

## **HARVEST GATHERING AND SIFTINGS**

### **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRESENT TRUTH.**

Many are the inquiries relative to the truths presented in the TOWER and MILLENNIAL DAWN, as to whence they came and how they developed to their present symmetrical and beautiful proportions. – Were they the results of visions? Did God in any supernatural way grant the solution of these, hitherto, mysteries of his plan? Are the writers more than ordinary beings? Do they claim any supernatural wisdom or power? or how comes this revelation of God's truth, any how?

No, dear friends, we claim nothing of superiority, nor of supernatural power, dignity or authority; nor do we aspire to exalt ourselves in the estimation of our brethren of the household of faith, except in the sense that the Master urged it, saying, "Let him who would be great among you be your servant." (Matt. 20:27.) And our position among men of the world and of the nominal church is certainly far from exalted, being everywhere spoken against. We are fully contented, however, to wait for exaltation until the Lord's due time. (1 Pet. 5:6.) In the apostle's words, we therefore answer, "Why look ye upon us, as though by our own power we had done these things?" We also are men of like passions with yourselves – of like infirmities and frailties, earnestly striving, by overcoming many besetments, discouragements, etc., to press along the line toward the mark of the prize of our high calling, and claiming only, as faithful students of the Word of God, to be simply index fingers, as we have previously expressed it, to help you to trace for yourselves, on the sacred page, the wonderful plan of God – no less wonderful to us, we assure you, than to you, dearly beloved sharers of our faith and joy.

No, the truths we present, as God's mouthpieces, were not revealed in visions or dreams, nor by God's audible voice, nor all at once, but gradually, especially since 1870, and particularly since 1880, a period of about twenty years. And this present clear unfolding of truth is not due to any human ingenuity or acuteness of perception, but to the simple fact that God's due time has come, and if we did not speak and no other agent could be found, the very stones would cry out.

We give the following history not only because we have been urged to give a review of God's leadings in the path of light, but specially because we believe it to be needful that the truth be modestly told, that misapprehensions and prejudicial mis-statements may be disarmed, and that our readers may see how hitherto the Lord hath helped and guided us. In so far as the names and views of others, who have parted company with us, may be associated with this history, we shall endeavor to bring forward only such points as are necessary to an understanding of our position and of the Lord's leadings. Nor can we name all the little points of divine favor in which faith was tested, prayers were answered, etc., remembering that our Master and the early church left no such example of boasting of faith, but rather admonished otherwise, saying, "Hast thou faith, have it to thyself." Some of the most precious experiences of faith and prayer are those which are too sacred for public display.

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We will not go back to tell how the light began to break through the clouds of prejudice and superstition which enveloped the world under Papacy's rule in the dark ages. The reformation movement, or rather movements, from then until now, has each done its share in bringing light out of darkness. But confining ourselves to the consideration of the harvest truths set forth in *Millennial Dawn* and Zion's Watch Tower, we begin the

narrative at the year 1868, when the editor, having been a consecrated child of God for some years, and a member of the Congregational Church and of the Y.M.C.A., began to be shaken in faith regarding many long-accepted doctrines. Brought up a Presbyterian and indoctrinated from the Catechism, and being naturally of an inquiring mind, I fell a ready prey to the logic of Infidelity as soon as I began to think for myself. But that which at first threatened to be the utter shipwreck of faith in God and the Bible, was, under God's providence, overruled for good, and merely wrecked my confidence in human creeds and systems of misinterpretation of the Bible.

Gradually I was led to see that though each of the creeds contained some elements of truth, they were, on the whole, misleading and contradictory of God's Word. Among other theories, I stumbled upon Adventism. Seemingly by accident, one evening I dropped into a dusty, dingy hall, where I had heard religious services were held, to see if the handful who met there had anything more sensible to offer than the creeds of the great churches. There, for the first time, I heard something of the views of Second Adventists from the preacher, Mr. Jonas Wendell, long since deceased. **[R1214 : page 4]** Though his Scripture exposition was not entirely clear, and though it was very far from what we now rejoice in, it was sufficient, under God, to re-establish my wavering faith in the divine inspiration of the Bible, and to show that the records of the apostles and prophets are indissolubly linked. What I heard sent me to my Bible to study with more zeal and care than ever before, and I shall ever thank the Lord for that leading; for though Adventism helped me to no single truth, it did help me greatly in the unlearning of errors, and thus prepared me for the truth.

I soon began to see that we were living somewhere near the close of the Gospel age, and near the time when the Lord had declared that the wise, watching ones of his children should come

to a clear knowledge of his plan. At this time, myself and a few other truth-seekers in Pittsburgh and Allegheny formed a class for Bible study, and from 1870 to 1875 was a time of constant growth in grace and knowledge and love of God and his plan. We came to see something of the love of God, how it had made provision for all mankind and how all must be awakened from the tomb in order that God's loving plan might be testified to them, and that they might then, by knowledge and help, through obedience – as a result of Christ's redemptive work – be brought back into harmony with God. This we saw to be the Restitution work foretold in Acts 3:21. But though seeing that the Church was called to joint-heirship with the Lord in the Millennial Kingdom, up to that time we had failed to see clearly the great distinction between the reward of the Church now on trial and the reward of the world after its trial, at the close of the Millennial age – that the reward of the former is to be the glory of the spiritual, divine nature, while that of the latter is to be the glory of restitution – restoration, to the perfection of human nature once enjoyed by their representative and head, Adam, in Eden.

