

TESTIMONY  
FOR  
THE CHURCH.

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BY ELLEN G. WHITE.

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### The Great Rebellion.

KORAH, Dathan, and Abiram, rebelled against Moses and Aaron, and so against the Lord. The Lord had placed special responsibilities upon Moses and Aaron in selecting them for the priesthood, and in conferring upon them the dignity and authority of leading the congregation of Israel. Moses was afflicted by the continual rebellion of the Hebrews. As God's appointed, visible leader, he had been connected with the Israelites through seasons of peril, and had borne with their discontent, their jealousies, and murmurings, without retaliation, or seeking to be released from his trying position.

When the Hebrews were brought into scenes of danger, and where their appetite was restricted, instead of their trusting in God, who had done wondrous things for them, they murmured against Moses. The Son of God was the leader of the Israelites, although invisible to the congregation. His presence went before them, and conducted all their travels, while Moses was their vis-

ible leader, receiving his direction from the angel, who was Jesus Christ.

#### BASE IDOLATRY.

In the absence of Moses the congregation demanded of Aaron to make them gods to go before them and lead them back into Egypt, it was an insult to their chief leader, the Son of the Infinite God. They had only a few weeks before stood trembling with awe and terror before the mount, listening to the words of the Lord, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The glory which sanctified the mount when the voice was heard which shook the mountain to its foundation still hovered over it in sight of the congregation ; but the Hebrews turned away their eyes and asked for other gods. Moses, their visible leader, was in converse with God in the mount.

They forgot the promise and the warning of God, "Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not ; for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in him."

The Hebrews were cruelly unbelieving and basely ungrateful in their impious request, "Make us gods to go before us." If Moses was absent, the presence of the Lord

remained. They were not forsaken. The manna continued to fall, and they were fed by a divine hand morning and evening. The cloudy pillar by day and the pillar of fire by night signified the presence of God, which was a living memorial before them. The divine presence was not dependent upon the presence of Moses. But at the very time that he was pleading with the Lord in the mount in their behalf, they were rushing into shameful errors, in transgression of the law so recently given in grandeur.

We see the weakness of Aaron. Had he stood with true moral courage, and in boldness rebuked the leaders in this shameful request, his timely words would have saved that terrible apostasy. But his desire to be popular with the congregation, and his fear of incurring their displeasure, led him to cowardly sacrifice the allegiance of the Hebrews in that decisive moment. He raised an altar, and made a graven image, and proclaimed a day to consecrate that image as an object of worship, and to proclaim before all Israel, These be the gods which led you out of Egypt. He calmly witnesses the merriment and dancing to this senseless image, while the top of the mount is still illuminated with the glory of God. Moses is sent down from the mount by the Lord to rebuke the people. But He would not consent to leave the mount

until his pleadings in behalf of Israel is heard and his request granted that God would pardon them.

THE TABLES OF THE LAW BROKEN.

Moses came from the mount with the precious record in his hands, a pledge of God to man on condition of obedience. Moses was the meekest man upon the earth ; but when he viewed the apostasy of Israel, he was angry and jealous for the glory of God. In his indignation he casts to the ground the precious pledge of God, which was more dear to his soul than his life. He sees the law broken by the Hebrews, and in his zeal for God to deface the idol they were worshiping, he sacrificed the tables of stone. Aaron stood by, calmly, patiently bearing the severe censure of Moses. All this might have been prevented by a word from Aaron at the right time. True, noble decision for the right in the hour of Israel's peril, would have balanced their minds in the right direction.

Does God condemn Moses ? No, no ; the great goodness of God pardons the rashness and zeal of Moses because it was all on account of his fidelity, and his disappointment and grief at the sight of his eyes in the evidence of Israel's apostasy. The man who might have saved the Hebrews in the hour of their peril is calm. He

does not show indignation because of the sins of the people, neither does he reproach himself and manifest remorse under the sense of his wrongs, but seeks to justify his course in a grievous sin. He makes the people accountable for his weakness in yielding to their request. He was unwilling to bear the murmuring of Israel, to stand under the pressure of their clamors and unreasonable wishes as Moses had done. He entered into the spirit and feelings of the people without remonstrance, and then sought to make them responsible. The congregation of Israel thought Aaron a much more pleasant leader than Moses. He was not so unyielding. They thought Moses showed a very bad spirit, and their sympathies were with Aaron, whom Moses so severely censured. But God pardoned the indiscretion of honest zeal in Moses, while he held Aaron accountable for his sinful weakness and lack of integrity under a pressure of circumstances. Aaron, in order to save himself, sacrificed thousands of the Israelites. The Hebrews felt the punishment of God for this act of apostasy ; but in a short time they are again full of discontent and rebellion.

#### THE PEOPLE MURMUR.

When the armies of Israel prospered, they took all the glory to themselves.

