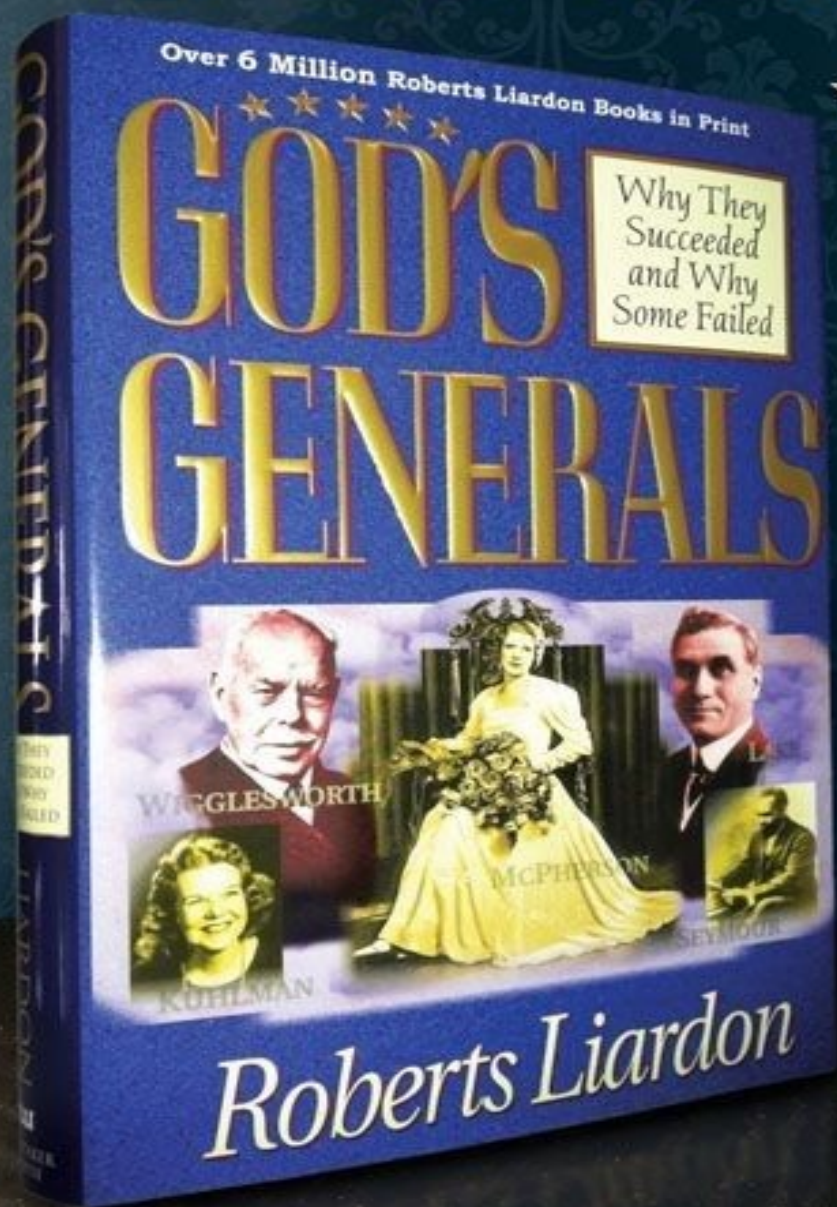


# GOD'S GENERALS



JOHN ALEXANDER  
DOWIE

ROBERTS LIARDON

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DOWIE



WHITAKER  
HOUSE

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God's Generals: John Alexander Dowie

Excerpted from God's Generals: Why They Succeeded and Why Some Failed

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## Introduction

When I was almost twelve years old, the Lord appeared to me in a vision. In this vision, He told me to study the lives of the great preachers—to learn of their successes and their failures. From that day on, I gave a large portion of my life to the study of church history.

When prominent people in the secular world die, people begin to look at their natural accomplishments. But when leaders in the body of Christ die, I believe Jesus would have us look at not only what was accomplished in the natural world through their lives, but at what they also accomplished within the body of Christ. The purpose of their remembrance is not to praise or criticize the leaders, but to see him or her as an example for our own lives.

The “Generals” that are written of in this book were human. Their stories represent a collaboration of the way life is. I have not made anyone out to be superhuman or bionic. I have told of their tears, their laughter, their successes, and their failures. They were all persecuted, lied to, betrayed, slandered, as well as honored, adored, and supported.

But most importantly, I have attempted to reveal the secrets of the power in their individual calls to the ministry—how they operated, what they believed, and what motivated them to change each of their generations for God.

The failures that took place in the lives of these great men and women will attempt to take place again. But their successes also challenge us and are waiting to be grasped again. There is nothing new under the sun. If there is something new to you, it is because you are new under the sun.

It takes more than a desire to fulfill the will of God. It takes spiritual strength. As you read these chapters, allow the Spirit of God to take you on a journey that points out the areas in your life which need to be focused or subdued. Then, determine that your life and ministry will be a spiritual success in this generation that will bless the nations of the earth to the glory of God.

—Roberts Liardon

# John Alexander Dowie

## “The Healing Apostle”

“‘Will he dare pray for rain?...If he does and no rain comes, then he’s not Elijah. If he doesn’t, then he’s afraid to—and that’s almost worse.’

“At last the preacher dropped on his knees behind the pulpit. Never before had an audience followed his prayers with more strained attention. ‘...God, our Father, we have seen the distress of this land... look upon it now in Thy mercy and send rain....’

