental verities of the Bible is precisely the same as that of the prophets and apostles of old, in regard to the writings of their predecessors. Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. The prophets who succeeded him affirmed the divine origin and authority of those books. Later, the apostles declared that the Scriptures of all these accredited prophets were "given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16), and that the writings of the prophets "came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter 1:21)

These statements of the New Testament prophets are likewise more than in passive agreement with those of their predecessors; they are decidedly affirmative. They accept and solemnly enjoin the teachings of those who had gone before them. This is one of the strong evidences of genuineness used by all apologists and defenders of the Sacred Scriptures. The acceptance by Mrs. White of the writings of all the prophets and apostles of the Bible as inspired and infallible, and her unwavering support and positive enforcement of them all upon all men, is, therefore, unquestionable proof of the genuineness of her gift as far as this one important test is concerned.

Notes:

1. Testimonies for the Church 4:230
2. "The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan," p. 193
3. Christ's Object Lessons, 126, 128
4. "The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan," Introduction, p. vii

5. Testimonies for the Church 4:69
6. Testimonies for the Church 5:264
7. Testimonies for the Church 7:71
8. Testimonies for the Church 5:711
9. Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 52
10. Patriarchs and Prophets, 44, 45
11. “The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan,” pp. 492, 493
12. Patriarchs and Prophets, 52, 55, 59, 61
13. Patriarchs and Prophets, 63, 64
14. Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 24
15. The Desire of Ages, 330
16. “The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan,” p. 486
17. Christ’s Object Lessons, 17
18. Steps to Christ, 16
19. Testimonies for the Church 8:178
20. The Desire of Ages, 669
21. The Desire of Ages, 671
22. The Desire of Ages, 805
23. Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, 76, 77
24. “The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan,” p. 66
25. Christ’s Object Lessons, 314

26. The Ministry of Healing, 161
27. Steps to Christ, 72-74
28. Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 60
29. The Ministry of Healing, 115
30. Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 18
31. The Review and Herald, July 12, 1892
32. "Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing," p. 54, edition 1900
33. The Review and Herald, November 4, 1980
34. The Review and Herald, June 4, 1895
35. Patriarchs and Prophets, 342
36. The Desire of Ages, 26
37. Education, 302, 303

Chapter 27

Claims Tested by Their Fruits

The sinner who accepts salvation through faith in Christ enters into a new relationship. “As many as received Him, to them gave He power [“right, or, privilege,” margin] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” (John 1:12) By nature an alien enemy, the sinner becomes through Christ, a son. This is a marvelous change of relationship.

With this new relationship there must be assumed new responsibilities. The apostle Peter declares: “As every man hath received the gift [of salvation], even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” (1 Peter 4:10) It therefore becomes the imperative duty of those saved by the grace of God to work for the enlightenment and salvation of others. The apostle Paul presents the matter thus:

“By grace are ye saved through faith; and that

not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:8-10)

The sinner who has been saved by grace is God’s “workmanship.” He is a new piece of humanity—a new creation. He is “created in Christ Jesus.” The apostle proceeds to point out the new responsibilities that accompany this new relationship. “Created,” he declares, “unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Summoned to Universal Action

Though no works of man can save him, yet it is true that God requires of those whom He has saved a wholehearted co-operation with Him in working for all who are still unsaved. This is all summed up in Christ’s great commission to His church: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15)

This command calls for a vast enterprise by the church—aggressive evangelism in home and foreign lands; shepherding the converts; organizing the believers for efficient service, and educating them in all lines of Christian endeavor; building up the churches in righteousness, in preparation to meet the Saviour when He returns for His people; engaging in medical ministry in all its phases for the sick and suffering; printing and circulating gospel literature in hundreds of languages throughout the world; and all other kinds of service that will aid in the prosecution and finishing of the work committed to the church.

In view of this purpose of God, so clearly revealed in the Scriptures and so heartily accepted and earnestly enjoined by prophets and apostles, we should surely look for anyone divinely endowed with the prophetic gift to be very active and urgent in all lines of legitimate service that could in any way advance the work of God in the earth.

Not alone must he be correct in theoretical teachings, important as this is, but he must himself exemplify his teachings and lead others in practical and efficient soul-saving efforts. We have tested the writings of Ellen G. White, and found them in agreement with the great gospel principles. It remains to consider now what has been their fruitage in guiding the church in the great task committed to her by her divine Lord.

Relationship to the Church

Not only was Mrs. White herself an indefatigable worker for souls during her whole life, but her writings abound with urgent exhortations to the churches, summoning them to universal action in behalf of every unsaved soul. In this matter she fully meets the requirements of one under the guidance of the prophetic gift. It is due those who read this volume to have more evidence regarding this important test, however, than a mere assertion to that effect. We shall, therefore, reproduce a few of the hundreds of doctrinal statements, urgent exhortations, and stirring

appeals found in her writings.

We should first consider her attitude toward the church of Christ which He ordained to be His channel for the proclamation of His gospel to the world until His return. Let it be understood that Mrs. White did not establish a church of her own. From the first manifestation of the prophetic gift through her in 1844 until her death, she clearly recognized “the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” 1 Timothy 3:15. There is not a line in all her writings giving the slightest intimation that she was the head of any church. She repudiated the statements and charges of this sort made by others. She stands in the line of prophets and apostles. Not one of them claimed the headship of the people of God. All recognized Christ as the sovereign Head. With them it was always the church “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.” (Ephesians 2:20) The following are some of the beautiful tributes Mrs. White pays to this divine institution:

“The church is the property of God, and God constantly remembers her as she stands in the world, subject to the temptations of Satan... Although Jesus Christ has passed into the heavens, there is still a living chain binding His believing ones to His own heart of infinite love. The most lowly and weak are bound by a chain of sympathy closely to His heart. He never forgets that He is our representative, and He bears our nature.” [1]

“The church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is the only object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard. While He extends to all the world His invitation to come to Him and be saved, He commissions His angels to render divine help to every soul that cometh to Him in repentance and contrition, and He comes personally by His Holy Spirit into the midst of His church... Consider, my brethren and sisters, that the Lord has a people, a chosen people, His church, to be His own, His own fortress, which He holds in a sin-stricken, revolted world; and He intended that no authority should be known in it, no laws be acknowledged by it, but His own.” [2]

“The church of Christ is God’s agency for the proclamation of truth; she is empowered by Him to do a special work; and if she is loyal to God, obedient to His commandments, there will dwell within her the excellence of divine power.” [3]

Evangelism, the telling of the good news of the gospel, is one of the great themes of the Bible. Noah the ancient was “a preacher of righteousness.” (2 Peter 2:5) To Abraham, the “friend of God,” the Lord said: “I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.” (Genesis 12:2) The prophet Isaiah cries out: “Arise, shine [give light]; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee... And the Gentiles [the unsaved] shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” (Isaiah 60:1-3) Of his personal experience, the apostle Paul says: “It pleased God, who ... called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen.” (Galatians 1:15, 16) Facing this great responsibility, he cries out: “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” (1

Corinthians 9:16)

Emphasis Upon Gospel Evangelism

Mrs. White was a conspicuous messenger in this glorious procession of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, who, under the guidance of the prophetic gift, placed great emphasis upon world-wide evangelism. As typical of much more in her writings, she says:

“The world is in need of the saving truth that God has entrusted to His people. The world will perish unless it be given a knowledge of God through His chosen agencies. In the power of the Holy Spirit, those who are laborers together with God are to labor with unflagging zeal, and shed abroad in the world the light of precious truth.” [4]

“Those in the highways and byways of life are to hear the gospel message. Church members are to do evangelistic work in the homes of their neighbors who have not yet received full evidence of the truth for this time. God calls for Christian

families to go into communities that are in darkness and error, and work wisely and perseveringly for the Master. To answer this call requires self-sacrifice.” [5]

The messages calling for a broad evangelism look beyond what is commonly called the homeland. They embrace all countries; hence they urge a world-wide missionary program.

As He was about to leave this ruined world, the Saviour gave to His disciples a great commission. “He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

Mark 16:15. The history of these disciples and their followers for a hundred years bears eloquent testimony to their faithfulness in endeavoring to meet their Lord’s deep solicitude for the world. Writing to the Colossians, the apostle Paul declared that “the hope of the gospel” had even then been “preached in all creation under heaven.” (Colossians 1:23, A. R. V.)

World-Wide Missionary Program

Universal evangelism is still God's program. Mrs. White's appeal is in full accord with this divine plan, as the following from her pen will testify:

“God's people have a mighty work before them, a work that must continually rise to greater prominence. Our efforts in missionary lines must become far more extensive... A more decided work than has been done must be done prior to the second appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. God's people are not to cease their labors until they shall encircle the world.

“The vineyard includes the whole world, and every part of it is to be worked. There are places which are now a moral wilderness, and these are to become as the garden of the Lord. The waste places of the earth are to be cultivated, that they may bud and blossom as the rose. New territories are to be worked by men inspired by the Holy Spirit. New churches must be established, new

congregations organized.” [6]

“The whole world is a vast missionary field, and we who have long known the gospel message should be encouraged by the thought that fields which were once difficult of access are now easily entered.” [7]

“Our watchword is to be, Onward, ever onward! Angels of heaven will go before us to prepare the way. Our burden for the regions beyond can never be laid down till the whole earth is lightened with the glory of the Lord.” [8]

This consistent, urgent teaching has exerted great influence in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with which Mrs. White was affiliated. The annual report of the church for the year 1934 gives the total number of persons devoting their entire time to the various activities of the church as 23,753. Of this number 11,642 are evangelists. The other 12,111 are engaged in carrying forward various lines of institutional work. These workers are located in every part of the world. Only 2,816

of the evangelists are in North America, while over 8,826 are at work in other lands—Africa, India, China, Russia, Persia, Turkey, South America, Japan, the islands of the seas, and all parts of Europe.

Church Order

It is a trite saying that God is a God of order. But abundant evidence of this appears in all His created works. To His church He says: “Let all things be done decently and in order.” (1 Corinthians 14:40) Writing to the Colossian church, the apostle Paul says: “Though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith.” (Colossians 2:5) In “the church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38) we behold the most perfect order and organization established by Moses under the direct leading of the prophetic gift. Thus we find that “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” (1 Corinthians 14:33)

Organization is designed to prevent disorder and confusion. It stands for systematic, harmonious action. It strengthens for advance, and also for defense. In a world-wide movement, such as the great threefold message of Revelation 14:6-14 foreshadows, the most thorough organization is imperative. In view of these considerations, it will be interesting to note a few passages from Mrs. White's writings regarding organization in the church.

“There is order in heaven, and God is well pleased with the efforts of His people in trying to move with system and order in His work on earth. I saw that there should be order in the church of God, and that system is needed in carrying forward successfully the last great message of mercy to the world.” [9]

“It is nearly forty years since organization was introduced among us as a people. I was one of the number who had an experience in establishing it from the first. I know the difficulties that had to be met, the evils which it was designed to correct, and

I have watched its influence in connection with the growth of the cause. At an early stage in the work, God gave us special light upon this point, and this light, together with the lessons that experience has taught us, should be carefully considered.” [10]

“As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization there would be great confusion, and the work would not be carried forward successfully. To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, organization was indispensable.” [11]

“O how Satan would rejoice if he could succeed in his efforts to get in among this people, and disorganize the work at a time when thorough organization is essential, and will be the greatest power to keep out spurious uprisings, and to refute claims not endorsed by the word of God! We want to hold the lines evenly, that there shall be no

breaking down of the system of organization and order that has been built up by wise, careful labor.”
[12]

Remarkable Organization

The response of the believers to this counsel has developed a remarkable denominational organization. It is broad, practical, and efficient. It is based on the plan of organization established by Moses for Israel, and also on that of the New Testament church as it was developed by Christ and the apostles.

The plan covers all phases of denominational activities throughout the world. Its units are the local church, the local conference, the union conference, the divisional conference, and the general, or world, conference. All these units are bound together by constitutional arrangements for united, harmonious, efficient action in every part of the world.

In this world organization there are today 12

divisions, 70 union conferences, and 144 local conferences. Associated and interlocked with them in 1934 were 318 mission organizations, making a total of five hundred forty-four. In these units there were 7,818 churches, with a membership of 404,509.

Writing to the young preacher Timothy, the apostle Paul said: “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15) Again: “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine... Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting [“growing proficiency,” Weymouth] may appear to all.” (1 Timothy 4:13-15) To all the Lord says: “Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge.” (Proverbs 23:12)

To those who follow this counsel the Lord declares: “Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times.” Isaiah 33:6. Of those who fail in this it is said: “My people are destroyed for

lack of knowledge.” (Hosea 4:6)

The Scriptures abound with instruction regarding the right, thorough culture of the intellect as well as of the heart.

Fosters Christian Education

In view of Mrs. White’s claims as to the source of her counsel, we have a right to insist that she should clearly and strongly stress the value and the character of Christian education. Nor are we disappointed. Hundreds of pages from her pen have been written, including three leading books on this subject, “Education,” “Counsels to Teachers,” and “Fundamentals of Christian Education.” We can give but a glimpse of her many utterances regarding the scope of true education.

“Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range. There is need of a broader scope, a higher aim. True education means more than the pursual of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to

do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world, and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.” [13]

“Moral, intellectual, and physical culture should be combined in order to have well-developed, well-balanced men and women. Some are qualified to exercise greater intellectual strength than others, while others are inclined to love and enjoy physical labor. Both of these classes should seek to improve where they are deficient.” [14]

“In our schools the standard of education must not be lowered. It must be lifted higher and still higher, far above where it now stands; but the education given must not be confined to a knowledge of textbooks merely. The study of textbooks alone cannot afford students the discipline they need, nor can it impart true wisdom. The object of our schools is to provide places

where the younger members of the Lord's family may be trained according to His plan of growth and development." [15]

Impressed with the sacred responsibility of giving the children, youth, and young men and women a Christian education, the denomination has developed a complete and efficient system of schools. Beginning with the elementary school, the student may advance through the academy, the junior college, and the senior college. From the senior college he may receive the degree of Bachelor of Arts. The report for 1934 gives the number of elementary schools conducted by Seventh-day Adventists as 2,130, with 2,896 teachers, and an enrollment of 72,625. There were 214 colleges and academies, with 2,459 teachers, and an enrollment of 25,117. At the present time nearly all who enter the denominational work come from these schools.

Supporter of Publishing Work

The prophets and apostles who wrote the Bible

said much about publishing the gospel by both voice and pen. They preached, they wrote messages, they produced and circulated books. Moses was commanded: “Write thou these words.” (Exodus 34:27) “The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book.” (Jeremiah 30:1,2) It was by the study of the writings of Jeremiah that a prophet said: “I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.”

was the company [“army,” margin] of those that published it.” Psalm 68:11. Through the labors of the apostles, “The word of the Lord was published throughout all the region” of Antioch and Syria. (Acts 13:49)

By every possible legitimate means the gospel is to be proclaimed by voice, written with the pen, and published by the circulation of books. The

printing and circulation of literature is of great importance in this age of printing. The printing press is the greatest factor in the world today for imparting information and molding the sentiments of the people.

Circulation of Literature

It is therefore altogether appropriate that Mrs. White should be led to urge the believers to put forth the most diligent efforts in the printing and circulation of literature filled with God's messages to men. Here are some of her personal experiences:

“At a meeting held in Dorchester, Massachusetts, November, 1848, I had been given a view of the proclamation of the sealing message, and of the duty of the brethren to publish the light that was shining upon our pathway.

“After coming out of vision, I said to my husband: ‘I have a message for you. You must begin to print a little paper and send it out to the people. Let it be small at first; but as the people

read, they will send you means with which to print, and it will be a success from the first. From this small beginning it was shown to me to be like streams of light that went clear round the world.’

“While we were in Connecticut in the summer of 1849, my husband was deeply impressed that the time had come for him to write and publish the present truth. He was greatly encouraged and blessed as he decided to do this. But again he would be in doubt and perplexity, as he was penniless. There were those who had means, but they chose to keep it. He at length gave up in discouragement, and decided to look for a field of grass to mow.

