

TESTIMONIES, VOLUME 9

By D. A. Delafield

Backgrounds of the Times

Volume nine appeared in 1909 five years after the issuance of Volume 8. During this time the Panama Canal was under construction. Theodore Roosevelt mediated peace settlements between the Japanese and the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War. The San Francisco earthquake occurred April 18 and 19, 1906. William H. Taft had become president of the United States.

In the spring of 1900 an aggressively anti-foreign group of Chinese revolutionists known as Boxers rose in revolt to expel the "foreign devils" from China. The Boxers occupied Peking and laid the foreign legations under siege. An international expedition that included US troops relieved Peking on the 14th of August 1900. The United States government paid indemnity for this, the invasion of US troops being a violation of the open door policy which might have prepared the way for China to be divided up among foreign powers.

Points to Emphasize

Note that Volume 9 is a small book, less than 300 pages. It is in some ways the most important of all the Testimony volumes.

One of the most important emphases during the class period should be on Question No. 1, a-f. Here is provided a splendid opportunity to establish clearly the predictive element in the writings of Ellen G. White. Note the 6 points mentioned as prophecies and call attention to fulfillment of these predictions in the events of our time.

A great poet once said, "If thou canst look into the seeds of time and tell which seeds will grow and which will not, speak thou to me." To illustrate: Suppose you are a farmer. One day you say to your neighbors, "Come over to my farm. I want to show you something." You take them to the corn row. In your hand is a fist full of corn kernels. "Do you see these seeds," you ask. "Now I am going to plant these kernels here." Taking the first kernel in your hand you say, "This seed will grow. This next one will grow. This next one also, the next and the next. But numbers 6 and 7 will not grow. Eight, nine, and ten will grow, but eleven and twelve will not. Thirteen and fourteen will grow, but number 15 will be destroyed by a worm."

Your friends say to you, "How do you know these things?" Your response is: "Come back when the corn is growing and you will see that I have accurately estimated the future of every kernel." Sure enough when they return, developments are just as you had indicated. The first five corn kernels grew, the next two did not, etc.

The poet indicated that if a man could make such prognostications he would be worthy of the ear and attention of every human being. The Bible prophets can do this. They have the ability to prognosticate. Read Isa. 46:9, and 10. So also did Ellen White. Volume 9 is a classic exhibit of prophetic foresight. Dwell much upon this during your discussion. Establish confidence.

Question No. 8 needs to be understood. There were a few seasons in the 1890s when Ellen White could not recognize completely an administration dominated by a few men who, with "kingly power" ruled the work of the church. These leaders were not evil men but were the victims of an inadequate structure of organization--too few leaders with too much responsibility, responsibility that needs to be shared with other men.

In the General Conference session of 1901 the situation worsened but the new structure of administrative organization which evolved in the Battle Creek meetings corrected the past mistakes and greatly enlarged the number of men carrying responsibilities. These changes the Lord approved.

Mrs. White was distressed by the reaction of some independent minds in the church who refused to cooperate with church leadership and insisted on their own way in nearly everything. This was as bad as "kingly power" for it did not recognize the fact that God spoke through designated officials of the church chosen to lead at duly authorized conference sessions.

Read pp. 257-269 carefully and encourage a sense of interdependence in the church, all cooperating and all working together as a unit, with harmony, love and good will.

No. 3 should be stressed -- Faithfulness in Health Reform. Pages 153-166 should be read at least once each year by every Seventh-day Adventist.

Here are the pages read before the delegates at the 1909 General Conference session in Takoma Park -- ripe, mature counsel. The health reform was given to us to help us not to hurt us, to help develop character. He who overcomes on the point of appetite will be able to overcome "on every other part," so wrote Ellen White in In Heavenly Places, p. 194:

"With man's nature, and the terrible weight of his sins pressing upon Him, our Redeemer withstood the power of Satan upon this great leading temptation, which imperils the souls of men. If man should overcome this temptation, he could conquer on every other point."

