

~~#~~ SHUT DOOR AND CLOSE OF PROBATION

Close of Probation Advocated by Himes, Litch, in 1840. [Quoting Rev. x, 7] "the mystery of God [or dispensation of grace] shall be finished." It would appear from this, that upon the fall of the Turkish empire which will take place on the closing up of the 'sixth vial' and 'trumpet,' that the day of probation will close." --Himes and Litch, Signs of the Times, Vol. I, No. 9, pp. 69, 70.

Approval of, by Miller. "Yours [Himes'] and Bro. Litch's articles on the closing of the door of mercy are good. . . . [After quoting Rev. 14: 15-19]. To say positively when the door will be shut, I cannot; for I do not know how much time may be included in the words, "when the seventh trumpet begins to sound." That the seventh trump has begun to sound, I have little or no doubt; and how long beginning to sound may last, whether one month, six months, or a year, I cannot tell."--Id. Quoted in Views of the Prophecies . . . Selected from Mss. of Wm. Miller," p. 252.

Probation to Close Ten or Fifteen Days Prior to Advent. "I am strong in my conviction that the next will be the last Lord's day sinners will ever have in probation; and within ten or fifteen days from thence they will see Him whom they have hated and despised, to their shame and everlasting contempt."--William Miller, Midnight Cry, Oct. 12, 1844, p. 122.

Time Correct. Nature of Event Questioned. "We cheerfully admit that we have been mistaken in the nature of the event we expected would occur on the tenth day of the seventh month; but we cannot yet admit that our great High Priest did not on that very day ACCOMPLISH ALL THAT THE TYPE WOULD JUSTIFY US TO EXPECT. WE NOW BELIEVE HE DID."--Joseph Marsh, Ed., Voice of Truth, Nov. 7, 1844.

Coming, Not in Glory, but As the Bridegroom. The true nature of this event was first intimated by J. Turner in Hope of Israel, Extra, Published in Portland, Maine, about December 20. Also by J. Turner and A. Hale in The Advent Mirror, January, 1845, under the heading, "Has Not the Saviour Come as the Bridegroom?" (See citations pp. 8, 15)

To the question, Where does the marriage take place, Hale and Turner found the answer in Daniel 7: 13:

"Must not this actual bestowment of power and territory be identical, as to time, with the marriage of the Lamb--if it be not indeed the event denoted by his marriage?--his inauguration in the holy city? . . . If so, the coming of the Bridegroom to the marriage must denote that change in his heavenly state, in which he comes to the Ancient of Days to receive dominion, and glory, which we know must take place before he can come in his glory." [Compare G.C. 428, 480]

"That the Bridegroom has come, and that those who were ready have gone in with him to the marriage, is at least possible; and there are some reasons for believing that to be the fact. These reasons may be given in considering this an awfully serious question:--Is the door shut? By this act is undoubtedly denoted the exclusion from all farther access to saving mercy, those who have rejected its offers during their time of probation."

Endorsed by William Miller. "I presume, Brother Marsh, you have seen Bro. Hale and Turner's Advent Mirror, printed in Boston, Jan. 1845, concerning the marriage, in the parable of the ten virgins. I do believe in the main they are right--that cannot be the personal coming of Christ. Why, say you, Read Luke 12: 36 [Quoted] You see, His coming, for which we look, is after the wedding. Has Christ come in the sense of Matt. 25: 10. I think he has. Was the contract finished, and when? My opinion is that it was on or about the tenth of the seventh month. . . . There was a division line drawn then. . . . I have not seen a genuine conversion since. If I am correct you will see a general and powerful struggle among our nominal sects, for revivals in a short time; but it will prove a failure, no one will be made truly pious. They will know and say, Lord! Lord! open unto us. They will make many pharisaical prayers, but will not be heard. And soon the Saviour will come in person."--Voice of Truth, Feb. 19, 1845.

Not a New Conviction. Though Turner and Hale had introduced the idea that Christ came as the Bridegroom, receiving the kingdom, October 22, 1844, with its logical sequence that the "door was shut," William Miller and others had advocated the "shut door," in the latter part of 1844, before the appearance of Turner's article.