“As he left the house, a burden was rolled upon me, and I fainted. Prayer was offered for me, and I was blessed, and taken off in vision. I saw that the Lord had blessed and strengthened my husband to labor in the field one year before; ... but that the Lord would not now give him strength to labor in the field, for He had another work for him to do, and that if he ventured into the field, he would be

cut down by sickness; but that he must write, write, write, and walk out by faith. He immediately began to write, and when he came to some difficult passage, we would unite in prayer to God for an understanding of the true meaning of His word.

“One day in July, my husband brought home from Middletown a thousand copies of the first number of his paper. Several times, while the matter was being set, he had walked to Middletown, eight miles, and back, but this day he had borrowed Brother Belden’s horse and buggy with which to bring home the papers.

“The precious printed sheets were brought into the house and laid upon the floor, and then a little group of interested ones were gathered in, and we knelt around the papers, and with humble hearts and many tears besought the Lord to let His blessing rest upon these printed messengers of truth.

“When we had folded the papers, and my husband had wrapped and addressed copies to all

those who he thought would read them, he put them into a carpetbag, and carried them on foot to the Middletown post office.” [16]

Publishing Directed of God

“The publication of truth is God’s ordained plan, as a means of warning, comforting, reproving, exhorting, or convicting all to whose notice the silent, voiceless messengers may be brought. Angels of God have a part to act in preparing hearts to be sanctified by the truths published, that they may be prepared for the solemn scenes before them.” [17]

“Our publishing work was established by the direction of God and under His special supervision. It was designed to accomplish a specific purpose.” [18]

“Our publishing houses are God’s appointed centers, and through them is to be accomplished a work the magnitude of which is yet unrealized. There are lines of effort and influence as yet by

them almost untouched, in which God is calling for their co-operation. As the message of truth advances into new fields, it is God's purpose that the work of establishing new centers shall be constantly going forward." [19]

"Our publications have a most sacred work to do in making clear, simple, and plain the spiritual basis of our faith... At this time God's message to the world is to be given with such prominence and power that the people will be brought face to face, mind to mind, heart to heart, with truth. They must be brought to see its superiority over the multitudinous errors that are pushing their way into notice, to supplant, if possible, the word of God for this solemn time.

"The great object of our publications is to exalt God, to call men's attention to the living truths of His word. God calls upon us to lift up, not our own standard, not the standard of this world, but His standard of truth." [20]

From the very small beginning set on foot by

James and Ellen White as related above, the publishing work of the denomination has developed into very great proportions. In 1934 there were 69 printing plants in operation in different parts of the world. From these, literature was being sent forth in 169 languages. A total of 1,090 persons were employed in these plants, and 3,264 field workers were devoting their lives to the sale of this religious literature. For years the annual sales of the literature printed in these institutions have exceeded four millions of dollars in value.

Advocates Health and Temperance Education

The apostles and prophets were earnest, consistent advocates of the principles that govern the health of body and mind.

Moses gave to Israel detailed instruction regarding temperance, sanitation, diet, cleanliness, quarantine for infectious diseases, and other factors that affect the health.

Christ Jesus in His perfect ministry for

mankind, sought to restore physical health as well as new spiritual life:

“Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.” (Matthew 4:23)

The same twofold ministry is set forth in His instruction to His disciples before sending them out to evangelize the people:

“As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers.” (Matthew 10:7,8)

The New Testament writers place a strong emphasis upon the place of temperance and physical self-control in the attainment of a Christian life. Paul reasoned with the people regarding the importance of temperate living. (See Acts 24:25) He declared that “every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.”

1 Corinthians 9:25. Of his own battle for personal righteousness, he said: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." (Verse 27) Peter admonishes believers to add virtue to faith, knowledge to virtue, and temperance to knowledge. (2 Peter 1:5,6)

Principles of Right Living

In this very important phase of life Mrs. White was one with the prophets and apostles of olden times. During her long life she earnestly advocated by voice and pen the broadest principles of right living. She wrote volumes regarding temperance, the care of the body, and the healing of the sick by the use of nature's remedies. From her pen there came to the church and the world three fine volumes, entitled "The Ministry of Healing," "Medical Ministry," and "Counsels on Health." In these books she gives most valuable instruction regarding three important subjects,—true temperance, the preservation of health, and nature's remedies for the healing of disease. A few brief passages will give some idea of the great

value of this instruction:

“The law of temperance must control the life of every Christian.” [21]

“True temperance teaches us to dispense entirely with everything hurtful, and to use judiciously that which is healthful. There are few who realize as they should how much their habits of diet have to do with their health, their character, their usefulness in this world, and their eternal destiny. The appetite should ever be in subjection to the moral and intellectual powers. The body should be servant to the mind, and not the mind to the body.” [22]

Sixty-five years or more ago, the evils of poisonous drug medication, as widely practiced by the physicians of those times, were divinely revealed to Mrs. White. The instruction which she imparted regarding proper remedies for the sick began to be given before the soundness of the principles she set forth was as generally recognized as at this day. In 1882 she wrote:

“There are many ways of practicing the healing art; but there is only one way that Heaven approves. God’s remedies are the simple agencies of nature, that will not tax or debilitate the system through their powerful properties. Pure air and water, cleanliness, a proper diet, purity of life, and a firm trust in God, are remedies for the want of which thousands are dying... Fresh air, exercise, pure water, and clean sweet premises, are within the reach of all with but little expense; but drugs are expensive, both in the outlay of means, and the effect produced upon the system.” [23]

Health Institutions and Health Education

In addition to messages for the individual, Mrs. White was given revelations regarding the establishment and conduct of medical institutions for the sick and suffering, and for the training of medical workers. Concerning this she wrote in 1865:

“I saw that the health reform was a great

enterprise, closely connected with the present truth, and that Seventh-day Adventists should have a home for the sick, where they could be treated for their diseases, and also learn how to take care of themselves so as to prevent sickness.” “I have publicly appealed to our brethren in behalf of an institution to be established among us... Our people should furnish means to meet the wants of a growing Health Institute among us... There should be connected with the Institute ample grounds, beautified with flowers, and planted with vegetables and fruits. Here the feeble could find work, appropriate to their sex and condition, at suitable hours.” [24]

These messages regarding temperance, the preservation of health, the healing of disease, and the erection and operation of a health institution made a profound impression upon the believers. They were thoroughly awakened to the importance of the great subject, and their response was remarkable. With great devotion they have thrown their activities into every phase of the health and temperance cause.

Since the establishment of the first Health Institute in Battle Creek, in 1866, a total of 69 sanitariums have been erected and are being operated in all parts of the world. Besides this, there are 62 hospitals, clinics, and dispensaries, where the sick and suffering are freely received and treated. Connected with these institutions are 903 recognized, able physicians, 4,163 nurses, dietitians, and other employees required to carry on the work. In 1934, nearly nine million dollars had been invested in the land, buildings, and equipment of this extended system of medical ministry. To the first health journal, started in 1866, many others have been added in different parts of the world and in different languages. Medical and temperance literature, from books containing a thousand pages to leaflets of but four pages, has been issued by multiplied millions of pages. Health-food factories, and stores have likewise been established with an investment of more than two million dollars. The establishment and operation of a medical college for the training of physicians will be told at length in a later chapter.

Thus in recognizing an organized, orderly church as Christ's body on earth, and in arousing that church to world-wide missionary activity, and in setting in operation efficient methods of labor, Mrs. White has made a record in harmony with the prophets of God whose lives are recorded and whose works are preserved in the Scriptures for our guidance.

Notes:

1. Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 19
2. Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 15, 16
3. Testimonies for the Church 8:11
4. Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 459
5. Testimonies for the Church 9:33
6. Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White, 220
7. Gospel Workers, 27
8. Gospel Workers, 470

9. Testimonies for the Church 1:191
10. Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White, 192, first written Dec. 19, 1892
11. Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 26
12. Gospel Workers, 487
13. Education, 13
14. Testimonies for the Church 3:157
15. Testimonies for the Church 6:126, 127
16. Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White, 128-130
17. Testimonies for the Church 1:590
18. Testimonies for the Church 7:138
19. Testimonies for the Church 7:144
20. Testimonies for the Church 7:150, 151
21. Counsels on Health, 42
22. Patriarchs and Prophets, 562
23. Testimonies for the Church 5:443
24. Testimonies for the Church 1:553, 559-562

Chapter 28

Establishing the Australasian Missionary College

In the closing part of 1891, Mrs. E.G. White, accompanied by her son, William C. White, and a number of others from the United States, joined the staff of conference workers in Australasia.

As the fruitage of some seven years of labor in that field, there were at that time about a thousand Adventists. Among them were a goodly number of fine young people who had an earnest desire to take some part in the proclamation of our message. But they lacked the essential education and training, and there was no place in their homeland where such training could be secured.

So determined were they to obtain the needed training for service that they had been crossing the Pacific to attend our schools in the United States.

When Mrs. White reached Australia, twenty or thirty of them had already gone abroad for this purpose. The sending of these young people so far away, together with supporting them in their schooling, was a heavy burden upon their parents and friends. This cost, and the expense of their return, was conservatively estimated at \$25,000; but apparently there was no other way of training the necessary workers, for there seemed no possibility of establishing an advanced school in Australasia in the then near future.

It was not long after Mrs. White's arrival in Australia, however, that a message came from her to the Conference Committee, stating that she was instructed by the Lord to tell us that we should establish a school. This message was timely and welcome, yet it caused us serious perplexity. How could we, with only a small constituency, and most of these poor in this world's goods, succeed in such an undertaking?

After prayerful study and counsel, it was soon decided to call upon Seventh-day Adventists in all

parts of Australasia to unite in establishing and maintaining a school. To purchase was, at that time, out of the question, but commodious buildings were secured at reasonable terms on St. Kilda Road, one of the most attractive boulevards in the city of Melbourne. This rented building was furnished simply, and on August 24, 1892, a term of sixteen weeks was begun with about thirty students in attendance. Their ages ranged from fifteen to fifty years.

Sweeping Missionary Projects Outlined

Mrs. White took a keen interest in the work of the school. Frequently she would give counsel to the faculty, and address the students. On one occasion, in the midst of a rousing address, she seemed to lose sight of her immediate surroundings, and impressively directed our attention to the great mission fields to the north, and east, and west of us—China, India, South America, and Africa. Some of these great, fields had not yet been entered by Seventh-day Adventists, while in others but a small beginning

had been made. She told us most clearly and forcefully that a great work would yet be carried on in all these fields. It was amazing to us, at that time, to hear her declare that what had been developed in North America would be repeated in those missionary lands. We were still more astonished when she said that young people trained in the Australasian school would be sent as missionaries to the lands mentioned.

We were overwhelmed by the great scope of activity and development outlined with such assurance. To enter those countries; learn the difficult languages; make disciples; organize churches; establish schools, printing houses, and medical institutions,—in short, to duplicate what had then been developed in North America, and to send missionaries from our little Australasian school to help do it,—all this seemed like the wildest kind of speculation. Our poor minds were too narrow and our vision too constricted to follow the great sweeping advance outlined to us in this address:

But some who were present have lived to see those staggering predictions strikingly fulfilled. Our work is now firmly established in India, Burma, Malaysia, China, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines,—to the north and west of Australia. A great work is being done in South America and Africa. What had been developed in North America in 1892 is already practically duplicated in some of these fields. Moreover, young men and young women, trained in Australia, have gone to every one of these mission fields,—save, possibly, South America.

Permanent School Plant Called For

The school proved helpful and satisfactory to the students during the first year. Encouraging reports were sent out to parents and friends; and so many others decided to attend the next year that it was found necessary to rent a third building. Thus progress was being made in this new undertaking.

But all this time we were being counseled through the spirit of prophecy that this place in the

city was not suitable for a permanent school. Our school, it was declared, should be located and developed as follows:

1. Located in the country, away from the large cities.
2. Provided with sufficient land for farming, gardening, fruit growing, dairying, and the like.
3. Furnished with varied industries for the employment of students on a basis remunerative both to the school and to the students.
4. Operate industries with such efficiency as to give the students skill, lead them to estimate rightly the value and dignity of labor, and to make them self-reliant men and women.

Here is some of the written instruction given us:

“Where shall our Australasian Bible School be

located? I was awakened this morning at one o'clock with a heavy burden upon my soul. The subject of education has been presented before me in different lines, in varied aspects, by many illustrations, and with direct specification, now upon one point, and again upon another.”

“Never can the proper education be given to the youth in this country [Australia], or any other country, unless they are separated a wide distance from the cities [*Italics mine*].”

“We need schools in this country to educate children and youth that they may be masters of labor, and not slaves of labor.”

“Manual occupation for the youth is essential. The mind is not to be constantly taxed to the neglect of the physical powers [*Italics mine*]. The ignorance of physiology, and a neglect to observe the laws of health, have brought many to the grave who might have lived to labor and study intelligently.”

“Habits of industry will be found an important aid to the youth in resisting temptation [*Italics mine*]. Here is opened a field to give vent to their pent-up energies, that, if not expended in useful employment, will be a continual source of trial to themselves and to their teachers. Many kinds of labor adapted to different persons may be devised. But the working of the land will be a special blessing to the worker.” [1]

As we studied this great outline, we felt it necessary to remind Mrs. White of what it would mean to a small constituency, few of whom owned their homes, to purchase high-priced land, erect necessary buildings, and establish, equip, and operate the industries called for. We told her that the task seemed utterly impossible. While acknowledging all these difficulties, she steadily pointed to the “blueprint” of the school that had been shown her.

Guided in the Purchase of Cooranbong

This led to the appointment of a committee to

make diligent search for a suitable location in the country. There was much searching, and much disappointment. Good land was found in desirable places, but the cost was absolutely prohibitive to us. No landowners made us any good offers. No community in all the country had any interest in our proposal to establish a school on the land. So everywhere we faced indifference and high prices.

Some good places were found, but the price ran from \$75 an acre up. At last we found a block of about fifteen hundred acres, located at Cooranbong, about seventy-five miles north of Sydney. It was offered at a very low price,—about three dollars an acre. The price seemed alluring, but the land itself was disappointing. Most of it seemed to be poor, sandy, and hungry. We were disappointed, and were divided in our judgment in regard to its purchase.

On May 24, 1894, Mrs. White went with the committee to examine the property. The day was spent in going over the various parts of the large estate; but when night came, no decision had been

reached. The following morning the committee again met, and examination was resumed. Of this Mrs. White wrote at the time to her son, J. E. White:

“Before starting we had a most solemn season of prayer. My heart was drawn out in earnest prayer for the Lord to guide us in judgment. He alone could indicate to us what was His holy will. The decision of this day meant much to every one of us; for it would be settled whether or not the school should be located in this place. I also felt most earnestly for Brother McCullagh who has been quite feeble, and prayed that the blessing of God might rest upon him. Our hearts were melted with the softening, subduing influence of the Spirit of God. We did believe that we received the things we asked of the Lord. All present seemed deeply moved, and several earnest prayers went up to the throne of grace. My faith increased, and I knew the Lord would teach us and lead us, and this He did do. There was perfect unity in making the decision to purchase the fifteen hundred acres of land at the price of four thousand five hundred dollars.” [2]

Remarkable Case of Healing

The brother referred to was in declining health, and seemed to be succumbing to tuberculosis. When we arose from our knees, this brother described the experience which had come to him. He said that while Mrs. White was praying, there passed through his body a sensation which he described as an electric wave, and immediately he realized that he was healed of his disease.

Thirty-five years later I met this man on a street in Sydney, in good health. He told me that he had never had a trace of tuberculosis since that morning in the fisherman's hut, where we knelt in prayer.

This powerful manifestation of God's presence with us made a profound impression upon all. Mrs. White said in substance: "Brethren, God is here with us! Why did He come so near and grant us this signal blessing? I accept it as evidence that we are in the right place!" We agreed then to take the property.

But the doubts entertained by some returned to disturb them—and us. The counsel of land experts who were consulted was disquieting. W. C. White, writing to the Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, under date of June 10, said:

“Nearly all of the men of influence with whom we have come in contact, shake their heads when we speak of the district. The Department of Agriculture after examining samples of the soil, said it was sour, and would require a ton and a half of lime to the acre. Then the Government fruit expert was sent up to examine it, and his report I will enclose with this. True, it was a rainy day, and we were short of time, and he did not see the best of the place, and yet, it sometimes makes me feel blue, to hear all of these men who know a great deal, condemn the place.”

