

# THE COMPREHENSIVE VISION OF JANUARY 3, 1875\*

By William C. White

## Background Material for Vol. 4

During the last of December, 1874, a very severe epidemic of influenza swept through the land, and many in Battle Creek were prostrated. One after another of our family came down with the sickness, and rallied. Mother was the last to be attacked. After the three or four days of the usual run of the disease, we expected her to recover, but she did not improve. Rather she grew worse, and the sanitarium physicians feared that she was in danger of pneumonia. They urged that she be brought without delay to the sanitarium for treatment.

Her illness came at a most inopportune time, for there were important meetings being held, and father was distressed at the thought of her not being able to bear her testimony before the members of the Bible Institute, the Battle Creek church, and many visiting brethren who had gathered to witness the dedication of the college.

Father felt that he could not endure the thought of this representative body of Adventists being deprived of her testimony, and he decided to follow the course taken many times in former years when he had called in the elders of the church to pray for mother's recovery.

I shall never forget the solemnity of the occasion. Mother had been brought down from her sickroom into the parlor. She was seated in a large armchair, warmly wrapped in blankets. Uriah Smith and J. H. Waggoner had come up from the Review office with father, to unite with him in prayer, and four members of our family were also permitted to be present.

### Ellen G. White in Vision

Elder Waggoner prayed. Elder Smith followed in prayer, and then father prayed. It seemed that heaven was very near to us. Then mother undertook to pray, and in a hoarse, labored voice, she uttered two or three sentences of petition.

Suddenly her voice broke clear and musical, and we heard the ringing shout, "Glory to God!" We all looked up, and saw that she was in vision. Her hands were folded across her breast. Her eyes were directed intently upward, and her lips were closed. There was no breathing, although the heart continued its action.

As she looked intently upward, an expression of anxiety came into her face. She threw aside her blankets, and, stepping forward, walked back and forth in the room. Wringing her hands, she moaned, "Dark! Dark! All dark! So dark!" Then after a few moments' silence, she exclaimed with emphasis, and a brightening of her countenance, "A light! A little light! More light! Much light!"

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\*Much of the content of the first half of Vol. 4 of the Testimonies, also the latter part of Vol. 3 is the fruitage of this remarkable vision.

This we understood afterward, when she told us that the world was presented to her as enshrouded in the mists and fog of error, of superstition, of false tradition, and of worldliness.

Then as she looked intently and with distress upon this scene, she saw little lights glimmering through the darkness. These lights increased in power. They burned brighter, and they were lifted higher and higher. Each one lighted other lights, which also burned brightly, until the whole world was lighted.

Following her exclamatory remarks regarding the lights, she sat down in her chair. After a few minutes, she drew three long, deep breaths, and then resumed her natural breathing. Her eyes rested upon the company that had been assembled for prayer. Father, knowing that after a vision everything looked strange to her, knelt by her side, and spoke in her ear, saying, "Ellen, you have been in vision."

"Yes," she said, her voice sounding far away as though she were speaking to someone in another room.

"Were you shown many things?" father asked.

"Yes," she replied.

"Would you like to tell us about them now?" he asked.

"Not now," was her response. So the company was dismissed, and she went back to her room.

Father then hastened down to the Review office to meet the brethren who were coming in from the East and the West to attend the dedication.

About sundown he came up from the office, walking through the snow, for it had been snowing quite heavily during the afternoon. Entering the house, he threw off his overcoat in the kitchen, and hastened up to mother's room. There, after a few words of inquiry about the experience of the afternoon, he said, "Ellen, there is to be an important meeting in the church this evening. Do you wish to attend?"

"Certainly," she answered. So she dressed for the meeting, and with father, walked down through the snow to the church.

In the Review for January 8, Elder Waggoner wrote thus of this meeting:

"The closing exercises on Sunday evening, January 3, were of unusual interest. A recapitulation of subjects canvassed was presented by Brother Smith. At this point Sister White entered the house. She had been very sick for several days, and all had resigned their hope of hearing her again before their departure. But the Lord, in answer to prayer, visited her in mercy and in power, and to the great joy of all present she was enabled to give a powerful exhortation and cheering testimony. Brother White followed with a stirring appeal which went to the hearts of the large assembly." -- Review and Herald, Jan. 8, 1875

## The Vision Related

In answer to the prayers offered, Mrs. White had been fully and permanently healed. Her cold and hoarseness were gone; her weakness was replaced with vigor, and she bore her part during special meetings that were held for several evenings after the dedication. In the next evening meeting she spoke about three quarters of an hour.

In her remarks she spoke with great emphasis upon the necessity of our taking broader views regarding the work which God had given us to do. She dwelt upon the necessity of our laying much broader plans for the education of home and foreign workers. She said that our movements in sending workers to foreign fields were altogether too slow and inadequate. She told us that in vision she had seen, in different parts of the world, companies studying the Bible, finding there the promise of Christ's soon return to redeem His people, and also the facts regarding the sacredness of the seventh-day Sabbath. She saw little companies here and there keeping the Sabbath without knowing that there were any other Sabbathkeepers in the world; and she told us that as we heard of such companies, it would be our duty to send experienced ministers to labor among them, teaching them the way of truth more fully. Otherwise there would arise disagreements among them, and they would become discouraged and give up the faith.

During the years, as our work has progressed, we have found in many lands just such companies as those described by Mrs. White in this meeting. Not long after this meeting, we learned of groups of Sabbathkeepers in Germany. The largest company was in Volwinkle, Elberfeld. After we heard of them, it was some time before we were able to send a teacher among them, and already the results of dissension had begun to manifest themselves. However, the earnest labors of one who had had long experience as an Adventist minister brought a degree of unity and harmony, and from among the young men in this company some entered the field as preachers.

