

Review and Herald, March 31, 1885 - The Advent Experience--No. 8

**"The Shut Door Doctrine Among the Believers
in the Third Angel's Message" p. 1, par. 1, [NUM8].**

We now proceed to give extracts on the "shut door" doctrine, showing that believers in the message held to such a belief as late as 1850 or '51. In Vol. 1, No. 6, of the "Review and Herald," published in Paris, Me., February, 1851, a letter is given which a brother wrote to his son. It begins as follows: "I have from the presentation of truth embraced the seventh-day Sabbath and shut door as being my last refuge in this dark and gloomy day." And when about half through he says, "Hence I embraced the `midnight cry,' the `shut door,' and the third angel's message as being my last refuge, as I stated at first." p. 1, par. 2, [NUM8].

But what kind of a "shut door" does this brother believe in? Opposers would say, "Of course if he believes in a shut door at all, this would exclude all conversions." But what does he say about it? A few lines below this last extract he speaks as follows: "My time and your patience might be exhausted were I to bring to your view the whole subject connected with the shut door. Suffice it to say that it does not in my opinion exclude all conversions. But it does exclude those who have wholly rejected all these messages. p. 1, par. 3, [NUM8].

"I believe that the names recorded in the `Lamb's book of life' were brought in on the tenth day of the seventh month; that he then bore in their names before the Father as the antitype of the `breastplate of judgment.'" It is reasonable to suppose that these views were in accordance with the opinions of those who published them in the "Review," or they would not have been published therein. p. 1, par. 4, [NUM8].

We next give an extract from the "Review" of January, 1851, from my own lamented father, who embraced the truth in 1850. It is taken from a letter he wrote to Elder Joseph Marsh, editor of the *Advent Harbinger*, one of the leading first-day Adventist papers. Elder White published it in the "Review." In this letter to Mr. Marsh my father gives some reasons for embracing present truth. He says: "At the passing of this time (1844) I believed the door was shut; nor was I alone in this belief. Yourself, and almost every other Advent believer, for months after the passing of the time believed the work for

the world was done." Here he quotes extracts from Mr. Miller and others to show that they believed thus. p. 1, par. 5, [NUM8].

He then asks, "If we have not had the midnight cry, *when*, and *where*, and *how* can we have it?" He then speaks of the Albany Conference, the effect it had upon the body of believers, and the confusion and coldness that came in. He concludes thus: "We have another testing truth before us; viz., the third angel's message; and I very much fear it will be too close a test for some of the leaders in the Advent movement. Leaders don't love to be led. But the Lord will abase the high and exalt the humble. The last shall be first, and the first, last. p. 2, par. 1, [NUM8].

I have been greatly blessed in meeting with the seventh-day Sabbath and shut door brethren. They hold to the past and defend our present position. I believe they have the truth, and that God is leading them by His Spirit." p. 2, par. 2, [NUM8].

But what kind of a shut door did he believe in? In a letter written to Brother and Sister White, published in "Review "of January, 1851, he says: "Since I have been converted to the *shut door* and seventh-day Sabbath, I have been out in this town and some of the neighboring towns . . . to try to get off some of the prejudice from other minds which I so deeply felt on my own. . . I have learned from conversation with others as well as from my past experience that the *shut door* has been the *great shoal* on which the Adventists have run their ship and foundered." p. 2, par. 3, [NUM8].

Then he speaks of their contradictory positions on the messages, midnight cry, etc., and says: "You see how all these have shunned the door." Then he speaks further upon the movements among them, and how they were "scattered upon the mountains," etc., and then remarks: "They suppose the shut door would exclude from every degree of the Spirit of God all the unconverted having had *light* or *no light*, *young* or *old*. I think if this class could have the true shut door and the third angel's message set before them, some of them would see the true line of prophecy and rejoice again in the light. I have been striving to look up those who have not given up our past experience in these messages, and trying to show them what the sanctuary is and what the shut door is; that the sanctuary spoken of in Dan. 8:14 is being cleansed.--E. P. Butler." p. 2, par. 4, [NUM8].