Misgivings Confirmed by Expert's Report

One brief passage from the report of the fruit expert will indicate the nature of his advice:

“From what I can gather, the objects of the society are to start a colony of a certain sect or denomination and to erect a college in connection with the colony for the purpose of educating missionaries who will receive an agricultural and horticultural training in addition to their purely missionary training. Therefore, in order for the undertaking to be a success, it is my opinion that the society will be unwise to select the land I visited.”

Even after we had made the first payment on the land, we were advised by the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture that to forfeit the deposit would be a small loss in comparison with what we should suffer were we to locate on this block of land.

The report of our own misgivings, together with the supposedly expert counsel given to us, naturally caused serious concern on the part of the Foreign Mission Board, whose cooperation it was necessary for us to have if we were to make the

enterprise a success. The Secretary, writing under date of October 30, gave this as their judgment:

“You delay further operations, at least as far as any further financial outlay is concerned, in connection with this tract, until such time as a full meeting of the Board here might be able to consider the matter, and advice given with reference to the same.”

When this counsel was received, we had no misgivings in voting, on August 27, to “delay further proceedings at Cooranbong until we have time to consider the question of location.” The work of surveying was stopped, and the whole matter was held in abeyance, until November 20, when action was taken to continue payments for the property.

Firm Counsel in the Crisis Hour

It was only the firm, unwavering counsel that came from Mrs. White that finally led the committee to proceed with the enterprise. When

the unfavorable report of the Government fruit expert was received, W. C. White and I were requested by our associates to inform Mrs. White. This was a painful and embarrassing task, but we endeavored to do our duty. When we had made our statement, she calmly said: "Is there no God in Israel, that ye have gone to the God of Ekron for counsel?" She reminded us of the experience of prayer and healing on the occasion of her visit to the place, and assured us that from that time she had felt no anxiety.

On one occasion she quoted words from the heavenly messenger spoken to her for our assurance, "They have borne false witness against the land." Repeatedly she assured us, "God will spread a table in the wilderness."

Some years later, addressing those bearing responsibilities in the Avondale school, she related an incident that had given her courage. She wrote:

"We are much pleased to have the privilege of hearing how greatly the blessing of the Lord is

resting upon the Avondale School. How pleased I should be to see the grounds as they are now, looking as I was instructed they might look under proper, intelligent cultivation.

“In the darkest hour of the establishment of the Avondale School, when the outlook seemed the most discouraging, I was sitting in the hotel in Cooranbong, then used by our people, completely wearied out by the complaints made regarding the land. My heart was sick and sore. But suddenly a great peace came upon me. Angels seemed to be in the room, and then the words were spoken, ‘Look ye.’ And I saw flourishing, cultivated land, bearing its treasure of fruit and root crops. Many resources were spread out before me, and wherever my eye was directed, I saw prosperity.

“I saw the school filled with promising students. All seemed to be helped, by the inspiration of well-organized efforts, to stand and work upon a high platform. There was so large a number of pleasant faces that I could not fail to understand that the light of the Lord’s countenance

was lifted upon them.

“A great light and peace came upon me. I was so blessed that I praised the Lord aloud, saying, His word is fulfilled, ‘God will spread a table in the wilderness.’ [3]

It was Mrs. White’s letters that caused the Foreign Mission Board to withdraw their objections; and, upon receipt of this word, we in Australia went forward with our plans to establish the school at Cooranbong.

Finished by Faith Under Difficulty

It fell to my lot to lead out in raising money for the land we had secured. My own courage was at a low ebb. Doubtless my personal misgivings helped to make it impossible to interest our brethren and to persuade them to give toward the enterprise.

Thus months passed, with but little progress having been made. Then in August, 1896, we learned that Mrs. White had borrowed \$5,000 from

a personal friend, and had lent it to the school for the erection of buildings. This generous act of faith and courage on her part made a powerful impression on our hearts. We felt much condemned, and confessed our wrongs in allowing our unbelief and dallying to increase the burden, perplexity, and heart sorrow of the Lord's servant. From that day forward, our faith, courage, and zeal in and for that school never wavered. We were able to throw all our energies into the effort to provide the buildings.

Our first unit consisted of two buildings—a small dormitory, and a dining hall and kitchen. We were so short of funds that in finishing the dormitory we were obliged to call for volunteers to give free labor. Work was continued into the night, some holding lighted candles while others drove nails. Only those who were on the ground and passed through the struggle can realize how great it was.

When these two buildings were finished and furnished, the first term of what is now known as

the Australasian Missionary College was begun. On the first day of our new school (April 28, 1897), we realized our need of the admonition, “Despise not the day of small things,” for we opened the term with four teachers and but ten students. The long delay, the perplexities, and the discouragements in getting the location and in providing the buildings and equipment had caused our people to lose heart. But when it became generally known that Mrs. White was encouraging the enterprise, and that the school had really opened, a new interest was awakened, and before the term closed there were fifty or sixty students in attendance.

Financial Difficulties Solved

Thus far we had endeavored to establish this enterprise without calling upon our people in North America for assistance; but we found the grade so steep and so long that we finally appealed to them for help. They promptly responded, by offering to appropriate a sum equal to the amount we would raise within, of course, a reasonable limit. This

gave us great encouragement, and with good heart our people in Australasia undertook to raise their share.

In the meantime we continued building operations, paying our share and running in debt for the amount we expected to receive from abroad. We gave our builders, and the business men from whom we purchased material, assurance that we should soon receive money to meet our obligations. We fully expected to receive this money by a certain date from America. But we were doomed to a terrible disappointment. Instead of a draft, the mail brought us the decision that, owing to financial depression, the General Conference would be unable to send their part. They advised us to delay building operations until the financial situation had improved in America. But we had already gone on with our building, and now we had no money to meet our obligations.

Moreover, Australia was then suffering from a severe drought, and some of our faithful brethren who had made liberal pledges said we must give

them more time.

Then, some who had lent us money, hearing of our disappointment and embarrassment, became alarmed, and called for the payment of their money at once. The members of the school board were sorely perplexed and distressed. They knew not what to do. Naturally, they blamed themselves for going ahead without money. Mrs. White and her son offered to mortgage their places and lend the school the proceeds. They went so far as to spend thirty dollars for an official appraisement. But the appraisement being only 15 per cent of the cost value, no loan could be secured.

The situation was grave. Money had to come from some source. In our great perplexity we made earnest supplication to our God, whose work we were trying conscientiously to carry forward. Our appeal was heard and answered. Miracles were wrought for us. In a few weeks our people in Australasia raised in gifts and loans all that was required to meet all our obligations.

Time Vindicates the Counsel of the Gift

Thirty-eight years have gone by since those marvelous experiences, and during all these years truly wonderful developments have attended the enterprise.

Those who were entrusted with the responsibility of developing the school endeavored faithfully to follow the outline given by the spirit of prophecy. Land was cleared and placed under cultivation. Fruit trees and grapevines were planted. A dairy was provided; carpentry, painting, and printing became important industries; and a small factory for the manufacture of health foods was installed.

God's blessing rested signally upon the field and orchard at Avondale. I remember at one time, while connected with the school for a short period, I went into the vineyard, lifted up some of the heavy vines, and brought to view large bunches of the most luscious grapes I have ever seen. From the ten-acre orchard I have helped the boys carry to the

school kitchen large baskets of peaches, oranges, lemons, and apples, as fine as could be grown. So numerous and so large were the turnips in a two-acre patch that I was able to walk across without stepping on the ground.

Some years later a practical demonstration was given by Prof. C. W. Irwin, then principal of the college, of the fulfillment of the assurance, “God will spread a table in the wilderness.” As a large number of people surrounded long tables laden with many varieties of choice fruit grown on the property, the providences of God in the establishment and growth of the school were rehearsed.

In 1909, twelve years after the opening of the school, Professor Irwin, who had been principal eight years, wrote as follows:

“As time has gone on, and we have had an opportunity to watch the work develop, we can say most assuredly, from our experience, that God led in the selection of this place. Everything that has

been said about the location of the school in this place has been fulfilled—everything.

“The brethren in counsel with Mrs. White had made such broad and liberal plans for the school that through my eight years’ connection with it I have never yet needed to change a single plan they had laid down. God guided in the establishment of the work there; and all we have endeavored to do during these eight years has simply been to develop more fully the plans already made. I believe the working out of this has proved that God’s instruction was true.”

Marvelous Results Follow

Although the college opened with but two small buildings, four teachers, and ten students, those who have been closely associated with the institution during the thirty-eight years of its history estimate that the average annual attendance must have been about one hundred seventy-five. More than two thousand students have, in some measure, enjoyed the advantages of this

educational institution. Hundreds of those who have had these advantages are now devoting their lives to the advancement of the cause for which the school stands. Union and local conferences, the island mission fields of the South Pacific, the educational, publishing, and medical institutions, the food factories and vegetarian cafés, and all lines of gospel work of every kind, are under the leadership and the management, with very few exceptions, of men and women who received their education and initial training in the Australasian Missionary College. Besides those who are connected with the Australasian Division, many have gone to distant fields.

In a survey of the institution given back in 1929,—six years ago,—the principal of the school gave the following report:

Enrollment: College, 200; church school, 100. Number of buildings, large and small, in use, 52. Number of acres of land retained for the school, 700; cleared, 300; in orchard, 25; in crops, 50; in garden, 5; in pasture, 220. Varieties of fruits

grown: apples, pears, quinces, oranges, lemons, plums, persimmons, lo-quats, and grapes. Variety of crops: oats, maize, potatoes, sorghum, vegetables of all kinds. Number of cattle in dairy, 85. Number of fowls, 760. Trades taught: carpentry, sewing, cooking, and home nursing.

Trades Provide Employment

Number of students employed by the school: farm, 21; dairy, 3; carpentry, 2; culinary, 25; campus, 2; halls, 8; poultry, 1; laundry, 3; bakery, 2; boiler, 2; office, 3. Total, 72. Number of students employed part time in the food factory, 112. Number of permanent workers employed in the food industry, 78. Number of faculty members, 22. Grand total employed in the school plant, 284. Amount earned by employees: outdoor students, \$14,500; indoor students, \$48,000; by permanent factory employees, \$112,000; by faculty, \$26,000. Total amount annually earned by all classes employed in the school plant, \$200,500.

In the food industry department several most

useful trades are carried on: health food production, electrical engineering, printing, carpentry, painting, importing, exporting, accounting.

To aid in the sale of the food products, seven food stores and vegetarian cafés are being maintained in the largest cities—the capitals of the states. The sale of these food products has developed beyond anything the founders of the school ever anticipated—two million dollars annually.

To operate these branch factories, depots, food stores, cafés, and the fleet of auto trucks and auto delivery cars requires the services of a large staff. Three hundred of our people are employed the year round for this work. Adding this number to those who are employed at the school, we have a staff of around six hundred. These are all our own church members. They are all given good wages for their labor.

A large investment of money is required to

carry on a work of those proportions. At present this investment is about three million dollars. It is a source of great satisfaction to our people in Australasia that this great enterprise is so efficiently managed that, after meeting the enormous expense of every kind, a good profit remains, and that this is all devoted to the advancement of the different lines of our work being carried on in the Australasian Division.

Following Counsel Brings Prosperity

So, as we review the very trying experiences through which we passed in building up the Australasian Missionary College, we see that even when clearly and definitely called to do things to advance the cause of God, we are not delivered from difficulties, toil, and disappointments of various kinds. But we may have the assurance all the way along that if we “give ourselves wholly to God, and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment.” [4]

We may also feel sure that what we do in strict conformity to the call of God will prosper, and come out most successfully. Thus it has surely been with the Australasian Missionary College. In leading us to that location the Lord saw more than the land, whether good or bad. He saw the great need of making it possible for our young people in Australasia to earn means with which to pay their way through school. He saw the necessity of our being isolated from certain labor complications near the cities. He saw the large development of the industries we were to carry on, and so He directed us to the place we were able to purchase, and placed us where we can now do the great work that He foresaw would be developed.

In all this we see the great value of the spirit of prophecy to the people and the cause of God. It gives light and understanding far beyond the comprehension of men. It leads us on to great undertakings from which we would shrink because we do not see the future nor the full importance of what we are called to do. We do not foresee the great proportions that small beginnings may

eventually reach. That was why we needed the spirit of prophecy when the time had come to provide educational facilities for our young people in Australasia. The church is always in need of that precious counsel to deal wisely with the serious problems that are continually springing up to baffle and defeat its purposes. The statement of Jehoshaphat is as true today as it was when spoken to Israel, “Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper.” (2 Chronicles 20:20)

Notes:

1. “Fundamentals of Christian Education,” chap., “Work and Education,” pp. 310-327
2. E. G. White Letter 82-1894
3. E. G. White Letter 36-1907
4. Christ’s Object Lessons, 363

Chapter 29

Meeting a Publishing Work Crisis

En route from her home in California to attend the General Conference of 1901, in Battle Creek, Michigan, Mrs. White stopped at various places in the Southern States. For many years she had carried a burden for this section of the country, and had written many pages of counsel regarding the great needs of the Southern field, and the best way of carrying forward the work there, for both the colored and the white people of that region.

On April 2, 1901, the day that the Conference opened, she wrote a manuscript, entitled “An Appeal for the Southern Field.” In this manuscript she spoke of the need of schools and sanitariums. Then she said:

“There is need also of a well-equipped printing press, that books may be published for the use of

the workers in the South. I have been instructed that the publication of books suitable for use in this field is essential. Something in this line must be done without delay...

“At Nashville I was surprised to find a printing office filled with busy workers. This office, with its furnishings, has been purchased at as little cost as possible. Everything about it is neat and orderly. The countenances of the workers express intelligence and ability, and the work they do is a valuable object lesson.

“But a larger building is needed; for many lines of business will open up as the work is carried forward...

“The Lord has placed means in the hands of His people to be used in this work. I call upon my brethren and sisters to give of their means to provide a suitable publishing house for the Southern field.” [1]

During the sessions of the General Conference,

Mrs. White made a number of appeals for means and facilities for the laborers in the South. Following the Conference, she continued to carry the burden upon her heart, making calls for money from congregations whom she addressed in various places.

This counsel to establish and equip a publishing house in the South was one of the first of the perplexities that I faced in undertaking the general oversight of our denominational work in 1901.

We had two large publishing houses,—the Review and Herald in Michigan, and the Pacific Press Publishing Association in California. Both these houses were in a state of marked depression. There seemed to be little demand for our literature. Only a comparatively few colporteurs were in the field, and they were meeting with but fair success.

In order to keep the presses running, and to hold the office force together, our publishing houses were accepting a large amount of commercial work. The Pacific Press had a contract

for printing the Paragon counter check books for the territory west of the Rocky Mountains. The Review and Herald was printing many catalogues and other types of printing for the business world.

Call for a Larger Plant

A small place had been bought in Nashville, Tennessee, by the Southern Missionary Society, and a publishing business was being established with private funds, “for the publishing of lowpriced literature for the South.” The Gospel Herald, November, 1900. Now the Lord was calling for a larger publishing house, and that at a time when the demand for our literature was barely sufficient to keep the presses running half time. As the situation was faced by our committee, it seemed that to establish a third house, in addition to our older offices, would only drive us deeper into commercial work, not to mention the financial difficulties involved in equipping another publishing plant.

The messages, however, were so direct and so

positive, that they could not be ignored or disregarded. We therefore set our hands a bit dubiously to comply with the instruction, and started what is now known as the Southern Publishing Association, in Nashville, Tennessee.

We were so poor that we had to furnish the small building secured for the purpose with secondhand equipment. As I think of the old boiler that was installed in those unsuitable quarters, I feel that the protecting hand of God must have preserved us from being blown up by an explosion. So the work was begun with poor presses and broken-down equipment.

Closing the Plant Recommended

As if the addition of this third publishing house were not sufficient to test our faith, we soon received further instruction that the Lord was not pleased that our presses were being used in printing for commercial enterprises. We were told that they should be used entirely in the production of literature filled with God's saving message for

these last days. It seemed that if this counsel were obeyed, it would be necessary to draw covers over half our presses, and to discharge half the employees in the printing offices. It is not strange that some were tempted to feel that these two messages, coming at the time of a great slump in the publishing work, could not be divinely inspired.

