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Pamphlets

HAVE WE AN INFALLIBLE
"SPIRIT OF PROPHECY"

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Have We An Infallible "Spirit of Prophecy"?

Takoma Park, D. C.,

April 1, 1920.

Dear Brother Washburn:

There is a dangerous doctrine that is rapidly permeating the ranks of our people. I feel that it ought to be met and met squarely. It is this: That Sister White is not an authority on history. Some, as you know, go even further, and claim that she is not an authority on doctrine or health reform. That was practically the position taken last summer, and stands as a sort of unwritten law.

During the Bible Conference in the summer of 1919 I heard it stated again and again by a number of our Bible and history teachers that Sister White is not an authority on history. If it were to go no further than these persons it would be bad enough, but think of the possibilities for evil when these men stand as teachers. These erroneous views will be poured into the receptive minds of our young people to undermine their faith in the Spirit of Prophecy and this message.

Surely no one believes that Sister White is an authority on history as we think of Gibbon, Momsen, Schaff, Ferrero, Von Hammer, and a host of other university professors who have given their lives to research of this character.

Neither does Elder W. C. White take that view: "Mother has never claimed to be author-

ity on history. The things which she has written out are descriptions of flashlight pictures and other representations given her regarding the actions of men, and the influence of these actions upon the work of God for the salvation of men, with views of past, present, and future history in its relations to this work. In connection with the writing out of these views, she has made use of good and clear historical statements to help make plain to the reader the things which she is endeavoring to present."—Statement before General Conference Committee, October 30, 1911.

And that is not what is intended by the use of that expression by her critics.

The "new school" champions say that Sister White merely selected certain historical quotations the same as any secular, fallible writer would do, and if they happened to be out of harmony with facts, according to their judgment, they are to be rejected!

But note where such an argument leads. Sister White uses many a thought expressed by others on various subjects, because it is truth. When she wrote against the use of drugs there were authorities on both sides of the question. Catherine Beecher, Cole and others taught many hygienic truths identical with Sister White's even before she did. If some thought that she used that was similar to theirs should be found to be out of "harmony with the facts" of some doctor or scientist (and such is the case) shall we repudiate her writings on these points? There is just as good

ground for this deduction as for the other.

I can carry out this comparison in all lines of knowledge upon which she wrote. There is nothing new under the sun; error is as old as truth in our experience. Even our fundamental doctrines are largely borrowed from other denominations who have gone before us. But, thank the Lord, out of the medley of discordant views the Spirit of Prophecy has guided in the selection of the true ones.

She selected and approved from other writers what she recognized as the truth, and it was thus substantiated by God as authoritative. The well-known Professor Bush pointed out this principle:

"It is clear that the purposes of a divine revelation require the character of unimpeachable truth in the communications which shall comprise it, an equally clear is it; that under the superintending control of Providence, an inspired man may make use of an uninspired document handed down to him from a prior period, if that document be true in itself. * * * Whatever God sees fit to authenticate, by adopting into his word, is to be considered as having virtually the stamp of inspiration."—Introduction to Notes on Joshua.

I feel that many of our teachers are following this ignis fatuus without a realization of what is involved in it. They thus join hands with the critics of the Bible, infidels, atheists and agnostics, who attempt to prove that the Scriptures are a mass of historical inaccuracies. They also place themselves on the side

of apostates who have left us and who attack Sister White, using the identical weapons against her.

Note the definition of the word history:

"1. A learning or knowing by inquiry; the knowledge of facts and events, so obtained; hence, a formal statement of such information, a narrative, a description; a written record.

"2. A systematic, written account of events particularly of those affecting a nation, institution, science, or art, and usually connected with a philosophical explanation of their cause; a true story, as distinguished from a romance."—Webster's Unabridged Dictionary.

Without considerable modification, such a loose statement, that Sister White is not an authority on history, would thus practically throw into the discard everything she has written, especially would this be true of Patriarchs and Prophets, Prophets and Kings, Desire of Ages, Acts of the Apostles, and the Great Controversy, for they are historical books.

But, simmered down to the real essence, what is intended is, that certain statements or quotations found in her writings condemn the pet theories of some of our leaders and—strange infatuation—the Spirit of Prophecy, the "testimony of Jesus," must be destroyed that their idols may survive!

The Lord knew, years ago, that Sister White was not an authority on anything—unless it was on privation and suffering. And

he selected her for that reason. The very thing the Lord commends these men use against her. Read these words:

"My Saviour declared me to be his messenger. 'Your work,' he instructed me, 'is to bear my word. Strange things will arise, and in your youth I set you apart to bear the message to the erring ones, to carry the word before unbelievers, and with pen and voice to reprove from the word actions that are not right. Exhort from the word. I will make my word open to you. It shall not be as a strange language.' In the true eloquence of simplicity, with voice and pen, the messages that I give shall be heard from ONE WHO HAS NEVER LEARNED IN THE SCHOOLS. My Spirit and my power shall be with you."—Review and Herald, July 26, 1906.

Did Moses have to be an authority on history and anthropology before he could write the record of creation?

Did Job's description of celestial bodies depend upon his being an authority on astronomy?

Did the apostles have to become professors of languages before Pentecost could arrive?

The whole Bible record proves beyond contradiction that when God spoke through a person, whether learned or unlearned, everything touched upon became authoritative. For God, not the prophet, was the one speaking. The same is true respecting Sister White, or the above quotation is false.

For some unaccountable reason few seem to be able to comprehend the fact that it takes as much inspiration to select truth from error as it does to give truth originally. Some have shipwrecked their faith on this point. Seeing something in Sister White's writings that has been expressed by someone else, they immediately jump to the conclusion that it does not take inspiration to write this down, and therefore, such matter is merely her own opinion.

