

The Evangelical Revival

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THE PHILADELPHIAN PERIOD OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION

“To the angel of the church of Philadelphia write; These things says he that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that open, and no man shuts; and shuts, and m men opens; I know your work’s behold I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it: for you have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name. Behold, I will make then of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold I will make them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.”

“Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which you have, that m man take your crown. Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go m more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” Revelation 3:7-13.

The historical view of these messages to the seven churches is that they represent the seven periods of the Christian church from the first to the second advent of Christ. This has been the view of leading Bible scholars down through the centuries and is the view of Seventh-day Adventists.

“The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in the different periods of the Christian era.” Acts of the Apstoles, page 585. (1)

The last period of these seven churches is called Laodicea. The meaning of “Laodicea1” is “the judged or justified people”. It comes from two words: “Laos” - people, and “dikaios” - justified” or “judged”. (2) The meaning of the name provides a clue whereby we can ascertain the time period of the final church of Laodicea. We believe that the judging of the people is an allusion to the “pre-Advent Judgment”, or the “Investigative Judgment” in the heavenly sanctuary, which began in 1844 and concludes at the close of human probation. Therefore, the period of Laodicea concerning the judging of the people must commence in 1844 and terminate near the second advent of Christ.

The sixth period is that of Philadelphia. If Laodicea commenced in 1844, then we can logically conclude that the Philadelphian period ended in 1844. At what time, then, did the Philadelphian period commence? To answer this question we must ascertain the time period of the fifth church. The fifth period, that is, the period before Philadelphia, was Sardis. This was the period of the Reformation and post-Reformation churches. This position has been generally held by most scholars through the years. The Philadelphian period then, is the period between the time of the Reformation and post-Reformation churches, and 1844.

When did the Sardis period conclude? In order to answer this we need to ask: “What were the Reformation churches and how did they fulfill the conditions that were predicted of them in the Sardis epistle?” The Reformation bodies that arose at the beginning of the sixteenth century, were the Lutheran, the Anglican and the Calvinistic or Reformed churches. Later the Reformed were also called Presbyterian. How did the Lord describe the church in this period of Sardis? In Revelation 3:1 it tells that they had “a name that thou

lives, and are dead". In other words, these churches of the Reformation would spiritually decline and become spiritually dead.

It is a recognized fact that this is exactly what happened to the churches of that period. They commenced in glorious fashion when they broke from the church of Rome, but ere long, because of their refusal to walk in the light of the Word of God, and binding themselves about with creeds, they became exclusive. "Rigid and frigid" are the words of the historian in describing the Lutheran church. (3) These churches often became relentless persecutors of those who dissented from them. This was true of the Lutheran, Swiss and Anglican churches.

Who were the dissenting groups of this period? There were the Anabaptists, who existed in Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Poland, Moravia, and even England. They were a staunch body of believers who suffered great persecution from their fellow Protestants as well as from the Roman Catholics. Many were martyred for their faith. In England there were the Puritans. These were Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists and Quakers. The Independents were later called Congregationalists. In Scotland from 1660 - 1688, there were the Covenanters. Eighteen thousand of these were martyred by the Stuart Kings, aided and abetted by the Anglican church.

In France there was a branch of the Reformed church - the Hugenots - who under the reign of their Catholic kings and aristocracy suffered the worst persecution of any Protestant group since the Reformation began. This persecution involved the massacre of St. Bartholomew of 1572 in which upwards of 70,000 were slain and later when the Edict of Nantes was revoked in 1685 all Protestants were outlawed. About half a million fled France while thousands of others were martyred. (4)

In the message to Sardis the Lord declared "Thou has a name that thou lives and are dead". Nevertheless, the Lord also said, "Thou has a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments anti they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." Revelation 1:4. No doubt those dissenting groups, generally small in number, but faithful to Christ, even to death, were the faithful few that the Lord marked out in the Sardis period.

When did the Sardis period come to its conclusion? We believe that that period ended in what is called, The Age of Reason, or Enlightenment that came upon Europe from about 1680 to approximately 1750. In this period the philosophy of Deism swept Christendom and under the guise of reason and enlightenment, this anti-Christian philosophy became a powerful instrument in undermining the Christian faith. The churches were seriously influenced by it, and as a result the Christian church in general became paralyzed, and faith in Christ reached an all-time low. In England it made an appalling impact upon society. We believe we are on safe ground in holding that it was this Age of Reason or Deism that crystallized the Sardis condition of the church, i.e. it had a name that it lived, but it was spiritually dead.