"We have done our work in warning sinners, and in trying to awake a formal church. God in His providence has SHUT THE DOOR. . . . Never since the days of the apostles, has there been such a division line drawn as was drawn about the 10th or 23rd day of the 7th Jewish month. Since that time they say 'they have no confidence in us.' We have need of patience, after we have done the will of God, that we may receive the promise."--Advent Herald, Dec. 11, 1844.

"We think the parable of the ten virgins clearly tells us where we are. The proclamation of the tenth day of the seventh month, we believe, was the midnight cry, when all, not a part, of the virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. This work continued until the tenth day passed. Since then, the lamps of the foolish have been 'going out'--their faith is dying--the wise have no oil to spare."--Advent Herald, Nov. 13, 1844.

"We closed up our work for the world some time ago, this is my conviction; and now God has given us a little season for self-preparation, and to prove us before the world. . . . The world and the nominal church know nothing at all of your hope--they cannot be made to understand us. Let them alone."--F. G. Brown, in Advent Herald, Letter dated Nov. 15, 1844.

Advent Leaders Began to Change in Spring of 1845. The question of the "shut door" or close of probation soon came to be a point of division among the leaders. William Miller wrote:

"You ask, why I do not show whether the probation of sinners is ended. I answer, It is a close point, and if handled at all, it ought to be done very wisely, and with a great deal of humility. . . . There is much sensitiveness on this point among our good brethren, therefore I would

much rather keep my views in my own breast, if I could, and do right, than run the risk of hurting the oil and the wine. You will, therefore, permit me to give my views by the Scripture."--Advent Herald, Feb. 12, pp. 2,3.

As reasons for believing that there would be a period between the close of probation and the coming of Christ, Miller quoted and commented on Dan. 12: 10; Rev. 7: 13,14; Zech. 13: 9; Mal. 3: 18 and Rev. 22: 11, a text which "is perfectly plain, and needs no comment." He then reiterates his personal belief:

"I did believe, . . . and I must honestly confess I do now, that I have done my work in warning sinners, and that in the seventh month. I know my feelings are no rule for others; therefore, let every one who feels he has a duty to do to sinners let him do it. . . . But I must be honest; when I am enquired of, I must state my own conviction honestly. I have done it, and given my reasons from the word of God. And now let me say, brethren, we will have no contention on this point for we be brethren."--Id.

Himes Differs. The foregoing letter from William Miller was followed by comments from Himes, who took the position that there would be no period before Christ came when sinners could ^{not} be saved. That it was Christ's coming in glory that shut the door. "We are unable," he says, "to see the correctness of the application of some of the above texts, i.e., how they prove the door of mercy will be closed before the end."--Id.

Alleged Conversions Urged as Argument Against. Typical of some of the correspondents is the following from E. C. Wellcome:

"We have supposed, while following out the prophetic periods according to our faith (yet not to their end) that we had been led to the close of probation. We have felt that . . . our labor for our fellow-men was done, and we could cheerfully say, Amen. . . . But by recent developments it is evident that more can be done for perishing souls. I have witnessed cases of those who have been led astray by blind guides, . . . who now begin to see their doleful condition. . . . Although the mass have forsaken God, and shut his truth from them, yet there are some that want and will receive light and truth, even at this late hour."--Advent Herald, Feb. 19, 1845, p. 11.

The Question Debated. For two weeks, nearly the entire paper was given over to a discussion of the subject between Hale and Himes. The former assuming the "shut door," stating that the question hinges largely upon, "Have we had the cry?" Regarding which he says:

"If we have not had the cry, it is difficult to determine why the Saviour, in a discourse designed to guard his church against the dangers which they must be exposed to, at the period of his second advent, should not have warned us of such a false movement, as he must have seen it, of the movement of the 7th month to be a false alarm. As he has given us no intimation of such a counterfeit movement among his people, I must believe we have had the cry denoted in the parable." Id. Feb. 26. [The discussion continued in the issue also for March 5, 1845.]

Hale logically deduces that as the parable has "been fulfilled down to the cry," the only questions to which it can fairly give rise are these,--Has the Bridegroom come? or does the cry still present to us our duty to proclaim, "Go ye out to meet Him."

