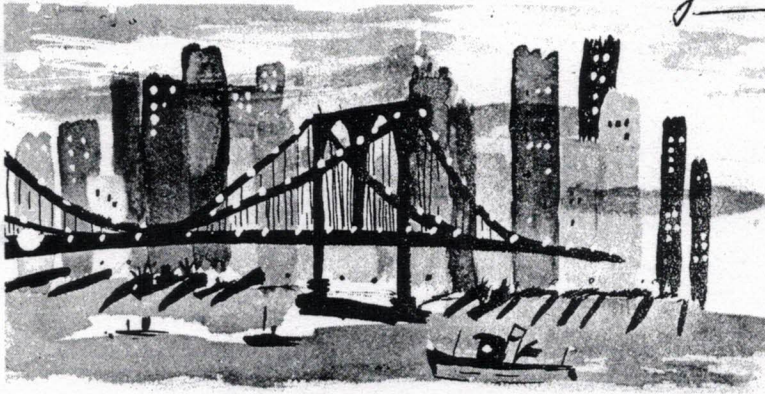


June/72



# "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*

## A STRANGE FIRE IN OUR PULPITS

At the time when the danger and depression of the church are the greatest, God does not leave Himself without a witness. There will be those "who are standing in the light" that will sigh and cry because of the abominations done in the church.<sup>1</sup> Their prayers will arise in behalf of the church, "because its members are doing after the manner of the world." But not alone will their voices be heard in pleading with God, they will also reprove, counsel, and entreat. They "will not hold their peace to obtain the favor of any."<sup>2</sup> But how will this love for souls be met in the church? While some will "try to throw a cloak over the existing evil, and excuse the great wickedness everywhere prevalent", others will trample the messages of reproof under foot.<sup>2</sup>

What causes such a state of affairs? It is our failure to understand the work of the Holy Spirit. In the days of the Jewish church, had Christ come to exalt them above all the peoples of the earth, and free them from the hated Roman yoke, they would have accepted Him gladly. Just so, if the Holy Spirit would come and glorify us in the eyes of the world, we would accept gladly the messages given; but when "the Spirit of God, which prompts to reproof"<sup>3</sup> comes through any agent of His choosing, we despise the warning, and call the voice, "divisive", "subversive", and "un-Christlike". We charge the one through whom the prompting voice may come as an "accuser of the brethren". What are the results of this high-handed Laodicean response? "The servants of Satan triumph. God is dishonored, the truth made of none effect."<sup>4</sup>

We come now to another question. If this situation continues to prevail, to what will it lead? And in answering this question, we again find Testimonies we would wish had not been written; but they have been written, and because they have, we need to face up to them squarely.

On one occasion, the servant of the Lord was writing relative to the conditions developing in the church. As the Spirit of God opened before her the full picture of the possibilities resulting from the spiritual declension, her eyes filled with tears and fell upon the paper as she continued to write. What had she written? Read these words thoughtfully:

The patience of God has an object, but you are defeating it. He is allowing a state of things to come that you would fain see counteracted by and by, but it will be too late. God commanded Elijah to anoint the cruel and deceitful Hazael king over Syria, that he might be a scourge to idolatrous Israel. Who knows whether God will not give you up to the deceptions you love? Who knows but that the preachers who are faithful, firm, and true may be the last who shall offer the gospel of peace to our unthankful churches? It may be that the destroyers are already training under the hand of Satan and only wait the departure of a few more standard-bearers to take their places, and with the voice of the false prophet cry, Peace, peace, when the Lord has not spoken peace.<sup>5</sup>

At this point the tears came, and dropped on the writing paper. But sense the deep pathos as she continued to write:

It may be that ere long all prophesyings among us will be at an end, and the voice which has stirred the people may no longer disturb their carnal slumbers.<sup>5</sup>

That special voice was stilled in 1915 - some thirty years after these words were penned. But the reproofs given and cautions sounded were to be heard in the church till the end of time. And how should we be relating to these warnings? Read on:

When God shall work His strange work on the earth, when holy hands bear the ark no longer, woe will be upon the people. Oh, that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! Oh, that *our people* may, as did Nineveh, repent with all their might, and believe with all their heart, that God may turn away His fierce anger from *them!*<sup>6</sup>

What a picture - "when holy hands bear the ark no longer", and Satan who is only waiting for the "departure of a few more standard bearers" can foist on the

church a deceptive message of peace through the voices of false prophets. Truly "woe will be upon the people", when the ministers who are faithful, firm, and true are no longer permitted to speak in our pulpits the pure gospel of peace.