At the end of a year's endeavor, I went to Nashville to attend the first annual meeting of the new publishing house. I was staggered to learn, from the balance sheet, that there had been a loss of \$12,000,—a sum equal to what had been invested in the enterprise, and which had been secured by donations from our brethren in the Northern States. We all expressed great sorrow over this large deficit, but were assured by those in charge that there was a better prospect for the coming year.

But these hopes were not realized. At the end of a second year, there was another loss amounting to a thousand dollars a month,—or a total of \$24,000 for the two years. To add to our perplexity, the third year passed by with but very

slight improvement over the preceding two. For a long time, I kept these three balance sheets on my desk as a souvenir of unsuccessful management, distressing experience, and our terrible feelings.

The General Conference Committee in Battle Creek was seriously alarmed, and justly so. They appointed a commission, of which I was one, to go to Nashville to investigate the situation, and bring in recommendations regarding the future of the enterprise. As we looked over the plant and the prospects for the future, we could see nothing ahead but continued loss and trouble. But it was evident that these losses simply could not continue indefinitely. So we drew up a recommendation that the equipment be sold to a junk dealer and that the house be used as a book depository or distributing agency for the Southern field, for books printed at the Review and Herald and Pacific Press offices. It seemed to us that all the printing of our denominational literature that would ever be required in North America could be done by these two houses.

We faced a difficulty. Mrs. White had given us the counsel that led to the establishing of the Southern Publishing Association. As we rehearsed the sorry experience that had followed our attempt to follow the counsel of the spirit of prophecy, the suggestion came to us that reference might have been made to circulation, and not to printing of literature in the Southern field. This was our attempt to reconcile our confidence in the messages coming through Mrs. White with our understanding of good business sense. We made ourselves believe that it was our misinterpretation of the counsel that was at fault, not the instruction itself. Then, too, there was definite instruction to the effect that we were not to create heavy debts for our people to pay off.

Mrs. White's Acquiescence Brings Relief

It was felt, however, that we should lay the perplexing problem before Mrs. White before putting into effect our recommendation to discontinue the printing house in Nashville. As I was soon to visit the Pacific Coast, the Committee

requested me to lay the situation before her, and to seek her counsel.

It was in the early morning of October 19, 1902, that a group of brethren met with Mrs. White at her home—"Elmshaven," St. Helena, California. Besides me, there were Elders W. C. White, W. T. Knox, A. T. Jones, J. O. Corliss, and E. R. Palmer. Brother Clarence Crisler reported the interview stenographically.

Mrs. White was deeply grieved and sorely perplexed by my recital of the terrible losses sustained by the Southern PublishingAGP 325.5

House during the three years of its existence. She agreed that it must be put upon a basis where there would be no such losses, and said, "If it cannot be, it had better be closed."

Not being able to give us a sure remedy, she assented to our proposal to discontinue the printing, to turn the building into a depository, and to purchase the literature from other publishing

houses. This seeming agreement with our plans brought great relief and satisfaction to many who had been struggling with the baffling problem.

Brother Crisler wrote out a part of the interview, and, with this in my pocket, I departed with a light heart. On arrival at Battle Creek, I lost no time in telling the other members of the Committee of our interview, with the assurance that Mrs. White was with us in our plans to close up the Nashville office in a very short time.

Divine Counsel Reverses Human Judgment

A few days later, a letter was received from Mrs. White, stating that she had spoken according to her own judgment in agreement with the presentation we had made to her. But she was now instructed by the Lord to tell us that she had been wrong in giving this counsel, and that the printing house in the South should not be closed. Plans must be laid to prevent further indebtedness, but we were to move forward in faith. She assured us that as we followed in the counsel of God, He

would give success.

As an illustration of the manner in which instruction was frequently given to her through symbols, I quote from the manuscript written on the morning of October 20, just twenty-four hours after our interview with her:

“Last night I seemed to be in the operating room of a large hospital, to which people were being brought, and instruments were being prepared to cut off their limbs in a big hurry. One came in who seemed to have authority, and said to the physicians, ‘Is it necessary to bring these people into this room?’ Looking pityingly at the sufferers, he said, ‘Never amputate a limb until everything possible has been done to restore it.’ Examining the limbs which the physicians had been preparing to cut off, he said, ‘They may be saved. The first work is to use every available means to restore these limbs. What a fearful mistake it would be to amputate a limb that could be saved by patient care! Your conclusions have been too hastily drawn. Put these patients in the

best rooms in the hospital, and give them the very best of care and treatment. Use every means in your power to save them from going through life in a crippled condition, their usefulness damaged for life.’

“The sufferers were removed to a pleasant room, and faithful helpers cared for them under the speaker’s direction; and not a limb had to be sacrificed.” [2]

In the same letter, the interpretation of this symbolic representation was clearly given. Instead of closing up the publishing house at Nashville, we were to study diligently to save it and to restore it to life and efficiency. “Let the Southern field have its own home-published books,” she said. “There is need in the Southern field of a publishing house for the publication of the truth for this time.”

Frank Acknowledgment of Her Mistake

In a letter written a few weeks later, addressed to “My Brethren in Positions of Responsibility,”

Mrs. White said:

“During the night following our interview in my house and out on the lawn under the trees, October 19, 1902, in regard to the work in the Southern field, the Lord instructed me that I had taken a wrong position.” [3]

In this communication, a bright picture of the future of the Nashville printing office was given. In words of precious encouragement she declared:

“Light will shine upon the workers in Nashville. From this center light will shine forth in the ministry of the word, in the publication of books large and small. We have as yet merely touched the Southern field with the tips of our fingers. ‘The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.’ The same voice that at the beginning said, ‘Let there be light,’ in these last days declares that a knowledge of God’s word shall not be confined merely to a few places.” [3]

The message to continue the work of the Southern Publishing Association was truly disconcerting. It brought great disappointment to many. Its contradiction to the counsel given to us in our interview threw some into perplexity. But we were reminded that there is scriptural record for a prophet's reversal, after being divinely instructed, of a seemingly sound human judgment. King David called to him the prophet Nathan and spoke of his purpose to build a house for the Lord.

“Then Nathan said unto David, Do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee. And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, Go and tell David My servant, Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not build Me an house.” (See 1 Chronicles 17:1-4)

David accepted the message that had come by revelation, in place of the counsel given in the interview the preceding day.

Our Committee took the same action. We accepted the written message sent to us, and set

aside our former plans with the approval that had been given to them by the servant of the Lord. We undertook with renewed determination to make the Nashville printing plant a success. The brethren connected with the work in the South gave their best energies and thought to the enterprise. New talent was brought in. Economies were effected. Each year thereafter the losses were less, and in a few years the plant came through with no deficit. The swing upward continued with larger profit year by year until the gains had more than offset all the preceding losses.

Confidence in the Gift Confirmed

The demand for our publications grew until all commercial work was laid aside at the Review and Herald and the Pacific Press. The presses in all three houses were running overtime. A modern brick building was put up, equipped with up-to-date machinery, for the publishing house in Nashville. For many years our beautiful Harvest Ingathering magazine has been printed there, on one of the best presses we have in North America.

Now with the tremendous expansion of all lines of our work, we can see how narrow and restricted were some of our plans of thirty years ago. God who knows the end from the beginning sent us messages to prevent us from narrowing the work in a time of discouragement. These messages sometimes seemed difficult to understand. They called for superhuman effort. In these later days, we can rejoice more than ever in the guiding hand of God manifested through His servant. I number this experience as one among many that have confirmed my confidence in the divine leadership of God's people through the prophetic gift.

Notes:

1. E. G. White MS. 40-1901
2. E. G. White Letter 162-1902
3. E. G. White Letter 208-1902

Chapter 30

Denomination Saved From Pantheistic Teaching

The Bible sets forth as the object of our worship an infinite Being whose dwelling place is in heaven. That He is a personal Being, we have abundant evidence. As Creator, He made man in His own image. Jesus Christ came into the world to reveal to men His personality and His character. He Himself, as a man with our nature, prayed to the One who had sent Him on a mission of love to earth, and taught His disciples to address Him as “Our Father which art in heaven.”

Though the almighty God is beyond finite comprehension, yet many seek unwisely to delve into the question of His personal nature and attributes. Especially in this age of great learning is there danger that men will, by so-called scientific methods, enter into speculations regarding the Infinite,—speculations that will take away from

their hearts that saving faith which is imperative for salvation.

In marked contrast to the Biblical view of a God infinitely greater than the creatures of His hand, One who is outside of and beyond us, is the teaching that God is a mysterious essence, or an impersonal influence, a mere force pervading all nature. Such a teaching is known as pantheism, though it is found in various forms and in sundry religious garbs. In India, it is found in Hinduism; in China, in Taoism and Confucianism; among the followers of Colonel Alcott and Annie Besant, it is named theosophy; with Mrs. Eddy and her followers, it constitutes the very heart of Christian Science; with Herbert Spencer, it is denominated the Unknowable Intelligence. Others designate it “New Thought.” This teaching is popular today.

The story of the insidious attempted entrance of pantheistic sentiments into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and of the checking of the movement by messages from heaven through the gift of prophecy, is of thrilling interest to those

who passed through the experience herein narrated. The story is related briefly here, not for the purpose of reviving old controversies, but as a remarkable instance of the profound influence of the spirit of prophecy in restoring unity in the church, and in warning against subtle dangers unperceived by those being unconsciously drawn into a fatal snare. Some of those whose feet were slipping again planted their feet on the eternal rock of truth, while the few who persisted in their beliefs have disconnected themselves entirely from the organized body.

A New Philosophy

One whose indefatigable energy, whose scientific research, whose skill as physician and surgeon, and whose devotion to benevolent and humanitarian principles had greatly endeared him to the denomination was one of the chief exponents of what was sometimes termed the “new philosophy.” In defining God, he had reached the place where he actually said in 1897, before the General Conference:

“Gravitation acts instantaneously throughout all space. By this mysterious force of gravitation the whole universe is held together in a bond of unity... We have here the evidence of a universal presence, an intelligent presence, an all-wise presence, an all-powerful presence, a presence by the aid of which every atom of the universe is kept in touch with every other atom. This force that holds all things together, that is everywhere present, that thrills throughout the whole universe, that acts instantaneously through boundless space, can be nothing else than God Himself. What a wonderful thought that this same God is in us and in everything!” [1]

After my return from Australia, and when I entered upon my official duties in connection with the General Conference, I made my home in Battle Creek. It was not long before I heard this new teaching, setting aside the personality of God and making Him merely a pervading essence. One of the illustrations used to furnish a supposed analogy was later printed as follows:

“Suppose now we have a boot before us,—not an ordinary boot, but a living boot, and as we look at it, we see little boots crowding out at the seams, pushing out at the toes, dropping off at the heels, and leaping out at the top,—scores, hundreds, thousands of boots, a swarm of boots continually issuing from our living boot,—would we not be compelled to say, ‘There is a shoemaker in the boot’? So there is present in the tree a power which creates and maintains it, a tree maker in the tree.”
[2]

The logical conclusion was drawn that man, instead of looking to some great being sitting on a throne in some far-away heaven, should look within himself to find the God to whom he should pray.

Such teaching troubled me, and all the more as I found that it had to some degree been accepted by certain of the teachers in Battle Creek College, and was being taught to the students. A number of physicians, prominent in the denomination, were

fascinated by this new conception of God, which made Him seem so near to the individual. Even ministers who were honored and revered by the church defended the doctrine when it was questioned. None of us, however, at that time realized fully the subtle danger that lay in such a conception of God.

Health Book for Raising Funds Proposed

On February 18, 1902, our sanitarium in Battle Creek burned to the ground. Not long after this, the medical superintendent met with the General Conference Committee to confer regarding plans for raising money to rebuild that large medical institution. At the time, we were in the midst of a great circulation campaign with a book on the parables of Jesus, entitled "Christ's Object Lessons." Mrs. White, the author, had given the manuscript of this book for the benefit of our schools, and, at her request, the publishing houses had relinquished their usual profit. Our people everywhere were being asked to take a few copies and sell them to their neighbors. As a result of this

concerted action, thousands of dollars were being realized for the purpose of paying off the indebtedness on our schools.

The success of this enterprise led me to suggest that a book be prepared dealing in a simple way with physiology and hygiene, and with home remedies for sickness, and that such a book be handled, for the benefit of the sanitarium, in the same way as “Christ’s Object Lessons” was being used for the relief of the schools. This plan met with favor by the Committee, and the medical superintendent of the sanitarium was asked to prepare the manuscript for the book.

At the same time the plan was proposed, it was made very plain that the book was to be purely medical, and that none of the theology relating to the personality of God should be included, for it was evident that the inclusion of a controverted dogma would make impossible the united effort necessary for success. This was agreed to. Some months later, a few copies of galley proofs were distributed. The name chosen for the book was

“The Living Temple.”

Honeycombed With Pantheistic Teachings

But some of us were appalled to find, on examination of these proofs, that the author had strongly set forth this “new philosophy” regarding the actual presence of God in all His works. There were such expressions as the following:

“God is the explanation of nature,—not a God outside of nature, but in nature, manifesting Himself through and in all the objects, movements, and varied phenomena of the universe.” [3]

Such teaching would make God personally responsible for all the temptations and unholy desires that move within the sinner, leading to the grossest sin.

Again, certain phenomena were spoken of as—
“a physiological proof of the existence within the body of some power superior to the material composition or substance of the body, which

exercises a constant supervision and control whereby individual identity is maintained. This can be nothing less than the Power which builds, which creates,—it is God Himself, the divine Presence in the temple.” [4]

In support of this conclusion, the author quotes a scriptural expression:

“The apostle Paul in his declaration, ‘Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost,’ simply gave expression to a fact which the most profound scientific researches in the fullest degree corroborate.” [5]

But it should be noted that Paul was addressing a company of believers in Christ, whose hearts were opened to the presence of the Holy Spirit. In the eighth chapter of Romans, the same writer draws a marked contrast between the natural man who walks after the flesh and the regenerate Christian who walks after the Spirit. That there is a distinction between those whose bodies are surrendered as temples of the Holy Spirit and those

who are devoid of that Spirit as a controlling power is made very clear in the following verse:

“Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” (Romans 8:9)

Confused Nature With God

After speaking of the mysteries connected with the thought processes of the body, the conclusion is drawn in the book under discussion:

“The only explanation of the mysteries of the varied intellectual processes is the operation of a divine, ever-present, all-pervading Intelligence. The one explanation of nature which makes every mystery clear, is God, who both creates and maintains, who made all things and operates all things.” [6]

The logical conclusion of such a premise is that this “all-pervading Intelligence” is responsible for

the operation of our mind, irrespective of the purity or the impurity of the thoughts that are generated.

One more brief quotation only will be given here of the pantheistic sentiments that were interwoven throughout the book which was seeking entrance into our denomination to mold its theology. Its full significance will be apparent:

“Let us not forget that the sunlight is God’s smile of benediction; that the sunshine is Heaven’s light and life and glory, the true Shekinah, the real presence with which the temple needs most to be filled; that the cooling breeze is the breath of heaven, a veritable messenger of life, carrying healing on its wings.” [7]

A Divine Interposition

This created a deplorable situation, which could but result in controversy between leading men. When the author of the book appeared before the Committee and asked for the promised co-operation in bringing out and circulating it as a

relief agency for the rebuilding of the sanitarium, we could not give that co-operation. We could not conscientiously consent to giving our approval to the circulation of teachings that we believed dangerous and erroneous. On the other hand, the author was just as firm in his belief that his views were new light, and should be disseminated everywhere.

At length a committee of five was appointed to bring in a report on the teaching of the manuscript, and on its suitability for the purpose for which it had been planned. But the subcommittee was itself divided. Three were in favor of its publication, and two were opposed. After hearing their report, the General Conference Committee voted against the majority report, and accepted that of the minority.

Then a public hearing was demanded by the disappointed author. This was granted, with the inevitable result that the issue became more involved, and as the controversy became more widely known, strong men were taking sides.

Despite the advice of the majority of the General Conference Committee that the book be dropped, an order was sent to the Review and Herald Publishing House to print five thousand copies at once. Then there came, what seemed to some, a divine interposition to avert the open rupture that must inevitably follow its publication and its attempted circulation in the church. Just as the book had received its final corrections and was about to be run through the press, the factory was destroyed by fire and the plates were ruined.

