

TESTIMONY

For the Church.

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## INTRODUCTION.

THE Testimonies to the Church, now twenty-six in number, cover a period of twenty years. These have ranged, in point of size, from a sixteen-page tract to a pamphlet of two hundred and eight pages. In these, a voice has been appealing to the people of God, in one straight-forward line for a score of years. This voice has in a uniform manner given warning of the deceitfulness of riches, and the dangers of the love and spirit of this world. It has also cried out against the prevailing sins of our evil time.

On the other hand, we recognize the voice of the dear Shepherd comforting the little flock, and encouraging them to faithfulness in their Christian lives and sacrifices in his cause, in view of immortal rewards to be given at the second coming of Christ.

The character of God, of his law, his Son, the Sacred Scriptures, and the way of holiness have been represented in a uniform manner for this period of twenty years. This also may be said of Satan, sin, and the path of death.

Twenty years since, the idea of Testimonies from God to the church, through a frail, hum-

ble instrument, was regarded very questionable; a few believed fully by reason of attending evidences. Many, however, balancing the matter in their minds like Gamaliel, said, "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." Here is a work that has been subjected to the most rigid criticisms, and the most violent persecutions for the long period of twenty years, and yet remains unchanged. Had this work originated in the mind of an unsophisticated woman, it would have been forced out of its course long since and brought to confusion and to naught.

Let the following pages be read in the fear of God. Those who cannot feel the force of the great truths stated, and the importance of the admonitions given, at the first reading, should re-read this book upon their knees. Many who will read these pages of reproof, have read others of a similar character without taking heed to them. Their minds are consequently blinded, and their hearts are well nigh as cold and unfeeling as a stone. Those who can read these pages unmoved, should read them again and again with fervent prayer until they do feel deeply these admonitions from the Lord to his waiting people.

J. W.

*Oakland, Cal., Jan., 1876.*

## TESTIMONY FOR THE CHURCH.

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### Bible Biographies.

THE lives recorded in the Bible are authentic histories of actual individuals. From Adam down through successive generations, to the times of the apostles, we have the plain, unvarnished account of what actually occurred, and the genuine experience of real characters. It is a subject of wonder to many, that inspired history should narrate facts in the lives of good men that tarnish their moral characters. Infidels seize upon these sins with great satisfaction, and hold their perpetrators up to ridicule.

The inspired writers did not testify to falsehoods, fearing that the pages of Sacred History would be clouded by the record of human frailties and faults. The scribes of God wrote as they were dictated by the Holy Spirit, having no control of the work themselves. They penned the literal truth, and stern, forbidding facts are revealed for reasons that our finite minds cannot fully comprehend.

It is one of the best evidences of the authenticity of the Scriptures, that the truth is not glossed over, nor the sins of its chief

characters suppressed. Many will urge that it is an easy matter to give a relation of what has occurred in an ordinary life. But it is a proven fact that it is a human impossibility to give an impartial history of a contemporary; and it is almost as difficult to narrate, without deviating from the exact truth, the story of any person or people with whose career we have become acquainted. The human mind is so subject to prejudice that it is almost impossible for it to treat the subject impartially. Either the faults of the person under review stand out in glaring relief, or the virtues shine with undimmed luster, just as the writer is prejudiced for or against him. However impartial the historian may design to be, all critics will agree that it is a very difficult matter to be truly so.

But divine unction, lifted above the weaknesses of humanity, tells the simple, naked truth. How many biographies have been written of faultless Christians, who, in their ordinary home life and church relations, shone as examples of immaculate piety. No blemish marred the beauty of their holiness, no fault is recorded to remind us they were of the common clay, and subject to the ordinary temptations of humanity.

Yet, had the pen of inspiration written their histories, how different would they have appeared. There would have been revealed human weaknesses, struggles with selfishness, bigotry and pride, hidden sins perhaps, and the continual warfare between the spirit and

the flesh. Even private journals do not reveal on their pages the writer's sinful deeds. Sometimes the conflicts with evil are recorded, but usually only when the right has gained the victory. But they may contain a faithful account of praiseworthy acts and noble endeavors, this, too, when the writer honestly intends to keep a faithful journal of his life. It is next to a human impossibility to lay open our faults for the possible inspection of our friends.

Had our good Bible been written by uninspired persons it would have presented quite a different appearance and would have been a discouraging study to erring mortals contending with natural frailties and the temptations of a wily foe. But, as it is, we have a correct record of the religious experiences of marked characters in Bible history. Men whom God favored, and intrusted with great responsibilities, were sometimes overcome by temptation and committed sins, even as we of the present day strive, waver, and frequently fall into error. But it is encouraging to our desponding hearts to know that through God's grace they could gain fresh vigor to rise again above their evil natures, and remembering this we are ready to renew the conflict ourselves.

