

To the Angel of the Laodiceans

[By : Bro. Victor T. Houteff]

Dear Brethren in Laodicea !

Do you know that prophecy positively declares that the people of God in the Laodicean church are in critically dangerous condition and know it not ? Well, Brethren, whether or not you realize it, whether or not you believe it, that precisely is the case. And if you hope to enter into eternal life, you must believe it, and without delay. Whatever else you may believe or disbelieve, this one thing you must believe. *”for it is the True Witness who speaks, and his testimony must be correct.”* — **Testimonies, Vol. 3, p. 253.**

And remember that above all people, the Laodiceans should not only be the last but the least inclined to criticize, for they themselves, says the True Witness, are *“wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,”* without so much even as suspecting it, but instead blissfully imagining that they are *“rich, and increased with goods, and”* in *“need of nothing.”* Rev. 3 : 17. How, then, can they be in a position truly to know anything about others !

Think, Brethren, and rouse to life ! This voice, pleading with you to awake and avert the Enemy’s pitfalls, cannot possibly be the Enemy’s voice ! Remember that the Lord *“surprises us by revealing His power through instruments of His own choice, while He passes by the men to whom we have looked as those through whom light should come. God desires us to receive the truth upon its own merits, -- because it is truth.”* — **Testimonies to Ministers, p. 106.**

“No matter by whom light is sent, we should open our hearts to receive it with the meekness of Christ We should all know what is being taught among us; for if it is truth, we need it.” — **Gospel Workers, p. 301.**

“The great danger with our people has been that of depending upon men, and making flesh their arm. Those who have not been in the habit of searching the Bible for themselves, or weighing evidence, have confidence in the leading men,

and accept the decisions they make; and thus many will reject the very messages God sends to His people, if these leading brethren do not accept them.” – Testimonies to Ministers, pp. 106, 107.

“He will use men for the accomplishment of His purpose whom some of the brethren would reject as unfit to engage in the work.” – The Review and Herald, Feb., 9, 1895.

In the light of these warnings, will you not take time carefully and prayerfully to ascertain whether or not God is leading in this reformatory work ? He has promised to all who will do this, that He will not leave them in darkness but will guide them into all Truth. So will you not take Him at His Word, and try Him ?

We plead with you to, for already “the agencies of evil are combining their forces, and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world,” says Inspiration, “and the final movements will be rapid ones The time is coming when in their fraud and insolence men will reach a point that the Lord will not permit them to pass, and they will learn that there is a limit to the forbearance of Jehovah Those who hold the reins of government are not able to solve the problem of moral corruption, poverty, pauperism, and increasing crime. They are struggling in vain to place business operations on a more secure basis Soon everything that can be shaken will be shaken, that those things that can not be shaken may remain

“It is impossible to give any idea of the experience of the people of God who shall be alive upon the earth when celestial glory and a repetition of the persecutions of the past are blended. They will walk in the light proceeding from the throne of God. By means of the angels there will be constant communication between heaven and earth.” – Testimonies, Vol. 9, pp. 11, 13, 15, 16.

In view of these solemn realities even now looming before our eyes, no longer, Brother, Sister, hide yourselves in the darkness. Stand in the light, lest you stumble and fall and not be found. Come, take time, and

Let Us Reason Together.

The Laodicean church, the last of the seven churches (Revelation 2, 3), being figurative of the Christian church in her last period, our time, the message on record to her is therefore the last message to the church. So, plainly, if there is any Bible subject essential for the church to study, the message to the Laodiceans certainly is.

Although satisfied with their attainments, the Laodiceans who believe and take God at His Word will not question Him concerning their condition but will, whether they see it or not, acknowledge that they are in a “sad deception,” “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Having honestly made this acknowledgment, they will, in consequent obedience to the True Witness’ counsel to buy of Him eye salve which He alone can supply, anoint their eyes with it and be able to see.

