

A SKETCH OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRESENT TRUTH

Many are the inquiries relative to the truths presented in *MILLENNIAL DAWN* and *ZION'S WATCH TOWER*, 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?

No, dear friends, I claim nothing of superiority, nor supernatural power, dignity or authority; nor do I aspire to exalt myself in the estimation of my 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 my position among men of the world and of the nominal church is certainly far from exalted, being "everywhere spoken against." I am fully contented, however, to wait for exaltation until the Lord's due time. (1 Pet. 5:6.) In the Apostle's words I therefore answer, "Why look ye upon us, as though by our 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 a faithful student of the Word of God, to be an index finger, as I have previously expressed it, to help you to trace for yourselves, on the sacred page, the wonderful plan of God—no less wonderful to me, I assure you, than to you, dearly beloved sharers of my faith and joy.

No, the truths I present, as God's mouthpiece, 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. Neither is this clear unfolding of truth due to any human ingenuity or acuteness of perception, but to the simple fact that God's due time has come; and if I did not speak, and no other agent could be found, the very stones would cry out.

The following history is given not merely because I have been urged to give a review of God's leadings in the path of light, but especially because I believe it to be needful that the truth be modestly told, that misapprehensions and prejudicial misstatements may be disarmed, and that our readers may see how hitherto the Lord has helped and guided. In so far as the names and views of others, who have parted our company, may be associated with this history, I 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 I 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 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.

LIGHT OUT OF DARKNESS

I 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, have each done their share in bringing light out of darkness. Let me here confine myself to the consideration of the harvest truths set forth in *MILLENNIAL DAWN* and *ZION'S WATCH TOWER*.

Let me 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, the preacher being Mr. Jonas Wendell, long since deceased. Thus, I confess indebtedness to Adventists as well as to other denominations. 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 Word. We came to see something of the love of God, how it had made provision for all mankind, how all must be awakened from the tomb in order that God's loving plan might be testified to them, and how all who exercise faith in Christ's redemptive work and render obedience in harmony with the knowledge of God's will they *will then* receive, shall then (through Christ's merit) be brought back into full harmony with God, and be granted everlasting life. 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 faithful 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 in Eden by their progenitor and head, Adam.

However, we were then merely getting the general outline 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 I should and do gratefully mention assistance rendered by Brothers Geo. Stetson and Geo. Storrs, the latter the editor of *The Bible Examiner*, both now deceased. 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 should 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 1872, 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 me the fullest assurance that *ALL must come forth* from their graves and be brought to a clear knowledge of the truth and to a full opportunity to gain everlasting life in Christ.

Thus passed the years 1869-1872. 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 in Allegheny. We progressed from our first crude and indefinite ideas of restitution to clearer understanding of the details; but God's due time for the clear light had not yet come.

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. 5. 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 as to 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.