However, we were then merely getting the general outlines of God's plan, and unlearning many long-cherished errors, the time for a clear discernment of the minutiae having not yet fully come. And here we should and do gratefully mention assistance rendered by Brothers George Stetson and George Storrs, both now deceased, the latter the editor of *The Bible Examiner*. The study of the Word of God with these dear brethren led, step by step, into greener pastures and brighter hopes for the world, though it was not until 1872, when I gained a clear view of our Lord's work as our ransom price, that I found the strength and foundation of all hope of restitution to lie in that doctrine. Up to that time, when I read the testimony that all in their graves shall come forth, etc., I yet doubted the full provision – whether it should be understood to include idiots or infants who had died without reaching any degree of understanding, beings to whom the present life and its

experiences would seem to be of little or no advantage. But when, in 1873, I came to examine the subject of restitution from the standpoint of the ransom price given by our Lord Jesus for Adam, and consequently for all lost in Adam, it settled the matter of restitution completely, and gave fullest assurance that ALL *must come forth* from Adamic death and be brought to a clear knowledge of the truth and to fullest opportunity of everlasting life in Christ.

Thus passed the years 1869-1872, and the years following, to 1876, were years of continued growth in grace and knowledge on the part of the handful of Bible students with whom I met regularly in Allegheny. We progressed from our first crude and indefinite ideas of restitution to clearer understanding of the details, God's due time for clearer light not having come until 1874.

During this time, too, we came to recognize the difference between our Lord as "the man who gave himself," and as the Lord who would come again, a spirit being. We saw that spirit-beings can be present, and yet invisible to men, just as we still hold and have set forth in *Millennial Dawn, Vol. II., Chap. x*. And we felt greatly grieved at the error of Second Adventists who were expecting Christ in the flesh, and teaching that the world and all in it except Second Adventists would be burned up in 1873 or 1874, whose time-settings and disappointments and crude ideas generally of the object and manner of his coming brought more or less reproach upon us and upon all who longed for and proclaimed his coming Kingdom.

These wrong views of both the object and manner of the Lord's return led me to write the pamphlet – "*The Object and Manner of The Lord's Return*," of which some 50,000 copies were published.

It was about January 1876 that my attention was specially drawn to the subject of prophetic time, as it relates to these

doctrines and hopes. It came about in this way: I received a paper called *The Herald of The Morning*, sent by its editor, Mr. N. H. Barbour. When I opened it I at once identified it with Adventism from the picture on its cover, and examined it with some curiosity to see what time they would set next for the burning of the world. But judge of my surprise and gratification, when I learned from its contents that the editor was beginning to get his eyes open on the subjects that for some years had so greatly rejoiced our hearts here in Allegheny – that the object of our Lord's return is not to destroy, but to bless all the families of the earth, and that his coming would be thief-like, not in flesh, but as a spirit-being invisible to men, and that the gathering of his Church and separating of the wheat from the tares would progress in the end of this age without the world's being aware of it. I rejoiced to find others coming to the same advanced position, but was astonished to find a further statement very cautiously made, that the editor believed the prophecies to indicate that the Lord was already *present* in the world (unseen and invisible) and that the harvest work of gathering the wheat was already due.

Here was a new thought: Could it be that the *time prophecies* which I had so long despised, because of their misuse by Adventists, were really meant for *us* – to indicate when the Lord would be invisibly *present* to set up his Kingdom – a thing which we clearly saw could be known in no other way? It seemed, to say the least, a reasonable, very reasonable thing, to expect that the Lord would inform his people on the subject – especially as he had promised that the faithful should not be left in darkness with the world, and that though the day of the Lord would come upon all others as a thief in the night (stealthily, unawares), it should not be so to the watching, earnest saints. – 1 Thes. 5:4.

I recalled certain arguments used by the Adventists to prove that 1873 would witness the burning of the world, etc. – the chronology of the world showing that the six thousand years from

Adam ended with the beginning of 1873, and other arguments drawn from the Scriptures and supposed to coincide. Could it be that these, which we had passed by as unworthy of attention, really contained an important truth which they had misapplied?

Anxious to learn, from any quarter, whatever God had to teach, I at once wrote to Mr. Barbour, informing him of our harmony on other points and desiring to know particularly why, and upon what Scriptural evidences, he held that Christ's presence and the harvesting of the Gospel age dated from the Autumn of 1874.