Those, though, who recline in the false security of self-complacency, will pay no attention to the warning counsel, and will as a result lose everything – be spewed out ! Yet how few does this dread threat alarm ! How few does it impel to find out where the trouble lies and how they stand ! How few, indeed, does it even trouble ! And O how few incline to inquire into it for fear that it may rebuke their evil course and deprive them of some sinful pleasure which they dearly cherish ! Surprisingly few, yet all too truly.

Then, too, there being instilled in them great fear of false prophets, and not at all awakened in them any expectation of true ones (although there can be no false where there are no true), they are now therefore almost beyond reach. And behind their careless attitude is seen the truth that “the pains of duty and the pleasures of sin are the cords with which Satan binds men in his snares” (**Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 53**), while behind the deeply instilled fear of false prophets, is seen the false watchman’s carefulness to keep them from coming in contact with the messengers whom God has sent to them.

Our deep concern, therefore, is that there awaken an interest in you, dear Laodicean, to go to the bottom of the matter, to make sure of your salvation. So will you not be sensible and courteous enough to sit down with this light bearer in humble, impartial, prayerful study which must repay you many, many times over what you put into it ? Remember, there is a divine law that converts every honest effort into joy, a personal experience with God, and eternal life. So will you not start now to measure yourself, no longer by what you think you are or will be, but by what the Lord says you are and must be ? Begin your investigation with the ensuing

S e v e n Q u e s t i o n s

- 1. Who is Laodicea ?**
- 2. Whom does the angel represent ?**
- 3. What is meant by being wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked ?**
- 4. What is it to be “lukewarm”?**

5. **Why does God prefer one either cold or hot rather than lukewarm ?**
6. **What is the eye salve ?**
7. **Should Laodicea fail to repent, how would her shame be uncovered ?**

The Revelation, chapter 2 and 3, describe the condition of each of the seven churches, the last of which is the Laodicean. These churches, admittedly, portray the Christian church in seven different periods; the seventh, Laodicea, depicting her in the period just before the “harvest”, the last in which the “wheat and tares” are commingled, and the one in which she is to experience the separation of the bad from among the good (Matthew 13 : 30, 47, 49).

Since in her every section, the church must be true to her name (it alone being her identification), we shall therefore consider the question :

Who is Laodicea ?

Laodicea may be infallibly recognized amidst the many “ism” of Christendom by the work she is doing -- declaring the judgment. Indeed, this mark of identification is pointed out by the very name Laodicea, compounded of the two Greek words *lao* and *dekei*, the one meaning “people,” also “speak”, the other meaning “judgment,” the two in one meaning *the people declaring judgment*. The church, therefore, which declares, “*Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come*” (**Rev. 14 : 7**), is evidently the one called Laodicea. And it is almost as well known outside Seventh-day Adventist circles as within, that the Seventh-day Adventists church is endeavoring to carry the judgment message of Revelation 14 : 7, and is therefore unchallenged in her claim to the title, Laodicea.

Since, therefore, the Seventh-day Adventist church is the only one proclaiming the judgment, and since each of the seven messages addressed to the angel of the respective churches, the message to Laodicea is accordingly addressed

To the Seventh-day Adventist Angel

According to Revelation 1 : 20, the “candlesticks” symbolize the churches, and the “stars” the angels (leaders) who have charge over the churches. Being the attendants of the churches, the angels are thus seen to be the ministry, whose responsibility is to have the lamps trimmed, filled with oil, and burning brightly, so that the church may give light to all about her.

Accordingly, as the Laodicean angel, him to whom the condemnatory message is sent, is symbolical of the ministry in Laodicea, he should consequently be the more anxious to discover where the trouble lies, for he is, says the Lord,

Wretched, Miserable, Poor, Blind, and Naked.

With a ministry wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, what church (candlestick) could possibly stay lighted ? And with her light thus gone out or but flickering dimly, how could she lighten the world as God has set her to do ? Through the eyes of the True Witness, therefore, the tragedy of Laodicea is starkly seen --- “*sleeping preachers preaching to a sleeping people*” (**Testimonies, Vol. 2, p. 337**), while a sin benighted world plunges on hell-bent in its darkness ! O what a piteous plight ! And yet it is so utterly overlooked !