Notice what Dr. Fitchett wrote concerning the 18th century - the period in which Deism swept Christendom:

"In some respects, the 18th century is the most ill-used period in English history. It is the 'Cinderella of the centuries'. No one has a good word to say about it. Carlyle sums it up in a bitter phrase: 'Soul extinct - stomach well alive.' The real scandal of England in the 18th century is the general decay of religion which marked its first fifty years. Only by an effort can we realize the condition of England in 1703. Christianity came near its death swoon in that sad age. Green, the historian, said, 'There was open revolt against religion and against churches in both extremes of English society, The poor were ignorant and brutal to a degree impossible now to realize. The rich, to an almost utter disbelief of religion, linked a foulness of life now happily almost inconceivable.' The fatal thing in the religion of that age, was that it had ceased to be a life, or to touch life. Christianity in England, at the beginning of the 18th century was a circle of dead fibers." (5)

Undoubtedly it was in the first part of the 18th century that the Sardis period of the seven churches of Revelation came to its end.

We now return to the sixth period - to Philadelphia, which means “brotherly love”. When we read the message to Philadelphia, we find that it is in stark contrast to that of Sardis. There is not a single complaint made by Christ concerning His people in this period. This indicates that there must have been a dramatic change from the condition of the Sardis period. There must have been a revival of Christian faith, a return to Christ. Was there such a return? Was there such a revival?

It is indisputable that there was a remarkable revival of the Christian faith in the 18th and 19th centuries. What was the origin of this revival? It appears that it originated initially with the Pietists of Germany. (6) In the later part of their existence there rose among them, a leader called Count Zinzendorf. He had a large estate at Hernhuth, near the Czechoslovakian border. Zinzendorf was foremost in this revival in its latter years. One day there came, from Moravia, a band of refugees who had suffered severe persecution from the Roman Catholics. Zinzendorf welcomed them and offered them residence at Hernhuth, where they established themselves as a religious company. Zinzendorf led this group to experience a genuine revival of Christian faith. These were the Moravians. They were inspired to take the gospel to the unconverted and to the heathen in foreign lands. (7) The Moravian movement became one of the most remarkable missionary movements of the Christian era.

The second event that led to the Philadelphian revival, originated at Oxford University. Here was formed the “Holy Club” by a number of young religious scholars, mostly Anglican, who sought for a renewal of spiritual life. Among them were three remarkable characters: George Whitfield, John Wesley and his brother Charles. (8) They were gifted men and undoubtedly the Lord raised them up to turn back the forces of darkness and to revive the Christian faith in Britain, in the English-speaking world and beyond. John Wesley originally was a cold, legalistic churchman, but through the influence of the Moravian missionaries, he found Christ and true salvation, and as a result he became a transformed man. (9) He united with George Whitfield, who pioneered the proclamation of the Gospel to the masses of England, and there began the mighty Evangelical Revival of the 18th century. Their motto was: “The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man”. How relevant was this motto in the light of the sad and wretched times that had befallen the majority of the population.

John Wesley declared, “The world is my parish”, and remember, the message to Philadelphia was: “I have set before thee an open door”.

What was this open door? There are five different applications given in Scripture of the “open door”, and all of these are supported by the Spirit of Prophecy. (10) One application is that it was the door of access, of communication with God. Secondly, it was a door to answered prayer. Thirdly, it was a door to the reception of truth and power to overcome sin. Fourthly, it was a door of missionary opportunity. Fifthly, it was the door into the “holy of holies” of the Heavenly Sanctuary, into which Christ was to enter at the close of the Philadelphia period in 1844.

All five of the above applications were abundantly fulfilled in the great Evangelical Revival of the 18th and 19th centuries. The first four applied to the Revival at its beginning and throughout its career. The fifth one applied to the close of the Philadelphian period. What a revival! It was a powerful exhibition of brotherly love. In order to reach the miserable masses of the under-privileged, Whitfield and the Wesleys were compelled to preach in the open air. At all hours, in all places, and under all conditions they were inspired to proclaim the simple Gospel of Christ. They were burning and shining lights, and, in turn, they set Britain alight. Thousands upon thousands listened, vast audiences stood in wonder. They saw that these preachers - members of the privileged class - loved them, which was so unusual. The wretched masses, in their hopeless situation learned that God loved them, that they were precious in His sight. As the historian declared:

“The true awakening of the religious life of the English-speaking race dates from Wesley. To say that he reshaped the conscience of England is true, but it is only half the truth. He recreated it. It was dead, twice dead, and through his lips God breathed into it the breath of life again.” (11).