The answer showed that my surmise had been correct, viz.: that the *time arguments*, chronology, etc., were the same as used by Second Adventists in 1873, and explained how Mr. Barbour and Mr. J. A. Paton of Michigan, a co-worker with him, had been regular Second Adventists up to that time, and that when the date 1874 had passed without the world being burned, and without their seeing Christ in the flesh, they were for a time dumb-founded. They had examined the time-prophecies that had seemingly passed unfulfilled, and had been unable to find any flaw, and had begun to wonder whether the *time* was right and their expectations wrong, – whether the views of restitution and blessing to the world, which others were teaching, might not be the right thing to look for. Not long after their 1874 disappointment, a reader of the *Herald*, who had a copy of the *Diaglott*, noticed something in it which he thought peculiar, – that in Matt. 24:27,37,39, the word which in our common version is rendered *coming*, is translated *presence*.

This was the clue, and following it, they had been led through prophetic *time* toward proper views regarding the object and manner of the Lord's return. We of Allegheny on the contrary were led first to proper views of the object and manner of our Lord's return and then to the examination of the *time* for these things, indicated in God's word. Thus God leads his children often from

different starting points of truth; but where the heart is earnest and trustful, the result must be to draw all such together.

But there were no books or other publications setting forth the time-prophecies as then understood, so I paid Mr. Barbour's expenses to come to see me at Philadelphia (where I had business engagements during the summer of 1876), to show me fully and Scripturally, if he could, that the prophecies indicated 1874 as the date at which the Lord's presence and the harvest began. He came, and the evidences satisfied me. A person of positive conviction and fully consecrated to the Lord, I at once saw that the new light had an important bearing upon our duty and work as Christ's disciples; that being in the time of harvest, the harvest-work should be done, and that *present truth* was the sickle by which the Lord would have us do a gathering and reaping work everywhere among his children.

I inquired of Mr. Barbour as to what was being done by him and through the *Herald*. He replied that nothing was being done; that the readers of the *Herald*, being Adventists, had nearly all lost interest and stopped their subscriptions – and that thus, with money exhausted, the *Herald* might be said to be practically suspended. I told him that instead of feeling discouraged and giving up the work since his newly found light on restitution (for when we first met, he had much to learn from me on the fulness of restitution based upon the sufficiency of the ransom given for all), he should rather feel that now he had some good tidings to preach, such as he never had before, and that his zeal should be correspondingly increased. At the same time I felt that the knowledge of the fact that we were already in the harvest period gave to me an impetus to spread the truth such as I never had before. I therefore at once resolved upon a vigorous campaign for the truth.

I determined to curtail my business cares and give my time as well as means to the great harvest work. Accordingly, I sent Mr.



Barbour back to his home, with money and instructions to prepare in concise book form the good tidings so far as then understood, including the time features, while I closed out my Philadelphia business preparatory to engaging in the work, which I afterward did, traveling and preaching.

The little book of 196 pages thus prepared was entitled *The Three Worlds*, and while it was not the first book to teach a measure of restitution, nor the first to treat upon time-prophecy, it was, we believe, the first to *combine* the idea of restitution with time-prophecy. From the sale of this book and from my purse, our traveling expenses, etc., were met. After a time I conceived the idea of adding another harvest laborer and sent for Mr. Paton, who promptly responded and whose traveling expenses were met in the same manner.

But noticing how quickly people seemed to forget what they had heard, it soon became evident that while the meetings were useful in awakening interest, a monthly journal was needed to hold that interest and develop it. It therefore seemed to be the Lord's will that one of our number should settle somewhere and begin again the regular issuing of the *Herald of the Morning*. I suggested that Mr. Barbour do this, as he had experience as a type-setter and could therefore do it most economically, while Mr. Paton and I would continue to travel and contribute to its columns as we should find opportunity. To the objection that the type was now sold, and that the few subscriptions which would come in would not, for a long time, make the journal self-sustaining, I replied that I would supply the money for purchasing type, etc., and leave a few hundred dollars in bank subject to Mr. Barbour's check, and that he should manage it as economically as possible, while Mr. Paton and I continued to travel. This, which seemed to be the Lord's will in the matter, was done.

It was after this, while on a tour of the New England states, that I met Mr. A. P. Adams, then a young Methodist minister, who became deeply interested and accepted the message heartily during the week that I preached to his congregation. Subsequently, I introduced him to little gatherings of interested ones in neighboring towns, and assisted otherwise, as I could, rejoicing in another one who, with study, would soon be a co-laborer in the harvest field. About this time, too, I was much encouraged by the accession of Mr. A. D. Jones, then a clerk in my employ in Pittsburgh – a young man of activity and promise, who soon developed into an active and appreciated co-laborer in the harvest work, and is remembered by some of our readers. Mr. Jones ran well for a time, but ambition or something eventually worked utter shipwreck to his faith, and left us a painful illustration of the wisdom of the Apostle's words: "My brethren, be not many of you teachers, knowing that we shall have the severer judgment." – James 3:1.

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