Observe No. 7 where the servant of God deals with religious oppression soon to become reality in this country and abroad. What are the issues in the final acts of the great controversy? When Sunday is enforced by civil law what should Seventh-day Adventists do? Who will be able to stand for Christ and His law in that day when a man-made institution will supplant the Bible Sabbath?

"Religious powers, allied to heaven by profession, and claiming to have the characteristics of a lamb, will show by their acts that they have the heart of a dragon and that they are instigated and controlled by Satan. The time is coming when God's people will feel the hand of persecution because they keep holy the seventh day. Satan has caused the change of the Sabbath in the hope of carrying out his purpose for the defeat of God's plans. He seeks to make the commands of God as less force in the world than human laws. The man of sin, who thought to change times and laws, and who has always oppressed the people of God, will cause laws to be made enforcing the observance of the first day of the week. But God's people are to stand firm for Him. And the Lord will work in their behalf, showing plainly that He is the God of gods."--
Testimonies, Vol. 9, pp. 229,230

It might be well to deal with the last question in "The Times of Volume 9" in conclusion. Repeat from memory the well known statement from Life Sketches, page 196: "We have nothing to fear for the future except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us and His teaching in our past history." Poor memory is one of our greatest dangers. We have a debt that we owe to the past. We can pay this debt by continuing to study the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy by keeping fresh in our memories the events of the early years of the movement and the lessons God has taught us through the mistakes we have made.

Ellen White wrote much concerning the review of past experiences that have come to God's people in ages gone by. e.g. "The experience of Israel . . . as recorded in the 105 and 106 Psalms down to end of paragraph!" -- Testimonies to Ministers, pp. 98,99

And again the following from 6 Bible Commentary, p. 1091:

"The Lord desires me to call the attention of His people to the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. Read this chapter every day, and from it the value that God places on sanctified, heaven-born love, and let the lesson that it teaches come home to your hearts. Learn that Christlike love is of heavenly birth, and that without it all other qualifications are worthless." -

We need to remember that love is basic to Christian life and witness. We should never forget that the God who led Israel through their experiences in the wilderness is still living to lead His people safely through to the kingdom of God.

"There is no need to doubt, to be fearful that the work will not succeed. God is at the head of the work, and He will set everything in order. If matters need adjusting at the head of the work, God will attend to that, and work to right every wrong. Let us have faith that God is going to carry the noble ship which bears the people of God safely into port.

"When I voyaged from Portland, Maine, to Boston, many years ago, a storm came upon us, and the great waves dashed us to and fro. The chandeliers fell, and the trunks were rolled from side to side, like balls. The passengers were frightened, and many were screaming, waiting in expectation of death.

"After a while the pilot came on board. The captain stood near the pilot as he took the wheel, and expressed fear about the course in which the ship was directed. 'Will you take the wheel?' asked the pilot. The captain was not ready to do that, for he knew that he lacked experience.

"Then some of the passengers grew uneasy, and said they feared the pilot would dash them upon the rocks. 'Will you take the wheel?' asked the pilot; but they knew that they could not manage the wheel.

"When you think that the work is in danger, pray, 'Lord, stand at the wheel. Carry us through the perplexity. Bring us safely into port.' Have we not reason to believe that the Lord will bring us through triumphantly?"

"There are before me many who are old hands in the cause. I have known some of you for the last thirty years. Brethren, have we not seen crisis after crisis come upon the work, and has not the Lord carried us through, and wrought for the glory of His name? Can you not believe in Him? You cannot with your finite minds understand the working of all the providences of God. Let God take care of His own work." -- Treasure Chest, p. 95

A Report to Remember

In the September 1968 Northern Light, official organ of the Northern European Division, appeared the following statement by a German socialologist, Dr. Irmgard Simon, who published her doctoral thesis about Seventh-day Adventists in 1965. Her subject was Ellen G. White.