The labors of Wesley illustrate the labor of love of him and his associates. He ministered for fifty-two solid years and preached 45,000 sermons. He traveled about 225,000 miles, mostly on horseback. He wrote 233

books and pamphlets and aided in producing 100 others. He and his brother produced 417 books between them. He labored from sixteen to eighteen hours a day. It was a labor of brotherly love - Philadelphia! He was a remarkable man, gifted by God and used by God.

In Wesley we see the striking fulfillment of the promise given by the Spirit of Prophecy:

“There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart and lives a life wholly consecrated to God.” 8 Testimonies, page 19. (12).

If ever there was seen an exhibition of that principle, it was seen in the life and ministry of the beloved John Wesley and also of his companions. The high Anglican churchman, Dr. Knox, declared concerning Wesley:

“Referring to pride, ambition, selfishness and personal gratification of what ever kind; since the days of the apostles, there has not been a human being more thoroughly exempt from all the frailties of human nature than John Wesley.” (12A).

Dr. Skeates declared:

“No man in any age has exceeded him in the skill of organization, or the wisdom of administration.” (13).

No doubt this remarkable ability stemmed not only from the gifts with which he was born, but from his close relationship with Christ. As a result of the complete dedication of Wesley and his fellows there was produced the greatest revival since the times of the apostles. It was a revival affecting not only the hearts and minds of millions, but their very lives, their society, their nation and the world. Initially, through the power of the gospel it transformed individuals by the millions. Secondly these transformed individuals transformed their own environment - their families, homes, their fellowmen - the English-speaking race. The masses of the English people at that time were in such a sordid, poverty-stricken, wretched condition, that it was only a matter of time before they would have exploded in awful vengeance upon the privileged class and destroyed them, as occurred in the terrifying French Revolution. But Wesley and his companions saved England from such an awful experience. The great Revival produced a bloodless revolution through the Gospel.

As Dr. Brady declared:

“The Evangelical Revival was, in fact, a revolution. It was a revolution which had at its heart a love of humanity, not hatred of class.” (14).

When we examine the number and the effects of the social reforms that were inspired by the Evangelical Revival, it beggars the mind. In our day and age, it is difficult to realize the condition of society of England and elsewhere, compared with what it is today. Wesley taught men to look upon every man as his brother. He and his companions engaged in a vast visitation program of the poor, the sick and the prisoners, which was unheard of. Wesley was ordered “to cease preaching at Newgate prison, lest he make the prisoners wicked and also at Bedlam, (insane asylum), lest (he) drive the inmates mad.” (15).

They attacked the legal, political and religious corruption of the day. They influenced the changing of the barbarous prison system which amounted, among other atrocities, to deliberate torture. They altered the savage penal code, which included the death penalty for 160 different violations of the law. They abolished the appalling crimes permitted against the infants of the poor. At birth it was permitted to strangle or starve them to death. They abolished child slavery - the cruel system of child labor. The name that stands prominent in this reform was that of Lord Shaftesbury, a product of the Great Revival.

They attacked bribery and smuggling, the curse of English life, and engaged in a remarkable ministry to the poverty-stricken, which involved the vast majority of the population. They led the poor to Christ, in whom they found forgiveness, acceptance and peace. They taught them self-respect. They taught them to sing. They started schools for the poor. They encouraged them to read, and Wesley even wrote special books for them. They taught the poor the dignity of labor. They taught them skills by which they could be self-supporting, which included even their women. They inculcated the spirit of initiative and independence in

the under-privileged. They raised money to lend to the poor to start them in self-supporting business. They exposed the appalling maladministration of justice to the poor.

Wesley also founded the first free medical dispensary in England. He commenced a program of natural health and temperance, and the drop in the death rate and the rise in public health was the most marked in British history. They attacked the liquor traffic - the populace in that period "was saturated with gin". The reason food was so expensive was because half the corn was used for gin production. They attacked the national obsession of the day - gambling. Society was described as "a vast casino" and it demoralized the people.