“Suddenly the General Overseer stopped...then said, ‘Get to your homes quickly, for there is sound of abundance of rain.’ But he was too late. Just as the multitude turned to go, rain descended in torrents.”<sup>1</sup>

Few in our generation today know of the fascinating and dramatic ministry of John Alexander Dowie. Undoubtedly, this man succeeded in shaking the world at the turn of the century. He brought to the forefront of society, the visible church of healing and repentance. Whether one agreed with Dr. Dowie or not, the fact remains that his incredible story is one of unflinching faith and powerful vision. John Alexander Dowie’s recorded converts numbered in untold millions. Although the end of his ministry is a tragic one, rarely has there been a mission containing more strength and vitality. His apostolic ministry was world-changing. From coast to coast it single-handedly challenged and triumphed over the great apostasy and lethargy of his time, demonstrating soundly that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Against hypocritical, opposing clergy, fierce and slanderous tabloids, murderous mobs, and relentless city officials, Dr. Dowie wore his apostolic calling as a crown from God, and his persecution as a badge of honor.

## MORE THAN ORDINARY

John Alexander Dowie was born May 25, 1847, in Edinburgh, Scotland. His Christian parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Murray Dowie, named him what they hoped he would grow up to be: “John,” meaning “by the grace of God,” and “Alexander,” “a helper of men.”

He was born in poverty, and one would have to see through the eyes of faith

to ever believe what was to come in the future for this small child. Although his school attendance was irregular due to frequent illness, young Dowie exhibited brilliance and enthusiasm. His parents trained and helped him because they had hope for his call. Young Dowie was an active part of their prayer meetings and Bible studies. They never left him out of the ministry, and they loved him dearly. This parental security produced a key element in his early foundation.

At the mere age of six, young Dowie read the Bible through from cover to cover. Deeply convicted by what he had read, he developed an intense hatred for the use of alcoholic beverages. A temperance movement was on the rise in Scotland at the time, and without even realizing the hand of God upon him, he campaigned against alcohol abuse and signed a petition to never partake of it.

Dowie continued to read the Bible and accompany his father as much as possible on “preaching journeys.” On one such journey, he came upon a humble street preacher by the name of Henry Wright. As young Dowie listened to the details of the gospel, he gave his heart to Jesus Christ.

At the tender age of seven, Dowie received his call to the ministry. But he didn’t yet know how to answer.

At the age of thirteen, John and his parents left Scotland for a six-month journey to Australia. Once situated in this new country, John began to earn his living by working for his uncle in the shoe business. He soon left his uncle and began working at various other places, always in menial positions. And even then, his peers noticed that he was a “more than ordinary” young businessman. Dowie soon became the assistant to a firm’s partner in a business that grossed more than \$2 million a year.

Through these years of “climbing the occupational ladder,” God continually spoke to him. His heart was constantly tugged toward full-time ministry. He realized there were many truths in the Bible that had been neglected by the clergy of that day. One such teaching—divine healing—had been realized at his own expense. Dowie had been a sickly child. And he suffered from “chronic dyspepsia,” a severe indigestion problem that plagued him in his teen years. But, after reading the will of God concerning healing, Dowie petitioned the Lord and was “completely delivered of the affliction.”<sup>2</sup> And this divine manifestation was only a token of the revelation that was to come in his life.

Finally, at the age of twenty-one, Dowie made an absolute decision to answer



the call of God. He would take the money he had saved from his occupation and begin studying under a private tutor to prepare for the ministry. Fifteen months later, he left Australia to enroll in Edinburgh University to study in the Free Church School. Majoring in theology and political science, he was not regarded as a model student because of his disagreements with the professors and their doctrine. He challenged their lethargic interpretations brilliantly. John Dowie had an incredible hunger and thirst for the Word of God. He read constantly, and had a photographic memory. This established him far beyond his superiors in substance and accuracy.

While in Edinburgh, Dowie became the “honorary chaplain” of the Edinburgh Infirmary. It was there that he had the unique opportunity to sit under the famous surgeons of his day, comparing their diagnoses with the Word of God. But as patients lay helplessly under chloroform, Dowie heard these surgeons lecture on their medical inadequacies. It was then that he realized these surgeons could not heal, and that they could only resort to removing the diseased organs, hoping for a cure. He watched many surgeries end with deadly results. As he heard from the lips of these medical professors the confession that they were only guessing in the dark, and witnessed their experiments, Dowie developed a strong antipathy to surgery and medicine.<sup>3</sup>

Many today still accuse Dowie of condemning the medical field. But I want to point out that in his time, the medical practice was very primitive. And he was one of the privileged few who saw behind the scenes. He witnessed how the physicians of his day offered great hope to patients, but confessed in private that they knew nothing. He saw poor victims paying untold amounts of money in the hope for a cure, while receiving the worst of results. He despised falsehood, so, he searched for an answer. And when he began to publicly come against their deceiving methods, his accusations proved true.

While studying at Edinburgh University, Dowie received a cablegram from his father in Australia. In response, he made a hasty return home to free himself from any inheritance in the family business because of his love for the ministry.

Because he dropped everything and returned home so quickly, he was under a tremendous financial strain. But he resolved that this setback would not hinder him and vowed that he would fulfill the mission of his life. He would be an ambassador for God in full-time ministry.

Soon Dowie accepted an invitation to pastor the Congregational Church in



Alma, Australia. His duties were divided among several churches. And as was to be expected, his bold preaching sent uneasy rifts throughout the church. Persecution quickly arose against him and resentment was openly voiced because of his penetrating method of ministry. Dowie was a visionary, but despite his repeated endeavors, he was unable to arouse the people from their lethargy. Although he needed the church financially, he chose to resign the pastorate because he felt it a waste of time to continue with them.