With both ministry and laity in such a pitiful state of darkness, it is clear to be seen that though the Laodicean church is the last in the order of the seven churches, God cannot through her lighten the world and prepare His people for the Kingdom when she is in darkness and unprepared herself. Hence the necessity of a new order, a new ministry, as predicted in **Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 80**, and in **Zephaniah 3 : 11, 12**.

Then it will come to pass that “only those who have withstood temptation in the strength of the Mighty One, will be permitted to act a part in proclaiming it [the Third Angel’s Message] when it shall have swelled into the Loud Cry.” – **The Review and Herald, No. 19, 1908**.

In the light of these facts, the prophetic message to the angel of the Laodiceans must obviously be brought and proclaimed by someone other than the angel himself. But this, of course, is the very thing that neither the ministry nor the laity expect or wish to happen. For the sake of the faithful, nevertheless, it is happening.

So since God’s Word says that the ministry of the Laodicean church is wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, and that neither they nor the laity are aware of the facts, it lends heavy emphasis to the statements : “*Sleeping preachers preaching to a sleeping people !*” (**Testimonies, Vol. 2, p. 337**); “*the message of the True Witness finds the people of God in a sad deception, yet honest in that deception.*” **Testimonies, Vol. 3, p. 253**.

Although they are in this horrible predicament, one which should make them tremble and fear, and give anything to get out of, yet they continue

Lukewarm --- Neither Cold Nor Hot.

When one finds himself in a climate which is neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm, a temperature desired and sought by all, there he basks as a pauper become a prince ! So it is with the Laodiceans, as represented in prophecy, though their supposed riches are nothing but a death trap !

To rescue one from such a terrible deception is a task which calls for the utmost wisdom not only because the victim is blindly inured to the perilous condition he is in, while his rescuers are endeavoring to save him from perishing, but also because he considers them as his enemies, false prophets, instead of as his friends and deliverers, messengers from God !

From the life line, the saving message, which they pleadingly hold forth to him, he recoils. And consequently by his attitude against them , he shouts : Away, away, I am rich and increased with goods : I have need of nothing ; I have all the truth. *“I am satisfied with my position. I have set my stakes, and I will not be moved away from my position, whatever may come.”* — **Testimonies to Sabbath School Work, p. 65; Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 28.**

In protesting that they are not wretched (not unhappy), not miserable (not troubled), not poor (not in need of truth), not blind (not benighted or illiterate), not naked (not without the righteousness of Christ), the Laodiceans are contradicting the True Witness, rejecting His counsels, and discrediting His remedy ---

The Eye salve.

As only the “salve” will heal them from their deadly Laodicean malady, hence if they fail to avail themselves of the cure (by searching for the truth as for hidden treasure) and to apply it (to repent), they will be spewed out. O, Brother, Sister, will you not call for the “salve” ? or will you continue in your wretchedness, miserableness, poverty, blindness, and nakedness, and thus compel Him to spew you out and to

Uncover Your Shame ?

That your shame, Brethren, might not appear to all, God has long forbore to expose to the world the sins which you have cherished and kept under cover. Not forever, though, will He forbear. So for you soul’s sake, argue no longer that you have all the truth; cease adding sin to sin ; repent, and return to Him; He will just as gladly accept you and make a feast for you as did the father in the parable welcome back his prodigal son and make a feast for him.

Be not like the Jew. But open your heart; cast out its pride, its prejudice, and its self-conceit; let these not deprive you of eternal life at such a late hour as this. If

you repeat the mistake of the Jews, your shame and your loss will be as much greater than theirs as are your light and your opportunities and privileges. Yea, beyond comparison ! So do not fail, we plead with you, to end your long Laodicean sickness and poverty, and no longer imagine that you are

Rich, Increased With Goods.