The murmurings of ancient Israel and their rebellious discontent, are recorded for our benefit as well as the mighty miracles wrought in their favor, and the punishment of their idolatry and ingratitude. The ex-

ample of ancient Israel is given as a warning to the people of God that they may avoid unbelief and escape his wrath. If the iniquities of the Hebrews had been omitted from the Sacred Record, and only their virtues recounted, their history would fail to teach us the lesson that it does.

Infidels, and the lovers of sin excuse their crimes by citing the wickedness of men to whom God gave authority in olden times. They argue that if these holy men yielded to temptation and committed sins, it is not to be wondered at that they too should be guilty of wrong-doing; and intimate that they are not so bad after all, since they have such illustrious examples of iniquity before them.

The principles of justice required a faithful narration of facts for the benefit of all who should ever read the Sacred Record. Here we discern the evidences of divine wisdom. We are required to obey the law of God, and we are not only instructed as to the penalty of disobedience, but we have, narrated for our benefit and warning, the history of Adam and Eve in Paradise, and the sad results of their disobedience of God's commands. The account is full and explicit. The law given to man in Eden is recorded together with the penalty accruing in case of its disobedience. Then follows the story of the temptation and fall, and the punishment inflicted upon our erring parents.

Their example is given us as a warning against disobedience, that we may be sure

the wages of sin is death, that God's retributive justice never fails, and that he exacts from his creatures a strict regard for his commandments. When the law of Sinai was proclaimed, how definite was the penalty annexed, how sure was punishment to follow the transgression of that law, and how plain are the cases recorded in evidence of that fact.

The pen of inspiration, true to its task, tells us of the sins that overcame Noah, Lot, Moses, Abraham, David and Solomon, while even Elijah's strong spirit sank under temptation during his fearful trial. Jonah's disobedience and Israel's idolatry are faithfully recorded. Peter's denial of Christ, the sharp contention of Paul and Barnabas, the failings and infirmities of the prophets and apostles, are all laid bare by the Holy Ghost, who lifts the veil from the human heart. There lay before us the lives of the believers, with all their faults and follies, and they are intended as a lesson to all the generations following them. If they had been without foible they would have been more than human, and our sinful natures would despair of ever reaching such a point of excellence. But, seeing where they struggled and fell, took heart again and conquered through the grace of God, we are led to be encouraged, and press on over the obstacles that degenerate nature places in our way.

God has been ever faithful to punish crime. He sent his prophets to warn the

guilty, denounce their sins, and pronounce judgment upon them. Those who question why the word of God brings out the sins of his people in so plain a manner for scoffers to deride and saints to deplore, should consider that it was all written for their instruction, that they might avoid the evils recorded, but imitate the righteousness of those who served the Lord.

We need just such lessons as the Bible gives us, for with the revelation of sin is recorded the retribution following. The sorrow and penitence of the guilty and the wailing of the sin-sick soul, come to us from the past telling us that man was then, as now, in need of the pardoning mercy of God. It teaches us that while he is a punisher of crime, he pities and forgives the repenting sinner. In his providence the Lord has seen fit to teach and warn his people in various ways. By direct command, by the Sacred Writings, by the spirit of prophecy has he made known unto them his will.

My work has been to speak plainly of the faults and errors of God's people. Because the sins of certain individuals have been brought to light, it is no evidence that they are worse in the sight of the Lord than many whose failings are unrecorded. But I have been shown that it was not mine to choose my work, but humbly to obey the will of God. The errors and wrong-doings in the lives of professed Christians are recorded for the instruction of those who are liable to fall

into the same temptations. The experience of one serves as a beacon light to warn others off the rocks of danger.

Thus the snares and devices of Satan are revealed, the importance of perfecting Christian character, and the means by which this result may be obtained. Thus God indicates what is necessary to secure his blessing. There is a disposition on the part of many to let rebellious feelings arise if their peculiar sins are reproved. The spirit of this generation is, Speak unto us smooth things. But the Spirit of Prophecy speaks only truth.

Iniquity abounds, and the love of many who profess to follow Christ waxes cold. They are blind to the wickedness of their own hearts, and do not feel their weak and helpless condition. God in his mercy lifts the veil and shows them there is an eye behind the scenes that discerns their hidden guilt and the motives of their actions.

The sins of the popular churches are white-washed over. Many of the members indulge in the grossest vices and are steeped in iniquity. Babylon is fallen and has become the cage of every foul and hateful bird! The most revolting sins of the age find a shelter beneath the cloak of Christianity. Many proclaim the law of God abolished, and surely their lives are in keeping with their faith. If there is no law then there is no transgression, and therefore no sin, for sin is the transgression of the law.