John Alexander Dowie was a reformer and a revivalist. This kind of calling has to see results because of the passion for God that burns so strongly within. He loved people, but his commitment to the truth caused him to focus only on groups that would respond.

Soon after his resignation, he was asked to pastor the Congregational church in Manly Beach. He was warmly received. But, once again, he was distraught over their lack of repentance and sensitivity to the Word of God. Still, Dowie remained with this pastorate. His congregation was small and it gave him the time to pursue his studies and gain direction.

As time passed, Dowie continued to have a tossing restlessness in his spirit. He knew he was a man on a mission, but he had no idea of where or how his mission would be accomplished.

He began to long for larger congregations, and an opportunity soon opened to pastor a larger group in Newton, a suburb of Sydney. So, in 1875, Dowie moved again. Unknown to him at the time, this move would take him into the revelation that would launch his ministry into worldwide acclaim.

“OH, COME AT ONCE! MARY IS DYING...”

While Dowie was pastoring in Newton, a death-wreaking plague swept through the region, particularly in the outskirts of Sydney. People were dying at such a high rate that the population was totally paralyzed with fear and dread. Within a few short weeks at his new appointment, Dowie had presided over forty funerals. Sickness and death seemed to be waiting at every corner. The tragedy of it all struck the heart of Dowie to such an extreme that he sought for immediate answers. And he knew those answers were available in God’s Word. Listen to the sense of tragedy the young pastor wrote in his own words:

“I sat in my study in the parsonage of the Congregational church, at Newton, a suburb of Sydney, Australia. My heart was very heavy, for I

had been visiting the sick and dying beds of more than thirty in my flock, and I had cast the dust to its kindred dust into more than forty graves within a few weeks. Where, oh where, was He Who used to heal His suffering children? No prayer for healing seemed to reach His ear, and yet I knew His hand had not been shortened.... It seemed sometimes as if I could almost hear the triumphant mockery of fiends ringing in my ear whilst I spoke to the bereaved ones the words of Christian hope and consolation. Disease, the foul offspring of its father, Satan, and its mother, Sin, was defiling and destroying...and there was no deliverer.

“And there I sat with sorrow-bowed head for my afflicted people, until the bitter tears came to relieve my burning heart. Then I prayed for some message.... Then the words of the Holy Ghost inspired in Acts 10:38, stood before me all radiant with light, revealing Satan as the Defiler, and Christ as the Healer. My tears were wiped away, my heart was strong, I saw the way of healing...I said, ‘God help me now to preach the Word to all the dying around, and tell them how ‘tis Satan still defiles, and Jesus still delivers, for He is just the same today.’

“A loud ring and several loud raps at the outer door...two panting messengers who said, ‘Oh, come at once, Mary is dying; come and pray.’...I rushed from my house and ran hatless down the street, and entered the room of the dying maiden. There she lay, groaning, grinding her teeth in the agony of the conflict with the destroyer...I looked at her and then my anger burned....

“In a strange way it came to pass...the sword I needed was still in my hands...and never will I lay it down. The doctor, a good Christian man, was quietly walking up and down the room.... Presently, he stood at my side and said, ‘Sir, are not God’s ways mysterious?’ God’s way!...No sir, that is the devil’s work and it is time we called on Him Who came to “destroy the work of the devil.”<sup>4</sup>

Offended by the words of Dowie, the doctor left the room. Dowie turned to Mary’s mother and asked why she had sent for him. Learning that she wanted the prayer of faith, Dowie bowed by the girl’s bed and cried out to God. Instantly the girl lay still. The mother asked if her daughter was dead, but Dowie replied, “No...she will live. The fever is gone.”<sup>5</sup>

Soon, the young girl was sitting up in bed and eating. She apologized for

sleeping so long and exclaimed how well she felt. And as the small group thanked the Lord, Dowie went into the room of her brother and sister, prayed for them, and they were instantly healed.<sup>6</sup>

From that moment on, the plague was stayed as far as Dowie's congregation was concerned. Not another member of his flock died of the epidemic. And as a result of this revelation, the great healing ministry of John Alexander Dowie was launched.

## WEDDING BELLS

Soon after his remarkable revelation of divine healing, Dowie began to think about a possible mate. When he did, he found he was in love with his first cousin, Jeanie, and that he could not be happy without her. After many controversial discussions with family members, it was agreed that the two should marry. So at the age of twenty-nine, on May 26, 1876, John Dowie married Jeanie, and the two began their incredible mission together.

Their first son, Gladstone, was born in 1877. But Dowie had misjudged certain persons in financial matters and found himself in great financial hardship. So Jeanie and Gladstone were sent to live with her parents until the situation could be worked out. Needless to say, such a decision caused an even greater turmoil, due to the in-laws' mistrust of their son-in-law. However, even through these shaky hardships, Dowie remained a man of divine vision. In the midst of the chaos, he held fast to the work before them and wrote this to his beloved wife: "...I can see that future far more clearly than I can solve the mysteries of the immediate present."<sup>7</sup>

Every ministry has a future. But we must believe in that future or we will never take the first step. Like Dowie, we must determine to hold fast to the Word of God and fight for what is ours in the earth. Setbacks are always present, but we are the ones who determine if the problem is to remain permanent. Even though we are called, we still have to war against spiritual evils that are sent to destroy our vision and to discourage us. God's angels can help, but the war for our destiny is a personal responsibility that we must win.

## NO MORE RELIGION!

During this trying time, Dowie made an unprecedented decision to leave the denomination he was a part of. He couldn't understand or operate with the cold, lethargic state of their leadership. And he burned with a passion to proclaim the

message of divine healing throughout the city. His congregations had grown to over twice the size of the others. But his success spoke to deaf ears, and he was constantly fighting through the politics and “letter of the law” theology that threatened to dampen his faith.