Trend Away from the "Shut Door." A few, like George Needham, continued to say, "I am, and have been convinced since the 10th of the 7th month, that our work with the world and the foolish virgins is done. I must deny that glorious movement as the work of God, or I can come to no other conclusion.--That I can never do. How can we do them any good?" Voice of Truth, March 19, 1845. Yet the view of Himes prevailed. Miller deplored the controversy, as indicative of division, expressed his hope that Christ would come before the end of the year, and urged, "Let us be silent for at least two months, if Christ does not come before, and by that time I think we shall obtain some light."

Repudiation of "Shut Door" at Albany Conference. At the Conference at Albany, N. Y., beginning April 29, 1845, among the points on which agreement was reached, was the "duty of ministers to continue to preach the gospel to every creature, even unto the end." At a Conference at Boston, a few days later, William Miller is reported to have said, that "after the seventh month he felt for a time that his work was done. But when he commenced his lectures at Albany, all his darkness was gone. Therefore, brethren, he said, where you find a door open, enter upon that field of labor, and labor until the Master shall tell you to stop."--Advent Herald, June 4, 1845, p. 132.

Even by Hale. Replying to frequent questions as to whether he still held "that the Bridegroom has come, and that the door is shut," Hale, at this same meeting is reported to have said that "he could never give up that position, for

he had never taken it. . . . He had given the reasons why he supposed these events might have taken place."--Id., June 11, p. 138.

Involvements of This Step. Leaders of the great body of Adventists did, for a time after the disappointment, follow the application of the parable of the ten virgins to its logical conclusion. They had sounded the "midnight cry," They now saw implications in the next phrases:

"The bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut." Matt. 25: 10.

In changing their first views, ^{they} must logically repudiate the seventh-month movement, including the ending of the prophetic period on Oct. 22, 1844. The beginning of the 2300 day period must then be set forward. The way was opened for various interpretations, and for a period of years, repeated times were set for their ending. This, together with the rejection of the advancing light seen by some regarding the sanctuary service in heaven, the claims of the Sabbath, and the manifestation of the prophetic gift, made it impossible for them to advance. They soon became divided among themselves, and ^{began} to decline in influence and numbers. In their early bitter opposition to the Sabbath-keeping group they frequently referred to them as the "Sabbatarian," or "shut-door" followers.

Although Ellen Harmon was associated with those who believed in the "shut door," a "shut door" involving at first the close of probation for the world, no more sinners to be converted, the closing of the door of mercy, it is noteworthy that these strong expressions used frequently by her contemporaries are not to be found in her writings. Though it seems not to have found recognition in print at the time, the view of a hundred and forty-four thousand Adventists ready to enter the city at the end of the way, could hardly be reconciled, indeed, with such a "shut door," in view of the fact that not more than fifty or a hundred thousand at most were estimated to have entered into the "midnight cry" movement of 1844.

Bridegroom's Coming and Change of Christ's Ministry in the Sanctuary. Turner

and Hale, with their view of Christ's having come as the Bridegroom, although they associated this event with Dan. 7: 13, did not see this as a change of ministration in the sanctuary. In Ellen Harmon's vision, given at Exeter, Maine, February, 1845, she saw this change,—first the Father going into the Holy of holies, followed by Christ with the retinue of angels, who was represented as saying: "Wait here; I am going to My Father to receive the kingdom; keep your garments spotless, and in a little while I will return from the wedding and receive you to Myself." E. W. pp. 54-56.

Thereafter, Mrs. White's references to the "shut door" may be understood as the door of the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, and was soon coupled with the "open door," to the second apartment, and was confined in its application to those who had wilfully rejected the great light that had shone in such mighty power in connection with the former advent movement, and especially in the summer of 1844—the "midnight cry." See Early Writings, p. 36, also the "Open and Shut Door," pp. 42-45.

The Door Opens. At first the world of sinners was understood to be excluded from Christ's mediation. But questions soon began to arise. First, a typical case of one young lady whose father had not permitted her to attend lectures, hence she had not rejected light. Said Ellen Harmon:

"God has never shown me that there is no salvation for such persons. It is only those who have had the light of truth presented to them and knowingly rejected it." Quoted from letter of Mrs. Truesdail in G.S.A., p. 222.

Other classes were soon seen to be subjects of Christ's mediation, their names being on the breastplate of Christ as he continued his mediation for Israel in the Most Holy place:

"When the Master of the house (the Lord Jesus) rose up and shut to the door, all honest believers, that had submitted to his will, and children that had not arrived to the years of accountability, were undoubtedly borne in on his breastplate of judgment which is over his heart."—Joseph Bates, R & H, Jan. 1851, p. 39.

