

Levi Stockman's Counsel to Ellen Harmon

Introduction by Kevin L. Morgan

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The account of how pastoral counsel from Levi Stockman helped Ellen Harmon through a spiritual crisis she experienced as a teenager is included in *Life Sketches of James and Ellen G. White* (Battle Creek: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1880), 148-159.

When Ellen Harmon heard William Miller's preaching in Portland, June 1842, she was troubled over whether she had experienced the sanctification necessary to be ready for Christ's return. She wrote that "in my mind the justice of God eclipsed his mercy and love" (151), and she struggled with the doctrine of eternal torment. She felt it her duty to pray and testify at "social meetings," as Methodists were expected to do, but she could not bring herself to do so (154).

"While in this state of despondency," she had two significant dreams, one of a temple and a lamb and the other of Jesus' smile of approval and a green cord, which represented the faith required to maintain connection with Heaven. The first dream caused her great concern over the salvation of souls. The green cord dream began to give her hope of acceptance with God. She wrote: "the beauty and simplicity of trusting in God began to dawn upon my benighted soul" (157). Yet, she seemed still to be in general spiritual despondency when she confided in her mother, who directed her to Elder Levi Stockman.

Stockman's Counsel

". . . Upon hearing my story, he placed his hand affectionately upon my head, saying with tears in his eyes: 'Ellen, you are only a child. Yours is a most singular experience for one of your tender age. Jesus must be preparing you for some special work.'

"He then told me that even if I were a person of mature years and thus harassed by doubt and despair, he should tell me that he knew there was hope for me, through the love of Jesus. The very agony of mind I had suffered was positive evidence that the Spirit of the Lord was striving with me. He said that when the sinner becomes hardened in guilt he does not realize the enormity of his transgression, but flatters himself that he is about right and in no particular danger. The Spirit of the Lord leaves him and he becomes careless and indifferent or recklessly defiant. This good man told me of the love of God for his erring children, that instead of rejoicing in their destruction he longed to draw them to himself in simple faith and trust. He dwelt upon the great love of Christ and the plan of redemption.

"He spoke of my early misfortune, and said it was indeed a grievous one, but he bade me believe that the hand of a loving Father had not been withdrawn from me; that in the future life, when the mist that then darkened my mind had vanished, I would discern the wisdom of the providence which had seemed so cruel and mysterious. Jesus said to his disciples: 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' In the great future we should no longer see as through a glass darkly, but come face to face with the great beauties of divine love.

“‘Go free, Ellen,’ said he with tears in his eyes, ‘Return to your home trusting in Jesus, for he will not withhold His love from any true seeker.’ He then prayed earnestly for me, and it seemed that God would certainly regard the prayer of this saint, even if my humble petitions were unheard. My mind was much relieved, and the wretched slavery of doubt and fear departed as I listened to the wise and tender counsel of this teacher in Israel. I left his presence comforted and encouraged.

“During the few minutes in which I received instruction from Elder Stockman, I had obtained more knowledge on the subject of God’s love and pitying tenderness than from all the sermons and exhortations to which I had ever listened. . . .”