Because of the hostility presented by denominational leaders, he found himself constantly on the defensive. In a letter to his wife proclaiming his decision to begin an independent ministry, Dowie wrote that the political system of his denominational church:

“...killed initiative and individual energy, made men denominational tools, or worse, caused them to become worldly-minded, and left them high and dry and useless for the most part—good ships, but badly steered and terribly overladen with worldliness and apathy.”<sup>8</sup>

Dowie had come to realize that revival was possible if the church could be awakened. He considered the vast opportunities that lay ahead of him. He studied the lethargic side of the church, then he studied the unchurched. He made the decision that reaching the vast number of the unchurched would result in a greater fervor for Jesus Christ. And he decided to stop his laborings among the cynical. So he determined that his mission would reach the uncared for and perishing masses of the city with the revelation that Christ was the same yesterday, today, and forever.

In 1878, Dowie broke free from his denomination and secured the Royal Theatre in Sydney to begin an independent ministry. Hundreds flooded the theatre to hear his powerful messages. But, once again, a lack of funds halted his work. Though the crowds were large, many had no financial income. The only answer Dowie could see was to sell his home and furnishings, put the money into the work, and move to a smaller residence. After Dowie did this the work flourished. In a message describing his decision, he said:

“My beautiful furniture and pictures were gone, but there came in place of them men and women that were brought to the feet of Jesus by the sale of my earthly goods.”<sup>9</sup>

In Dowie’s passion, he had no thought for the strong opposition that arose against him. He vehemently denounced the evils of the day and formed a group to distribute literature city-wide. Violent persecution, mostly from local pastors, arose from these pamphlets. Still Dowie was merciless in dealing with the

lethargic clergy. He didn't mince his words, responding that he "did not recognize their right to request any information of his actions, nor did he have any respect for their judgment." He answered one minister:

"I consider your judgment to be as feeble and incapable as your ministry.... I wish I knew who distributed these 'obnoxious tracts' among your flock; I would certainly commend his choice of a field...."<sup>10</sup>

Part of Dowie's call was to deal with moral evils. A strong stance on morals usually goes with a strong healing ministry. (Sin causes much of the sickness and disease.) But Dowie paralyzed his critics with such astute sharpness that it led them to consort and plan in private to destroy him. And so the stage was set for the seemingly invincible John Alexander Dowie.

### MISREADING THE CALL

Dowie was an apostle who didn't have the complete understanding of that office. The anointing he carried pierced the religious theocracies of his day, but there were few who understood him, including himself. As a result, he misunderstood several administrations that came with the passion of his office. One passion was in the area of politics.

Dowie's leadership was gaining a strong national influence. So seeing his potential and knowing his stand, the Temperance Society asked him to run for Parliament. At first, he opposed the idea. But he later changed his mind, thinking he could possibly influence more in the political arena and decided to enter the race.

But Dowie suffered a sound defeat in the elections. The local newspapers that had been so damaged by his ministry waged an all-out attack against him. The politicians and alcoholic beverage industry paid untold amounts of money to see him slandered and defeated. After the election, Dowie had wounded his church, and disgraced his ministry.

Dowie was moved by such strong spiritual yearnings that he sought to fulfill them in the natural. I can only speculate why he made this move. It could have been because the church world wasn't grasping the truth fast enough to satisfy him. Whatever his reason, he misread the timing and plan of God for his ministry.

We need to understand that God has a central point from which every aspect of our lives operates, whether individually or corporately. That area is called “timing.” From the operation of that one word, lives can move forward with God or be hindered. Nations can advance spiritually, or regress. Life in the spirit realm has a timing to it, just like life in the natural. Therefore, it is vitally important for us to follow the leading of our spirit. We must learn that it’s not always right to move into action because it seems like the thing to do. This kind of obedience only comes from seasons of prayer and intercession.

Politicians and the political arena have never changed the world, church-wise or government-wise. Only a people whose hearts are changed by the gospel can transform civil laws and regulations. Politics are meant for compromise to please people as a whole. The apostolic office presents the Word of the Lord, then it is up to the people to conform to and follow it. The apostolic and political don’t mix. Dowie with his calling, should have never resorted to a political lifestyle.

While campaigning for office, Dowie also neglected his commandment to preach divine healing. He simply steered away from his calling to pursue a personal goal, thinking he could reach a greater mass of people. And as a result, the rest of his time in Australia was spent in darkness and futility.

#### PEOPLE CAME FROM EVERYWHERE

Dowie finally repented and in 1880 returned to the message of divine healing, with great physical and spiritual blessings coming to him as a result. The gifts of the Spirit began to manifest in his life and revelation abounded like never before. Because of his spiritual obedience, thousands were healed under his ministry. Persecution abounded, even to the point that his enemies in organized crime once schemed to plant a bomb under his desk. The bomb was set to explode during the late hours Dowie kept, but he heard a voice that said, “Arise, go!” The third time he heard it, he grabbed his coat and went home to finish his work. Within minutes after arriving safely home, the bomb exploded under his desk, several blocks away.

In 1888, Dowie sensed the unction to come to America, then possibly on to England. His unction became reality in June of that year as he passed under the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. Newspapers carried the story that Dowie was heading for America, and that people were coming from all parts of California to be healed. From morning until evening, halls would overflow with people waiting for an audience with Dowie, and he would pray for only one

person.