The carnal mind is at enmity with God

and rebels against his will. Let it once throw off the yoke of obedience and it slips unconsciously into the lawlessness of crime. Iniquity abounds among those who talk grandly of a pure and perfect religious liberty. Their conduct is abhorrent to the Lord, and they are co-workers with the adversary of souls. The light of revealed truth is turned from their sight, and the beauties of holiness are but as shadows to them.

It is astounding what flimsy foundations very many build their hopes of Heaven upon. They rail at the law of the Infinite One as if they would defy him and make his word null. Satan even, with his knowledge of the divine law, would not dare to make the speeches which some law-hating ministers do from the pulpit, yet he exults in their blasphemy.

I have been shown what man is without a knowledge of the will of God. Crimes and iniquity fill up the measure of his life. But when the Spirit of God reveals to man the full meaning of the law, what a change takes place in his heart. Like Belshazzar he reads intelligently the hand-writing of the Almighty and conviction takes possession of his soul. The thunders of God's word startle him from his lethargy and he calls for mercy in the name of Jesus. And to that humble plea God always listens with a willing ear. He never turns the penitent away comfortless.

The Lord has seen fit to give me a view of the needs and errors of his people. Painful

though it has been to me, I have faithfully set before the offenders their faults and the means of remedying them, according to the dictates of the Spirit of God. This has, in many instances, excited the tongue of slander, and embittered against me those for whom I have labored and suffered. But I have not been turned from my course because of this. God gave me my work, and, upheld by his sustaining strength, I have performed the painful duties he has set before me. Thus has the Spirit of God pronounced warnings and judgments, withholding not however the sweet promise of mercy.

If God's people would recognize his dealings with them, and accept his teachings, they would find a straight path for their feet, and a light to guide them through darkness and discouragement. David learned wisdom from God's dealings with him, and bowed in humility beneath the chastisement of the Most High. The faithful portrayal of his true state by the prophet Nathan, made David acquainted with his own sins and aided him to put them away. He accepted counsel meekly, and humiliated himself before God. "The law of the Lord," he exclaims, "is perfect, converting the soul."

Repentant sinners have no cause to despair because they are reminded of their transgressions and warned of their danger. These very efforts in their behalf show how much God loves them and desires that they shall be saved. They have only to follow his counsel

and do his will to inherit eternal life. God sets before his erring people their sins that they may behold them in all their enormity, under the light of divine truth. It is then their duty to renounce them forever.

God is as powerful to save from sin to-day as he was in the times of the Patriarchs, of David, and the prophets and apostles of Bible times. The multitude of cases recorded in Sacred History, where God has delivered his people from their own iniquities, should make the Christian of this time eager to receive divine instruction, and zealous to perfect a character that will bear the close inspection of the Judgment.

Bible history stays the fainting heart with the hope of God's mercy. We need not despair when we see that others have struggled through discouragements like unto our own, fallen into temptations, even as we have done, yet recovered their ground and been blessed of God. The words of inspiration comfort and cheer the erring soul. Although the patriarchs and apostles were subject to human frailties, yet through faith they obtained a good report, fought their battles in the strength of the Lord, and conquered gloriously. Thus may we trust in the virtue of the atoning sacrifice and be overcomers in the name of Jesus. Humanity is humanity the world over, from the time of Adam down to the present generation, and the love of God through all the ages is without a parallel.

## Unity of the Church.

DEAR BRETHREN:—As all the different members of the human system unite to form the entire body, and each performs its office in obedience to the intelligence that governs the whole, so the members of the church of Christ should be united in one symmetrical body, subject to the sanctified intelligence of the whole.

The advancement of our church is retarded by the wrong course of its members. Unit-ing with the church, although an important and necessary act, does not make one a Christian or ensure salvation. We can not secure a title to Heaven by having our names enrolled upon the church books, while our hearts are alienated from Christ. We should be his faithful representatives on earth, working in unison with him. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” We should keep in mind this holy relationship and do nothing to bring dishonor upon our Father’s cause.

Our profession is an exalted one. As Sabbath-keeping Adventists, we profess to obey all God’s commandments, and are looking for the coming of our Redeemer. A most solemn message of warning has been intrusted to God’s faithful few. We should show by our words and works that we recognize the great responsibility laid upon us. Our light should shine so clearly that others can see that we glorify the Father in our daily lives; that we are connected with

Heaven and are joint-heirs with Jesus Christ; that when he shall appear in power and great glory, we shall be like him.