The copy, however, was immediately sent out to another publisher. A few months later a large edition of “The Living Temple” was printed. It was placed on the market, and energetic efforts were made to enlist our young people in its circulation.

Up to this time I had made no public statement, either through the press or on the platform, in opposition to some of my brethren who were working most earnestly to leaven the denomination with what I believed to be veiled heathenism. But I spent many sleepless nights, as I reviewed the

situation, and sought to be true to the trust that had been committed to me, while avoiding a controversy that I feared would bring confusion and pain to our people. I saw seeds being sown among the hundreds of young people in our leading institutions that I firmly believed would produce results heartbreaking to hundreds of our brethren.

Crisis Comes in 1903

Men of prominence in ministerial, medical, and educational circles openly took their position in favor of the book and of its teachings. A campaign of correspondence encouraging the young people to come to Battle Creek to obtain an education that was made to seem very promising was carried forward by the advocates of the new teaching.

The crisis came in the month of October, 1903. The headquarters of our denominational work had been moved from Battle Creek to Takoma Park. We had appointed a council of our leading workers, and were hoping to lay broad plans for advance moves. But our proposed plans were

interrupted when a group of about ten men came to our meeting and introduced points of controversy, which soon focused in a discussion of the teachings to be found in the book to which we have referred, "The Living Temple." It was a painful session to us all.

One evening a prominent worker accompanied me from the meeting to my home. He believed the new views, and was doing all in his power to uphold and to circulate the book which was the cause of our controversy. As we stood under a street lamp on the corner near my home, he said to me, "You are making the mistake of your life. After all this turmoil, some of these days you will wake up to find yourself rolled in the dust, and another will be leading the forces."

To this I replied: "I do not believe your prophecy. At any rate, I would rather be rolled in the dust doing what I believe in my soul to be right than to walk with princes, doing what my conscience tells me is wrong."

Timely Messages From the Spirit of Prophecy

We parted and, with a heavy heart, I entered the house. There I found a group of people who were very happy. One of them said: “Deliverance has come! Here are two messages from Mrs. White.”

No one can imagine the eagerness with which I read the documents that had come in the mail while we were in the midst of our discussions. There was a most positive testimony regarding the dangerous errors that were taught in “The Living Temple.”

The timeliness of this testimony will be appreciated the more by quoting from two of the documents received. In one of them, we read concerning the book in question:

“Be careful how you sustain the sentiments of this book regarding the personality of God. As the Lord presents matters to me, these sentiments do not bear the endorsement of God. They are a snare that the enemy has prepared for these last days...”

“The track of truth lies close beside the track of error, and both tracks may seem to be one to minds which are not worked by the Holy Spirit, and which, therefore, are not quick to discern the difference between truth and error...

“In the visions of the night this matter was clearly presented to me before a large number. One of authority was speaking... The speaker held up ‘Living Temple,’ saying, ‘In this book there are statements that the writer himself does not comprehend. Many things are stated in a vague, undefined way. Statements are made in such a way that nothing is sure. And this is not the only production of the kind that will be urged upon the people. Fanciful views will be presented by many minds. What we need to know at this time is, What is the truth that will enable us to win the salvation of our souls?’” [8]

In another of the documents received during this conference session occurred this solemn charge:

“After taking your position firmly, wisely, cautiously, make not one concession on any point concerning which God has plainly spoken. Be as calm as a summer evening; but as fixed as the everlasting hills. By conceding, you would be selling our whole cause into the hands of the enemy. The cause of God is not to be traded away. We must now take hold of these matters decidedly. I have many things to say that I have not wanted to say in the past, but now my mind is clear to speak and act.

“I am sorry to be compelled to take the position that I am forced to take in behalf of God’s people. In taking this position, I am placed under the necessity of bearing the heavy burden of showing the evil of the plans that I know are not born of heaven. This is the burden that many times in the past the Lord has laid upon me, in order that His work might be advanced along right lines. How much care and anxiety, how much mental anguish and wearing physical labor might be saved me in my old age! But still I am under the necessity of going into the battle, and of discharging in the

presence of important assemblies the duty that the Lord has laid upon me,—the duty of correcting the wrong course of men who profess to be Christians, but who are doing a work that will have to be undone at a great loss, both financially and in the shaking of the confidence of the people.” [9]

Light Comes at the Parting of the Ways

The next morning we assembled again for our council. After prayer, I arose and told the brethren that we had received two very important messages from Mrs. White. This aroused the attention of all, and they sat in thoughtful silence while i read the documents.

It would be impossible to find language to state as clearly and as forcefully as I wish I might all the facts relating to the reception, presentation, and influence of these testimonies, and others received during that council. Never had I seen such signal evidences of the leadership of an all-wise Being as in connection with these experiences. Only the divine mind could have foreseen our condition and

our needs, and have sent us the exact help we needed at precisely the right moment. We had come to the parting of the ways. It was evident that we were facing a complete division of leading men, and soon the people would have been called upon to choose sides.

As I read to the assembly statement after statement setting forth the falsity of the teachings in the book “The Living Temple,” many loud “Amens” broke forth, and tears flowed freely. From that hour light came into the council, and the presence of God was clearly felt through the day. When I had finished reading, the brethren immediately began to express their gratitude to God for this clear voice that had spoken to us. So precisely did these messages point out the situation that everyone who spoke at all was obliged to say that it was the voice of God speaking to us. Before the council closed, the author of the book stated that he would take it from the market.

These Messages a Great Blessing

I wish that it might be truthfully said that all present accepted these powerful messages. A number, indeed, of those who had been in confusion were led back into the light. A few maintained their opposing positions, but they soon took their stand so decidedly against the church that they had no further influence in spreading their teachings.

These plain, positive messages regarding the specious errors taught in “The Living Temple” errors which a number of our brethren had more or less fully accepted—were a great blessing. They brought both unity and separation,—unity among those who accepted the counsel given, and separation on the part of a few who still maintained their position, even though it meant a repudiation of the gift so closely related to the church.

This narrative would not be complete without relating briefly why these messages came just when they did at the peak of the crisis. The

timeliness of their arrival was so impressive that I wrote a letter to Mrs. White, telling her that they had come just in time to give us the light we needed. In answer to this letter, she wrote me under date of November 1, 1903, explaining why the documents were hastened to me at the particular time they were sent. Her own words follow:

“Shortly before I sent the testimonies that you said arrived just in time, I had read an incident about a ship in a fog meeting an iceberg. For several nights I slept but little. I seemed to be bowed down as a cart beneath sheaves. One night a scene was clearly presented before me. A vessel was upon the waters, in a heavy fog. Suddenly the lookout cried, ‘Iceberg just ahead!’ There, towering high above the ship, was a gigantic iceberg. An authoritative voice cried out, ‘Meet it!’ There was not a moment’s hesitation. It was a time for instant action. The engineer put on full steam, and the man at the wheel steered the ship straight into the iceberg. With a crash she struck the ice. There was a fearful shock, and the iceberg broke into many pieces, falling with a noise like thunder

upon the deck. The passengers were violently shaken by the force of the collision, but no lives were lost. The vessel was injured, but not beyond repair. She rebounded from the contact, trembling from stem to stern like a living creature. Then she moved forward on her way.

“Well I knew the meaning of this representation. I had my orders. I had heard the words, like a living voice from our Captain, ‘Meet it!’ I knew what my duty was, and that there was not a moment to lose. The time for decided action had come. I must without delay obey the command, ‘Meet it!’

“This is why you received the testimonies when you did. That night I was up at one o’clock, writing as fast as my hand could pass over the paper.

“We have all stood at our posts like faithful sentinels, working early and late to send to the council instruction that we thought would help you.” [10]

Effective Work of the Gift

The fact should be repeated that the introduction of the controversy over pantheism in this council came as a complete surprise to the brethren in Washington, and there was no possible way in which Mrs. White could have known of this from any human source. The angel of the Lord aroused her at exactly the right time to write and mail these messages so they might be received at the very moment when they were needed.

Mention should also be made here of the part that the spirit of prophecy acted in defeating a related movement planned by the same group of leading workers who had so stoutly defended the teachings found in "The Living Temple." In order to comply with the instruction that had been given regarding the advantages of a country location for our educational institutions, the large college that had been operated in Battle Creek had been moved to Berrien Springs, Michigan. The buildings in Battle Creek were later secured by those who controlled the sanitarium. They were used in

connection with the medical school, which was then conducted in Battle Creek.

Warnings Against a Proposed College

Far-reaching plans were then laid for the establishment of a great educational center in Battle Creek. Attractive circulars were printed and widely circulated among the young people of the denomination, setting before them the great advantages of training in this re-opened Battle Creek College.

Had this enterprise succeeded as its promoters hoped, the flower of Seventh-day Adventist youth would have been called to this great center, contrary to the plain counsels of the spirit of prophecy calling for decentralization. In this college the students would certainly have become indoctrinated with the subtle teachings of the “new philosophy,” which was prominently advocated by leading members of the faculty.

But the Lord, through His servant, sent most

solemn warnings against this movement. Our youth were emphatically admonished that they should not go for their education to Battle Creek, where their faith in some of the fundamentals of God's word would be undermined. These messages published in the Review were loyally accepted by nearly all our people, and the proposed college received but little support.

A few months later, "Testimonies for the Church," Volume 8, appeared, and much of the instruction that had been sent to our leading brethren was thus made available to the church members everywhere. Eighty pages of this book (255-335) are devoted to a refutation of the views that were set forth by the author of "The Living Temple." By this clear, forceful presentation of "the essential knowledge" regarding the personality of God, the church is now fortified against a recurrence of such pleasing but subtle teachings.

Blessings of the Gift

In concluding this account of a memorable

experience, illustrative of the great blessings of the gift of prophecy, I quote from a letter that I addressed to Mrs. White on October 20, 1903.

“We are in the midst of our council, and I am terribly pressed with work, but I must take a minute this morning to tell you what a wonderful blessing your communications have been to our council. Never were messages from God more needed than at this very time; and never were messages sent from Him to His people more to the point than those you have sent to us. They have been exactly what we have needed, and have come at just the right time from day to day in our council. You can never know, unless the Lord Himself causes you to know it, what a great blessing your communication regarding ‘The Living Temple’ has been to us. It came at just the right time exactly. The conflict was severe, and we knew not how things would turn. But your clear, clean-cut, beautiful message came and settled the controversy. I do not say that all parties came into perfect harmony, but it gave those who stood on the right side strength to stand, and hold their

ground...

“These messages you are sending are so clear, so pointed, so applicable, that everyone can see that God has revealed the situation clearly to your mind. Great confidence is being established in the hearts of our workers in the spirit of prophecy. This is true not only of our ministers, but of all our people. From the day we began to move out of Battle Creek, faith and confidence and assurance in the spirit of prophecy began to come to this denomination. I believe God is preparing for a great work, and I believe that in the closing, struggle the great masses of this denomination will stand by your side, and walk in the light God gives them through you.”

The messenger of God to whom these words were addressed is dead. It seems to be His will that I, too, shall go to rest before the work is finished. Yet the messages given to guide God’s people still live, and it is still my firm conviction that “in the closing struggle” God’s people need as never before to walk in the light that has been given to

direct them all the way to the city of God.

Notes:

1. The General Conference Bulletin, February 12, 1897, p. 83
2. "The Living Temple," J. H. Kellogg, p. 29. Battle Creek, Michigan: Good Health Publishing Company, 1903
3. "The Living Temple," p. 28
4. "The Living Temple," p. 52
5. "The Living Temple, Preface
6. "The Living Temple," p. 398
7. "The Living Temple," p. 412
8. E. G. White Letter 211-1903
9. E. G. White Letter 216-1903
10. E. G. White Letter 238-1903

Chapter 31

The Providential Move to Washington, D. C.

The Seventh-day Adventist movement, which has now grown to world-wide proportions, had its beginnings in New England. There the first believers were gained. In Middletown, Connecticut, in 1849, there was issued a small journal, the Present Truth, which marked the beginnings of our publishing endeavors. From this point, it will be of profit and of interest to trace the shifting centers of our work.

For three years the pioneers had no printing plant of their own. Elder James White and his wife were directed in the providence of God to various places, where favorable conditions obtained for their work as leaders, especially for the publishing of their paper. Following the very modest beginning at Middletown, Connecticut, they carried forward their work at Oswego, New York, then at

Paris, Maine, and later at Saratoga Springs, New York. During this period, they prepared the copy, and hired newspaper offices to publish for them.

In April, 1852, the work was moved to Rochester, New York. A small press, with type and other equipment for printing, was purchased, and for two years they conducted their enterprise in rented houses. During this time there were but few Sabbath-keeping Adventists in the East. The cause was meeting with greater success farther west. Several groups of believers were raised up in Michigan. These new converts were warmhearted, loyal, and earnest. They heartily invited the leaders to come to Michigan, and offered liberal inducements to enable them to establish their printing plant on a larger scale. This led to the establishment of the headquarters of our work at Battle Creek, Michigan, in November, 1855.

This removal to Michigan brought sorrow to the hearts of the believers in New York and New England. Elder and Mrs. James White, Joseph Bates, Uriah Smith, Samuel Rhodes, and others,

who had brought the message to them and whom they had learned to love, had now gone to what was then known as “the West.” They felt that they had been deserted. About a year after the settlement in Battle Creek, Mrs. White had a message for these disappointed, sorrowing believers, not only assuring them that God had led in the move, but giving reasons why that move was for the best interests of His work. A few sentences from this message will set forth some of these reasons:

“Dear Brethren: The Lord has shown me in vision some things in regard to the East and the West, which I feel it my duty to set before you. I saw that God has been opening the way for the spread of present truth in the West. It requires much more power to move the people in the East than in the West...

“The people in the East have heard the proclamation of the second coming of Christ, and have seen much of the display of the power of God, and have fallen back into a state of indifference and

security, where it is almost impossible to reach them at present...

“I saw that the people in the West could be moved much more easily than those in the East. They have not had the light of the truth, and have not rejected it, and their hearts are more tender and susceptible to the truth and the Spirit of God...

“I saw that tenfold more has been accomplished in the West than in the East with the same effort, and that the way is opening for still greater success.” [1]

This definite guidance of the Lord, through the gift of prophecy, in connection with the establishment of the work in Battle Creek, should be fully appreciated. The location of the central office is a very important factor in determining the success of a movement. The Lord did not leave this important question to the unaided, finite judgment of men, with their limited vision and possible sectional prejudices. He gave positive, definite instruction.

“The burden of the work is in the West,” they were told, “and it is of the greatest importance that the servants of God should move in His opening providence.” [2]

In harmony with the outline given in this message, our work seemed to take wings in speeding forward from the time the headquarters were located in Battle Creek. It went westward, farther and farther, crossing rivers, plains, and mountains, until it reached the Pacific Coast. Believers were added in far greater numbers than had ever been experienced in the East. So great has been the development of the work in the West that one third of all our believers in the United States and Canada are west of the Rocky Mountains. Just as the message predicted, the work grew rapidly, and developed into strength all through the Western States.

Again Directed to Return East

But there is another remarkable statement in

this same message that pointed out the reasons for the move westward in 1855. This statement is predictive, and therefore must take its place in testing the truthfulness of such predictions. Immediately following the last-quoted statement are the words:

“I saw that when the message shall increase greatly in power, then the providence of God will open and prepare the way in the East for much more to be accomplished than can be at the present time [*Italics mine*].” [3]

These words greatly comforted the brethren in the East. During the few years prior to the move to Michigan, they had seen the center of the work moved a number of times; and, in their limited vision, they thought that it would be only a short time until the return that was promised.

But nearly half a century passed without any indication of a return to the East, as indicated in the message given by Mrs. White in 1856. During this time, not only had there been remarkable growth of

the work, especially in the West, but a great institutional work had been built up in Battle Creek. Besides the headquarters of the General Conference, there were a large printing house, a mammoth sanitarium, and an excellent college. More than two thousand Sabbathkeepers attended Sabbath services in the great Tabernacle.

This was the situation in 1903, when, at the time of the General Conference held in Oakland, a number of the brethren were so impressed with the counsels that had been coming from Mrs. White regarding our duty to move out of Battle Creek that a resolution was drawn up for discussion by the Conference:

“That the General Conference offices or headquarters be moved from Battle Creek, Michigan, to some place favorable for its work on the Atlantic Coast.”