The reformer had a unique way of praying for the sick. He fervently believed no one could come for healing unless they were born again and had repented of any lifestyle contrary to the gospel. He was usually indignant if he sensed worldliness on someone who came for healing. As a result, he prayed for very few people early in his ministry—but the ones he did pray for were instantly healed.

## FORSAKING THE DIVINE

Soon Dowie began healing crusades up and down the coast of California. It was during this time that he met Maria Woodworth-Etter, the great woman healing evangelist. But there arose a conflict between them, and Dowie denounced her method of ministry. I believe this was a tragic mistake on his part.

In our lives, we have many relationships, casual and sometimes intimate. But the most significant ones to the kingdom of God are “divine relationships.” In every call, whether secular or ministerial, God sends divine relationships to help strengthen your walk with Him. We may have many casual relationships, but divine relationships are very few. They can usually be counted on one hand.

I believe Dowie and his family missed a tremendous opportunity to have a divine relationship with Maria Woodworth-Etter. But for some reason, possibly a “manly-ministerial” pride, Dowie crucified Etter every chance he got. Once he attended her meeting, took the stage, and proclaimed her to be of God. But he forsook that leading of the Spirit and later renounced her.

Etter’s method of ministry made Dowie uneasy, because he didn’t understand it. But he never took the time to speak with her privately about it, heart to heart. His ministry “preference,” or favorite style of ministry, caused him to cut Maria off. Etter also had a revelation of divine healing, but she was more experienced in cooperating with the Spirit. And she had the spiritual strength to speak into Dowie’s life. She could have instructed him on how to live out of his spirit while resting his body at the same time. Dowie had a problem in this area. He sometimes worked forty-three hours straight in his passion. Through Maria, he could have befriended others of like faith and call, furthering his own ministry. But he didn’t.

As a result, Dowie experienced only casual relationships with certain followers, rather than the kind of divine relationship he could have had with



other fellow leaders.

I think it's interesting to note that Dowie interviewed the great impostor of his day, Jacob Schweinfurth, who claimed to be Jesus Christ.<sup>11</sup> He also challenged the famous atheist, Robert Ingersoll, to a confrontation.<sup>12</sup> But he never gave Sister Etter the courtesy of a conversation.

Don't miss your divine relationships in life. There will always be fellow laborers, but divine relationships are few and far between.

### FINALLY, A HOME

Persecution from envious ministers began to rise feverishly against Dowie. But by this time, he had become a veteran in the art of facing opposition. Persecution brought out his brilliance and strength and he never gave those bringing it thought unless they were in the immediate way of his mission.

Dowie toured the regions of America and eventually chose to settle in Evanston, Illinois, outside of Chicago. The Chicago newspapers bitterly attacked him, calling him a false prophet and impostor. They boldly declared that he was not wanted in Chicago. But none of their attacks caused Dowie to flinch. He remained where he had chosen, and ministered wherever he felt led to go.

Once, while speaking at a divine healing convention in Chicago, he was summoned to pray for a lady dying from a fibroid tumor. At the time, Chicago was the second largest city in America. There were strong, evil spiritual influences ruling Chicago, and Dowie was very interested in establishing his headquarters there. So he took this woman's request for healing as a test as to whether or not he should begin a work in the city. The woman's tumor was reportedly the size of a coconut that had grown into various parts of her body. When Dowie prayed for her, she was instantly healed. In fact, the healing was so remarkable that several Chicago newspapers ran the story. Now he was convinced, and Dowie made his worldwide headquarters within the city. His enemies didn't like it, but Dowie didn't care.

The World's Fair was to open within a matter of months, so Dowie built a small wooden "hut" outside its gates. From the top of the hut named "Zion Tabernacle," hung a flag with the words, "Christ Is All." Services went on day and night. Though the beginning was small, the crowds grew steadily, and soon people had to stand outside in the snow to get a glimpse of the miraculous healings taking place inside.

As was true in Australia, Dowie had opened the doors to the city of Chicago by way of divine healing. Never before or since has one man so captured a city. Still, Dowie experienced the fight of his life in those early years. He demonstrated God's Word in power, and by so doing, the medical profession and the religious churches suffered financially. So the newspapers frantically formed a list of allies, including ministers, to pull out all the stops to paralyze his ministry. But none could tarnish his work. To their dismay, the constant articles and unrelenting slander only caused his work to increase.

### ANOTHER HOME—JAIL!

By now, hundreds of people flooded the city of Chicago to attend Dowie's services. As a result, lodging was difficult to come by, so Dowie opened several large rooming houses called "Healing Homes." Here, the sick who had come for healing could find shelter and rest between the services held at Zion Tabernacle. Once there, they were able to receive constant ministry from the Word until their faith mounted to the place of complete manifestation. But the newspapers, mainly the Chicago Dispatch, were merciless, calling the homes "Lunatic Asylums" and continued to print every lie imaginable.<sup>13</sup>

Because of these healing homes, Dowie's enemies thought they had found a vulnerable spot. So early in 1895, they arrested him on the charge of "practicing medicine without a license." This was obviously untrue; Dowie would have been the last person to allow medicine into his homes. He hired a brilliant attorney, but he only kept Dowie advised of the legal matters. So Dowie chose to represent himself in court because no one else could articulate his call as accurately as himself.

Dowie's superior intellect was not enough to overrule the evil jurisdiction of the court. Despite his profound arguments, the court fined him. But they never dreamed he would take the case to a higher court, costing much more money than the fines they had issued. When he did, the higher court denounced the evil of the lower court, and reversed the decision.

The city hoped Dowie would get discouraged if they continued to arrest and fine him. So before the year was over, he had been arrested one hundred times. Although severely persecuted, he was never discouraged. Persecution brought out great resiliency in his character. He actually thrived on his persecutor's affliction and interrogation.