That father, in his view of the shut door, was at this time in perfect accordance with Brother and Sister White, we know by personal knowledge. We will show Elder White's views on this subject by an extract from his own statements. Just two months after this, in the April number of the "Review and Herald," on page 64, is a letter from M. M. Truesdail, in which he asks the question, "Does the shut door exclude all conversion?" Elder White answers: p. 2, par. 5, [NUM8].

"Conversion, in the strictest sense, signifies a change from sin to holiness. In this sense we readily answer that it does not exclude all conversions; but we believe that those who heard the `everlasting gospel' message and rejected it, or refused to hear it, are excluded by it. We have no message to such. They have no ears to hear us, unless we lower the standard of truth so low that there would be no salvation in it. But there are those who may be converted. p. 3, par. 1, [NUM8].

"1. Erring brethren. We believe that there are many in the Laodicean church, who will yet be converted as the apostle directs in his epistle to the waiting brethren. `Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one CONVERT him, let him know that he which converteth the SINNER from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.' James 5:19, 20. p. 3, par. 2, [NUM8].

"2. Children who were not old enough to understandingly receive or reject the truth when our great High Priest closed His mediation in the holy place at the end of the 2300 days, are subjects of conversion from sin to holiness. Their names were borne in upon the breastplate of judgment, and they are subjects of the mediation of Jesus. God's ways are equal. He will give every intelligent being a chance to be saved. p. 3, par. 3, [NUM8].

"3. When Elijah thought that he was alone, God said to him, `I have reserved to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed to the image of Baal.' We believe that God has reserved to Himself a multitude of precious souls, and some even in the churches. These he will manifest "in His own time." They were living up to what light they had when Jesus closed His mediation for the world, and when they hear the voice of the Shepherd in the message of the third angel they will gladly receive the whole truth. Such will be converted to the truth, and from their errors. But we think we have no message to such now; still, `he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear.' Our message is to the Laodiceans; yet some of these hidden souls are being manifested." p. 3, par. 4, [NUM8].

Here we see the views of the leading man in the message quite plainly expressed relative to the "shut door." There cannot be found an utterance of Brother or Sister White's previous to this time, so far as we can find from a careful perusal of this first volume of the "Review" or in the different numbers of *Present Truth*, which contradicts this definition of the shut door. Up to this time they still felt that their main work or message was to the old Advent believers, who had understood about the 2300 days, the glorious experience of '44, etc. p. 3, par. 5, [NUM8].

For a similar reason the disciples, after the crucifixion, labored for the Jews several years before they turned to the Gentiles, who knew nothing of the past work. Yet children who had come to accountability could be reached, and, says Brother White, God "will give every intelligent being a chance to be saved." p. 4, par. 1, [NUM8].

Noble and sensible words were these. Therefore we are forced to conclude that he believed that those who had not rejected the light were not left out by the shut door doctrine as they held it. "We believe that God has reserved to Himself a *multitude* of precious souls, some even in the churches. These He will manifest "in His own time."" (This emphasis is his own.) Does this look as if their ideas of the shut door excluded everybody but Advent believers? Our opposers tell us so; but we know better. p. 4, par. 2, [NUM8].

But it is said by some that Elder White has used in certain numbers of the *Present Truth* other language inconsistent with these statements. We will quote the very words to which they refer, from page 79 of No. 10 of *Present Truth*, published in Oswego, N. Y., May 1850: p. 4, par. 3, [NUM8].

"When we came up to that point of time [1844] all our sympathy, burden, and prayers for sinners ceased; and the unanimous feeling and testimony was that our work for the world was finished forever. The living branches on earth will sympathize and move in concert with the 'True Vine' in heaven. The reason why the living branches felt that their work was done for the world, was because the 2300 days were ended, and the time had come for Jesus to shut the door of the holy and pass into the most holy place, to receive the kingdom and to cleanse the sanctuary. p. 4, par. 4, [NUM8].