When they were tested and proved by hunger, or warfare, they charged all their hardships to Moses. The power of God which was manifested in a remarkable manner in their deliverance from Egypt, and seen from time to time all through their journeyings, should have inspired them with faith, and forever closed their mouths from one expression of ingratitude. But the least apprehension of want, the least fear of danger from any cause, overbalanced the benefits in their favor, and caused them to overlook the blessings received in their times of greatest danger. The experience they passed through in the matter of worshiping the golden calf, should have made so deep an impression upon their minds as never to be effaced. But, although the marks of God's displeasure were fresh before them in their broken ranks and missing numbers because of their repeated offenses against the angel who was leading them, they did not take these lessons to their hearts, and by faithful obedience redeem their past failure, and again they are overcome by the temptations of Satan. The best efforts of the meekest man upon the earth could not quell their insubordination. The unselfish interest of Moses was rewarded with jealousy, suspicion, and calumny. His humble shepherd's life was far more peaceful and happy than

his present position as pastor to that vast congregation of turbulent spirits. Their unreasonable jealousies were more difficult to manage than the fierce wolves of the wilderness. Moses dared not choose his own course and do as best pleased himself. He had left his shepherd's crook at God's express command, and in its place had been given him a rod of power. He dared not lay down this scepter and resign his position, till God should dismiss him.

Satan's work is to tempt minds. He will insinuate his wily suggestions, and stir up doubting, questioning, unbelief, and distrust of the words and acts of the one who stands under responsibilities, who is seeking to carry out the mind of God in his labors. It is the special purpose of Satan to pour in upon and around the servants of God's choice, troubles, perplexities, and opposition, that shall hinder him in his work, and, if possible, discourage his heart. Jealousies, strife, and evil surmising, will counteract, in a great measure, the very best efforts God's servants appointed to a special work may be able to perform.

Satan's plan is to drive them from the post of duty by working through agents. All whom he can excite to distrust and suspicion he will use as his instruments. The position of Moses in carrying the burden he bore for the Israel of God was not

appreciated. There is in the nature of man, when not under the direct influence of the Spirit of God, a disposition to envy, jealousy, and cruel distrust, which, if not subdued, lead to a desire to undermine and tear down, while selfish spirits will seek to build themselves up upon their ruins.

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, were men who, by God's appointment, had been intrusted with special honors. They had been of that number who went up, with the seventy of the elders, with Moses into the mount, and beheld the glory of God. They saw the glorious light which covered the divine form of Jesus Christ. The bottom of this cloud was in appearance "like the paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness." These men were in the presence of the glory of the Lord, and did eat and drink without being destroyed by the purity and unsurpassed glory that was reflected upon them. But a change had come. A temptation, slight at first, had been harbored and strengthened as it was encouraged, until the imagination was controlled by the power of Satan. These men upon the most frivolous pretense ventured upon their work of disaffection. They hinted and expressed doubts at first which took with many minds so readily that they ventured still farther, being more and more confirmed in their sus-

picious by a word from one and another, each expressing what they thought of certain things which had come under their notice, until these deceived, deluded souls really thought that they had a zeal for the Lord in this matter, and that they would not be excusable unless they carried out to the full their purpose of making Moses see and feel the preposterous position he was standing in toward Israel. A little leaven of distrust, and of dissension, envy, and jealousy, was leavening the camp of Israel.

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, first commenced their cruel work upon the men to whom God had intrusted sacred responsibilities. They were successful in alienating two hundred and fifty princes, famous in the congregation, men of renown. With these strong and influential men in their cause, they felt sure of making a radical change in the order of things. They thought they could transform the government of Israel, and greatly improve it from its present administration.

Korah was not satisfied with his position. He was connected with the service of the tabernacle, yet he desired to be exalted to the priesthood. God had established Moses as chief governor, and the priesthood was given to Aaron and his sons. Korah determined to compel Moses to change the order of things, whereby he

should be raised to the dignity of the priesthood. To be more sure of accomplishing his purpose, he drew Dathan and Abiram, the descendants of Reuben, into his rebellion.

They reasoned that, being descendants from the eldest sons of Jacob, the chief authority which Moses usurped belonged to them, and, with Korah, they were resolved to obtain the office of the priesthood. These three became very zealous in an evil work. They influenced two hundred and fifty men of renown to join them, who were also determined to have a share in the priesthood and government. God had honored the Levites to do service in the tabernacle, because they took no part in making and worshiping the golden calf, and because of their faithfulness in executing the order of God upon the idolaters.

To the Levites was assigned the office of erecting the tabernacle, and encamping around about it, while the hosts of Israel pitched their tents at a distance from the tabernacle. And when they journeyed, the Levites took down the tabernacle, and bore it, and the ark, and all the sacred articles of furniture. Because God thus honored the Levites, they became ambitious for still higher office, that they might obtain greater influence with the congregation. "And they gathered themselves together against

Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them; wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?"

#### FALSE SYMPATHY.

There is nothing which will please the people better than to be praised and flattered when they are in wrong and darkness and deserve reproof. Korah gained the ears of the people, and next their sympathies, by representing Moses as an overbearing leader. He said he was too harsh, too exacting, too dictatorial, and that he reproved the people as though they were sinners when they were a holy people, sanctified to the Lord, and the Lord was among them. Korah rehearsed the incidents in their experience in their travels through the wilderness, where they had been brought into straight places and where many of them had died, because of murmuring and disobedience, and with their perverted senses they thought they saw very clearly that all their trouble might have been saved if Moses had pursued a different course. He was too unyielding, too exacting, and they decided that all their disasters in the wilderness were chargeable to Moses. Korah, the leading

spirit, professed great wisdom in discerning the true reason for their trials and affliction.

