

January 1911.

"WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT?"

The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night:
if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12

FANATICISM - CRISIS - APOSTASY

At the beginning of the 20th Century, following the rejection of the Latter Rain in the message of Righteousness by Faith, the church experienced an organizational crisis, the alpha apostasy, and fanaticism. The seeds sown during the period from 1888 through 1893 produced a harvest. When men refuse to recognize the righteousness of God by faith, human philosophies of righteousness have an appeal and appear very acceptable.

In 1900 motivated by a desire to see a revival within the church, and inspired by A. F. Ballenger's challenge to "Receive ye the Holy Ghost", the workers of the Indiana Conference led by S. S. Davis and R. S. Donnell, conference revivalist and president respectively, launched what came to be known as the Holy Flesh Movement. While emotional extravaganza accompanied this so-called revival, there were basic doctrinal deviations involving such fundamental teachings as the incarnation and perfection. But one needs to consider that this "movement" was not an "off-shoot", but was carried forward in the conference with the full approval of the committee and officers of the conference. All but five members of the ministerial staff of the conference embraced the teaching.¹ This is no insignificant fact when one realizes that in 1900, there were thirteen ordained ministers, and fifteen licentiates in the employ of the Indiana Conference.² The "movement" was cut short by a direct testimony given by Ellen G. White at the 1901 General Conference Session.¹

At this same 1901 General Conference Session, the church faced a crisis

of organization. As soon as the General Conference president formally opened the session for business, Sister White came forward and stated in language that could not be misunderstood that what was needed was a re-organization. Note the following excerpts from her message:

I feel a special interest in the movements and decisions that shall be made at this Conference regarding things that should have been done years ago, and especially ten years ago, when we were assembled in Conference, and the Spirit and power of God came into our meeting, testifying that God was ready to work for this people if they would come into working order. The brethren assented to the light that God had given, but there were those . . . who brought in elements of unbelief, so that the light that was given was not acted upon. It was assented to, but no special change was made to bring about such a condition of things that the power of God could be revealed among His people. . .

Year after year the same acknowledgement was made, but the principles which exalt a people were not woven into the work. God gave them clear light as to what they should do, and what they should not do, but they departed from that light. . .

That these men should stand in a sacred place, to be as the voice of God to the people, as we once believed the General Conference to be, - that is past. What we want now is a reorganization. We want to begin at the foundation, and to build upon a different principle.³

Whether the actions taken at the 1901 Session, and the amending actions of the 1903 Session met the specifications of a reorganization built upon a different principle is still an open question. Much more research and study than has been done to date will be needed to clarify the picture. It is doubtful that the basic problem which marked the ten years prior to 1901 could be altered by mere constitutional action. Only a complete acceptance of the message of 1888 could produce a change. The acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit fully in each individual life would lead to the exaltation of the Spirit to His proper place in church administration as the Vicegerent of the Son of God. Too many of us feel that if we removed our human hands from the "ark", the work of God would go to pieces. We are afraid to let the Holy Spirit guide the "oxen" to the proper place. Our unbelief rivals that of our spiritual forefathers. Be-

cause of this, we seek to lead the laity to look to conference leadership for guidance rather than teach them to seek God to find their individual responsibility.

In 1903, Dr. J. H. Kellogg published a book titled - The Living Temple. The servant of the Lord without hesitation declared that this book, "presented the alpha of deadly heresies."⁴ Coupled with this warning, was a warning of greater apostasy to follow. This future apostasy was termed the omega. Observe these comments:

Be not deceived, many will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. We have now before us the alpha of this danger. The omega will be of a most startling nature.⁵

In the book, Living Temple, there is presented the alpha of deadly heresies. The omega will follow, and will be received by those who are not willing to heed the warning God has given.⁴

Living Temple contains the alpha of these theories. I knew that the omega would follow in a little while; and I trembled for our people.⁶

It would be wonderfully simple if I, or someone else, could place our finger on a particular book, or some specific action, and say, "This is the omega of apostasy." But such is not the case! Furthermore, we have another distinct disadvantage which was not present in 1903. The living voice of the prophet to the Remnant is no more. The errors and seductive influences which marked the alpha of apostasy were woven into a fabric of philosophy and program of action which appeared as a beautiful garment of truth. But through the Spirit of Prophecy the fibers of error were clearly delineated. Our only hope today is to study carefully the fabric of the alpha apostasy so as to be able to discern in suggested programs of activity, and in published books and articles those seductive threads of apostasy which will constitute the omega.

We also need to note the figure of speech chosen - alpha and omega. We dare not conclude that since the apostasy at Battle Creek led by Dr Kellogg

constituted the alpha, all will be well until we reach a stunning, obvious declension that can be termed without question - the omega. Such is not the case! From the time of the alpha to the end, there was to be a growing apostasy, whether we have been willing to recognize this fact or not. Note the following warning written at the time of the alpha:

One thing it is certain is soon to be realized, - the great apostasy, which is developing and increasing and waxing stronger, and will continue to do so until the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout. We are to hold fast the first principles of our de-nominated faith, and go forward from strength to increased faith. Ever we are to keep the faith that has been substantiated by the Holy Spirit of God from the earlier events of our experience unto the present time. We need now larger breadth, and deeper, more earnest, unwavering faith in the leadings of the Holy Spirit. If we needed the manifest proof of the Holy Spirit's power to confirm truth in the beginning, after the passing of the time, we need to-day all the evidence in the confirmation of the truth, when souls are departing from the faith and giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.⁷

Before studying any specific characteristics of the alpha apostasy, we should observe certain factors which stand out in bold relief from that which has already been outlined above. Whether we like to recognize the fact or not, in each of the events which faced the church at the turn of the Century, it was brethren in positions of trust in the church who were either hindering the progress of the work which necessitated the demand for a reorganization, or else who were leaders in apostasy, as in the Holy Flesh Movement, and the Kellogg declension. In other words apostasy comes from within, and involves those who are in a position to manipulate a movement or an organization. Dare we conclude that the omega will have any different origin? Dare we then give to any man or group of men an unconditional loyalty pledge? There is only one Person to whom one can ascribe unquestioned loyalty, and that is to our God, and His Truth.

Ask yourself a question - when have you heard from the sacred desk, or read a report of a sermon given at one of our Church Councils which dealt with

the omega apostasy? The servant of the Lord in considering the omega apostasy "trembled for our people." If then the laity are not warned of this coming danger, who will answer for the souls that will be lost as a result of this overwhelming deception? But here is a conundrum! How can those in positions of leadership warn the church and point out that the omega will come from within, and through its leadership, and at the same time demand of the laity unconditional trust, and unquestioning allegiance? It is an impossibility!

Our palsied condition did not happen over night. Trends, ever so slight, were permitted under the guise that we need to keep pace with the world. Suddenly these little trends became broad policies of action. Instead of opposing the direction through courageous leadership, leadership became prisoners of their own policies. Besides this, we have refused to retrace our steps and remove that which was wrong - whether men or actions - and start again from the true foundation. But do not forget that any deviation from the "first principles of our denominated faith" is apostasy!

¹Wm. H. Grotheer, The Holy Flesh Movement, A Research Paper presented in fulfillment of the requirements for Course T600 - Research in Theology - at Andrews University, July 1965

²General Conference Bulletin, 4th Quarter, 1900, p. 207

³General Conference Bulletin, 1st Quarter, April 3, 1901, p. 23, 25

⁴Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 2, p. 50

⁵Ibid., p. 16

⁶Ibid., p. 53

⁷Ibid., No. 7, pp. 56-57

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