"'But,' says the objector, 'the door of mercy will not be closed until Jesus comes.' We do not read in the Bible of such a door as the door of

mercy; neither do we teach that such a door was shut in 1844. 'God's mercy endureth forever.' He is still merciful to His saints and ever will be; and Jesus is still their advocate and priest. p. 4, par. 5, [NUM8].

But the sinner to whom Jesus had stretched out His arms all the day long, and who had rejected the offers of salvation, was left without an advocate when Jesus passed from the holy place and shut that door in 1844. The professed church who rejected the truth was also rejected. . . . Says the objector, 'I believe that Jesus is still on the mercy seat.' In answer to this oft-repeated assertion, let me say, Jesus never was on the mercy seat, and never will be. The mercy seat is in the most holy place, where Jesus entered at the end of the 2300 days. Its position is upon the ark of the ten commandments; and over it are the cherubim of glory. Before the mercy seat stands our great High Priest, pleading His blood for Israel. p. 4, par. 6, [NUM8].

If the door (represented by the door in the parable) is not shut until Jesus descends from heaven in flames of fire, then where will be the knocking and saying, 'Lord, Lord, open unto us?' It is evident that the door is shut prior to the second advent, and that unbelievers are ignorant of the fact of its being shut; therefore they knock at the shut door, and say, 'Lord, Lord, open unto us.' When the great day of God's wrath is come, and unbelievers are apprised of their lost situation, they will not knock with a hope of being admitted. No, no! but they will flee to rock and mountains for shelter." p. 5, par. 1, [NUM8].

We give these lengthy extracts from Brother White in order to fairly represent the very strongest expressions we have been able to find in all his early writings on the shut door subject. We do not propose to follow the example of opposers who sift out a few passages, the strongest expressions they can find in his language, and perhaps leave out the connection and other passages which would explain his meaning. But we give extracts covering all phases of the subject. Let us examine carefully this language: p. 5, par. 2, [NUM8].

1. It teaches that at the end of the 2300 days the ministration of our great High Priest changed from the sanctuary, and therefore a door was shut and another opened. S.D. Adventists believe this yet. p. 5, par. 3, [NUM8].

2. That this change of service and ministration constitutes a "real" change in the work of Christ. The examination of the books of record on high commenced. The investigative judgment, the blotting out of sins, and their removal from the life records of all the children of God, began

preparatory to those sins being placed upon the head of the antitypical scape-goat, Satan. This is a most important work, indeed; and it must be recognized by the people of God who will be ready for Christ's coming. S. D. Adventists still believe this. p. 5, par. 4, [NUM8].

3. As we have stated over and over in these articles, when the believers came up to this important point in 1844, there was a universal feeling among them that their "work for the world was done." Under the circumstances, how could they have thought otherwise? Should we have reason to expect anything less when this important transition occurred in the ministry of Christ? Would it be reasonable to suppose that, after preaching such a solemn message as they had been giving, they would still continue to feel just the same burden for sinners who had rejected their message as they had before? It would have proved that they had really no confidence in their own preaching if they had felt so. p. 5, par. 5, [NUM8].

4. It will be noticed by the careful reader that in these extracts the only classes Brother White speaks of as being "rejected" are sinners "to whom Jesus had stretched out his arms all the day long, who had rejected the offers of salvation," and "the professed church, who rejected the truth." In short, the very classes to whom the message of warning had been preached, but who had *rejected* it. In these remarks not one word can be found implying that those not yet come to years of accountability or those who had not rejected light were included among the ones shut out. S. D. Adventists still believe that those who deliberately refused the call will be lost. "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." Luke 14:24. p. 6, par. 1, [NUM8].