In this work of disaffection there was greater harmony and union between these discordant elements, in their feelings and views, than had ever been known to exist before. Korah's success in gaining the larger part of the congregation of Israel on his side, led him to feel confident that he was wise and correct in judgment, and that Moses was indeed usurping authority that threatened the prosperity and salvation of Israel. He claimed that God had opened the matter to him, and laid upon him the burden of changing the government of Israel just before it was too late. He stated that the congregation was not at fault; they were righteous. This great cry about the murmuring of the congregation bringing upon them the wrath of God was all a mistake. The people only wanted to have their rights; they wanted individual independence. As the sense of the self-sacrificing patience of Moses would force itself upon their memories, and as his disinterested efforts in their behalf while they were in the bondage of slavery, would come before them, their consciences would be somewhat disturbed. Some were not wholly with Korah in his views of Moses, and sought to speak in his behalf. The men,

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, must assign some reason before the people for Moses' doing as he has done in showing so great an interest from the first for the congregation of Israel. Their selfish minds which have been debased as Satan's instruments, suggest that they have at last found out the object of Moses' apparent interest. He had designed to keep them wandering in the wilderness until they all, or nearly all, should perish, and he should come into possession of their property.

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and two hundred and fifty princes who had joined them, first became jealous, then envious, and next rebellious. They had talked in regard to Moses' position as ruler of the people, until they imagined that it was a very enviable position, which any of them could fill as well as Moses. And they gave themselves up to discontent until they really deceived themselves and one another, in thinking that Moses and Aaron had placed themselves in the position which they occupied to Israel. They said that Moses and Aaron exalted themselves above the congregation of the Lord, in taking upon them the priesthood and government, and that this office should not be conferred on their house alone. They said that it was sufficient for them if they were on a level with their brethren; for they were

no more holy than the people, who were equally favored with God's peculiar presence and protection.

#### CHARACTER TESTED.

As Moses listened to the words of Korah, he was filled with anguish, and fell upon his face before the people. "And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to-morrow the Lord will show who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him, even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him. This do; take you censers, Korah, and all his company; and put fire therein, and put incense in them before the Lord to-morrow; and it shall be that the man whom the Lord doth choose, he shall be holy; ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi. And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi. Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee; and seek ye the priesthood also? For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord; and

what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?" Moses told them that Aaron had assumed no office of himself; that God had placed him in the sacred office.

Dathan and Abiram said, "Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of the land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? Moreover, thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards; wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up."

They accused Moses of being the cause of their not entering the promised land. They said that God had not dealt with them thus. He had not said that they should die in the wilderness. They would never believe that he had thus said; but that it was Moses who had said this, not the Lord; and that it was all arranged by Moses to never bring them to the land of Canaan. They spoke of his leading them from a land that flowed with milk and honey. They forgot in their blind rebellion their sufferings in the land of Egypt, and the desolating plagues brought upon that land. But they now accuse Moses of bringing them from a good land, to kill them in the wilderness, that he might be made rich with their possessions. They

inquired of Moses, in an insolent manner, if he thought that none of all the host of Israel were wise enough to understand his motives, and discover his imposture; or if he thought they would all submit to have him lead them about like blind men as he pleased, sometimes toward Canaan, then back again toward the Red Sea and Egypt. These words they spoke before the congregation, and they utterly refused any longer to acknowledge the authority of Moses and Aaron.

Moses was greatly moved at these unjust accusations. He appealed to God before the people whether he had ever acted arbitrarily, and implored him to be his judge. The people in general were disaffected, and influenced by the misrepresentation of Korah. "And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the Lord, thou, and they, and Aaron, to-morrow; and take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before the Lord every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and Aaron, each of you his censer. And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron."

Korah and his company who aspired to the priesthood in their self-confidence, even

took the censers and stood in the door of the tabernacle with Moses. Korah had cherished his envy and rebellion until he was self-deceived, and he really thought that the congregation was a very righteous people, and that Moses was a tyrannical ruler, continually dwelling upon the necessity of the congregation's being holy, when there was no need of it, for they were holy.

These rebellious ones had flattered the people in general to believe that they were right, and that all their troubles arose from Moses, their ruler, who was continually reminding them of their sins. The people thought if Korah could lead them, and encourage them, and dwell upon their righteous acts, instead of reminding them of their failures, they would have a very peaceful, prosperous journey, and he would without doubt lead them, not back and forward in the wilderness, but into the promised land. They said that it was Moses who had told them that they could not go into the land, and that the Lord had not thus said.

#### THE REBELS PERISH.

Korah, in his exalted self-confidence, gathered all the congregation of Israel against Moses and Aaron, "unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And

the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation. And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment. And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation? And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him. And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side; and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children. And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them