Evil will always try to persecute the power of God. But Dowie was supernaturally secure and anchored in his godly authority. The supernatural never bows to the natural.

## LEAVES OF HEALING

Having foiled the legal system, his enemies then plotted to take away his mailing privileges. By 1894, Dowie's newsletter, Leaves of Healing, had a weekly worldwide circulation. It was filled with teachings and healing testimonies. Needless to say, the newsletter was very dear to his heart. Dowie fondly spoke of it as the "Little White Dove."

True to his form, Dowie never minced words in his writings. He fervently denounced sin and exposed evil industries. And those who were the most hurt by the publication saw it as another opportunity to end his ministry. Leaves of Healing also warned its readers of lethargic and controlling denominations.

People loved Dowie's dramatics and straightforward talk. Many wanted to say the same thing themselves, so they looked to him as their voice. Even those who despised him read the newsletter to see what he had to say. As a result, circulation increased rapidly. Much of his support and ministry was attributed to this publication.

The Postmaster General of Chicago was a devout Catholic. So to take his mailing privileges, Dowie's enemies gave one of his sermons that renounced the infallibility of the Pope to this man. The Postmaster was instantly offended and revoked his second-class mailing privileges, forcing Dowie to pay fourteen times the usual cost!

But Dowie could not be outdone. He paid the increase and solicited his readers to write Washington, D.C., to tell of this injustice. His supporters came out in full force, and he was granted an immediate audience with the Postmaster General in Washington. Once Dowie shared his story and showed the malicious lies printed in the Chicago newspaper, both the editor and the paper were denounced by the U.S. government. In fact, by 1896, this particular editor, one of Dowie's greatest persecutors, was put in prison on a separate charge and was made a public spectacle, forever ruined.

While in Washington, Dowie was also granted an audience with President William McKinley. He assured the president of his prayers while in office and the president warmly thanked him. While leaving the White House, Dowie

commented to his staff that he feared for McKinley's life. He later asked his followers to pray for the safety of the president because he was not properly guarded.<sup>14</sup> But in spite of Dowie's prophetic warnings, President McKinley was shot in Buffalo, New York, on September 6, 1901. He died eight days later, being the third U.S. president to be killed by an assassin.

### “ZION HAS COME”

By the end of 1896, Dowie had gained great influence over the city of Chicago. His enemies were either dead, in prison, or silent. The local police, who had once arrested him a hundred times, were now his friends and protected him at a moment's notice. The political officials, including the mayor, had all been voted in by Dowie's people. Divine healing was preached on every street corner. Dowie had sectioned off the districts of the city, and sent teams called “The Seventies” proclaiming the gospel into each area.

Soon, there was scarcely a person in Chicago who had not heard the gospel message. Now Dowie was praying for thousands every week to receive divine healing. Sadie Cody, niece of Buffalo Bill Cody, was miraculously healed, having first read a copy of *Leaves of Healing*.

Among other notable healings were Amanda Hicks, cousin of Abraham Lincoln; Dr. Lillian Yeomans; Rev. F. A. Graves; John G. Lake's wife; and the wife of a U.S. congressman.

Through his apostolic mantle, John Alexander Dowie literally ruled the city of Chicago for Jesus Christ. He leased the largest auditorium in Chicago for six months, and moved the great Zion Tabernacle into the building, filling its six thousand seats at every service.

Now Dowie was finally able to pursue the dream he had long held in his heart—to organize a church on apostolic principles. It had been his lifelong desire to bring back the teachings and foundation of the early church found in the book of Acts. So, in January, he held his first conference and laid the groundwork. The work was named “Christian Catholic Work,” with the name “Catholic” meaning “universal,” and was by no means connected to the Roman Catholic Church.

He would never allow this church to be known as a “new thing.” He looked at it as a “restoration” of the principles that had been lost to the body of Christ. His theology was good in that he warned if something was “new,” then it was “false.” Within a few years, Dowie's Christian Catholic Church had multiplied

into tens of thousands.

I believe without a doubt that all of the fivefold ministries listed in Ephesians 4 are alive and well today (see verses 11–13). The apostolic office was not done away with when the original twelve died. Nor did God allow His plan for the church to die when the apostles' flesh did. His new covenant principles were to continue until His return. They aren't bound by men's ideas or theology, nor do His promises end when men get nervous. There have been many more than the original twelve apostles, and men today are still called to that office.

Ephesians 2:20 says the foundations of the church are built upon the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone. Great authority comes with the office of an apostle, and I believe God sovereignly chooses and equips those He wants to stand there. But there has always been a lack of knowledge concerning the administration of that office. I believe Dowie was sovereignly called and equipped as an apostle. And I don't believe his ministry failed because he accepted the apostolic office. But I do believe that because of his lack of knowledge and understanding, that he misread the spiritual operations of his office. And I believe that this in itself was the main spiritual deficiency that caused him to misuse his authority.

During the time in which Dowie's church was being instituted, some very interesting events transpired. This period has been called, "The Golden Years" of Zion.<sup>15</sup> The next three years were quiet, prosperous, and influential. It was then that Dowie made his secret plans for his special city.

Knowing that such an effort would produce curiosity, Dowie diverted the attention of the multitudes by declaring a "Holy War," and announced a coming message entitled "Doctors, Drugs, and Devils." Advertising the message for weeks, the title caused no small stir. Then while his enemies were distracted by it all, Dowie secretly hired proprietors to survey land forty miles north of Chicago to build a city. After they found sixty-six hundred acres on Lake Michigan, Dowie dressed himself up as a tramp so as not to be recognized, then toured the site. And before his enemies could discover what was happening, the land had been purchased, and decisive plans were made for building the city of Zion, Illinois.