"Erring Brethren. We believe there are many in the Laodicean church who will yet be converted as the Apostle directs in his epistle to the waiting brethren. . . .

Hidden souls. "We believe that God has reserved to himself a multitude of precious souls, some even in the churches. These he will manifest in his own time. They were living up to what light they had when Jesus ceased his mediation for the world, and when they hear the voice of the Shepherd in the message of the third angel, they will gladly receive the whole truth."
--James White, R. & H., April 7, 1851.

The Meaning Changes. Thus it is manifestly misleading to charge the Sabbath-keeping Adventists after the Sabbath conferences of 1848 and 1849 with still holding to the close of probation for the whole world. For a time, however, they continued to use the term "shut door."

"Still a Believer in the Shut Door Theory." Of her own experience in relation to these issues, Mrs. White declares:

"For a time after the disappointment in 1844, I did hold in common with the Advent body, that the door of mercy was then forever closed to the world. This position was taken before my first vision was given me. It was the light given me of God that corrected our error, and enabled us to see the true position.

"I am still a believer in the shut door theory, but not in the sense in which we at first employed the term, or in which it is employed by my opponents.

"There was a shut door in Noah's day. . . . There was a shut door in the days of Abraham. . . . There was a shut door in Christ's day. I was shown in vision, and I still believe, that there was a shut door in 1844. All who saw the light of the first and second angel's messages and rejected that light, were left in darkness." Quoted in "Testimony of Jesus," by F. H. Wilcox, p. 95.

False Reformations Seen. In Oswego, a Bro. M. was conducting a Methodist revival in the winter of 1849 to 50. Other Adventists were taunting the believers with the mighty work of God thus manifested. Mrs. White wrote:

"They triumphed over the believers in present truth. I told them to wait and see the result of the matter, and referred them to Hosea 5: 6,7. But in the midst of the revival M. was arrested and placed in confinement." He was found to have been guilty of theft.--Spiritual Gifts, Vol. II, pp. 123, 124.

It is in the light of such experiences as this that we can better understand the following, written at that time and published in the Present Truth:

"The excitements and false reformations of this day do not move us, for we know that the Master of the house rose up in 1844, and shut the door of the first apartment of the heavenly tabernacle; and now we certainly expect that they will 'go with their flocks,' 'to seek the Lord; but they shall not find Him; He hath withdrawn himself (within the second veil)

from them.' The Lord has shown me that the power which is with them is a mere human influence, and not the power of God."--Present Truth, March, 1850, p. 64.

The Experience of the Disciples. After Christ's ascension, the disciples for a period of seven or eight years confined their evangelistic effort to their own people. When the time came for the Gentiles to hear and receive the gospel, it was necessary for God to reveal in vision his purpose. Yet no one would maintain that God was not leading them, or that it was not in His providence that they thus restricted their labors. So, in giving the unfolding truths of the third angel's message, it is not strange that God permitted, or even led the few believers to limit for a time their efforts to those who had passed through and maintained their faith in the first in the first and second messages.

The Better Way Out. We have seen how the main body of Adventists by opposing the dawning rays of light, repudiated the "shut door," and gave up faith in God's guidance in the former advent movement, and in the accuracy of the prophetic reckoning of the 2300 years. To those who maintained their faith in that prophetic period and in God's guidance, the coming of the Bridegroom and the "shut door," of the parable of the ten virgins, so closely associated with their experience, seemed for a time the only explanation of their disappointment. Developing light on the sanctuary, as a result of Bible study, gradually led them first to an ever widening door, not only of possible converts to their message, but of access to the public. By 1852 so many were accepting the message who had not accepted the earlier advent message, that ^{it} was evident that such were subjects of grace.

Why Not Corrected by Spirit of Prophecy? The rule already seen to operate in the development of truth applies here also. God leads his people no faster through the Spirit of prophecy than they are led through their Bible study. So intricately related to maintenance of faith in the "Midnight Cry," ^{was} the "shut door," that a revelation abruptly pointing out its inconsistency would have seemed contrary to other points of truth that were not clearly seen as yet.