

SDA CHURCH APPEARS TO FALL: OMITTED TEXT

Neil C. Livingston

The following is another example why one should not trust the Ellen G. White Estate, or any other committee of man, to interpret the messages of God - either from the Spirit of Prophecy or the Holy Scriptures. The following is an Ellen G. White letter written to Elders Butler and Haskell. The three paragraphs that have been omitted by the White Estate is quoted between the stars *** and are listed as paragraphs 4, 5, and 6.

This letter continues through page 383. The statement that "The church may appear as about to fall. . . ." appears on page 380. Read the whole letter in context including the above omission by the Ellen G. White Estate.

(1) Basil, Switzerland, December 8, 1886. Dear Brethren (G. I.) Butler and (S. N.) Haskell: For weeks I have not been able to sleep after half past three o'clock. My mind is deeply exercised in regard to our condition as a people. We ought to be far in advance of any other people on the earth because we have greater light and greater knowledge of the truth, which lays us under increased accountability to advance that light and not only to profess to believe the truth but to practice it. When we do practice the truth we are then following Jesus, who is the light of the world; and if we as a people are not constantly elevating, becoming more and more spiritual minded, we are becoming like the Pharisees-self-righteous - while we do not the will of God.

(2) We must have a greater nearness to God. Much less of self and much more of Jesus Christ and His grace must be brought into our everyday life. We are living in an important period of this world's history. The end of all things is at hand; the sands of time are fast running out; soon in heaven it will be said: "It is done" (Rev. 21:6). "He that is holy, let him be holy still," "he which is filthy, let him be filthy still" (Rev. 22:11).

(3) Let our testimonies be sharpened up, let us have a firmer hold on God. I cannot refrain from prayer at one, two, and three o'clock in the morning for the Lord at work upon the hearts of the people. I think of all heaven being interested in the work that is going on upon the earth. Ministering angels are waiting about the throne to instantly obey the mandate of Jesus Christ to answer every prayer offered in earnest, living faith.

I think of how many who profess the truth are keeping it apart from their lives. They do not bring in sanctifying, refining, spiritualizing power into their hearts. . . .

The omission begins at this point in the letter and is quoted in paragraphs 4, 5 and 6, between the stars ***.

(4) *** I think of His great sorrow as He wept over Jerusalem, exclaiming, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" God forbid that these words shall apply to those who have had great light and blessings. In the rejecting of Jerusalem, it was because great privileges were abused which brought the denunciation upon all who lightly regarded the great opportunities and precious light that were entrusted to their keeping. Privileges do not commend us to God, but they commend God to us. No people are saved because they have great light and special advantages, for these high and heavenly favors only increase their responsibility.

About to Fall

(5) The more and increased light God has given make the receiver more responsible. It does not place the receiver in any safer position unless the privileges are wisely improved., prized and used to advance God's glory. Christ said, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

(6) When Jerusalem was divorced from God, it was because of her sins. She fell from an exalted height that Tyre and Sidon had never reached. And when an angel falls he becomes a fiend. The depths of our ruin is measured by the exalted light to which God has raised us in His great goodness and unspeakable mercy. Oh, what privileges are granted to us as a people! And if God spared not His people that He loved because they refused to walk in the light, how can He spare the people whom He has blessed with the light of Heaven in having opened to them the most exalted truth ever entrusted to mortal man to give to the world? ***

This is the end of the omitted portion. In Selected Messages , Book 2, page 377, the letter continues from the above marks.

(7) We are far from being the people God would have us to be, because we do not elevate the soul and refine the character in harmony with the wonderful unfolding of God's truth and His purposes. . . . Ellen G. White, Selected Messages , book 2 (pages 376-383).

The following comments are by Elder William Grotheer, Adventist Laymen's Foundation.

Nowhere in the Bible is it taught that once saved, always saved. Neither is it taught, once called, always called. If ever a people were called of God, the children of Israel were. For centuries, God bore long with the rebellion and apostasy of His chosen people. Finally after sending prophets and wise men, He sent His only begotten Son. This Son came unto His "own things" - so close was the attachment perceived - but His "own people" (John 1:11, Greek) by their deliberate decision and choice received Him not. To that people, Jesus had to finally say - "Your house is left unto you desolate." (Matt. 23:38). The temple was the centerpiece of the "visible organization" of the Jewish Church. The Lord of glory could not save the temple, nor turn the Jewish Church around.

The Jews worshiped the temple and were filled with greater indignation at anything spoken against that building than if it had been spoken against God. Ellen G. White, Early Writings , page 198.

In the prophetic picture of Laodicea, Jesus is ever pictured as standing outside the door, knocking. He never gains entrance. Only to the individual (tis, Greek: "anyone") who opens the door does Jesus come in to "sup with him." (Rev. 3:20). Corporate Laodicea never opens the door.

Ellen G. White in the letter to Elders Butler and Haskell, dated December 8, 1886, wrote very pointedly concerning the relationship between the Jewish Church of Christ's day, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is from this letter that the oft-used quotation is to be found - "The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out - the chaff separated from the precious wheat."

But the context in which this statement is made in the letter is ignored by the omission by the trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate. The letter is talking about the Church when "Satan will work his miracles to deceive; he will set up his power as supreme." It is stated in the setting when "the decree of national councils" and "the national laws" shall seek to enforce the observance of the false Sabbath. (ibid. p. 380). That time is not now. "When it does come, we will then be able better "to measure the strength of Israel." (See, Watchman, what of the night? XXIV, December, 1991, pages 1, 2).