We should every one feel our individual responsibility as members of the visible church and workers in the vineyard of the Lord. We should not wait for our brethren, who are frail as ourselves, to help us along, for our precious Saviour has invited us to join ourselves to him, and unite our weakness with his strength, our ignorance to his wisdom, our unworthiness to his merits.

None of us can occupy a neutral position, our influence will tell for or against. We are active agents for Christ or for the enemy. We either gather with Jesus or scatter abroad. True conversion is a radical change. The very drift of the mind and bent of the heart should be turned, and life become new again in Christ.

God is leading out a people to stand in perfect unity upon the platform of eternal truth. Christ gave himself to the world "that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." This refining process is designed to purge the church from all unrighteousness and the spirit of discord and contention; that they may build up instead of tear down, and concentrate their energies on the great work before them. God designs that his people should all come into the unity of faith. The prayer of Christ to his Father, just prior to his crucifixion, was that his disciples might be one, even as

he was one with the Father, that the world might believe that he had sent him. This most touching and wonderful prayer reaches down the ages, even to our day, for his words were, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."

How earnestly should the professed followers of Christ seek to answer this prayer in their lives. Many do not realize the sacredness of their church relations, and are loth to submit to restraint and discipline. Their course of action shows that they exalt their own judgment above that of the united church; and they are not careful to guard themselves lest they encourage a spirit of opposition to its voice.

Those who hold responsible positions in the church may have their faults in common with other people, and may err in their decisions; but notwithstanding this, the church of Christ on earth has given to them an authority that cannot be lightly esteemed. Christ, after his resurrection, delegated power unto his church, saying, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."

A relation to the church is not to be easily canceled; yet some professed followers of Christ will threaten to leave the church when their path is crossed, or their voice has not the controlling influence which they think it deserves. True, in leaving the church, they would be the greatest sufferers themselves,

for in withdrawing beyond the pale of its influence, they subject themselves to the full temptations of the world.

Every believer should be whole-hearted in his attachment to the church. Its prosperity should be his first interest, and unless he feels under sacred obligations to make his connection with the church a benefit to it, in preference to himself, it can do far better without him. It is in the power of all to do something for the cause of God. There are those who spend a large amount for needless luxuries, and to gratify their appetites, but feel it a great tax to contribute means to sustain the church. They are willing to receive all the benefits of its privileges, but prefer to leave others to pay the bills. Those who really feel a deep interest in the advancement of the cause, will not hesitate to invest money in the enterprise whenever and wherever it is needed.

They should also feel it a solemn duty to illustrate in their characters the teachings of Christ, being at peace one with another and moving in perfect harmony as an undivided whole. They should defer their individual judgment to the judgment of the body of the church. Many are living for themselves alone. They look upon their lives with great complacency, flattering themselves that they are blameless, when in fact they are doing nothing for God, and are living in direct opposition to his expressed word. The observance of external forms will never meet the

great want of the human soul. A profession of Christ is not enough to stand the test of the day of Judgment. There should be a perfect trust in God, a childlike dependence upon his promises, and an utter consecration of self to his will.

God has always tried his people in the furnace of affliction, in order to prove them firm and true, and purge them from all unrighteousness. After Abraham and his son had borne the severest test that could be imposed upon them, God spoke through his angel unto Abraham, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." This great act of faith causes the character of Abraham to shine forth with remarkable luster. It forcibly illustrates his perfect confidence in the Lord, from whom he withheld nothing, not even his son of promise.

There is nothing too precious for us to give to Jesus. If we return to him the talents of means he has intrusted to our keeping, he will give more into our hands. Every effort we make for Christ will be rewarded by him; and every duty we perform in his name will minister to our own happiness. God surrendered his dearly-beloved Son to the agonies of the crucifixion, that all who believe on him should become one through the name of Jesus. When Christ made so great a sacrifice to save men and bring them into unity one with another, even as he was united with the

Father, what sacrifice is too great for his followers to make, in order to preserve that unity?

If the world sees a perfect harmony existing in the church of God, it will be a powerful evidence to them in favor of the Christian religion. Dissensions, unhappy differences, and petty church-trials dishonor our Redeemer. All these may be avoided if self is surrendered to God, and the followers of Jesus obey the voice of the church. Unbelief suggests that individual independence increases our importance, that it is weak to yield our own ideas of what is right and proper, to the verdict of the church. But to yield to such feelings and views is unsafe, and will bring us to anarchy and confusion. Christ saw that unity and Christian fellowship were necessary to the cause of God, therefore he enjoins it upon his disciples. And the history of Christianity from that time until now proves conclusively that in union only there is strength. Let individual judgment submit to the authority of the church.

The apostles felt the necessity of strict unity, and they labored earnestly to this end. Paul exhorted his brethren in these words:

“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”