"As to the question of how it was possible that a woman who had never received a real education, and also suffered from poor health, could fill such an important and far-reaching office in spite of these handicaps--many answers have been given.

"The most important reason was to be found in her powerful faith, in her strong religious equipment, and in her visionary capacities, things that rendered her absolutely certain of being one especially called. Apart from that, she was an exceptionally talented woman, rich in ideas and imagination, hungry for knowledge, always progressive and willing to improve herself, and exceedingly good public speaker and interpreter of the highest degree, and talented with an unusual capacity for organization. The feeling of being one especially chosen gave her energy, persistency and patience.

"She was filled with lofty moral ideas, which she met in her own personal life, and which she also expected her fellow-beings to live up to. In addition to this, she knew human beings as few have done. She looked upon people in the modern way in the wholeness of their beings, with body, mind and spirit. She was without fear of men' courageous and consistent, she struggled within the movement to solve the many problems. She solved problems which the churches did not expect to see solved in many decades.

"In spite of her strong, yes, ecstatic union with God, she rarely lost the ground of reality. On the contrary she tackled many practical questions in life. Ellen G. White lived for only one purpose, to benefit and expand the denomination she served, in order that her church members might be well prepared, and by a God-pleasing life belong to the number of the "Remnant Church."

"Her knowledge of the various subjects she would practice with all emphasis, yet not in a over-zealous or fanatical way, for she rebuked all kind of fanaticism, but in such a way as to fit prevailing circumstances. E. G. White was a wise and commanding woman, and she had a strong soul. She thought of and lived for the movement which she formed. She disdained "the world," and worked untiringly for the purpose of breaking its ties and winning people for Christ.

"It is easy to understand that a person involved in such a work, and being its central figure, would receive severe criticism, especially being a woman."

Dr. Simon discussed the question whether or not Mrs. White was a mystic of the church. She is of the opinion that there is no adequate scientific explanation for her visions and experiences. A Catholic Church historian by the name of Rahner has observed that E. G. White might very well have been canonized if she had been a Roman Catholic:

"Undoubtedly it was the established fact of her mystic vision of God which worked as a powerful radiance on her fellow-believers, enabling her to be their leader without holding an official office in the Church. She functioned as a messenger between God and the churches. Through her the members had a part in the Divine Being. This explains the strong position E. G. White has won among Adventists. In spite of her high position, E. G. White never fell for the temptation other founders of various movements have done, where they claimed to be elevated themselves above the weaknesses of human flesh, but was a servant and did not claim the honour that belongs to God.

"The Seventh-day Adventists still live on the spirit of E. G. White and only as far as this heritage lives on do the Adventists have a future."

Interestingly Mrs. White declared:

"Perilous times are before us. Everyone who has a knowledge of the truth should awake, and place himself, body, soul, and spirit, under the discipline of God. The enemy is on our track. We must be wide awake, on our guard against him. We must put on the whole armor of God. We must follow the directions given through the Spirit of prophecy. We must love and obey the truth for this time. This will save us from accepting strong delusions. God has spoken to us through His word. He has spoken to us through the testimonies to the church, and through the books that have helped to make plain our present duty and the position that we should occupy. The warnings that have been given, line upon line, precept upon precept, should be heeded. If we disregard them, what excuse can we offer?" -- 8 Testimonies, p. 298

Suggestion:

Be sure to encourage all students to now begin the systematic study of the Testimonies.

Plan 1. Read straight through, Volumes 1-9. Cover 13 pages daily. Finish in a year's time.

Plan 2. Read Volumes 1-9. Cover 6-7 pages daily. Take 2 years to finish 9 volumes.

Plan 3. Adopt either schedule of reading in plan 1 or 2, but start with Volume 9. Read back to Volume 1. This is a real Countdown - 9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1.

Plan 4. Adopt either schedule of reading in plan 1 or 2, but read Volumes 5-9, then 1-4. Success to you all!