

George I. Butler on the Relationship of Ellen White to the Bible: 1874, 1883

President of the General Conference on two occasions, 1871-1874 and 1880-1888. All bold is mine.

Article excerpts:

Review and Herald, June 9, 1874

“Visions and Prophecy Among Seventh-day Adventists” by George I. Butler

As the Scriptures are designed to "thoroughly furnish" the man of God unto all good works, we can rely upon them in this case. **We believe these visions because the Bible teaches them. We use the rules given in that holy book and are forced to the conclusion that these manifestations are the work of the Spirit of God. Instead of our setting up these visions above and outside of the Scriptures as another rule of authority, as our opponents pretend, we claim that none can really take the Bible and fairly apply its teachings without accepting these visions as from God. The Bible is the supreme authority in deciding this as well as other questions.** When it tells us to "try the spirits," to "prove all things," and "hold fast that which is good," it is our duty to do this. We find by so doing that these visions harmonize perfectly with the Scripture, and that they in no case contradict themselves or the Bible. They everywhere teach the purest doctrine, and even their bitterest enemies admit that a person will be saved if he will obey them.

We have tested them as a people for nearly a quarter of a century, and we find we prosper spiritually when we heed them, and suffer a great loss when we neglect them. We have found their guidance to be our safety. They never have led us into fanaticism in a single instance, but they have ever rebuked fanatical and unreasonable men. **They everywhere direct us to the Scriptures as the great source of true instruction, and to the example of Jesus Christ as the true pattern. They never claim to be given to take the place of the Bible, but simply to be a manifestation of one of those spiritual gifts set in the church by its divine Lord; and as such, should have their proper weight.**

We admit that their influence upon Seventh-day Adventists during their past history has been weighty, but it has always been for good, and always had a tendency to make us a better people. Having been in exercise for so many years among us, we are certainly prepared to judge by this time in regard to the nature of their teachings. . . .

Seventh-day Adventists believe in these visions because the Bible teaches them. They do not make them in any sense a test of fellowship, knowing very well the prejudice which exists against everything of this kind and that the people have been witnesses to many false manifestations. They leave every one perfectly free to come to their own conclusions concerning them. They are not ashamed of these visions, but thankful to God for his care and interest in giving them, as their instructions have been of great benefit. They claim the right to believe in them and to present the reasons for such belief. There are some in their churches who have not been acquainted with Mrs. White, or had evidence sufficient to satisfy them in regard to the visions. These

are not disturbed. It is true that many of those who have longest believed in the tenets of this church have faith in the visions as from the Lord. These were at first as skeptical as any. But after much investigation and careful observation of the workings of this cause, they were forced to this conclusion.

The evidences which I have noticed are submitted to a candid public, hoping they will be fairly considered. There is much more which might be said; but it is believed that what is presented is sufficient to satisfy any one who will candidly consider the subject with a determination to arrive at the truth. We fully believe we have reached the last church, that the great day of God is soon to burst upon the world, and that the spirit of prophecy exists among his servants, as God has declared it would.

Review and Herald Supplement, Aug. 14, 1883

“The Visions: How They Are Held Among S. D. Adventists” by George I. Butler

The majority of our people believe these visions to be a genuine manifestation of spiritual gifts, and as such to be entitled to respect. **We do not hold them to be superior to the Bible, or in one sense equal to it. The Scriptures are our rule to test everything by, the visions as well as all other things. That rule, therefore, is of the highest authority; the standard is higher than the thing tested by it. If the Bible should show the visions were not in harmony with it, the Bible would stand, and the visions would be given up. This shows plainly that we hold the Bible the highest, our enemies to the contrary, notwithstanding.**