After some discussion, and before final action was taken, Mrs. White was asked publicly for her counsel regarding such a serious move. The

following statement was made to her:

Positive Counsel Received

“We have felt from what has occurred during the last two years, and the counsels you have given, that the time had come to move from that place. But we do not want to do this unless it is right, and we felt that we would like to place the matter before you, and receive any counsel and light you could give us. [4]

In no uncertain language Mrs. White spoke in response to this inquiry. She referred to the recent burning of the Review and Herald publishing house, and said:

“The very worst thing that could now be done would be for the Review and Herald office to be once more built up in Battle Creek.” [4]

She was no less specific regarding the transfer of the General Conference headquarters. She said:

“In reply to the question that has been asked in regard to settling somewhere else, I answer, Yes. Let the General Conference offices and the publishing work be moved from Battle Creek.” [4]

The decision to leave Battle Creek came as a great surprise and as a shock to many residents of the city, especially to some who owned homes of their own. Some of these rented rooms to employees in the sanitarium and the publishing house, or to teachers and students in the college, and were largely dependent for their support upon the rent they received. The property owners were especially perturbed at the prospect of the financial losses that would accrue to them. Some of them entered into a campaign of active opposition. They declared the proposal to be folly, and openly declared their disbelief that it was the Lord who was calling for the move.

Other communications were received from Mrs. White after the Conference, encouraging us to carry forward as quickly as possible the plans for removal. Those who recognized the divine source

of the messages accepted them despite the adverse outlook, and did all they could to inspire confidence in others. Meetings were held in the Tabernacle at Battle Creek, and while we were unable to secure a unanimous agreement, yet a majority voted to follow the counsel received through Mrs. White.

A committee was appointed to search for a location in the East. We wrote to Mrs. White of this action, and asked her if she could give us specific light as to the exact place we should go. To this she responded that she had not been shown the locality, but made special reference to our duty to work the large cities in the East.

We had all thought of New York City as the most likely place that would be suitable; for that was the port from which we were sending practically all our missionaries at that time. So we began our search, and spent a number of weeks investigating various properties that were brought to our attention. But we found nothing that seemed satisfactory.

Attention Focused on Washington, D. C.

One day, a number of us, weary and nearly disheartened, came to the office of the Pacific Press Branch, in New York City. There we found a letter from Mrs. White, addressed to the General Conference Committee, dated May 20, 1903, in which she said:

“In regard to establishing the institution in New York, I must say, Be guarded. I am not in favor of it being near New York. I cannot give all my reasons, but I am sure that any place within thirty miles of that city would be too near. Study the surroundings of other places. I am sure that the advantages of Washington, D. C., should be closely investigated.” [5]

Up to this time, we had not thought of the advantages of Washington, D. C. Many of our brethren on the committee thought it would be a great blunder to locate so far from the port of New York. Elder H. W. Cottrell and I said: “We are

counseled to investigate, and we shall go to Washington, D. C., and see what we can find.”

Headquarters at National Capital

The next morning we took the train for the national capital. We searched the district thoroughly, tramping for miles from one spot to another. Brethren living in the city rendered valuable assistance in looking for suitable places. We priced land in various sections, but without much satisfaction. Finally we fixed a date for closing our investigations; but, as we reached that date, we felt strongly impressed that we should continue our search.

Soon we met with encouragement. We were most favorably impressed with the suburban town of Takoma Park, seven miles from the heart of the city of Washington. About a mile from the village, we found a fifty-acre block of land, which we felt would meet our requirements, and which could be obtained at a very low price. We also found about five acres in the village that could be secured for

the General Conference office, Review and Herald plant, and homes for our people.

While we were still there, we received another message from Mrs. White, speaking more favorably and definitely of Washington, and encouraging diligent search. Elder Cottrell and I had become satisfied that the capital of the nation truly possessed important advantages for the headquarters of our work.

In reply to this letter, we wrote Mrs. White about our search and findings, and also of our favorable impressions. Then we returned to our homes. Soon a positive message came from her, saying:

“From the light given me, I know that, for the present, the headquarters of the Review and Herald should be near Washington.” [6]

A few days later another letter was received, saying:

“The Lord has opened this matter to me decidedly. The publishing work that has been carried on in Battle Creek should for the present be carried on near Washington. If after a time the Lord says, Move away from Washington, we are to move. We are pilgrims and strangers in this earth, seeking a better country, even a heavenly. When the Lord tells us to move, we are to obey, however inconvenient and inconsistent such a command may seem to us to be.” [7]

No one but those who passed through this very trying experience can appreciate the relief brought to us by that word of certainty. A large committee was called to Washington, and the men examined the location more carefully. Inspection, prayer, and counsel from the spirit of prophecy led to the conviction that we had come to the right place. The decision was made to purchase the fifty-acre block, and the deal was closed.

Memorable Move and Marvelous Results

We soon undertook the difficult task of moving

the General Conference offices to Washington. We decided to take enough type and equipment from the Review and Herald office to print the Review and Herald and the Youth's Instructor. At this point we met with most determined opposition from a few stockholders in the Review and Herald Association. They forbade the removal of any of the printing material, and threatened court proceedings. They demanded an amount of money, which we felt was unjust and which would practically strip us of the small amount of cash we had in our treasury. But they were unyielding, and finally with heavy hearts we paid the price.

This left us so short of funds that I found it necessary to attend a camp meeting or two on my way to Washington, in order to solicit and borrow the money we would need to pay the freight bills and other expenses we should incur in settling in our new location.

The arrival of our staff in Washington on the tenth day of August, 1903, is an event never to be forgotten. Here were about a dozen of us in a

strange city, with very little money, and with no buildings and no equipment to carry on the world-wide work which was then in operation, and was to be greatly enlarged. We rented a large dwelling house, No. 222, North Capitol Street N. W., in the city of Washington. The printing office was located in the dining room and kitchen, and other departments were placed in the different rooms of the building.

Under the editorial management of Prof. W. W. Prescott, the Review and Herald was issued from our new location without missing a single number. The last issue came from the press in Battle Creek on Tuesday, August 11, and the next paper was printed in Washington on Thursday of the following week. The same was true of the Youth's Instructor. The first that many of our people knew about the final action was gathered from these two issues of the Review, containing the account of our removal.

Continued Evidence of Divine Leading

A remarkable and unlooked-for effect attended this transfer of our headquarters. For nearly fifty years, Battle Creek had been the center to which all eyes had turned, to which a great volume of correspondence had poured in from all parts of the world, and to which the streams of money for the general work had flowed from thousands of sources.

It was but natural to anticipate more or less dissatisfaction throughout the field, and considerable confusion in correspondence and delay in turning the streams of monetary support to the new location. But none of this followed. Scarcely a complaint came to us. From all parts of the world the change was hailed with deep satisfaction. It seemed as if a mighty hand turned the great tide of correspondence and money to Washington. Very few letters and scarcely any money intended for the General Conference or the Review and Herald were delayed by going to Battle Creek. To our surprise and joy, everything

soon moved along as if we had been in Washington all the years of our history.

Thirty-two years have passed since the headquarters of our world-wide work were moved back to the East. What has been our experience? We have had constant evidence that it was assuredly the providence of God that led us to Washington, D. C. Very soon after we settled in the national capital there appeared in the Washington Post a report of a Sunday bill that had been introduced into the House of Representatives the day before. We got busy immediately, and sent out messages to our people all over the States. In a short time protests began to pour in from all parts of the country. The bill was defeated. Nearly every year since that time some Sunday bill has been introduced, but so far not one has ever gotten through Congress. We have been able to get acquainted with many of our Congressmen and Senators. We have had a number of them at our sanitarium. They have formed personal acquaintance with us, and have come to understand our position regarding the relation of church and

state. Therefore, many of them are with us in our opposition to the Sunday laws.

Advantages of Our Location

When the United States entered the World War, our stand as noncombatants brought us into conflict with the military authorities. We faced great perplexities, and it became necessary to appeal to the civil arm of the Government. We found that our presence at the national capital was of inestimable value to our work. Men in high office gave attention to our position, made favorable decisions, and did all they could to protect and relieve us. We cannot imagine what our lot would have been if we had not had ready access to these men of great authority.

In later years we have been sending missionaries to foreign lands in increasing number. Our national capital in the United States affords us marked advantage in the matter of passports and of ready access to embassies and consulates representing all lands, when problems connected

with their countries arise. The National Congress sits in Washington, where our representatives may appear before committees, and even before the President, with memorials or appeals on legislative matters that affect our work. Our correspondence goes out from a national capital well known in all parts of the world. All such advantages assure us continually of the wisdom of having our headquarters in Washington, D. C.

As already stated, we were in such a desperate condition financially when we moved to Washington that we had to borrow money even to pay our moving expenses.

We started our printing work in the dining room and kitchen of a dwelling house. There we set the type for the Review and Herald and the Youth's Instructor, made up the forms, and took them in a hand cart to a printing house for printing and folding. We had no office building for the General Conference staff, no school, and no sanitarium.

What a truly wonderful work has been wrought in this new location! For the first time in our history a building was provided for the offices of the General Conference Committee and the staff of helpers, located in Takoma Park. Since we came to Washington, the staff of ten has increased to more than one hundred in these offices alone.

Benefits of Prophetic Guidance

The Review and Herald office, which was at first housed in a dining room and kitchen, has become a great institution with a large building of its own, well equipped with machinery, and doing a far greater volume of denominational work than was ever done while located in Battle Creek. It has an investment of over \$500,000, and it is entirely free from debt. For years this institution has donated tens of thousands of dollars to our foreignmission enterprises. The General Conference and Review and Herald buildings are located in the village of Takoma Park. On the outskirts, on the fifty-acre block purchased in 1903, are located the Washington Sanitarium and the

Washington Missionary College.

The Lord has surely placed the seal of His approval upon the removal from Battle Creek to Washington. The limits of this statement make it impossible to recount, in all their fullness and meaning, the blessings that have come to us through being located at the national capital. The Lord foresaw the issues that would arise; He foresaw that our missionary activities would extend to all lands; He foresaw the advantages that would be ours at the headquarters of the nation; and He led us there. This we recognize now. Even many of those who at first saw no light in the proposal now recognize that the hand of the Lord was truly in it.

But what led us to decide to make this removal, to attempt this gigantic task? The answer must be: A message through the spirit of prophecy. How came we to locate at Washington, D. C.? Through conviction that the messages that came to us through the spirit of prophecy were from God. Has, then, this gift been of value to this people and this cause? Most assuredly it has; indeed, of greater

value, in many ways, than we can fully realize. Such providences should lead us to hold this precious gift of the spirit of prophecy in the high esteem and sincere appreciation that it deserves.

Notes:

1. Testimonies for the Church 1:146, 147
2. Testimonies for the Church 1:149
3. Testimonies for the Church 1:149
4. “General Conference Bulletin, Vol. V, No. 6
5. E. G. White Letter 106-1903
6. E. G. White Letter 120-1903
7. E. G. White Letter 140-1903

Chapter 32

Our Medical School at Loma Linda

The increasing prominence given medical missionary work in plans for gospel evangelism, as set forth by the spirit of prophecy, has been noted in a foregoing chapter. At first, when we had but few sanitariums, there was little call for physicians in the organized conference work. But in later years, as sanitariums began to multiply, and as broader views of the work opened before us, an increasing number of young men and young women wished to qualify as physicians, not only to fill places in our medical institutions, but to engage in private practice. Others desired to take a medical course that they might use their talents in mission work in foreign lands.

About 1890, a group of such young men were encouraged to attend the medical department of the University of Michigan, at Ann Arbor. But soon

the advantages of training these youth for medical work in a school taught by Christian teachers became apparent. For several years Seventh-day Adventist medical students were able to complete their course in the American Medical Missionary College at Battle Creek. But after a time this institution closed its doors, and we again faced great perplexity in giving counsel to those desiring to qualify as Christian physicians in our denominational work.

Then later, for a time, favorable arrangements were made with the medical department of the George Washington University, in Washington, D. C. The school authorities very kindly agreed to require no Sabbath work from our students, to grant them substantial reduction in their tuition rates, together with other favors. At one time we had as high as fifteen of our youth attending this university.

But it was not long until new men were placed in charge of the medical department of the university, and some of these privileges were

withdrawn. Sabbath observance, while taking the course at the university, became increasingly difficult, and ultimately impossible.

These experiences led us to realize more fully the need of a medical college of our own. But we did not see how an enterprise requiring so much capital could be undertaken. We were launching out in the greatest foreign missionary program we had ever attempted. We were pushing into the heart of great continents, like South America and Africa, and the islands of the sea. We were pressing our people for every dollar we could get, and we were using about all the money secured as fast as it came to us. We had no reserve capital. How, then, could we finance the establishment and maintenance of a medical college?

Need for Medical College Apparent

Early in June, 1909, Elders E. E. Andross, J. A. Burden, and R. S. Owen appeared before the General Conference Committee in Takoma Park, as representatives of the College of Evangelists in

Loma Linda, California, to ask counsel regarding the future of the school. They pointed out that a number of messages had come from Mrs. White regarding the education that should be given at this place, some of which indicated that both nurses and physicians should be trained there.

As early as December 10, 1905, in a letter of counsel to the manager of Loma Linda, she said:

“In regard to the school, I would say, Make it all you possibly can in the education of nurses and physicians.” [1]

Then again, under date of August 19, 1906, she wrote of Loma Linda:

“A special work is to be done there in qualifying young men and young women to be efficient medical missionary workers...

“Preparations must be made for the school to be opened as soon as possible. Our young men and young women are to find in Loma Linda a school

where they can receive a medical missionary training, and where they will not be brought under the influence of some who are seeking to undermine the truth.” [2]

In the Review of June 21, 1906, Mrs. White wrote:

“Loma Linda is to be not only a sanitarium, but an educational center. With the possession of this place comes the weighty responsibility of making the work of the institution educational in character. A school is to be established here for the training of gospel medical missionary evangelists.”

In a talk at Loma Linda, October 30, 1907, she said:

“Physicians are to receive their education here. Here they are to receive such a mold that when they go out to labor, they will not seek to grasp the very highest wages, or else do nothing.” [3]

A committee of twelve was appointed to give

study to the question, and to report back to the General Conference Committee. On July 25 this committee rendered its report. They recommended that we recognize the Loma Linda College of Evangelists “as a special training school for medical missionary workers for the world-wide field, and encourage it to maintain and strengthen its efforts to provide a course of study for the training of workers combining the qualifications of the highly trained nurse with those of the practical evangelist.”

Discouraged by American Medical Association

As preliminary to consideration of “the suggested plan of adding to their faculty and equipment so as to give one or two years’ medical study that would be accepted by a recognized medical college as part of a regular medical course,” definite information was sought regarding three points: (1) the changes involved in making the necessary adaptation of their course; (2) the requirements of such colleges as would affiliate on this basis; and (3) what such a plan would involve

financially.

In a meeting at College View, in October, 1909, the future of the school was again considered, and it was—“Resolved, That we recommend the Board of Management of the Loma Linda College of Evangelists to secure a renewal of the charter for the school, that it may develop as the opening providence and the instruction of the Spirit of God may indicate.” [4]

Owing to the importance of the enterprise at Loma Linda, it was voted by the General Conference Committee that Prof.

Homer Salisbury, then Educational Secretary of the General Conference, should go with me to join with the brethren in Loma Linda in drafting the Articles of Incorporation. As we were passing through Chicago, we stopped to interview Dr. Colwell, the secretary of the American Medical Association. It would be necessary to be approved by this organization, if we were to conduct a medical school.

When we laid before Dr. Colwell our plans, he told us most frankly, yet kindly, that we could never succeed. He reminded us that it would require a very large sum of money to provide buildings and equipment for such an institution. Further, he questioned our ability to assemble a faculty such as would be required. He explained that at that very time the American Medical Association was engaged in eliminating all the “C” grade schools throughout the country, and that they were putting pressure on the “B” grade schools. “Our aim,” he told us, “is to retain only the class ‘A’ medical colleges.” He felt sure that we could not possibly hope to establish anything higher than a “C” grade school, and advised us not to proceed with the undertaking.

