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THE STORY OF A POPULAR BOOK

"STEPS TO CHRIST"

By W.C. White.

In the summer of 1890, Mrs. Ellen G. White was requested to furnish copy for a book on Christian experience.

The revised and enlarged edition of her book "Great Controversy" published in 1888 was beginning its wonderful career in the hands of our energetic canvassers. Its companion book "Patriarchs and Prophets", had just come forth from the press. Her book "Life of Christ" in French, German, Danish and Swedish, was being widely sold by subscription in Europe and America.

The work of supplying articles for the Review and Herald, the Signs of the Times and the Youth's Instructor was going forward with much regularity.

The preparation of copy for Christian Temperance was also under way. And now the burden pressed upon her heart to bring out for English readers a much fuller presentation of the Life of Christ.

Now came this appeal from several of our ministers that she prepare a book on Christian experience. They asked for a small book that could be sold by evangelists and in book stores for about fifty cents.

It was urged that in her articles published during the years in the Review, there were precious thoughts presented which if brought together in a book, would be very helpful to

those seeking the way to salvation.

The value of such a book as was asked for was recognized, and with the help of her trusted secretary, Miss Marian Davis, the work of preparing copy was begun.

The way to Christ was a theme on which she had written many articles, and the Review and Herald and Signs of the Times were searched to find <sup>the best</sup> material. Many unpublished manuscripts and letters were also examined for statements that would help to make up chapters. In some cases, Mrs. White wrote new matter to complete chapters, and studying what had formerly been written, she rewrote certain portions, to make the presentation more suitable for the proposed book.

As with other books, Miss Davis was instructed to do thorough work in searching through published articles and manuscripts, to find choice passages in the back volumes of the Review and Signs that would help to make each chapter as clear and as forceful as possible.

The work of preparing the copy moved very slowly, because Sister White was burdened with the writing of articles for our periodicals, and the writing of individual testimonies and because for several months Sister Davis was her only helper in correcting these for mailing out.

Miss Fannie Bolton, who previous to this had for some time acted as a helper in copying letters and preparing articles for the periodicals, was then a student in Ann Arbor.

In the summer of 1891, at the Educational Convention held in Harbor Heights, the copy for this book on Christian experience was presented to leading ministers in attendance at the Convention, for consideration.

I remember very distinctly the statement that Sister Marian Davis made before a group of brethren, regarding the composition of the manuscript. She said that the material for some of the chapters had been gathered from articles published in the Review or the Signs in former years, and other chapters were prepared from some of the more recent writings of Mrs. White as they were found in manuscript.

The brethren who read the manuscript were deeply impressed regarding its powerful appeal. They were enthusiastic regarding its value, and predicted great things regarding its sale.

It was then decided that it should be named "Steps to Christ."

That it might be widely sold in book stores, it was suggested that we secure its publication by some very popular book concern and by Elder George B. Starr it was proposed that it be offered for publication to Fleming H. Revell. This was done and the manuscript was accepted by them. Early in 1892, the first edition appeared. From the first it was popular with our people and with others. Many thousands were sold at seventy-five cents.

After seven years the copyright was purchased from the Revell Company by the Review and Herald, and after Sister White returned from Australia, the copyright was transferred to her. Then she gave all rights in all languages other than English to the General Conference Corporation.

Since 1900, this much loved book has been issued in four different bindings in the English language, and has been translated and published in more than fifty different languages.

Through its study thousands have been helped in the Christian way, and led to deeper devotion in service.

A Corroborative Statement

In a letter to a brother in Oklohoma, Elder Starr made a statement, October 9, 1931, as follows:

"Regarding 'Steps to Christ,' I can give you the early history of that precious book.

"In 1891, while living with Sr. White, in Petosky, Michigan, she handed me a roll of typewritten matter, stating that Miss Marian Davis had compiled from her writings this matter for a pamphlet on Christian experience, and she invited me to read and express my opinion as to its value.

"This manuscript, at this time was not yet named 'Steps to Christ.' I read it with the deepest interest. Many of its striking statements, such as 'In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace, as real as the air which circulates around the globe,' (p. 72) were new to me. I had never seen them before.

"Returning it to Sr. White, I stated that I had read a number of pamphlets relating to Christian experience; but none of them, to my mind compared with this; and that I hoped it might be speedily published; and that it ought to be in every language on earth.

"Well, this has been partially accomplished. During the first year, seven editions were printed, and since that it has been translated into over fifty languages. The Lord has made it a blessing to thousands of souls.

"I commended Miss Davis' work. She had searched through manuscripts and articles and personal letters, written by Sr. White, and compiled them, with Sr. White's assistance, into this wonderful book. Miss Davis did not write it, but compiled it from Sr. White's writings."

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