The Revival also abolished the cruelty and savagery of the sport of that day which involved the cruel abuse of animals. They reformed the working conditions of the laborers, bringing in reasonable hours and pay and conditions. They inspired the formation of labor unions - and remember, the original labor unions were led by Methodist lay preachers. They abolished the system of slavery. Britain, we may recall was one of the main nations in promoting slavery but, finally, she was the one that brought it to a halt. This also was the result of the great Evangelical Revival - Methodism.

They also instilled into the aristocracy, the principle of social responsibility, using their means to help the poor and shun the extravagance and luxury, to which they were so prone at that time. The Revival created a middle-class in England and this class became the backbone of Britain. They brought into being the voluntary hospital system, which through the decades has been such a blessing to the people. Florence Nightingale and all she stood for was the fruitage of the great Evangelical Revival.

They produced an age of celebrated prose and poetry of the English language. They gave to the English-speaking world the greatest heritage of sacred song and Charles Wesley was the foremost contributor and inspirer. They inspired the Sunday School movement, involving millions of children in learning the Bible and other branches of knowledge. They also revived the faith of many of the Church of England, and this gave birth to the evangelical branch of that church. However, only about five to six percent of the Anglican clergy were affected by the revival. They formed the "Society of Strangers in Distress" - brotherly love again: They revived the flagging spirit of the other dissenting churches - Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist and Quaker. They revived and transformed the church in Scotland which resulted in the tremendous philanthropic and missionary zeal of the Scots, who made such a magnificent contribution in establishing the British Empire. The revival renewed the moral fiber of the British people and it was this that brought greatness to Britain. As the historian has said:

"The true awakening of the religious life of the English-speaking race dates from Wesley. To say that he re-shaped the conscience of England is true, but that is only half the truth. He re-created it. It was dead, twice dead, and through his lips God breathed into it the breath of life again." (11)

In the religious sphere, the Evangelical Revival inspired the formation of Gospel and Tract Societies for the distribution of the Bible to the world. It gave birth to the mighty unprecedented surge of missionary endeavor that took the gospel to the world of the heathen. It inspired the formation of the Y.M.C.A., the Boy Scouts' Movement, homes for orphans and homeless children, such as those of Dr. Mueller and Dr. Barnardo. It inspired the formation of the Salvation Army, for William Booth was a Methodist clergyman. And finally, the Evangelical Revival prepared the way for the Great Second Advent Movement of 1833 to 1844.

You may recall that one of the promises Christ made to the Philadelphia church was: "I have set before thee an open door." One of those doors was the door of mission opportunity. At the close of the 18th century there arose one of the mightiest movements the world has ever seen in connection with foreign missions. In 1792, a sermon was preached by Baptist William Carey, by which God set on fire Christians of all churches. In 1797 Dr. D.L. Leonard declared:

"Christians in every corner of the land are meeting in a regular -manner and pouring out their souls for God's blessing on the world. The efforts most successfully made to introduce the Gospel to the South Seas

have had a most powerful tendency to unite the servants of Christ of every denomination in the bands of brotherly love". (Philadelphia). (16).

Again, Dr. J.A. Seiss declared:

"The era of revivals and missions and united efforts for the general conversion of mankind ensued, such as had not been since the primitive ages, there was a great love and fraternity among Christians." (17).

In 1784 (end of the 18th century), there were only twenty Protestant mission stations in the world, and half of these were Moravian. The Christian church, as such, showed little or no interest in missions, but in 1792, William Carey galvanized Christians into action. From 1792 until 1844, a period of fifty years, we can count at least thirty -six significant events involving the great foreign movement of that time.

It began with the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society, and the following year, William Carey, its first missionary, sailed for India. Then was formed the Scottish Tract and Colporteur Society, then the Evangelical Magazine commenced its missionary publication. Next arose the London Missionary Society, and the New York Missionary Society. Then there sailed to the South Seas the missionary ship "The Duff", with twenty-nine missionaries on board. This was the beginning of the great mission program. Then was formed the Netherlands Missionary Society; then the second voyage of "The Duff" with forty-six missionaries. After this the Church Missionary Society was formed by the Church of England, indicating that the evangelical arm of that church was playing its part as a result of the great revival. Then came the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804. Soon the "Haystack" group in America began its activities at Williams College, which resulted in a remarkable missionary thrust from the United States. From 1812, Henry Martin sailed for Persia and Arabia, Judson began work in Burma and the Baptist Missionary Union was formed in America. In 1816, John Williams sailed for the Society Islands in the South Seas, the American Bible Society was formed, as well as the Wesleyan Society.