Notwithstanding this discouraging outlook, we proceeded to California, and joined our brethren in preparing Articles of Incorporation, which opened the way for the school to develop, so as to grant the degree of M. D. to its graduates.

There still remained some difference of opinion as to the real meaning of certain communications that had come from Mrs. White. In order that they might have a specific, unequivocal statement from her, the delegates, at a meeting of the Pacific Union Conference, held at Mountain View, California, January 24-30, 1910, sought her counsel in the matter. A letter was drafted, which contained the following question:

“Are we to understand from what you have written concerning the establishment of a medical school at Loma Linda that, according to the light you have received from the Lord, we are to establish a thoroughly equipped medical school, the graduates from which will be able to take State Board examinations and become registered, qualified physicians?” [5]

A prompt answer was received, as specific as the question:

“The light given me is: We must provide that which is essential to qualify our youth who desire

to be physicians, so that they may intelligently fit themselves to be able to stand the examinations required to prove their efficiency as physicians. They should be taught to treat understandingly the cases of those who are diseased, so that the door will be closed for any sensible physician to imagine that we are not giving in our school the instruction necessary for properly qualifying young men and young women to do the work of a physician... For the special preparation of those of our youth who have clear convictions of their duty to obtain a medical education that will enable them to pass the examinations required by law of all who practice as regularly qualified physicians, we are to supply whatever may be required.” [5]

A few weeks later, at a meeting of the General Conference Committee, representatives from the Pacific Coast were present, and read to us this clear, plain testimony calling for the operation of a medical school that would meet the requirements of the authorities for the qualification of physicians.

Follow Counsels of the Spirit

They also brought to us recommendations of the Pacific Union Conference, outlining a plan for the establishment of a medical school on a broad, firm basis. This included a request that the General Conference unite with six union conferences and one local conference in raising the means for its establishment.

As an illustration of the definite guiding influence of the counsel from Mrs. White upon this official conference action, I quote verbatim the first part of the Pacific Union Conference action as reported in the Recorder:AGP 358.4

“We Recommend, (1) That, in harmony with the above instruction, we favor the establishment and maintenance of a medical school at Loma Linda, California.

“(2) In order that this medical school may meet the mind of the Lord in doing the work appointed for it by the spirit of prophecy,” etc.

Here was a staggering prospect for us to face. Fortunately for our peace of mind, we could at that time anticipate only a very small part of the financial demands that would come through the years before the enterprise should near its maturity.

We believed, however, that the Lord had spoken to us. The experiences of the past, some of which have been related here, had served to teach us the lesson that there can be no failure in following the counsel of the Lord. Realizing fully that we were entering upon an undertaking far beyond our apparent ability, we voted on April 13, 1910:

“1. That the General Conference unite with the Pacific Union Conference in establishing a medical school at Loma Linda, California.

“2. That we authorize the officers of the General Conference to appropriate \$1,000, or any fraction thereof, for the above purpose during the year 1910.”

Present Achievements Vindicate Counsels

This first appropriation of funds by the General Conference did not go far. Frequent calls for means, and in increasing amounts, came to us during the ensuing months and years. At times it seemed that we should have to abandon the enterprise. But always in our great need, the Lord provided for us, sometimes in unexpected ways. After meeting the call for dormitories and buildings for classrooms, a laboratory was demanded, if we were to meet the demands of the required syllabus for the final years of the initial class that had enrolled in the medical course. Many other facilities were required, and in view of the discouraging advice given us by the secretary of the American Medical Association, it was but natural, when the time came for him to investigate the work done by the school, together with the competence of its faculty and the adequacy of its equipment, that he should have no prepossessions in its favor. He expressed great surprise and satisfaction with the work we were doing, however,

and encouraged us to go on. This man became a true friend to our work, and later aided in lifting the school to the “A” grade.

This medical school, with its division at Loma Linda, where the first two years of medicine are taught, and its division in Los Angeles, with its large hospital, is today the largest medical college west of the Rocky Mountains. There are only about twenty-five medical colleges in the United States that have a larger attendance.

In the lobby of the White Memorial Hospital, in the city of Los Angeles, is a bronze plate with the inscription:

This Hospital
Is Dedicated to the Memory of
Ellen Gould White
Whose long life was unselfishly dedicated to
the
Alleviation of the woes and sorrows of the sick,
The suffering and the needy; and to inspiring
the

Young men and women to consecrate their
lives
To the work of Him who said, "Heal the sick."

This tribute to Mrs. White is a fitting reminder of the fact that had it not been for the urgent messages of the spirit of prophecy which came through her, this medical school would not be in existence today. True, there have been liberal gifts and large donations and appropriations. But these have come largely because of the confidence of the donors in the messages that she bore. The loyal and unstinted service of talented physicians and surgeons on its teaching faculty has been indispensable. But in most cases this service has been given as an expression of faith in the program called for by the prophetic gift in the remnant church. Inspired by the same faith, hundreds of young men and young women have passed through its doors, and have gone forth to take their places in the world field. A goodly number are to be found in the Master's service, not only in the United States but also in foreign lands.

At the beginning of the school year, 1934-1935, 115 freshmen were enrolled in our medical school. In the second-year class there were 113; in the third, 80; in the fourth, 96; and in the fifth, or interne year, 84. These make the total enrollment of medical students 488. Including the 84 who will be graduated this year, a total of 906 physicians have been graduated to date.

In addition to students taking the medical course, there are 117 taking the nurses' course, and engaged in nursing work in connection with our sanitarium and hospital.

Each year about 100,000 patients pass through the White Memorial Hospital. Thousands of these are able to pay a small amount for medical attention; but those who are unable to pay anything are given treatments and medicines free.

British Schools Open to Alumni

Students who have completed the course in our medical college have passed national and state

boards, many with high distinction. Early in the history of the school, a graduate who had come from South Africa went to a British university, and so ably represented the quality and character of the instruction given at Loma Linda that the doors of this and other British universities were opened to our alumni for graduate study. With degrees from these medical schools, they may enter and secure recognition throughout the vast British Empire.

Early in 1932, the dean of the Edinburgh University visited and inspected our medical college. After he had looked over our college equipment and the work done in the school, he bore a good testimony for the institution at a banquet given him in Los Angeles. He told the physicians and surgeons present that, although our buildings and equipment were unpretentious, he had formed a high opinion of our school, for he found in it a spiritual element of great value to the medical profession.

In olden times there were schools of the prophets among God's People. The worth and

blessing of these schools revealed in some measure the value of the prophets who established and carried on the schools. Measured by such practical and beneficial results, who can fail to recognize the value of the prophetic gift in the remnant church?

The value of this institution to the denominational work and of the hundreds of Christian physicians and nurses that have been and are being trained for service, constitutes, therefore, another witness to the value of the spirit of prophecy as relates to the manifold world-wide work that is being carried forward in proclamation of the soon-coming kingdom.

Not only did Mrs. White appeal for the establishment of our medical college, but she maintained a deepening interest in its development during the last years of her life. She loved to visit the institution, and to address students and faculty, setting before them the principles that should govern in its work. One brief statement only will be quoted from her, expressing her views regarding the purpose for which the school was developed.

August 29, 1911, she wrote:

“The students at Loma Linda are seeking for an education that is after the Lord’s order,—an education that will help them to develop into successful teachers and laborers for others. When their education at Loma Linda is completed, they should be able to go forth and join the intelligent workers in the world’s great harvest fields who are carrying forward the work of reform that is to prepare a people to stand in the day of Christ’s coming...

“Many should seek to obtain the education that will enable them to combat disease in its various forms by the most simple methods. Thousands have gone down to the grave because of the use of poisonous drugs, who might have been restored to health by simple methods of treatment. Water treatments, wisely and skillfully given, may be the means of saving many lives. Let diligent study be united with careful treatments. Let prayers of faith be offered by the bedside of the sick. Let the sick be encouraged to claim the promises of God for

themselves.” [6]

Medical College a Strategic Point

In every great warfare there have been strategic points that constitute keys to the situation, and around which the battle rages with strength and fury. One such key point is our College of Medical Evangelists. In the early struggle for the possession of Loma Linda, and later in raising more than a million dollars for buildings and equipment for the medical school, the enemy has thus far been defeated, so far as the material aspect is concerned. But the battle is still on, and triumph is assured only to the degree with which faculty, students, and helpers are loyal to the basic spiritual principles and ideals that have been set forth in the Testimonies of God’s Spirit In this connection, attention should be directed to a manuscript prepared and read by Mrs. White, at the General Conference in 1909, regarding the “Loma Linda College of Evangelists.” See Testimonies for the Church 9:173-176. 4 as the basic truths that lie at the heart of the founding concept of our medical

school.

Notes:

1. E. G. White Letter 325-1905
2. E. G. White Letter 274-1906
3. E. G. White MS. 151-1907
4. General Conference Committee Minutes, Oct. 13, 1909
5. Quoted in Pacific Union Recorder, February 3, 1910
6. E. G. White MS. 15-1911

Chapter 33

Confidence Confirmed by Personal Experiences

We have now tested the writings and teachings of Mrs. E. G. White by comparing them with the great fundamental truths of revelation as set forth by the Scriptures, and have found them to be in perfect harmony therewith. We have noted her recognition of the church as Christ's organized body on earth. We have observed how her messages have urged the church on to its present degree of success. We are confident that the thoughtful, reverent reader will recognize in these features that have been presented a masterful dignity and a wise generalship that are consonant with the claim that she was guided by a higher Intelligence in thus directing the church.

There remains in the field of evidence that should be presented in weighing the claims of Mrs. White to the prophetic gift, the narration of certain

incidents illustrative of the practical working of the gift in guiding the church in her divine mission.

In other books or in periodical articles may be found many early incidents of Mrs. White's work,—incidents largely personal, and pertaining chiefly to the early days of her work when the cause was comparatively small. In relating a few of the many striking illustrations of the operation of the gift as manifested through Mrs. White, I shall confine myself to certain larger issues that have come within the range of my own experience, and which exerted a profound influence upon the major plans and policies of the administration and the welfare of the church.

Personal Acquaintance Began in 1878

As I approach this great and sacred endeavor, I feel constrained to make a statement regarding my personal acquaintance with Mrs. Ellen G. White during a period of twenty-three years of close association in the work in which we had mutual relationships.

This personal acquaintance and association began in the year 1878, when I was just beginning my work in the gospel ministry in the State of Texas. In the autumn of that year, Mrs. White, with her husband, came to our field to attend a general meeting of the new believers who had recently joined our ranks.

At the close of the meeting, they decided to remain for the winter. As they were alone and in rather poor health, it was arranged that my wife and I should join them in their rented home, to give them such service as we could. In this way we became members of their family, for the time. My wife superintended the household affairs, and I assisted Elder White in his writing and other activities. This was a valuable experience for us, and one never to be forgotten. We remained with them until they left Texas in the following summer.

In 1886, I was called to ministerial work in Australasia. In the autumn of 1891,—thirteen years after my first association with Mrs. White,—it was

my privilege to meet her and her attendants at the port of Sydney, and to extend to them a truly heartfelt welcome to that mission field.

Accepted Presidency, Assured of Counsel

A few weeks later, I was elected to the presidency of the newly organized Australian Conference, and continued in that office during the nine years of Mrs. White's residence in that field. This official responsibility kept me in unbroken association with her. Our mission field was vast. Our problems were heavy, and some of them very perplexing. It fell to my lot to promote evangelistic activities, to give counsel in the organization of churches and conferences, to superintend the erection of church buildings, and to foster many other phases of the gospel work.

Our membership increased encouragingly, and it became necessary to establish a training school for Christian workers, also church schools for the children of our believers. Then followed the erection of a sanitarium for the treatment of the

sick, and the establishment of a factory for the manufacture of health foods.

I was young, and utterly inexperienced in most of these undertakings. As president, I was held more or less responsible for progress in all these endeavors. I needed counsel. This I sought at every important step from Mrs. White, and I was not disappointed I was also closely associated in committee and administrative work with her son, W. C. White. His counsel was very helpful to me; it was based on a longer experience than my own, and also upon his intimate knowledge of the many messages of counsel that had been given through his mother during past years, in meeting conditions similar to those we were facing.

It is hardly necessary to state that nearly nine years of such intimate association enabled me to gain a clear insight into the life of Mrs. White, and to reach a well-considered conclusion regarding her high claims to inspiration.

A Sacred Experience

In 1900 we all returned to the United States, and in the spring attended the session of the General Conference held in Battle Creek, Michigan. At this Conference Mrs. White delivered many solemn messages regarding our work. Some were warnings of dangers we were facing. Others urged a great advance into the unentered parts of our world field. Important changes and improvements in administrative methods were called for. In fact, nothing less than a complete reorganization was demanded.

With those revolutionary changes outlined, I was overwhelmed with a sense of responsibility when I was unexpectedly called to the presidency of the General Conference. I could not have given the consent of my mind to accept the office, were it not for the invaluable experience I had gained under the counsels of Mrs. White during the years in Australia. I was also encouraged by the expectation that she would remain in this country, and that I might still have her counsel as it had

been so freely given in the mission field.

In attempting to effect the sweeping changes, especially in organization, called for by the messages given at the General Conference, it was inevitable that conservative elements should be alarmed and disconcerted. It was only to be expected that in the distribution of responsibilities, some who had for years occupied positions of great prominence should find it difficult to relinquish a portion of the administrative power that had long been held by them. Added to these divisive factors, there was a still more serious cause for anxiety in certain new and subversive teachings that were being advocated by some men prominent in the ministry and in some official positions.

After two years of great perplexity and of increasing controversy with some of my brethren whose judgment differed from mine, we came to the time of the General Conference of 1903, with every prospect of facing debate and opposition over features both of organization and of doctrine. I had sought earnestly, as far as I knew, to act in

harmony with the counsel of the Lord's messenger. But we were separated by two thousand miles, or more, and there had been so many weighty problems that called for immediate action that there had frequently been neither time nor opportunity to seek guidance through her counsel as often as I desired.

A Solemn Compact With God

At this time I was weary and heartsick at the prospect. I was sorely tempted to lay down the responsibilities of leadership, and go to a country across the broad Atlantic where I might give the rest of my life to simple gospel ministry. But I did not want to run away from duty or to act rashly. I set aside the Sabbath day before the Conference in Oakland, California, for fasting and prayer, that I might know my duty. I trusted that thus I might receive light from the Lord.

This experience of prayer, and its sequel, is so personal and sacred to me that it is with great reluctance that I make it public. It seems fitting,

however, to relate it here because of its profound influence upon my later relations to the controversial and administrative problems with which I had to deal. It also marked the beginning of an important era of wholehearted acceptance of the spirit of prophecy and of my deep interest in the subject.

After hours of agonizing prayer for some sign or evidence of my own personal acceptance with the Lord and of His support in the great conflict before me, the answer was given. The Lord came graciously near me, and gave me a most profound impression. Every doubt was removed from my mind. I knew that I must not run away from the work to which I had been called by my brethren, and that I must stand with them at my post of duty. I was deeply impressed that I must be as true as the needle to the pole to the counsels of the spirit of prophecy, that I must stand loyally by the Lord's servant, upholding her hands, and leading this denomination to recognize and appreciate her heaven-sent gift.

As distinctly as if audibly spoken, the words burned into my mind as a message from heaven, “If you will stand by My servant until her sun sets in a bright sky, I will stand by you to the last hour of the conflict.”

I then made my solemn promise to the Lord that I would be true to His cause, that I would do all in my power to prevent anything from arising in this denomination to dim the glory of the priceless gift and of the Lord’s servant who had exercised this gift for so many years.

My Chief Earthly Counselor

In reviewing the experiences of the years that followed, I am not unmindful of the help that came from the Lord in this direct answer to personal prayer for wisdom, courage, and victory. Nor am I forgetful of the great service rendered by the members of the various committees and boards with which I was associated. But beyond this we were often in sore need of the help God foreordained to give His church through His

messenger to whom He imparted the prophetic gift. During fifteen out of the twenty-one years of my presidency of the General Conference, Mrs. White was my chief earthly counselor. My responsibilities were heavy all of the time. My dangers were great. Often my perplexities were bewildering and almost crushing.