But why did she not take the error along with the truth? This question is overlooked. Sister White, by the illumination of God's Spirit, knew the difference, while the other writers did not.

If her historical writings are to be discredited because she is not an "authority on history," then the logic of the situation forces us to the conclusion that all her writings must be thrown overboard, for historical facts are inextricably interwoven in all her messages. They stand or fall together. Let me ask:

Is Sister White's description of the opening heavens, where the New Jerusalem is coming down, and other references to celestial bodies to be discredited because she is not an authority on astronomy?

Are her books on education useless because she is not a doctor of pedagogy?

Are her teachings on foods to be belittled because she is not a dietitian?

Are her wonderful expositions of the Scrip-

tures to be ignored because she is not a doctor of divinity?

Are her remarkable predictions of no value because she did not claim to be a prophet?

Are her enlightening interpretations of the law invalid because she is not a doctor of laws?

Is her instruction regarding the harmfulness of drug using to be ridiculed because she is not a doctor of medicine?

To hear some of our "infallible" historians speak, one would think that they knew more than Sister White herself about her own visions and revelation. To discredit her statements they will quote writers as authority who have never pretended to be inspired, and who we know are not. They thus place themselves in the class spoken of in the following:

"There are men among us in responsible positions who hold that the opinions of a few conceited philosophers, so-called, are more to be trusted than the truth of the Bible or the Testimonies of the Holy Spirit. Such a faith as that of Paul, Peter or John, is considered old-fashioned and insufferable at the present day."—Testimonies, Vol. 5, page 79.

Is there anyone who has the faintest idea of the wealth of revelation given to Sister White? Many things were presented to her over and over. With these visions indelibly stamped upon her mind, supplemented by the help of the Holy Spirit, need there be any question about her knowing what is authoritative and what is in harmony with real

"facts"? Further, the very honor of God is at stake in the integrity of his messenger.

In the Review of July 26, 1906. Sister White says of the messages that have been coming "during the past sixty years," that they "will bear the test of investigation." Is that from the Lord? Will they deny that statement? If they accept it, then what becomes of their position regarding her historical statements or her doctrinal instruction or any other counsel?

One tells me her books are not in harmony with facts historically, another that she is wrong scientifically, still another disputes her claims theologically, and another questions her authorship, and others discredit her writings grammatically and rhetorically. Is there anything left? If these claims are all true, how much spirit of prophecy does the remnant church possess?

When anyone declares that Sister White's writings contain anything but the absolute truth, they must draw a line to distinguish between what is truth and what is error. Have they the authority to do this? Can they do it. Are they wise enough to do it?

Let me commend to all such a statement from the Spirit of Prophecy which condemns this work: Speaking of some who were attempting to "weigh the Testimonies" by "their own mind and judgment," she says:

"My Instructor said to me, Tell these men that God has not committed to them the work of MEASURING, CLASSIFYING AND DE-

FINING the character of the Testimonies. Those who attempt this are sure to err in their conclusions."—General Conference Bulletin, 1913, page 219.

We have the word of the Lord for believing that Sister White's books and articles were written for the very purpose of pointing out errors which are fast coming in, and which bring such a storm of criticism upon her:

"I am instructed that the Lord, by his infinite power has preserved the right hand of his messenger for more than half a century, in order that the truth may be written out, as he bids me write it for publication in periodicals and books. Why?—Because if it were not thus written out, when the pioneers in the faith shall die, there would be many new in the faith who would sometimes accept as messages of truth teachings that contain erroneous sentiments and dangerous fallacies. Sometimes that which men teach as 'special light' is in reality specious error, which, as tares sown among the wheat, will spring up and produce a baleful harvest. And errors of this sort will be entertained by some until the close of this earth's history."—Testimony to Brethren Butler, Daniells and Irwin, April 27, 1906.

Some day those who are pointing out so-called weaknesses in God's messenger will find out, as others did in Bible times, that the impotence is in themselves rather than in the prophet.

Several have said to me: "Oh, you are making a Pope out of Mrs. White."

I reply Never! I would not lower the dignity and authority of God's messenger by putting her on a par with a Pope. She is far above and superior to any Pope. This is what Cardinal Gibbons says for the Pope, and he is a recognized spokesman for the Church of Rome:

"The infallibility of the Pope does not signify that they are inspired. * * * No Catholic, on the contrary, claims that the Pope is inspired or endowed with divine revelations properly so called.

"The inerrability of the Popes, being restricted to questions of faith and morals, does not extend to the natural sciences, such as astronomy or geology."—"Faith of Our Fathers," pp. 117-119.

But Sister White is inspired, as much as any Bible prophet, and her revelations are not limited to moral questions.

As we have already stated, she speaks with authority on medical subjects, dietetics, agriculture, education, hygiene, theology, prophecy, astronomy, missionary work and a host of other subjects. And her positions have been and are being continually confirmed by scientific research.

The ex cathedra decrees of the Pope I believe to be Satan's counterfeit of the true, infallible guide that God has placed in his church under the title of the Spirit of Prophecy, and a weak counterfeit at that.

How thankful we should be that God has condescended to place in our midst such a wonderful gift.

Unprejudiced persons in the world, who have read Sister White's books are more ready to acknowledge her inspiration than are many belonging to the faith.

I stand absolutely and uncompromisingly for the inspiration of Sister White's writings. I draw no line between the so-called human and divine; they are all Scripture to me.

Yours in the interest of the Spirit of Prophecy,
CLAUDE E. HOLMES.

1881-1953