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"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

UNITY FROM DISUNITY - A PARADOX

The High Priestly prayer of Christ was a prayer for unity among those who profess His name.¹ This unity is three-fold.

It is *historical*. Our faith and practice must be the same as the faith and practice of the true church in all ages. Kneeling with the little band of eleven men, Jesus prayed - "Neither pray I for *these* alone, but for *them* also who shall believe on Me through their word; that they *all* may be one."² The realization of this historical unity will bring to us that revival of primitive faith and godliness not seen since apostolic times.³

It is *vertical*. This unity involves a deep spiritual relationship that finds its source in the Father-Son accord of the Godhead. Jesus continued His prayer - "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they may be *one in us*."⁴ This is the ultimate realization of the new covenant, when will be fulfilled in the life of each believer, the promise, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."⁵

It is *horizontal*. When the historical and vertical unity is experienced, the horizontal follows. Christ bestows the same glorious privilege on His followers that He received, "that they may be one" even as He and the Father are one.⁶ That motivating glory which pervaded the life of Christ and caused Him to finish the work given Him to do, will bind the hearts and lives of all believers into one all-consuming objective - to glorify God on the earth.⁷ Self will be forgotten; the

Cross alone will be exalted.

This three-fold unity - historical, vertical, and horizontal - is the unity which God designs that His church on earth shall possess. We read:

God designs that His people shall be a unit; that they shall see eye to eye, and be of the same mind and of the same judgment. This cannot be accomplished without a clear, pointed, living testimony in the church.⁸

We long for the hour when such unity shall be manifest, for it will herald the coming of the power of the Latter Rain. But we stumble over the means to the objective - the giving of the straight testimony. Why? Because its results seemingly will evidence a state of disunity, and discord between so-called brethren. The clear, pointed testimony calls for a high standard of conduct and pure unadulterated truth. "Some will not bear this testimony. They will rise up against it, and this will cause a shaking among God's people."⁹ While we with our blurred perceptions conceive that the pointed testimony is the cause for disunity, it is rather those who rise up against its clear warnings and reproofs who are the real cause for discord and strife. Because of this spiritual blindness, we silence reproof, and seek to mute the voice that dares to speak out against the apostasy and deception within the church. Note what the results are to be:

According to the light that God has given me in vision, wickedness and deception are increasing among God's people who profess to keep His commandments. Spiritual discernment to see sin as it exists, and then to put it out of the camp, is decreasing among God's people; and spiritual blindness is fast coming upon them.¹⁰

Take time to check your membership lists - envision each member. On some church records are smokers; beer drinkers (maybe something stronger); Sabbath breakers. Divorced persons are numbered there - even holding church office. One pastor states it this way - "We have a Manual, but what church is there that has clean enough officers to take on the expressed-clearly defined duty to purge itself of smokers, Sabbath-breakers, etc. It is seldom done anymore." A sister writes, "I still believe that if we were to get all those names off that do not belong there,

God could and would bless His church. But with all the sin in the camp He cannot. But of course if the names came off that would lower the goals so they [conference] won't let us take them off."

What is the divine answer? Continuing the above quoted testimony, we read:

The straight testimony must be revived, and it will separate those from Israel who have ever been at war with the means that God has ordained to keep corruptions out of the church. Wrongs must be called wrongs. Grievous sins must be called by their right name. All of God's people should come nearer to Him, and wash their robes of character in the blood of the Lamb. Then they will see sin in its true light, and realize how offensive it is *in the sight of God*.¹¹

This calls for the members of the church to come into that vertical unity for which Christ prayed. To have fellowship with Christ, our lives must be conformed to His life - "washed in the blood of the Lamb." He hated sin with an intense hatred, for He had seen its devious workings in the courts of heaven.¹² We do not have this hatred for sin because of our failure to walk in unity with Him by faith where He is in the presence of God. Thus we do not see "the necessity for the plain testimony."¹³

Our High Priest is dwelling in the light of the Father's presence. The prophet, beholding in vision the heavenly sanctuary with the veil swept aside, saw the Lord upon a throne, high and lifted up. He heard the voices echoing back and forth through the temple courts - "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts."¹⁴ This same vision of God would cause us to cry out as did Isaiah, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."¹⁵ However, the remedy is prepared and waiting. The Live Coal from the altar of God will purge our sin, and take away our iniquity.¹⁶ Then through unfeigned lips we could pour forth the straight testimony. Sin would be called sin with no fear of reprisals from obdurate sinners. We would speak the message of God from guileless lips, and with lives freed from the conscious guilt of sin.

A living experience resulting from a full view of the work of our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary is our great need. He is there to cleanse not only the record, but to free us from the very guilt of sin itself. It is this guilt complex that makes our testimony against sin so weak. True we have sinned, and will always remember that we have sinned. But such an experience should make us merciful to the sinner who heeds the straight testimony; rather than making us hesitant to speak the truth.

The intercession of Christ will change one from a cringing coward into a valiant soldier of the Cross. Where once reigned hatred and enmity against God, there will reign hatred and enmity against all things sinful. A conflict? Yes! Disunity? Yes! There never can be harmony between those who walk in the light as Christ is in the light, and those who hold on to sin. Will there ever be unity? Yes! All those who heed the straight testimony called forth by the True Witness will be a unit. They will see eye to eye, and be of the same mind and judgment. O Glorious Day! May God annoint our eyes to see clearly His way into this experience.