Dowie unveiled the architectural plans for Zion at the New Year's Eve Watch Night service on January 1, 1900. His business ability was praised by his people and the secular world, for starting the Zion Land Investment Association.

Subdivisions were allotted, and home-building began. The land was not to be sold; instead, it was to be leased for a period of some eleven hundred years. The terms of the lease strictly forbade the possession or use of tobacco, liquor, and swine's flesh anywhere within the limits of the city.<sup>16</sup> And in two years' time, houses had been erected and the city was taking shape.

### THE ELIJAH COMPLEX

Though his "moral utopia" seemed to abound, those closest to Dowie noticed a change. Trouble was brewing in Zion. There was no longer any time for divine healing to be preached because all of Dowie's efforts were focused on running the city. He deemed himself as Zion's General Overseer. The rule of the city was to be absolutely in his hands. And problem after problem arose to cleverly divert him from his original ministry command.

It was during this season that some ministers came to Dowie and proclaimed him to be the Elijah foretold in the Bible. At first, Dowie soundly denounced them. But their words kept "ringing in his ears." Then after awhile Dowie himself said a voice seemed to say, "Elijah must come, and who but you is doing the work of Elijah?"<sup>17</sup>

Eventually Dowie had so sadly diverted from God's plan for his life that he embraced the suggestion and proclaimed it as truth. He believed he was Elijah. He even went on to believe that by establishing other cities like Zion outside of every major city in America, that he could eventually have the money to build outside of Jerusalem. His plan was to buy out the Turks, the Muslims, and the Jews to take over Jerusalem for Jesus so He could establish His city during the millennial reign. Dowie was thoroughly deluded. Soon his preaching had deteriorated into the mere denouncing of his enemies. He also gave "lectures" on political views while he exhorted his hearers to invest more heavily into the work of the city.<sup>18</sup> He took counsel from no one, except in minor matters. And he removed all restraints that could have kept him in check or hindered his plans.

### MADISON SQUARE KNOCKOUT

What was once a persecution battle against the Word of God had now become a personal war to maintain Dowie's own level of influence. It was godly persecution that activated the mantle of his apostolic office, but now he was fighting to maintain his own personal influence and success. And it destroyed him.

A vividly sad example of Dowie's vanity in this area happened at what was deemed the "New York Visitation." The bishop of the Methodist church and the editor of its denominational newspaper, Dr. Buckley, asked for an interview with Dowie. So Dowie granted them audience and thought that he had fully persuaded them to believe his acclamations. But he hadn't. According to Buckley's newspaper article, Dowie was "in the moonlit border land of insanity where large movements of limited duration have sometimes originated." Buckley also added, "If he believes it or not, he is but another impostor."<sup>19</sup> Enraged, Dowie rented the Madison Square Garden, and though financially strained, arranged for eight trains to take thousands of his followers to New York City. Once there, he planned to make an open show of the two men to demonstrate the power he still held. What was once inspired by God's divine direction, was now reduced to Dowie's own self-appointment. It was totally in the flesh. He reacted out of a hurt and emotional wound and now he was determined to display his vengeance.

The event failed miserably. Though thousands went with Dowie, thousands more came who had another plan. They filled the Garden, but as Dowie took the platform to speak, they began to exit by the droves. The scene confused Dowie terribly and kept him from speaking as he had originally planned. As a whole, the city of New York was virtually unaware that anything had transpired at this meeting. It was as if God silenced the newspapers and had mercy on His servant.

### THE FATEFUL END

By now, the city of Zion was broken financially. So Dowie sought to escape by taking an expensive trip around the world where he found himself unwelcome in many cities. It was on this trip that his train pulled into Pomona, California. There had been a severe drought in the land, and no rain had fallen for eight months. So the reporters chided Dowie, reminding him that Elijah prayed for rain during drought in Israel and rain came. And that if he was Elijah, surely he would do the same for California. Dowie did indeed pray for rain at the end of his service, and before the crowd was dismissed, rain was falling in torrents.

Upon leaving California, Dowie planned a venture into Mexico to establish "Zion Plantation." He was hoping this new venture could pay for the debts of the old. But his followers, now broken financially and disillusioned, had left him in heart. They couldn't help but notice how poor they had become—while Dowie lived in extremes, hosted lavish parties, and left for a world tour.



Some say Dowie built his own city because he was tired of the persecution. But in my personal opinion, that doesn't seem true. Although greatly anointed and sent by God, it seemed that Dowie had a weakness for power and success. He said of himself:

“In becoming an apostle, it is not a question of rising high, it is a question of becoming low enough.... I do not think that I have reached a deep enough depth of true humility...of true abasement and self-effacement, for the high office of an apostle....”<sup>20</sup>

Jesus never commanded us to build communes. Jesus commanded us to “Go!” not “Huddle.” The book of Acts “commune” didn't work for long, either. (See Acts 2:44–47; 5:1–10.) Persecution hit the group, and they were scattered to the uttermost regions of the earth. (See Acts 8:1.) Why? So the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19–20 could be fulfilled. We are to be lights in the world and penetrate Satan's darkness. Huddling together won't accomplish that feat.

The greatest test of a leader is not in the area of persecution, though many fall there. I think one of the greatest snares comes in the form of power and success. We must never think we've “made it” and begin to dictate our personal power as a result of God-given success. Success brings a multitude of avenues and ventures. If we get caught up in the vast selections that come from success and fail to develop our spiritual tenacity, we can fall victim to the “whirlwind.” We can't find peace with our past by using the power of the present. With each new height, we must build a new tenacity. That's why some churches grow to a certain level, then become comfortable, or fall. The leadership become too busy with the “avenues” and lose the time and energy to develop both themselves and their members for higher levels in God.