There was, as we learned later, another marked instance of a group of Sabbathkeepers being raised up in Australia at that time.

## A Broadening Work

In Mrs. White's rehearsal of her vision regarding the growth of the work, which was given her on January 3, 1875, not only did she speak of seeing companies of believers who were waiting for the gospel messenger, but she also told her hearers that the time was not far distant when we should send ministers to many foreign lands, that God would bless their labors, and that there would be in many places a work of publishing the present truth. She said that in the vision, she had seen printing presses running in many foreign lands, printing periodicals, tracts, and books containing truths regarding the sacredness of the Sabbath, and the soon coming of Jesus.

At this point, father interrupted and said, "Ellen, can you tell us the names of those countries?" She hesitated a moment, and then said, "N-o, I do not know the names. The picture of the places and of the printing presses is very clear, and if I should ever see them, I would recognize them. But I did not hear the names of the places. Oh, yes, I remember one, the angel said, 'Australia.'"

At the time when this vision was given, we had one publishing house, and were contemplating the establishment of a second one in California. We had one health institution, and were about to dedicate our first college. It was several years before we had presses of our own in Switzerland and Norway, and ten years before we had work of any kind in Australia, the country that was especially mentioned in the relation of the vision.

The rapid growth of our work in the United States, and the beginning of evangelistic work in Scandinavia, England, and on the Continent, absorbed the attention of our people and taxed their resources to the uttermost. . . .

During the ten years following the vision, the Pacific Press, in Oakland, a sanitarium in St. Helena, and two academies -- one in Healdsburg, California, the other in South Lancaster, Massachusetts -- were established. At the same time new conferences were being organized, covering nearly all the unoccupied territory of the United States.

Early in 1885, steps were taken to carry the message to Australia, and on May 10, S. N. Haskell, J. O. Corliss, and M. C. Israel, with their families, together with Henry Scott, a printer, and William Arnold, a book salesman, sailed on the steamer "Alameda" for Sydney.

#### The European Press

Three months later, on August 8, Ellen White, accompanied by her faithful secretary and traveling companion, Sara McEnterfer, and son, the writer, and his wife, and daughter Ella, sailed from Boston on the steamer "Cephalonia" for Liverpool, en route to Basel, Switzerland, where a general meeting was to be held in September.

In Basel, Ellen White was permitted to see for the first time with her natural eyes, one of the printing presses that had been shown to her in vision ten years before. We arrived in the city late in the evening, and the next morning were shown the various departments of the new publishing house at 48 Weirweg. "This place looks natural," remarked Mrs. White to B. L. Whitney, as we entered the pressroom. "I have seen these presses before." Soon the presses stopped, and the young men who had been feeding them were introduced to her. She shook hands with them, and turning to Elder Whitney, she said, "Where is the other one?"

Elder Whitney, desiring to ascertain just how much Mrs. White knew about the affairs of the office, inquired, "What other one, Sister White?"

She answered, "There is an older man who works in this room, and I have a message for him."

Elder Whitney replied, "Brother Albert Deichy, foreman of the room, is in the city this morning on business.. You will see him here tomorrow."

This was the first fulfillment of her statement that if she should see the places where the presses were running, she would recognize them.

### The Scandinavian Press

A few months later we visited Christiania [Oslo], Norway, and when we entered the new publishing house, mother remarked, "This place seems very familiar to me. I have seen this before."

When we reached the pressroom, she said, "I have seen these presses before. This is one of the places shown me years ago where publications were being issued in countries outside the United States."

Then, returning with Elder Matteson to his editorial room, she gave him much counsel about his work, thus indicating her familiarity with the work of this office. Among other instruction, she pointed out that he was exhausting his strength by carrying a great burden of detail regarding the management of the publishing house, that should be borne by other men.

### The Australian Press

Six years later, in December, 1891, Mrs. White, accompanied by several members of her family and G. B. Starr, arrived in Australia, where she lived and labored nearly nine years. We reached Melbourne the first week of 1892, and when she entered the publishing house in North Fitzroy, she spoke of the building, its different parts, and its uses as though she was fully acquainted with the place. When we came to the pressroom, she said, "I have seen this place before. I have seen these persons, and I know the conditions existing among the workers in this department. There is a lack of unity here, a lack of harmony."

Soon after this, she wrote words of counsel to the workers in the office, and especially those in the pressroom, which, when heeded, brought about important changes.

The report of these three experiences of visiting publishing houses in distant lands, and of seeing with her natural eyes the printing presses that had been shown to her in the vision of 1875, greatly cheered our brethren in their difficult endeavor to provide facilities for the publication of the third angel's message in many places. . . .

The vision of January 3 was given at a most opportune time to make a deep impression upon the denomination. Its relation before the large number of workers and prospective workers attending the Biblical institute, and those gathered to the dedication of the new college, as well as the standard bearers in Battle Creek, not only resulted in stirring those present, but in influencing our people in the entire field as these workers returned to their homes. And the remarkable manifestations connected with the healing of Mrs. White deepened the solemn conviction that God had visited His people with light.

"The vision itself lasted only about ten minutes, and furnishes another illustration of the rapidity with which revelations were communicated to her at such times. Besides that portion which pertained to the great expansion of the work of God in the world, there were given to her many messages for individuals, imparting counsel for them personally, and for proper relationships in the home and in the church. About one hundred and forty pages of matter based upon this remarkable vision are found in Testimonies for the Church, vol.3, pp. 434-575. In addition much of the first half of Vol. 4 is based on the light received in this vision.

In addition to the foregoing many pages of counsel and instruction were written out by hand and sent to individuals for whom they were given. Some of this instruction was given for persons whom she did not see until years later." -- The Review and Herald, Feb. 10 and 17, 1938.