¹John 17:9

²John 17:20-21

³Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 464

⁴John 17:21

⁵II Cor. 6:16

⁶John 17:18, 22-23

⁷John 17:4

⁸Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 3, p. 361

⁹Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 270

¹⁰White, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 324

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, bk. i, p. 254

¹³White, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 361

¹⁴Isa. 6:1-3

¹⁵Isa. 6:5

¹⁶Isa. 6:6-7

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COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

It is written - "We are to repeat the words of the pioneers in our work, who knew what it cost to search for the truth as for hidden treasure, and who labored to lay the foundation of our work. They moved forward step by step under the influence of the Spirit of God." (Counsels to Writers, p. 28) Note the list of the early pioneers who searched for truth as for hidden treasure: "My husband, *Elder Joseph Bates*, Father Pierce, Elder Edson, and others who were keen, noble, and true, were among those who, after the passing of time in 1844, searched for truth as for hidden treasure." (Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 2, p. 56)

Now take special note:-

"In all the land saith the Lord; TWO PARTS therein shall be cut off, and die; but the THIRD PART shall be left therein. God says He will bring the THIRD PART through the fire, and refine them. They shall call upon Him, and He will hear them. He will say IT IS MY PEOPLE; and they shall say the LORD IS MY GOD." [sic. - see Zech. 13:8-9.] First part, Sardis, the nominal church or Babylon. Second part, *Laodicea*, the nominal Adventist. Third part, *Philadelphia*, the only true church of God on earth, for they ask to be translated to the city of God. Rev. iii, 12; Heb. xii, 22-24. In the name of Jesus, I exhort you to flee from the Laodiceans, as from Sodom and Gomorrah. Their teachings are false and delusive; and lead to utter destruction. Death! Death! eternal DEATH!!! is on their track. Remember Lot's wife.

Joseph Bates

Fairhaven, Mass., Nov. 10, 1850.

(This is from the Review & Herald, November 1850, p. 8, published in Paris, Me.)

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Some have written regarding a question which was asked in the thought paper for May, 1974 (VII - 5). It read - "Could it be that the beast of Revelation 17 is the prophetic symbolism of the first beast of Revelation 13 in its 'healed' state?" This should have read - "Could it be that the woman riding the beast which comes from the 'bottomless pit' is the prophetic symbolism of how and in what combination the first beast of Revelation 13 will appear in its 'healed' state?" Babylon the great - the Harlot of Revelation 17 - is composed of three sectors (Rev. 16: 19) rather than just the Papacy as is represented by the first beast of Revelation 13. The beast of Revelation 17 is "the eighth, and is of the seven", not "seventh." This beast underlies all seven. See Testimonies to Ministers, p. 62 for the identification. Inasmuch as we are studying the book of Revelation in the Sabbath School, it should be noted that the lesson on this subject for the third quarter will give another interpretation to this prophetic symbolism. The lesson states: "From another vantage point this beast of chapter 17 is seen as the image to the beast in Revelation 13." (See Lesson 7, p. 56)

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An Explanation to Fit the Carnal Heart - A new re-write of our history has now be given as to why the message of 1888 was resisted by "some" of the delegates to that historic session. It reads:

So marvelous were the fresh new emphases that some of the delegates present actually resisted them as too good to be true!

Review & Herald, Righteousness by Faith Special, p. 16

The servant of the Lord - and she was there - stated of those "who resisted the Spirit of God at Minneapolis":-

All the universe of heaven witnessed the disgraceful treatment of Jesus Christ, represented by the Holy Spirit. Had Christ been before them, they would have treated Him in a manner similar to that which the Jews treated Christ. (Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 6, p. 20)

Who are we to believe, the Chairman of the Department of Church History at Andrews University, or the Messenger of God to the Remnant? How much longer are we going to continue our rebellion against the revelation of the Lord as to what did take place? When are we going to repent and say with Jeremiah - "We have sinned against the Lord, we and our fathers, from our youth even to this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God." Jer. 3:25.

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BIBLE CONFERENCE - From May 31 through June 12, the Manager of Publications and Research for the Foundation was in Berrien Springs, Michigan, attending as an observer the Bible Conference held on the campus of Andrews University. Of the fifteen papers read, ten, or two-thirds of the total, were devoted to Biblical Hermeneutics. (Hermeneutics is the study of the methodological principles used to interpret the Bible.) Much time could have been saved, and devoted to other subjects such as the atonement and the incarnation, which were not on the agenda, if the simple statement which was recognized by some, had been accepted and applied. It reads as follows:

The Bible with its precious gems of truth was not written for the scholar alone. On the contrary, it was designed for the common people; and the interpretation given by the common people, when aided by the Holy Spirit, accords best with the truth as it is in Jesus. (5T:331)

In future thought papers various concepts presented will be discussed and analyzed. As one officer of the General Conference remarked, these Bible Conferences were designed to move the church "back to center." This is good, and a very needful action; but is this the means that heaven has provided to accomplish the objective, or does heaven call for sincere repentance, and forthright confession of how far we have been off center?