In 1817, Robert Moffatt sailed for Africa. In 1820, Bingham sailed for Hawaii. In 1829, Alexander Duff sailed for India, in 1840, David Livingstone began his remarkable work in Africa. What a period it was! "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it" - and no man was able to shut it. It was a marvelous era of opportunity for the proclamation of the gospel to the non-Christian world.

The Lord had said to Philadelphia: "Thou has a little strength, and has kept my word, and has not denied my name". In the great Evangelical Revival of the 18th and 19th centuries, this was truly fulfilled. They entered that open door of missionary opportunity with little human strength but by the grace of God, they kept the faith as they understood it, and were not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

The next point in the message to the Philadelphian church was:

"I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou has kept the word of my patience, I also will keep them from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Revelation 3:11).

What is the meaning of the term "the synagogue of Satan - that say they are Jews and are not"? What is a Jew in the New Testament? A true Jew according to Romans 2:28-29, refers to one who is a true believer: "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly of the spirit whose praise is not of man but of God.", and the man who has the praise of God, is the true born-again Christian. Who, then, are these that say they are Jews and are not? Undoubtedly, they are professing Christians that make up the synagogue of Satan, but they are not genuine Christians. Who, then, is the "synagogue of Satan"? Notice this statement from the Spirit of Prophecy:

"Christ speaks of the church, over which Satan presides, as the synagogue of Satan. Its members are the children of disobedience. They are those who choose to sin, who labor to make void the holy law of God. It is Satan's work to mingle evil with good and remove the distinction between good and evil. Christ would have a church that labors to separate the evil from the good, whose members will not willingly tolerate wrong-doing, but will expel it from the heart and life." (18).

In the time of the great Evangelical Revival, was there any organization over which Satan presided, which professed to be Christian? The one that fulfilled to the very letter this description, was none other than the established church of the day, the Anglican church. If ever a church was responsible for an hour of temptation or trial upon God's people of that period, it was that organization. Historians have been inclined to white-wash the appalling guilt of the established church throughout the centuries. Not only did that religious organization refuse to walk in the light of truth, but she oppressed those who did.

The Anglican church continually opposed the reform and improvement of society. The prelates were guilty of pride, pomp, arrogance and corruption. It is recorded of the bishop of Winchester that "he excused his much swearing by claiming that he swore as a baronet but not as a bishop." (19) In the 18th century, it is claimed only two primates held office, who were even half worthy of office. The Anglican clergy were mostly traitors to England. They were Jacobite in their sympathies and continually supported the Catholic Stuart pretensions to the throne. They resisted social reform and the emancipation of the masses. As one authority has said:

"The attitude of the established clergy was that they were a classical royalist society, and that the lower majority were a vulgar, menial herd." (20).

This explains the attitude over the centuries of many of the clergy of the established church. Dr. Brady, wrote:

"The rapidly increasing industrial population came to account the parish clergy among the most merciless of all the forces of reaction and subjugation." (21).

Likewise Daniel Defoe declared, "The established Church of England was the most intolerant church in Christendom." (22)

Dr. Skeates, writing of the Wesleys and their associates:

"They began the regeneration of a whole people who were sunk in almost heathen darkness. The good they effected, they effected against the will and in spite of the prohibitions of their own church, which again exhibited herself in what was her characteristic attitude as the opponent of all sincere religious life and active religious work." (23).

"The gentle and sainted Archbishop Leighton had remarked of the Church of England, that in its administration, both in relation to the ecclesiastical courts and pastoral duties, it was the most corrupt he had ever seen." (24).

This was the condition of the established church of the day, and the Lord correctly termed it, "the synagogue of Satan". It violently and vehemently resisted the religious revival of Whitfield and the Wesleys. Previously, the Anglican church had supported and aided in the martyrdom of 18,000 Scottish Covenanters. It had been responsible for fining and imprisoning thousands of English dissenters, even from the times of Henry VIII, and Elizabeth I. At one time, 4,000 alone were in prison because they could not pay the severe fines for being dissenters. It was the established church which inspired the mobs to wreck the meetings of the Methodists; to pull down Methodist meeting houses; even to murder Methodist lay preachers. It fought strenuously through the years to retain the oppressive laws against all dissenters. (25).

