

James White on the Relationship of Ellen White to the Bible: 1847, 1851, & 1855

Leader and cofounder of Seventh-day Adventism and husband of Ellen G. White. All bold is mine.

In 1847 James White published the important pamphlet, *A Word to the Little Flock*, a synopsis of Sabbatarian Adventist thought up to that time. The following is an untitled piece White wrote as an introduction (pp. 13-14) to his wife's first vision, "To The Remnant Scattered Abroad" (pp. 14-18). Here he provides a biblical justification for the modern gift of prophecy. This piece laid the foundation for future Seventh-day Adventist teaching on the relation of Ellen White's prophetic gift to the Bible.

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see Visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants, and on my hand-maidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come". Acts 2:17-20.

"When the day of Pentecost was fully come," and the disciples were "all with one accord in one place," filled with the Holy Ghost, "Peter standing up with the eleven," quoted the above scripture from the prophesy of Joel. His object was to show that the marvelous work which was wrought in the disciples at that time, was a subject of prophesy, and the work of God. I conclude that there is not one Second Advent believer who will take the ground, that all of the prophesy of Joel, quoted by Peter, was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost; for there is not the least evidence that any part of it was then fulfilled, only that part which related to the pouring out of the Holy Ghost. We cannot believe that the signs in the sun, and the moon, etc, were seen on that day, or that there were any having visions, or dreaming among them at that exciting hour; for there is no proof of any such thing. A part of this prophesy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost; and ALL of it is to be fulfilled "IN THE LAST DAYS, SAITH GOD." Dreams and Visions are among the signs that precede the great and notable days of the Lord. And as the signs of that day have been, and still are fulfilling, it must be clear to every unprejudiced mind, that the time has fully come, when the children of God may expect dreams and visions from the Lord.

I know that this is a very unpopular position to hold on this subject, even among Adventists; but I choose to believe the word of the Lord on this point, rather than the teachings of men. I am well aware of the prejudice in many minds on this subject; but as it has been caused principally by the preaching of popular Adventists, and the lack of a correct view of this subject; I have humbly hoped to cut it away, with the "sword of the Spirit," from some minds, at least. We will bear it in mind, that these dreams and visions, are to be in the "LAST DAYS". As there cannot be any days later than the last, it is certain that we may expect just such revelations, until Christ appears in the clouds of heaven. I know that it is a very popular opinion among Adventists, that there was nothing more to be revealed by visions, after John closed up the revelation in A. D.

96. But if this opinion is correct, then the last days ended while John was on the isle of Patmos.

The bible is a perfect, and complete revelation. It is our only rule of faith and practice. But this is no reason, why God may not show the past, present, and future fulfilment of his word, in these last days, by dreams and visions; according to Peter's testimony. True visions are given to lead us to God, and his written word; but those that are given for a new rule of faith and practice, separate from the bible, cannot be from God, and should be rejected.

The following vision was published in the Day-Star, more than a year ago. By the request of friends, it is republished in this little work, with scripture references, for the benefit of the little flock.

I hope that all who may read it, will take the wise, and safe course, pointed out to us by the following passages of scripture. "Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Paul. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20 (WLF 13-14).

The following article excerpts by James White clearly set early Sabbatarian Adventism apart from sects such as Mormonism:

The Review and Herald, April 21, 1851

“The Gifts of the Gospel Church” by James White

The gifts of the Spirit should all have their proper places. **The Bible is an everlasting rock. It is our rule of faith and practice.** In it the man of God is "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." If every member of the church of Christ was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners, and searched the Holy Scriptures diligently and with much prayer for duty, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, we think, they would be able to learn their whole duty in "all good works." Thus "the man of God may be perfect." But as the reverse exists, and ever has existed, God in much mercy has pitied the weakness of his people, and has set the gifts in the gospel church to correct our errors, and to lead us to his Living Word. Paul says that they are for the "perfecting of the saints," "till we all come in the unity of the faith." - The extreme necessity of the church in its imperfect state is God's opportunity to manifest the gifts of the Spirit.

Every Christian is therefore in duty bound to take the Bible as a perfect rule of faith and duty. He should pray fervently to be aided by the Holy Spirit in searching the Scriptures for the whole truth, and for his whole duty. He is not at liberty to turn from them to learn his duty through any of the gifts. We say that the very moment he does, he places the gifts in a wrong place, and takes an extremely dangerous position. The Word should be in front, and the eye of the church should be placed upon it, as the rule to walk by, and the fountain of wisdom, from which to learn duty in "all good works." But if a portion of the church err from the truths of the Bible, and become weak, and sickly, and the flock become scattered, so that it seems necessary for God to employ the gifts of the Spirit to correct, revive and heal

the erring, we should let him work. Yea more, we should pray for him to work and plead earnestly that he would work by the Spirit's power, and bring the scattered sheep to his fold. Praise the Lord, he will work. Amen.