Until nearly the close of her life, in 1915, Mrs. White continued to take an active part in all the major interests of the cause to which she had given unreserved devotion for seventy-one years. The great problems in both home and foreign lands which her messages urged upon me led to scores of personal interviews, and brought many messages of instruction and warning, and sometimes of needed reproof.

In this present year of our Lord 1935, Mrs. White has been at rest twenty years, while I have been toiling on. I had had twenty-three years of direct observation of her lifework. Since her death I have now had twenty additional years for thoughtful reflection and study of that life and its

fruits. Now, at an advanced age, with the constraint of expressing only sober, honest truth, I can say that it is my deep conviction that Mrs. White's life far transcends the life of anyone I have ever known or with whom I have been associated. She was uniformly pleasant, cheerful, and courageous. She was never careless, flippant, or in any way cheap in conversation or manner of life. She was the personification of serious earnestness regarding the things of the kingdom. I never once heard her boast of the gracious gift God had bestowed upon her, or of the marvelous results of her endeavors. She did rejoice in the fruitage, but gave all the glory to Him who wrought through her.

I realize that these are grave statements, but they come from the deepest conviction and soundest judgment that I am capable of rendering. They are uttered in the sobering atmosphere of my last illness, as I face the Judge of all the earth, before whose presence I realize that I soon shall stand.

Another Major Episode

Previous chapters have recorded some of the marvelous—yes, miraculous—providences that attended certain of the divine messages that came from her pen. But the experiences related in those chapters in nowise exhaust the issues of first magnitude wherein the prophetic voice has guided the denomination and its leaders, or saved them from losing their bearings. But other major episodes, not recorded here, have been largely outside the range of my own personal contact and observation.

I will allude, by way of illustration, to but one such. This will not be developed in these pages, for it occurred while I was serving in Australia, and I was not, therefore, a personal observer or a participant. In a great crisis that came over the principle of righteousness by faith in the latter part of the 80's and in the early 90's, the Lord's messenger took her stand almost alone by the side of those who brought this basic principle of Christian life and service to the forefront, amid

either hesitancy or active opposition on the part of many. On the platform before large gatherings and in article after article in the Review and Herald, Mrs. White set forth clearly the issues involved. No other group of her written messages has so profoundly moved me, or so influenced my life in later years, as have those inspired messages from God. They tally fully with the teaching of the word, and they support the witness of evangelical truth through the ages. This experience is but one example out of a constant series of vital issues met during the full span of her witnessing.

Chapter 34

Believe in the Prophetic Gift

The welfare of the church as a whole, and of its individual members, is inseparably bound up with believing and heeding God's prophets. These, as we have seen, are His chosen messengers, His appointed spokesmen, to His church on earth. As we have also clearly shown, this plan of communication has been God's chosen, uniform, and beneficent provision for revealing His will to man, ever since the separation caused by sin. Through this means, God counsels and instructs, He cautions, entreats, and warns, as need may occasion and as divine love indicates. The presence of the prophet among men is not, therefore, something new or unusual, something strange or fantastic. God is the author of this provision, and wayfaring man is its beneficiary. It is as old as the human need, and as constant as the divine love that prompted and instituted it.

The vicissitudes of the church in all ages have

been gauged by its allegiance or its disloyalty to the gift of prophecy, and its safety measured by its response to these heavenly leadings. Through the centuries spanning the patriarchal, Mosaic, and apostolic eras, we have seen this inviolable rule in operation, as revealed in the pages of Holy Writ.

Then after the death of the apostles, the tragic march of events in the Christian era begins, is told in blood and tears, and is blotched with drift and apostasy. Steadily the nominal Christian church veers from those foundation principles—the precepts and practices, the letter and the spirit—that characterized the apostolic church. The departure centered in perversion of the law and the gospel, though it permeated every truth of Christianity.

Tragic has been the lot of those who stood for the primitive faith. Hated and maligned, persecuted and isolated, they witnessed to the truth. But from time to time prophets—men and women—arose at the call of God, and denounced the iniquity of the disloyal. They encouraged the fidelity of the

faithful, and guided and guarded the adherents of truth through the weary centuries.

Now in these divinely denominated “last days,” God’s great plan of redemption and the mad course of the human race approach their climax together. Iniquity so abounds among men, human philosophy is so defiant, man’s independence of God and of the provisions of redemption are so affronting in this supreme conflict between good and evil, that it was imperative for the gift of prophecy to be conspicuously manifest in the ranks of the remnant church.

Paramount Need in the Last Days

If ever in the course of the race man needed divine guidance, it is surely in these last days, when all the forces of iniquity have broken loose to confuse and to ruin, when the secular world has gone materialist, and the religious world has turned to modernistic teachings. If ever in history the church needed to have divine guidance, that time was reached at the crisis hour of the advent

movement, just following the disappointment of 1844, and throughout the decades following. Far-reaching were the issues; but adequate was God's guidance.

The last conflict comes over allegiance to God, and reaches its consummation in our day. The perfect law of God, with its Sabbath seal, is the object of Satan's hatred, and he would swing the world to his side in the conflict. The full salvation provided through faith in Christ is equally the object of his relentless attempts to deny His incarnation, His atoning death, His priestly ministry, and His imminent return in power and glory.

Satan's wrath is focused on God's remnant church, the supreme object of divine love and guidance. This church will finally stand as the sole defender of God's trampled law, to which are joined the full provisions of redemption. Not only is the church as a whole the object of the evil one's attack, but the individual member as well is harassed, because of maintaining the integrity of

the law and the gospel. Through injecting doubt, carelessness, defiance, or repudiation, Satan likewise seeks to turn allegiance from the counsels of the gift of prophecy. Hence the three great issues at stake in this last hour are as clearly and sharply defined as inspiration can disclose them. But these have all become confused in the beliefs and practices among the masses of Christendom.

But now, in bringing this volume to a close, the question of individual and church relationship to God's gift stands forth as of supreme importance. My closing words are therefore a plea for the recognition and heeding of this divine provision for the counsel of the church. They are an appeal to the church to keep these matters ever in mind, and to follow them faithfully in practice.

Give Heed to the Heavenly Counsels

Mark well, in retrospect, what this gift has meant to this people through the decades of the past. Mark well, how crisis after crisis has been met, and how issue after issue has been

successfully faced. Time has vindicated the heavenly counsels in every instance. Consider, by way of impressive comparison and admonition, the days of Israel in the time of Moses, and then ponder our own times as a parallel. Here are the words of Israel's great leader of old:

“I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.” “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey His voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto Him: for He is thy life, and the length of thy days.” (Deuteronomy 30:15,19,20)

Realizing that he was soon to lay down his responsibilities, the aged patriarch, Moses, was giving his final charge to the people whom he had led for forty years, from Egypt to the borders of the Promised Land.

He had great hopes for the future of his beloved

people. But knowing, by long experience, their frailties and their weakness at times under temptations and hardships, he also cherished grave fears that they might meet national disaster and defeat. Recognizing that their destiny for weal or woe was conditioned upon their relation to the instruction sent from God, he graphically, and at considerable length, set before them the blessings, temporal and spiritual, that would be theirs if they were obedient, and the curses that would be consequent upon their disobedience. (See Deuteronomy 27,28)

Israel's Failure to Remember

When he counseled them to love the Lord God, and to obey His voice, he was thereby exhorting them to heed the messages of counsel and instruction that he, as God's messenger had delivered to them. Save for the Ten Commandments, all the laws and testimonies and statutes enjoined upon them had been spoken through Moses. That they should see or hear only the human instrument in nowise lessened the guilt

of their rejection of these divine requirements. That is true also, not only of the generation that he personally addressed, but of the men and women of all time.

Moses made provision for these solemn adjurations ever to be kept in remembrance. Parents were to teach them to their children, speaking of them when they were sitting in the house or walking by the way, as well as in the evening and in the morning hours of worship. (Deuteronomy 11:19,20) They were to be written for a memorial in a book, and placed in the side of the ark. Every seventh year they were to be taken out and publicly read before the concourse of pilgrims assembled at the Feast of Tabernacles. For this solemn rehearsal of the prophetic writings, they were to gather the men and the women, not forgetting the stranger who was within their gates. The children who were coming to years of understanding were especially mentioned. They were also to hear, and learn to fear the Lord. (See Deuteronomy 31:9-13)

In view of the failure of Israel of old thus to keep in remembrance the solemn messages that had come through God's chosen messenger, should not we "upon whom the ends of the world are come" see to it that the instruction that has been given to the remnant church shall be kept vividly in mind?

Prophetic Gift Inseparable From the Movement

Drawing a present-day lesson from the directions of Moses (in Deuteronomy 6:20-25) to rehearse to the children, as they came to the age of inquiry, the signs and wonders wrought in their deliverance from Egypt, Mrs. White wrote in 1882:

"Here are principles that we are not to regard with indifference. Those who have seen the truth and felt its importance, and have had an experience in the things of God, are to teach sound doctrine to their children. They should make them acquainted with the great pillars of our faith, the reasons why we are Seventh-day Adventists,—why we are called, as were the children of Israel, to be a peculiar people, a holy nation, separate and distinct

from all other people on the face of the earth. These things should be explained to the children in simple language, easy to be understood; and as they grow in years, the lessons imparted should be suited to their increasing capacity, until the foundations of truth have been laid broad and deep.” [1]

The story of the birth of the nation of Israel, of their deliverance from cruel bondage and their final entrance into Canaan, could not be told without relating the work of Moses as a prophet. Interwoven with every phase of the history were the messages that came from heaven through the great prophet of that period. He was the mouthpiece for Jehovah, making known His will, guiding them in their organization and in their movements; reproofing their sins, rebuking their rebellion, and entreating them as a father.

It is likewise impossible today to tell our children “the reasons why we are Seventh-day Adventists” without familiarizing them with the prominent part played by the renewed gift of

prophecy in the laying of a scriptural foundation, and building thereon, in guiding in the principles of organization, in fostering every cardinal feature of the advent movement, and in bearing messages of counsel and reproof, or of hope and courage.

It is possible to believe nominally in the gift of prophecy, to accept the messages of former prophets, and yet reject and oppose a contemporary messenger chosen of God to give instruction to His people. In Christ's day the words of the ancient prophets were read every Sabbath in their synagogues, yet the religious leaders rejected John the Baptist, and crucified the Prophet who came direct from heaven,—the greatest who ever appeared on earth. The reason why they closed their ears against Heaven's messengers, together with the existence of modern Pharisaism, is well set forth in these words:

“The reproofs, the cautions, the corrections of the Lord, have been given to His church in all ages of the world. These warnings were despised and rejected in Christ's day by the self-righteous

Pharisees, who claimed that they needed no such reproof, and were unjustly dealt with. They would not receive the word of the Lord through His servants, because it did not please their inclinations. Should the Lord give a vision right before this class of people in our day, pointing out their mistakes, rebuking their self-righteousness and condemning their sins, they would rise up in rebellion, like the inhabitants of Nazareth when Christ showed them their true condition.” [2]

Why Testimonies Are Rejected

It was Christ’s rebuke of specific sins in their life that caused the Pharisees to reject His claim of being the Son of God. There is today, as there has always been in the past, a direct relation between the cherishing of some sin and a doubting of the messages of the Lord’s chosen servant.

“Many who have backslidden from the truth assign as a reason for their course, that they do not have faith in the testimonies. Investigation reveals the fact that they had some sinful habit that God

has condemned through the testimonies. The question now is, Will they yield their idol which God condemns, or will they continue in their wrong course of indulgence, and reject the light God has given them, reproving the very things in which they delight? The question to be settled with them is, Shall I deny myself, and receive as of God the testimonies which reprove my sins, or shall I reject the testimonies because they reprove my sins?" [3]

In the early part of this volume it is asserted, with corroborative evidence, that next to the gift of Christ to our world, the gift of prophecy is God's most precious bestowal upon the church. It is therefore certain that Satan, the great adversary of God and man, will have an intense hatred for every manifestation of the gift. Its possession by the remnant church is given in the Scriptures as the explanation of the dragon's wrath against her. Revelation 12:17. Knowing this, we shall not be surprised that the testimonies of God's Spirit are the object of bitter and ceaseless attack. The most subtle arguments that can be devised by a master

mind trained in guile and sophistry will be presented as reasons why we should disbelieve them.

Counsel to Our Remnant People

I counsel you who may meet with objections to the claims of the testimonies given for the remnant, to regard a proper balance between the trivial and the great, between that which is difficult of understanding and that which is plain. Here are clear, guiding principles:

“You need not go in uncertainty and doubt. Satan is at hand to suggest a variety of doubts; but if you will open your eyes in faith, you will find sufficient evidence for belief. But God will never remove from any man all causes for doubts. Those who love to dwell in the atmosphere of doubt and questioning unbelief, can have the unenviable privilege. God gives sufficient evidence for the candid mind to believe; but he who turns from the weight of evidence because there are a few things which he cannot make plain to his finite

understanding, will be left in the cold, chilling atmosphere of unbelief and questioning doubts, and will make shipwreck of faith.” [4]

“Those who train the mind to seize upon everything which they can use as a peg to hang a doubt upon, and suggest these thoughts to other minds, will always find occasion to doubt. They will question and criticize everything that arises in the unfolding of truth, criticize the work and position of others, criticize every branch of the work in which they have not themselves a part. They will feed upon the errors and mistakes and faults of others, ‘until,’ said the angel, ‘the Lord Jesus shall rise up from His mediatorial work in the heavenly sanctuary, and shall clothe Himself with the garments of vengeance, and surprise them at their unholy feast; and they will find themselves unprepared for the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ Their taste has been so perverted that they would be inclined to criticize even the table of the Lord in His kingdom.” [5]

The words of Moses, linking blessing with

obedience and disaster with disobedience, were predictive. They were spoken when Israel was just beginning her national history. The future of the nation was marked with the correlation of prosperity and obedience, and of ultimate captivity and destruction following persistent disobedience. The calamity came sooner in Israel, who rejected the counsels of all her prophets, than in Judah, whose day of doom was repeatedly postponed because of occasional reformations.

A Lesson for Our Time

The lesson is no less meaningful for our time. Our day of deliverance has been delayed because of our failure to measure up to the wholehearted consecration called for in the heavensent messages committed to us. We are still in this troubled world because we have not gone forward in faith, sacrifice, and earnestness to finish the work of God in the earth to which we have been most solemnly urged by God's servant. Had we fully heeded the admonitions and counsels that have come to us, we might now be enjoying the glories of heaven. This

we have been clearly told:

“Had the purpose of God been carried out by His people in giving to the world the message of mercy, Christ would, ere this, have come to the earth, and the saints would have received their welcome into the city of God.” [6]

“If every soldier of Christ had done his duty, if every watchman on the walls of Zion had given the trumpet a certain sound, the world might ere this have heard the message of warning. But the work is years behind. While men have slept, Satan has stolen a march upon us.” [7]

Nothing could impress our hearts more, perhaps, than these solemn words. The coming of the Lord for which we have longed and prayed and labored for so many years, might now be an accomplished fact, and the people of God have entered upon their reward, had we only lived up to the high privileges and responsibilities that are ours by the favor of God.

“Believe His Prophets”

Through the words of Scripture, God has given every essential saving truth. He has marvelously preserved that word, and has so multiplied copies of it that everyone may now have it. The characteristics of our day are outlined in that word. The testimonies of God’s Spirit, as given to the remnant church, are in harmony with that word, and lead us to that word. But in them is to be found that wealth of detail, needed by those who are living in “the time of the end,” those who must stand against the subtle and supreme wiles of Satan, and perfect a character befitting those who are to be translated. As the telescope reveals, but does not create, details unperceived by the unaided eye, so the reading of the messages sent us does not add to but rather magnifies the eternal word of God.

As we prayerfully and diligently study the counsel and instruction God has so graciously given to His remnant church, bringing our lives into conformity to the standard of character there

revealed, and striving diligently to finish the work allotted to us, we shall thereby prove that we are “looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.” (2 Peter 3:12)

“Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper.” (2 Chronicles 20:20)

Notes:

1. Testimonies for the Church 5:330
2. Testimonies for the Church 5:689
3. Testimonies for the Church 4:32
4. Testimonies for the Church 4:232, 233
5. Testimonies for the Church 5:690
6. Testimonies for the Church 6:450
7. Testimonies for the Church 9:29