John Wesley himself spent 52 years in continuous ministry. He proclaimed the Gospel publicly until the very year of his death. But for the first 35 years of his ministry, he suffered violent attacks from the mobs, inspired by the established church. In his journal, he relates how, at his meetings, organized mobs endeavored to destroy the effect of his preaching. (26) Surely the established church was the "synagogue of Satan". Now notice the prediction concerning the synagogue of Satan. "I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." (Revelation 3:9). Moffatt's translation says: "Lo, I will make those who belong to the synagogue of Satan, who style themselves Jews. Lo, I will have them come and do homage before your feet and learn that I love you."

Did those of the established church pay homage to the Evangelical Revival? Did the Anglicans pay homage to the Methodists? In the very time of John Wesley himself, the tide began to turn. At 35 years of age John Wesley was converted to Christ and commenced his life-long campaign. Through human storm and tempest, with the mighty spiritual weapons given by Christ, he waged relentless warfare against the entrenched forces of darkness. After thirty five to forty years of relentless, violent opposition, it began to cease and Wesley's final years were years of homage - homage of the masses - homage of the people, and even homage of the Anglican clergy. As Dr. Brady, in his account of Wesley's final years declared:

“Though from his spiritual birthday, late in his 35th year, unbroken peace and increasing joy had reigned within, nevertheless, for at least four decades, he had encountered a succession of violent tempests without. But ere the termination of his 80th year, cloud and storm had well-nigh passed from his horizon, and the veteran prophet thenceforth moved largely in an atmosphere of serenity, veneration and awe. Many, indeed, who had cursed him, now were praying for him. Not a few persons, who long had thundered against him from their pulpits, were now imploring him to preach from those same pulpits.”

“The stiff-necked, ecclesiastical and lay, continued to put on airs and expatiated on the folly of enthusiasm and the madness of the masses, but to multitudes, Wesley finally was an honored and matchless prophet. The tide had turned. The latter years of the great evangelist's itinerary were a series of triumphal tours. Commonly, as this veteran campaigner for God passed through towns and villages, the streets were lined with excited crowds, gazing with stark admiration and wonder, as if the king were going by. Clergymen - non-conformist and Anglican - turned out everywhere to hear him preach. Even bishops stole sheepishly into his open air congregations. The fury of the anti-Wesley' mobs was no more.” (27).

How impressive! The prediction to the Philadelphians was fulfilled: “I will have them come and do homage before your feet and learn that I love you.” (Revelation 3:9, Moffatt).

The great evangelical movement became acceptable. It finally received recognition, as it transformed society and the English-speaking world. Many of its leading opponents became its firmest supporters. Even George III, King of England, in acknowledging publicly the influence of the Evangelical Revival on popular education in 1805, declared:

“It is my wish that every poor child in my dominions should be taught to read the Bible.” (28).

This was the fruitage of the great revival. But not only that, Queen Victoria, reigning at the height of the British Empire's power, was requested by the German Ambassador as to what was the secret of Britain's greatness. The Queen taking a Bible and handing it to the Ambassador, declared, “This is the secret of England's greatness”. And what was it that brought the Bible to the British people, and transformed them, making Britain great? It was the Evangelical Revival. It was Methodism. Leading churchmen of the established church - its fiercest enemy - reluctantly at first, but later, have done homage to the Revival and to Methodism.

When one steps into Westminster Abbey, a stronghold of the established church through the centuries, one can see the plaque placed there in honor of John and Charles Wesley. On it is inscribed, “The world is my parish”. Thank God for that man and his associates.

Statesmen, historians, educators and other leading lights, by the hundreds, have lauded Methodism to the skies, and rightly so. Thus, the prediction of the Philadelphian period was abundantly fulfilled: “I will have them come and do homage before your feet, and learn that I did love you”.