“Dreams” by James White

God hath said, "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream." Num.xii,6. Said Jacob, "The angel of the Lord spake unto me in a dream." Gen.xxxi,2. "And God came to Laban, the Syrian, in a dream by night." Gen.xxxi,24. Read the dreams of Joseph, [Gen.xxxvii,5-9.] and then the interesting story of their fulfillment in Egypt. The great important image of the second chapter of Daniel was given in a dream, also the four beasts, &c. of the seventh chapter. And when Herod sought to destroy the infant Saviour, Joseph was warned in a dream to flee into Egypt. Matt.ii,13. This testimony is sufficient proof that God sometimes teaches his servants in dreams. The Prophet Joel has also declared that there should be dreams by the Spirit in the last days. **We should expect them. We shall be unwise to reject any means that the Spirit may employ to enlighten us. Those who are ashamed to talk of the Lord giving dreams, may be ashamed of the Bible. We find dreams in almost every part of it.**

But we should be careful to place them where they belong, and make a good use of them. Like the gifts of the Spirit, they may prove the overthrow of some. It is said of dreams, [Ecclesiasticus xxxiv,6,7.] "If they be not sent from the Most High, in the time of thy visitation, set not thine heart upon them. For dreams have deceived many, and they have failed that put their trust in them." "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." Jer.xxiii,28. **God's word is an everlasting rock. On that we can stand with confidence at all times. Though the Lord gives dreams, designed generally for the individuals who have them, to comfort, correct, or to instruct in extreme trials or dangers, yet to suppose that he designs to guide in general duties by dreams, is unscriptural, and very dangerous. The Word and Spirit are given to guide us.** If we look to be guided by dreams we shall be likely to fall into the deceptions of Satan. **We say that we expect the Lord will give dreams; but the necessity of his children will be his opportunity to thus teach them, as in all past time.**

Review and Herald October 16, 1855

“A Test” by James White

There is a class of persons who are determined to have it that the REVIEW and its conductors make the views of Mrs. White a Test of doctrine and Christian fellowship. It may be duty to notice these persons on account of the part they are acting, which is calculated to deceive some.

What has the REVIEW to do with Mrs. W.'s views? The sentiments published in its columns are all drawn from the Holy Scriptures. No writer of the

REVIEW has ever referred to them as authority on any point. The REVIEW for five years has not published one of them. Its motto has been, "The Bible, and the Bible alone, the only rule of faith and duty." Then why should these men charge the REVIEW with being a supporter of Mrs. W.'s views?

Again, How has the Editor of the REVIEW regarded Visions, and the gifts of the Gospel Church for more than eight years past? His uniform statements in print on this subject will satisfactorily answer this question. The following is from a Tract he published in 1847 [see above]:

"The Bible is a perfect and complete revelation. It is our only rule of faith and practice. But this is no reason why God may not show the past, present, and future fulfillment of his word, in these last days, by dreams and visions, according to Peter's testimony. True visions are given to lead us to God, and to his written word; but those that are given for a new rule of faith and practice, separate from the Bible, cannot be from God, and should be rejected."

Again, four years since, he wrote on the Gifts of the Gospel Church, re-published in the REVIEW for Oct. 3d, 1854 [see above], from which is taken the following:

"Every Christian is therefore in duty bound to take the Bible as a perfect rule of faith and duty. He should pray fervently to be aided by the Holy Spirit in searching the Scriptures for the whole truth, and for his whole duty. He is not at liberty to turn from them to learn his duty through any of the gifts. We say that the very moment he does, he places the gifts in a wrong place, and takes an extremely dangerous position."

Now if these paragraphs were not in print, his enemies might accuse him of changing his position; but as one was printed eight years since, and the other four, and re-printed one year since, they are nails driven in right places. Slanderous reports must fall powerless before facts of this character.

Again, in the REVIEW Extra, published March, 1855, is the following statement from the Church that had been personally acquainted with the facts in the case for three years:

This certifies that we have been acquainted with Bro. and Sr. White, and their teachings, and labors in church trials, and **have never known them to urge the visions on any one as a portion of religious faith, or make them a test of fellowship.**

In behalf of the Church,

J. T. ORTON,
S. T. BELDEN, Deacons.
T. B. MEAD.