Never do you even so much as intimate that you have all the buildings, all the institutions, all the money, all the workers, all the converts you need ! Your only boast is of having no need of more truth ! This attitude, therefore, the Lord says, is the way in which you are saying, “I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” It is the source of your trouble, and the thing which He expects you to confess and to repent of.

The angel’s (the ministry’s) mistaken claim of being rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing, does not make him a liar, but rather shows him to be a victim of ignorance and delusion. But his thinking that he has and knows all the Truth, makes his condition even more perilous than a liar’s, for a liar knows that he is lying. O awake, Brother, Sister, awake ! awake !

Do As Did Nathaniel

Come and see !

See what ? Laodiceans, rich and increased with goods, and in need of nothing, with the excuse that the need to take care of the material things of life (**Luke 14 : 15 – 19**) forbids their accepting the invitation ?

Indeed not !

See the Laodiceans from the streets and lanes --- “the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind” (**Luke 14 : 21**), gladly availing themselves of the remedy !

But, alas, not all who come, remain, for “when any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he that received seed by the way side.” Be not like him, but make the effort required to understand the Truth. And others, “when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word,” are offended. These are they “that received the seed into stony places.” Neither be like them; be rooted in the Truth. “But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruits, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” **Matthew 13 : 19 – 23.**

Though the “bad” along with the “good” are still coming (for we are yet in the period in which the wheat and the tares, the good and the bad fish, commingle) you need not be of the tares or of the “bad fish”. Be of the wheat, do as the “good” : lay aside your own thoughts and ways, then take the Lord’s, for He says “.....*My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.*” **Isaiah 55 : 8, 9.**

And finally, never be like a Pharisee who can see the mote in his brother’s eye, but cannot see the beam in his own (**Matthew 7 : 3**). For after all, “Who art thou ?” asks the Lord. Art thou thyself not a Laodicean ? How “judgest” thou “another man’s servant ? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up : for God is able to make him stand.” **Rom 14 : 4.**

Never mind the other fellow, Brethren; you have barely enough time to look after yourself. And moreover, do not measure the Truth with the rod of man, but with the Rod of God : “*Hear ye the Rod, and [Him] Who hath appointed it.*” (**Micah 6 : 9**), urges the Lord.

Will you not take His counsel ? If you will, then without further delay, send your name and address for Present Truth literature --- the feast which, though worth every thing, will cost you nothing. And besides being the only cure for your Laodiceanism, it will thrill and satisfy your hungry soul with something truly rich and extraordinary !

Then all of us together “shall have spiritual eyesight to discern the inner courts of the celestial temple. We shall catch the themes of song and thanksgiving of the heavenly choir round about the throne. When Zion shall arise and shine, her light will be most penetrating, and precious songs of praise and thanksgiving will be heard in the assemblies of the saints As we apply the golden eye-salve, we shall see the glories beyond. Faith will cut through the heavy shadow of Satan, and we shall see our Advocate offering up the incense of His own merits in our behalf. When we see this as it is, as the Lord desires us to see it, we shall be filled with a sense of the immensity and diversity of the love of God.” – **Testimonies, Vol. 6, p. 368.** And then we shall no longer ask :

Whose Advice is to be Followed ?

Now we want you to know that we truly appreciate your concern for our spiritual welfare, as expressed in many of your criticisms, and we assure you that we fully realize that, be we wrong, your advice is surely as valuable to us as, be we right, our advice is to you. So we are confident that you will be agreed with us that we must settle the question,

Who Is Who ?

To begin our investigation, it is necessary, in fairness to both sides, to have into account the experiential knowledge of each.

In view of our long experience with the Third Angel's Message in its first part, as well as in its present addition (**Early Writings, p. 277**), as brought in **The Shepherd's Rod**, as against yours in the first part only, we are constrained to believe that the possibility of your being wrong led by the angel of the Laodiceans, is greater than the possibility of our being wrongly led by the Rod.