We now have come to the climax of the Philadelphian period. God's people have passed through a time of trial, “the hour of temptation”, a tremendous hour of testing lasting for decade after decade, but in which God preserved them. The Philadelphian period climaxed in a great awakening of interest in the prophetic books of the Bible. Dramatic events were taking place that were seen as a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. In various parts of the world, scholars were led to the study of the books of Daniel and Revelation. In the first forty years of the 19th century, over twenty landmark events occurred that finally led to the establishment of the Great Second Advent Movement of 1833-44. (29).

It is significant to notice these, for they reveal the tremendous interest in the study of Daniel and Revelation of that period. In 1800 there commenced the famous Bampton lectures entitled “The Divine Origin of Prophecy - Illustrated and Defended”. Secondly, the publication of Faber’s “Dissertations on the Prophecies”; then Lacunza’s Works on “The Second Coming of the Messiah”. Following these was Cunninghame’s “Dissertations on the Seals and Trumpets of the Revelation”, and Freer’s contribution called, “The Combined View of the Christian Prophecies”. At this time also Joseph Woolf began his proclamation around the world of the Lord’s Second Coming. This aroused tremendous interest in the subject. Then there appeared the works of Edward Irving, and the conferences at Albury Park, Surrey, England, of those interested in the near advent of Christ. These Albury Park meetings involved many leading religious scholars of Great Britain. Added to these was Alexander Keith’s work, “The Evidence of the truth of the Christian religion derived from the fulfillment of prophecy”, and Mason’s essays on “Daniel’s prophetic numbers of 2,300 days”; Irving’s Exposition of the book of Revelation. In 1831, William Miller began to preach in the United States. This was the commencement of the Great Second Advent Movement, which was the fulfillment of the First Angel’s Message of Revelation 14:6, 7.

It was the Evangelical Revival that prepared the way for the proclamation of the Great Second Advent message. The Revival familiarized society with the Bible as never before. It was a biblically-minded society. Thus when the great prophecies of Daniel and Revelation were proclaimed, people generally were able to appreciate their significance, in particular, the truth of the second advent of Christ. It was from among those who had been influenced by the Evangelical Revival that the Advent message was received and proclaimed to the world. This was a fitting conclusion to the great Philadelphian period of the church, a period of which Christ finds no complaint concerning His people.

In conclusion, let us notice the unique promise to the overcomers of the Philadelphian period:

“Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.”

How often had the Evangelicals been driven out when they proclaimed the gospel to the generation of their day.

“And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem. And I will write upon him my new name.” Verse 12

This promise denotes protection, victory, and permanence. It also indicates that they would be objects of beauty in the kingdom of God. (30) They would be like the inscribed pillars in a glorious temple. This was a very fitting promise to the evangelicals of the day, who had suffered much for Christ. It denoted protection. After so much hostility and persecution, this was very meaningful to them. “Victory” - they had fought against such over-whelming odds; they had battled for the betterment of mankind and through the proclamation of the Gospel, their efforts did end in victory - but the promise here denotes permanent victory - they would be as pillars in the kingdom.

Finally “objects of beauty”. Did they become “objects of beauty” in the society of the day? John Wesley was an adornment of society -of beautiful character, he was a man that reflected the image of Christ. In the kingdom, the overcomers of this period will be objects of beauty. “They shall be mine, said the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.” (Malachi 3:17) This beautiful promise has particular application to those of the Philadelphian period. But more than that, this promise is also for every believer of every church period, who sincerely sacrifices for Christ and His fellow-men. In fact the messages to all of the seven churches apply to us today. As we read these messages and, in particular, the message to the Philadelphians, may we apply it to our own individual lives, so that we, like the Philadelphians, will be finally adjudged by Christ, to be without fault and so be ready for translation.

APPENDIX

What of the application of Revelation 3:7-12 concerning Philadelphia that is made by the Spirit of Prophecy? Some ask, "Is not the Spirit of Prophecy application at variance with the application as published in the preceding pages?"

The answer to this query is that there is often more than one application of some scriptures. There are primary applications and there are secondary applications. The historic application as given in this article is a primary application. However, like the messages to the other six churches there is also an individual application. The messages can also apply to the church, today. In this sense they would be classed as secondary applications.

Frequently the Spirit of Prophecy applies the messages of the previous six churches to the seventh or Laodicean church. We believe the application that the Spirit of Prophecy gives, concerning Philadelphia to the time of trouble involving God's people at the end, is a secondary application of that Scripture. However, such an application is in harmony with sound Biblical exegesis.

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