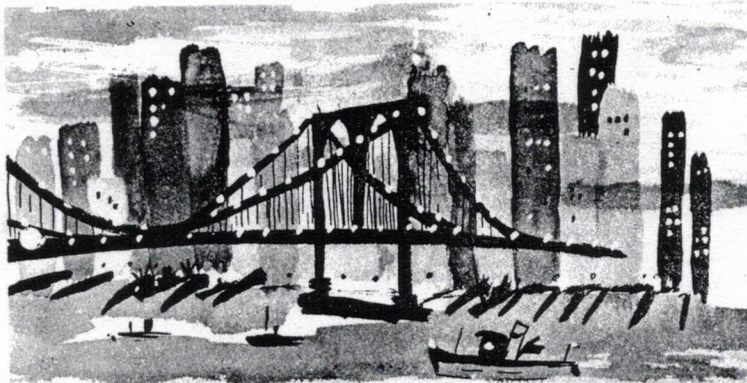


May/72.

"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 SPECIES OF IDOLATRY

Before continuing to evaluate some of the prophecies in the inspired Testimonies concerning our church, and the conditions that are to prevail, we should first consider the fallacy of an attitude which prevails in our thinking regarding God's relationship to the church as a corporate body. We are willing to admit that God rejected the Jewish church as His chosen people because of their continued transgression, and their failure to live up to the light that God sent to them. We profess to be the Israel of God today, but we have also convinced ourselves that God is going to deal differently with us than He did with His people anciently. By so assuming, we have set aside the God as revealed in history, and in turn have substituted for ourselves another god! This is a species of idolatry.

The true philosophy of history teaches that to every nation, and to every individual, God gives a period of test and trial. If that nation or individual fails, the decision is rendered - "Found Wanting". This same rule applies with equal force to those called to be His church in any given period of time. Such a rule is clearly indicated in the messages to the Seven Churches of Revelation. To the church period of Ephesus, the One walking in the midst of the candlesticks warned:

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.¹

Even to "that women Jezebel" of the Thyatira period, the Son of God "gave her space to repent of her fornication"² But she willed not to repent. What then was the

divine decree, and for what purpose? Note carefully the words written:

Behold I will throw her on a sickbed, and those that commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her doings; and I will strike her children dead. *And all the churches shall know that I am He who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.*³

Now the True Witness says to the Laodicean church in words that cannot be misunderstood - "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, *I will spue thee out of my mouth.*"⁴ Coupled with this plain prophecy of judgment is also the voice of mercy - "Be zealous therefore, and repent."⁵ But when we believe that we have nothing of which to repent, what has God left to do? It is not that God wants to cast us off, but we are leaving God with no other option. The true God is not only merciful, but He is also a God of judgment. He is on trial before the universe. If He makes a different set of rules by which to judge us as a Seventh-day Adventist church than He used in His judgment of the Jewish church, and so alters the criteria so that we can be accepted, and they rejected, the whole foundation of His government is placed in jeopardy. But the true God of the universe - the Father of lights - is One with whom there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."⁶ Therefore, if ancient Israel did not escape because of their refusal to heed the voice of God, "much less shall we escape if we reject Him who warns from heaven."⁷

We are in a fearful position today as a church, and seem to know it not. Thus these testimonies, which we would like to forget were ever written, need to be carefully studied. Such a study could lead us to a denominational repentance so that God can preserve us by His mercy without compromising His justice. We should in deep humility repent of our idolatry; cast aside our idol god that has given us a false sense of security, and return to the God of history by bringing "forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance" and not say within ourselves, "We have Abraham

to our father"; for "God is able of . . . stones to raise up children unto Abraham."⁸

In Volume Five of the Testimonies for the Church, there is a timely and very thought provoking chapter.⁹ Fearful are the consequences indicated. The time when these things could transpire is given. Observe thoughtfully:

Jesus is about to leave the mercy-seat of the heavenly sanctuary, to put on garments of vengeance, and pour out His wrath in judgments upon those who have not responded to the light God has given them.¹⁰

Where will the wrath fall first?

Here we see that the church - the Lord's sanctuary - was the first to feel the stroke of the wrath of God.¹¹

Why?

The ancient men, those to whom God had given great light, and who had stood as guardians of the spiritual interests of the people, had betrayed their trust.¹¹

How have these men of the hierarchy betrayed their trust? They have taught --

Times have changed. These words strengthen their unbelief, and they say, The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil. He is too merciful to visit His people in judgment. Thus peace and safety is the cry from men who will never lift up their voice like a trumpet to show God's people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sin.¹¹

What will be the result?

These dumb dogs, that will not bark, are the ones who feel the just vengeance of an offended God. Men, maidens, and little children, all perish together.¹¹

What sadder words could be penned - Men (elders and deacons), maidens, and little children of the Sabbath School all perish together. And why, because the ministry - the guardians of the spiritual interests have betrayed their sacred trust, and have erected for the people a shrine to Baal, and in so doing have declared that the God of history is dead. How tragic! Should we not weep as did Jesus on the brow of Olivet when He beheld the city of Jerusalem. Should not the same words stir our inmost souls - "If thou hadst known, even thou [modern Jeru-

salem], at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."¹² When Jesus approached the top of Mount Olives the evening sun was setting over Jerusalem, and when it should set, "Jerusalem's day of grace would be ended. . . The angel of mercy was then folding her wings to step down from the golden throne to give place to justice and swift-coming judgment."¹³ Is the western sun setting for us? "The day of God's vengeance is just upon us."¹⁴ O how we need a real revival and reformation in the midst of Israel so that these fearful prophecies need not be fulfilled. A trumpet needs to be blown in Zion; a solemn assembly called. The ministers need to weep between the porch and the alter. Instead of lulling the church of God into a fatal slumber, they need to call for a genuine and deep repentance, starting at the top - denominationally and individually - so that the laity can see by example what is expected of them. Then the cry to God would be heard - "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach."¹⁵

The clear results which follow the teaching that God is too merciful to visit His church in judgment, and that though He did reject ancient Israel because of their transgressions, He will not do so to modern Israel, but that the church as a corporate body is going through to the kingdom, is also revealed in this same Testimony. Such teaching produces worldliness of the darkest hue. The testimony declares that the members of the church "are doing after the manner of the world,"¹⁶ and that "pride, avarice, selfishness, and deception of almost every kind are in the church."¹⁷ The teaching produces its own results.

Read these words prayerfully, and ponder their deepest meaning - "The glory of the Lord had departed from Israel; although many still continued the forms of religion, His power and presence were lacking."¹⁸ Have we reached that hour? Are we merely going through the forms of religious worship without the real power of the presence of the Holy Spirit? And if we obtain a power otherwise than through