Were you in a position, such as we are in, to be fully informed in both messages, -- in both the one of 1844 and the one of *today*, ---then the possibility of your being right and of our being wrong, as against the possibility of your being wrong and of our being right, would be about equally balanced. In as much, though, as you are conversant with the former only, it is more probable that our position carries a greater percentage of possibility of being correct than does yours.

Moreover, whether the Rod is right or wrong, "the angel of the church of the Laodiceans" is, as the Lord Himself has made acutely clear, in a sad, fearful, and terrible deception (**Testimonies, Vol. 3, pp. 253, 254, 260**), and about to be spewed out.

In view, therefore, of the consequent greater responsibility resting upon us, we cannot be less interested in you than you are in us. And you cannot afford to be less mindful of our advice to you than we can afford to be of yours to us.

And finally, believing that you are as honest as we are, we are confident that you will candidly and carefully weigh every word herein.

Our being, as you know, unswerving adherents of the Bible and of Sister White's writings, full-fledged Seventh-day Adventists, we are sure that both the Bible and Sister White's writings support the Rod one hundred per cent. All three, therefore, we see in perfect harmony with one another, with the Rod giving "power and force" to the message as given since 1844. (See **Early Writings, p. 277**).

In view of our sustaining this solid conviction, you can readily understand that your rejecting the Rod on the ground that it is out of harmony with Sister White's writings, is not at all to us the actuality it seems to you.

Then, too, having every reason to believe that our minds are fully rational, we accordingly have every reason to believe that we are no less able than others

intelligently to study both the Bible and Sister White's writings. So let us, as Christians who really want to know the truth, together begin

Examining Both Your Position and Ours

To begin with, is it not correct that the Christian's textbook is the Bible ? If your answer to this fundamental question is in affirmative, then it compels us to study Sister White's writings in the light of the Bible, not the Bible in the light of her writings. This, in fact, she herself plainly says :

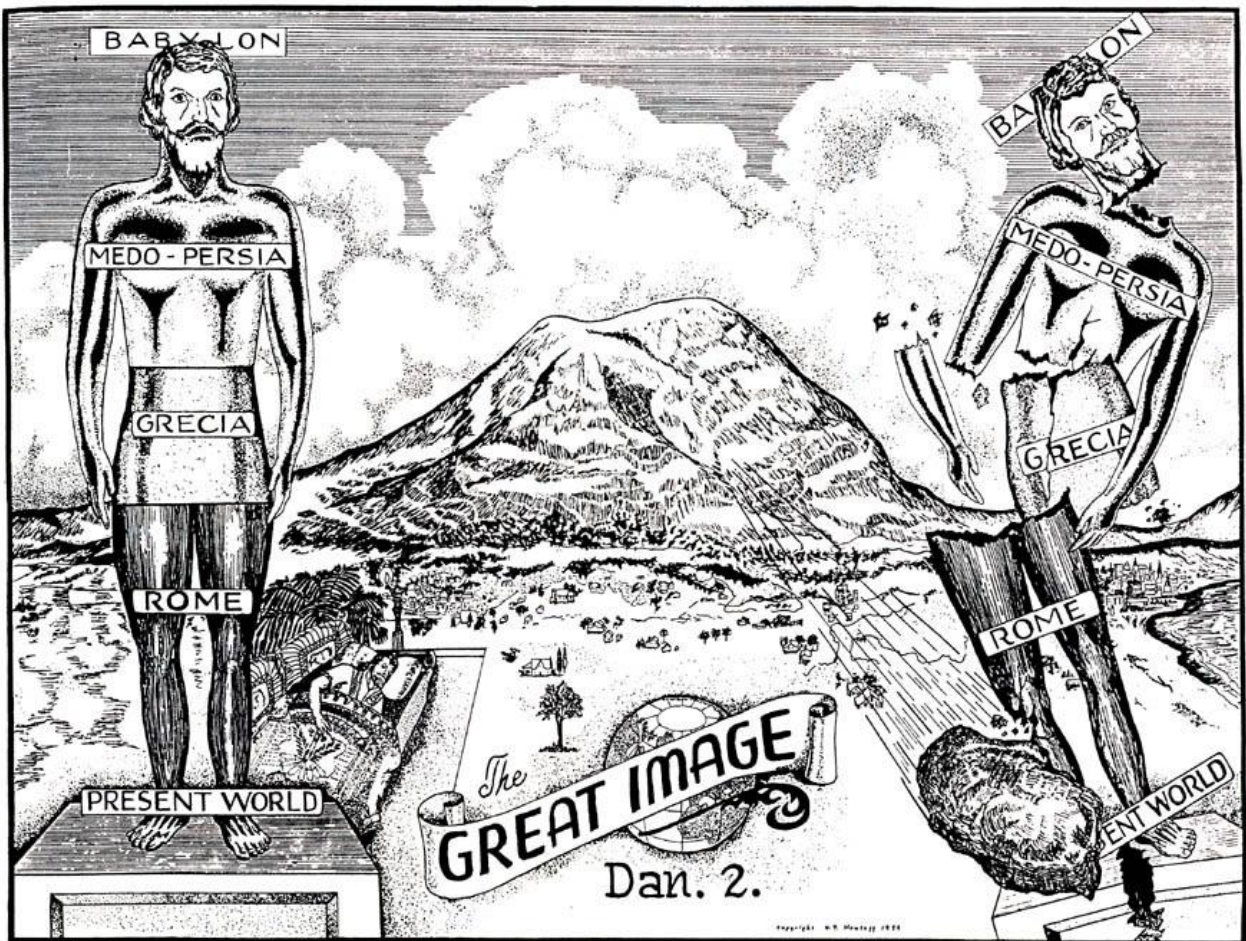
“Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures, and who have received the love of the truth, will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive. By the Bible testimony (not by hers), these will detect the deceiver in his disguise Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses ? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible, and the Bible only ?” – **The Great Controversy, p. 625.**