We see, then, that these extracts, the strongest our opponents can bring, utterly fail to prove what they undertake to prove by them; viz., that Elder White taught that there was no salvation for any but those who had been in the first message. These words are in perfect harmony with the extract which we have given, written less than a year after, in which he expressly states his belief that a "multitude of precious souls" would yet be reached. p. 6, par. 2, [NUM8].

It is well known that the believers at this time firmly held that 144,000 souls would be "sealed with the seal of the living God" (the holy Sabbath), and would be translated from among the living when Christ comes. There were

supposed to be about 50,000 Adventists who came out of the churches in 1844. Many of these gave it up after the time passed. All can see, then, that these believers expected that more than 100,000 would have to be gathered in outside of the old Advent believers. How preposterous, then, for our opponents to claim that these Sabbathkeepers thought none but old Adventists could be saved after '44! These were evidently the "multitude" to whom Brother White referred in the previous extract. p. 6, par. 3, [NUM8].

To make these positions still more emphatic, we introduce extracts from Brother David Arnold, one of our oldest and most faithful brethren, published in December, 1849, just five months *after* the first number of the *Present Truth* was printed, and four months *before* these extracts from Brother White were written. On page 45 of the number for December, 1849, we find these passages: p. 6, par. 4, [NUM8].

"Christ did close His daily, or continual, ministration or mediation in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary and "shut the door" [emphasis his] which no man can open, and opened a door in the second apartment or holiest of all, which no man can shut (see Rev. 8:7, 8); and passed within the second vail, bearing before the Father, on the breastplate of judgment, all for whom he is now acting as Intercessor." p. 7, par. 1, [NUM8].

We inquire, Who are these for whom He is thus acting? We quote again: "'But,' says the objector, 'does not this leave the present generation who have passed the line of accountability since that time, without an intercessor or mediator, and leave them destitute of the means of salvation?' In reply to this objection, I would remark that, as they were then in a state of innocence, they were entitled to a record upon the breastplate of judgment as much as those who had sinned and received pardon, and therefore subjects of the present intercession of our great High Priest."

This was written five years after the time passed in 1844. There must have been more than a hundred million persons who had come to years of accountability during these five years after '44. Brother Arnold's position, which we know Brother White endorsed at the time by the fact of his printing it, made provision for the *possible* salvation of all of these. The same principle, though he does not here mention it, would give to everyone who had not neglected light the very same privilege. p. 7, par. 2, [NUM8].

The whole question, according to the views of the early believers, turned upon the nature of the work of Christ in the most holy place. They did believe, as we plainly see, that those arriving at years of accountability after Christ changed His ministration were subjects of grace. He pleads for them as well as for those who had accepted the truth before. Their names were included among those borne in on the breastplate of judgment. There is nothing that I can find in their writings which would forbid the idea that any who had not rejected the light, might not be borne in by our great High Priest, for whom He would plead in precisely the same manner. We grant that this point was not one that they said very much about at the time, as their whole work was directed to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel"--the believers in the first message. p. 7, par. 3, [NUM8].

It was, doubtless, in the order of God that those who had been familiar with the truths of the great time movement, and who had been baptized with its spirit, should be the first to hear the third angel's message; just as it was that those who had heard John the Baptist and Christ, should hear the preaching of the apostles after the day of Pentecost. These were to form a nucleus for a great work, and they would be more firmly anchored in the truths of the message than novices could be. They would be able to assist in molding the new believers into the spirit of the work. p. 7, par. 4, [NUM8].

Hence, God so arranged that they should hear the last warning message first. That, as Brother White says, was the first burden they felt. They did not begin till afterward to labor for those "multitudes" who were yet to be brought in. This language of Brother Arnold, published before that which we quoted from Brother White, is positive proof that the leaders in the work did *not* believe in a shut door which would exclude all but old Advent believers. While they believed in an "open door" and a "shut door," none were excluded but those who had rejected the light of truth. In our next we will present still more positive proof of this.--G. I. B. p. 8, par. 1, [NUM8].