



**Smithsonian Institution**

*National Museum of African American History and Culture*

## **The Teacher Vol. 52 No. 2**

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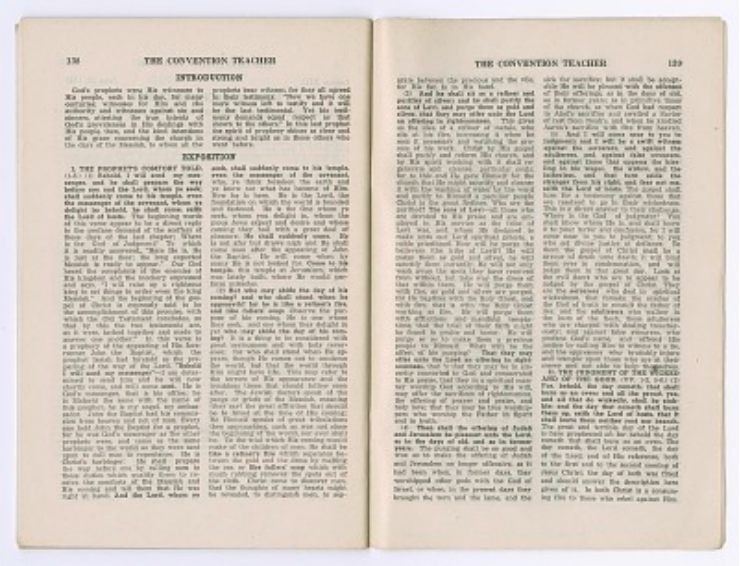
INTRODUCTION

God's prophets were His witnesses to His people, each in his day, for many centuries; witnesses for Him and His authority and witnesses against sin and sinners, attesting the true intents of God's providences in His dealings with His people then, and the kind intentions of His grace concerning the church in the days of the Messiah, to whom all the prophets bear witness; for they all agreed in their testimony. "Now we have one more witness left to testify and it will be the last testimonial. Yet his testimony demands equal respect as that shown to the others." In this last prophet the spirit of prophecy shines as clear and strong and bright as in those others who went before.

EXPOSITION

I. THE PROPHET'S COMFORT TOLD. (1-5.) (1) Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. The beginning words of this verse appear to be a direct reply to the profane demand of the scoffers of those days of the last chapter; Where is the God of Judgment? To which it is readily answered. "Here He is, He is just at the door; the long expected Messiah is ready to appear." Our God heard the complaints of the enemies of His kingdom and the mockery expressed and says, "I will raise up a righteous king to set things in order even the king Messiah." And the beginning of the gospel of Christ is expressly said to be the accomplishment of this promise, with which the Old Testament concludes, so that by this the two testaments are, as it were, tacked together and made to answer one another." In this verse is a prophecy of the appearing of His forerunner John the Baptist, which the prophet Isaiah had foretold as the preparing of the way of the Lord. "Behold I will send my messenger"-I am determined to send him and he will now shortly come, and will come sent. He is God's messenger, that is his office; he is Malachi the same with the name of this prophet, he is my angel, my ambassador. John the Baptist had his commission from heaven and not of man. Every one held John the Baptist for a prophet, for he was God's messenger as the other prophets were, and came as the same harbinger to the world as they were sent upon to call men to repentance. He is Christ's harbinger. He shall prepare the way before one by calling men to those duties which qualify them to receive the comforts of the Messiah and His coming and tell them that He was right at hand. And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, who, ye think forsaken the earth and ye know not what has become of Him. Now he is here. He is the Lord, the foundation on which the world is funded and fastened. He is the One whom ye seek, whom you delight in, whom the pious Jews expect and desire and whose coming they hail with a great deal of pleasure. He shall suddenly come. He is not afar but draws nigh and He shall come soon after the appearing of John the Baptist. He will come when by many He is not looked for. Come to his temple, this temple at Jerusalem, which was lately built, where He would perform miracles.

(2) But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: Observe the purpose of his coming, He is one whom they seek, and one whom they delight in yet who may abide the day of his coming? It is a



thing to be considered with great seriousness and with holy reverence; for who shall stand when He appears, though He comes not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might have life. This may refer to the terrors of His appearance and the troublous times that should follow soon after. The Jewish doctors speak of the pangs or griefs of the Messiah, meaning (they say) the great affliction that should be to Israel at the time of His coming; He Himself speaks of great tribulations then approaching, such as was not since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall be. To the trial which His coming would make of the children of men. He shall be like a refiner's fire which separates between the gold and the dross by melting the ore, or like fuller's soap which with much rubbing removes the spots out of the cloth. Christ came to discover men, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed, to distinguish men, to separate

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between the precious and the vile, for His fan is in His hand.

(3) And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. This gives us the idea of a refiner of metals, who sits at his fire, increasing it when he sees it necessary and watching the process of his work. Christ by His gospel shall purify and reform His church, and by His Spirit working with it shall regenerate and cleanse particular souls; for to this end He gave Himself for the church that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word and purify to Himself a peculiar people Christ is the great Refiner. Who are the purified? The sons of Levi-all those who are devoted to His praise and are employed in His service as the tribe of Levi was, and whom He designed to make unto our Lord spiritual priests, a noble priesthood. How will he purge the believers (the tribe of Levi)? He will purge them as gold and silver, he will sanctify them inwardly. He will not only wash away the spots they have received from without, but take away the dross of that within them. He will purge them with fire, as gold and silver are purified, for He baptizes with the Holy Ghost, and with fire, that is with the Holy Ghost working as fire. He will purge them with afflictions and manifold temptations, that the trial of their faith might be found to praise and honor. He will purge so as to make them a precious people to himself. What will be the affect of purging? That they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness, that is that they may be in sincerity converted to God and consecrated to His praise, that they in a spiritual manner worship God according to His will, may offer the sacrifices of righteousness, the offering of prayer and praise, and holy love; that they may be true worshipers who worship the Father in Spirit and in truth.

(4) Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years. The purging shall be so good and true as to make the offering of Judah and Jerusalem no longer offensive, as it had been when, in former days, they worshipped other gods with the God of Israel, or when, in the present days they brought the torn and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice; but it shall be acceptable He will be pleased with the offerings of their offerings, as in the days of old, as in former years; as in primitive times of the church, as when God had respect to Abel's sacrifice and swelled a Savior of rest

from Noah's, and when he kindled Aaron's sacrifice with fire from heaven.

(5) And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts. The gospel shall turn for a testimony against those that are resolved to go in their wickedness. This is a direct answer to their challenge. Where is the God of judgment? You shall know where He is, and shall know it to your terror and confusion, for I will come near to you to judgment; to you who set divine justice at defiance. To them the gospel of Christ shall be a savour of death unto death; it will bind them over to condemnation, and will judge them in that great day. Look at the evil doers who are to appear to be judged by the gospel of Christ. They are the sorcerers who deal in spiritual wickedness, that forsake the oracles of the God of truth to consult the father of lies; and the adulterers who wallow in the lusts of the flesh, those adulterers who are charged with dealing treacherously; and against false swearers, who profane God's name, and affront His justice by calling Him to witness a lie, and the oppressors who brutishly injure and trample upon those who are at their mercy and not able to help themselves.

II. THE JUDGMENT OF THE WICKED AND OF THE GOOD. (VV. 1-2, 5-6.) (1) For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. The great and terrible day of the Lord is here prophesied of: for behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven. The day cometh, the Lord cometh, the day of the Lord, and of His reference, both to the first and to the second coming of Jesus Christ; the day of both was fixed and should answer the description here given of it. In both Christ is a consuming fire to those who rebel against Him.

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