Clearly, therefore, her work must never be interpreted in such a way as to contradict the Bible, but always to clear it. If you undeviatingly follow this absolute rule of interpretation, you can never possibly have any trouble with the Rod or with any message the Lord may ever send.

Your interpretation of many of Sister White's writings, must notably, perhaps, those concerning the Kingdom, being manifestly contradictory to the prophecies of the Bible, cause the one who accepts her writings to doubt the Bible, and the one who holds to the Bible to be set against her writings, thus bringing in dispute and schism among the brethren. Such interpretations, one-sided and division-making, are therefore grievously unfair not only to the Bible and to Sister White's writings but also to yourself, and consequently to the cause of Truth.

So you will, we trust, see that while you are intentionally endeavoring to prove only the Rod wrong, you are in reality unwittingly endeavoring to prove Sister White at odd with the Bible --- a work which is scattering from Christ rather than gathering to Him.

As both your and our doctrinal positions must be in perfect harmony with the Bible, we are therefore asking you to harmonize your position on the Kingdom with Daniel 2 : 44; Jeremiah 51 : 20; Hosea 3 : 4, 12 – 16; Jeremiah 30 : 18 , 21; 31 : 2 – 13; 32 : 37; Ezekiel 37 : 15 – 28.



We hold it to be a simple, self-evident truth that as the stone (**Daniel 2 : 34**) is symbolical of the Kingdom, and that as It smites the toes of the image, It necessarily must be set up before It smite them., just as Daniel said : “*In the days of these kings [toe-kings : the kings of today] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom.*” “*In the days of these kings,*” cannot mean *after* their days. And unless the Kingdom is set up (brought into being), It cannot smite the nations.

If, moreover, Judah and Israel (both kingdoms) are not gathered together into one kingdom, as the prophecies say they will be (**Ezekiel 37 : 15 – 28**), then how can they be His “battle-ax” (**Jeremiah 51 : 20**) ? And how can the prophecies be fulfilled ?

It is equally self-evident that the “*many days*” (**Hosea 3 : 4, 5**) are the long years from the time the Kingdom went down until It shall finally be set up again. Wherefore the word “*return*” cannot mean anything other than that those dispersed “*many days*” are to go back to the land whence they were taken captive.