Whenever we obey God, success should come. So never be afraid of success! But to properly administrate success, we must hold ourselves in the strength of the Spirit, listening for His direction—not our own. It is only through the strength of the Spirit and a hunger for God that we are able to continue in what God has spoken, pioneering into the next level.

Dowie soon proclaimed himself as the First Apostle of a renewed, end-time church, denounced his last name, and signed his documents as “John Alexander, First Apostle.”<sup>21</sup> But not long after his “self-appointment,” Dowie suffered a stroke on the platform from which he delivered his last sermon. Then while he

was out of the country to recover, the city of Zion held an organized meeting to vote Dowie out.

Dowie fought this decision to the last ounce of his strength but never succeeded in regaining his position. He was allowed to live his last days inside of Shiloh House, his home for many years, and slipped into eternity on March 9, 1907. His death was documented with these words by Judge V. V. Barnes:

“...the last night John Alexander spent on earth, he was again in spirit upon this platform talking to the assembled multitudes of his people. He preached during that night and thought he was preaching the principles of the gospel to the assembled thousands. As he taught the same old truths...he lapsed again into slumber, awaking from time to time and continuing the dispensation of the old gospel message. The last song he ever sang as the morning light began to appear was, ‘I Am a Soldier of the Cross.’ Then they listened for his last sentence, and he said, ‘The millennium has come; I will be back for a thousand years.’ These were the last words that he spoke; the last sentence he uttered.”<sup>22</sup>

How could such a great life end in such sadness? Are there any answers? Again, I believe the answer lies in a basic misunderstanding of spiritual principles.

Dowie was spiritually assigned by God to the city of Chicago—and he conquered it. While living within that city, and carrying out his divine appointment, principalities and powers couldn’t touch him. But Dowie seemed to move out of Chicago through his own desire for power and gave the devil freedom to destroy his life. When he left the city of his calling, the enemy killed his worldwide influence through deception, killed a member of his family, destroyed his marriage, and destroyed Dowie himself with “every form of disease” fastening to his body.<sup>23</sup>

We must remain with the original, anointed plan of God for our lives and allow Him to open the avenues to administrate it. Maybe Dowie should have built churches and Bible schools instead of a city. That avenue would have sent thousands into the ministry from his godly influence.

Dowie did go on in peace to be with the Lord. Those who were with him at the end said he had returned to his faith of the early years. Many even testified that he had become a gentle, loving man who acted as if a tremendous burden

had been lifted. And the city of Zion, Illinois, remains today, but the leadership is divided among many brethren, "...as no single person could completely fill Dr. Dowie's shoes."<sup>24</sup>

### A GREAT OBJECT LESSON

Gordon Lindsay, John Alexander Dowie's official biographer and founder of Christ for the Nations in Dallas, Texas, described Dowie's ministry as "the greatest object lesson in the history of the church."<sup>25</sup> Pertaining to ministry, his life was filled with vivid, instructional detail. The lessons we can learn are never meant to degrade or criticize this great man of God. His personal problems should be held separate from the call of God.

John Alexander Dowie went down in history as an impostor, yet he was a genius called of God. Even in the midst of his error, he prophesied the coming of radio and television to our generation. He had his failures, but from his influence came many great men of God. His ministry produced John G. Lake, the great apostle to South Africa; F. F. Bosworth, and his brother B. B. Bosworth, whose healing campaigns touched untold millions; Gordon Lindsay, whose life and ministry resulted in the great interdenominational college, Christ for the Nations, in Dallas, Texas; Raymond T. Richey, healing crusader; and Charles Parham, "The Father of Pentecost," whose Bible school in Topeka, Kansas, ushered in another move of the Holy Spirit. Many more had large radio ministries and powerful mission works.

Without a doubt, John Alexander Dowie succeeded in making the Bible alive to untold millions. He was an instrument used of God to restore the keys of divine healing and the revelation of repentance to a lukewarm, lethargic generation. If there is a moral to the message of the failure in his life, that message is this: Never sway from what God has commanded you to do in the earth. No matter what your age, your generation has not passed until you exit the earth and enter heaven. So if God has commanded you to fulfill a commission, make it your utmost priority as long as you live.

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1 Gordon Lindsay, *John Alexander Dowie: A Life Story of Trials, Tragedies and Triumphs* (Dallas, TX: Christ for the Nations, 1986), 228–229.

2 Lindsay, *John Alexander Dowie*, 15.

3 Ibid.

4 Lindsay, John Alexander Dowie, 22–24.

5 Ibid., 25.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., 43.

8 Lindsay, John Alexander Dowie, 44–45.

9 Ibid., 46.

10 Ibid., 49.

11 Lindsay, John Alexander Dowie, 95.

12 Ibid., 151.

13 Lindsay, John Alexander Dowie, 107–109.

14 Lindsay, John Alexander Dowie, 133–135.

15 Lindsay, John Alexander Dowie, 161.

16 Lindsay, John Alexander Dowie, 173.

17 Ibid., 188.

18 Ibid., 199.

19 Lindsay, John Alexander Dowie, 221.

20 Ibid., 155–156.

21 Lindsay, John Alexander Dowie, 235.

22 Ibid., 260–261.

23 Ibid., 251.

24 This We Believe, Handbook of the Christian Catholic Church, 7.

25 Lindsay, John Alexander Dowie, introduction.