What is the pure gospel of peace? Since "sin has destroyed our peace"<sup>7</sup>, the gospel of peace is the means whereby man might find victory over sin. The first work of the Spirit of God is to reprove of sin. But such reproof is unwelcome, for we would rather have our sins indulged. We would prefer that a cloak be put over them, than to surrender our filthy garments for the robe of Christ's righteousness. When faithful ministers speak forth in regard to the "pride, avarice, selfishness, and deception" which is in the church, their testimony is unwelcome. They are removed, being accused of being divisive, and subversive. True in many instances strife is created because there is an eternal controversy between Christ and Satan, and between the ministers of Christ and the agents of Satan. But it must be remembered that "this creating of strife is not the effect of the gospel, but the result of opposition to it."<sup>8</sup> When, therefore, we can no longer distinguish between the effect of the gospel, and the results of opposition to it; calling good, evil, and evil, good, sad indeed has become our spiritual perception. We have then reached that total blindness as prophesied of Laodicea.

A greater tragedy now awaits us. When we refuse the faithful witness of the men of God's appointment, we open the doors for the false, for we cannot conceive of a church without a pulpit, or a pulpit without a preacher. When this takes place, what will we hear? "Many will stand in our pulpits with the torch of false prophecy<sup>9</sup> in their hands, kindled from the hellish torch of Satan."<sup>10</sup> When that time comes - and we may be closer to that hour than we think - holy hands will no longer bear the ark, and woe indeed will be upon this people!

We need to consider the context of this statement. The last two sentences of the preceding paragraph prior to the prophecy concerning the torch of false prophecy read as follows:

Let the son of deceit and false witness be entertained by a church that has great light, great evidence, and that church will discard the message the Lord has sent, and receive the most unreasonable assertions and false suppositions and false theories. Satan laughs at their folly; for he knows what truth is.

Then comes the prophecy regarding the torch of false prophecy. It is followed by these words, and an oft quoted Scripture:

If doubts and unbelief are cherished, the faithful ministers will be removed from the people who think they know so much. "If thou hadst known," said Christ, "even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

This brings us to some very solemn considerations. At the present time, we have some very stringent regulations controlling the use of the pulpit in the Seventh-day Adventist church. The Church Manual sets forth the following regulation:

God's work is to be jealously safeguarded by the responsible leaders in every step of organization, from the local church to the General Conference. In order that enemies of the work may not gain access to our pulpits, it is most strongly urged that no one be allowed to speak to any congregation unless he presents valid and up-to-date denominational credentials. It is recognized that there may be times when it is proper for our congregations to be addressed by government officials or by civic leaders, but all others should be excluded from the pulpit.<sup>11</sup>

How ironical that a regulation promoted to protect the church should become the means whereby the agents of Satan can be successfully installed in our pulpits. With this regulation enforced, the conclusion is inescapable: the hellish torch of false prophecy will be held aloft in our pulpits by men bearing the credentials of the conference! And it will not be in a few pulpits, or an isolated church here and there, for the servant of the Lord said - "MANY".

Tragically, the professed Israel of God will comprehend it not, but will continue to support this program until the judgment of the sanctuary is rendered, "Found Wanting".<sup>12</sup> Instead of the sacred tithe providing meat in due season in House of God, it would be misappropriated to support a peace and safety cry lit

from the hellish torch of Satan. And have we become so anesthetized that we can actually believe that God will not hold us responsible as individuals in such a misappropriation of the sacred funds?

How much longer will Israel sleep? When shall we awaken from our fatal slumbers? Or is it even now too late to alter the course of action, and has the time arrived when God is about to do His strange work in the earth?

---

<sup>1</sup>Compare Testimonies Vol. 5, p. 209 with Vol. 3, p. 267

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church Vol. 5, p. 210

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 77

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 77-78

<sup>7</sup>Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages, p. 336

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 357

<sup>9</sup>The expression - "prophecy" - needs to be understood in its broadest sense, as speaking forth, not necessarily of future events but of present conditions. A true prophecy would be the voice of warning, while a false prophecy would seek to lull to sleep with the fatal delusion that "All is well."

<sup>10</sup>Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers pp. 409-410

<sup>11</sup>Church Manual, p. 177 (1967 Edition)

<sup>12</sup>Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church Vol. 8, p. 247

+++++

Note - A very simple evangelistic program has been developed by the Adventist Laymen's Foundation. Pilot programs are presently being carried out in two counties of Mississippi. Any layman or a group of laymen interested in working such a program in his or their areas can write for details to the address given below.

Elder Wm. H. Grotheer  
P. O. Box 237  
Florence, Miss., 39073

V-6 (June 72)

Published by the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi, Incorporated.