This, furthermore, is the only position, consistent with all relevant Bible doctrines, that gives assurance of fulfillment of the prophecy of **Isaiah 2** and that of **Micah 4**.

Again : from **Isaiah 11** we see that the Lord is to “*set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people*” (**verse 11**), and that when He does so, He will prepare a way for them “*like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.*” **Verse 16.**

And Jeremiah testifies that the Lord “will bring *again* the captivity of Jacob’s tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed *from the midst of them.*” **Jeremiah 30 : 18, 21.**

To Ezekiel, moreover, “thus said the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land.” **Ezekiel 37 : 21.**

The Bible is either right or wrong. If you believe It is right, take It to heart, and take your stand upon It, at least upon such open passages as the ones herein quoted --- scriptures which need no interpretation.

And certain it is that God will accept no excuse for anyone’s trying to side-step them, so plain and positive are they. Neither will anyone succeed in escaping God’s judgments by endeavoring on the one hand to dodge through what he thinks to be loopholes in the Rod, and by endeavoring on the other hand to set up in Sister White writings obstacles to take cover behind.

Such vain attempts today will leave the perpetrators no more excusable (in fact, less so) than the vain efforts of the Jews yesterday left them in their attempt to discover loopholes in Christ’s work by the use of Moses’ writings.

If one’s excuse be that the Rod’s teachings are not found in Sister White’s writings, no more will he be vindicated in rejecting its voice on such grounds than are the Jews for fighting and rejecting the New Testament Scriptures on the grounds that they are not found in the writings of the prophets.

If you are really a sincere and faithful believer in both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, you will obey this counsel : “.....*if a message comes that you do not understand, take pains that you may hear the reasons the messenger may give.*” — **Testimonies on Sabbath-School Work, p. 65; Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 29.**

Your integrity in renouncing the sealing message, on the ground that it contradicts Sister White’s writings, will be tested by your response to her urging you to reason with the messenger rather than to reason with his enemies.

What to some of you may seem to set this or that teaching of the Rod squarely in contradiction to Sister White's writings, is not half so plausible as is that which to all appearance sets the Lord 's statement in Matthew 10 : 23 solidly in contradiction to His promises. "Ye shall not," say the Scriptures, "have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." But the apostles did go preaching the gospel not only to the cities of Israel but also to "every creature which is under heaven" (Col. 1 : 23), and as yet the Son of man is not "come," though 1900 years have passed since that time. Christ must have spoken the truth, but it is not understood, just as many points in connection with Present Truth are not understood, and hence in most cases are misconstrued.

When Moses wrote the first part of the Bible, he was not given the privilege to write the whole Truth which God intended to reveal to His people. Later in the Old Testament period came Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, et al. Then in the New Testament period came John the Baptist, Christ, the apostles, the reformers, Miller, and Sister White, each one in turn teaching truths which could not, however, be maintained by Moses' writings. This is the divine rule of unfolding truth. And only to one's own loss will he refuse to acknowledge that is operative the same today as ever, even though the message today is derived entirely from the inspired writers before it.

Though there is much more to be said on these matters, suffice these lines for the present, for unless for your life's sake you respond to them, more would be only a weariness to you and a loss of time to us.

Our sincere prayer and earnest hope, therefore, is that the valuable, irretrievable time expended in this effort of good will and deep concern for your souls, will be the means of bringing you to rejoice in the glorious hope which the Rod sets before you. May your heart yet be responsive to the "Lord's voice," which still "crieth unto the city, ...hear ye the Rod, and Who hath appointed it."

If you are resolved now to comply with this injunction, and with the one in Testimonies on Sabbath School Work, p. 65, to take pains to hear the reason the messenger may give, and to ask questions on the message, whether with respect to the Bible or to Sister White's writings, be assured that we shall welcome hearing from you, and shall gladly do our honest best to clear whatever is involved.

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