

## **J. N. Andrews on the Relationship of Ellen White to the Bible: 1870**

He was the first Seventh-day Adventist missionary to countries outside North America—called at the time, "the best we had." He early developed skill in Biblical studies; he could read the Bible in seven languages and, reportedly, could reproduce the New Testament from memory. In 1867 he became the third president of the General Conference, and from 1869-1870, an editor of the *Review and Herald*. As a theologian Elder Andrews made significant contributions to the development of various doctrines of the Adventist denomination. His most important publication was *History of the Sabbath and the First Day of the Week*.

The following article comes from the *Review and Herald*, Feb. 15, 1870, and is a very important articulation of Seventh-day Adventist teaching regarding the biblical doctrine of spiritual gifts and the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White:

“Our Use of the Visions of Sister White” by James Nevins Andrews

It is quite generally understood that the Seventh-day Adventists are believers in the perpetuity of spiritual gifts. It is also understood that we regard the visions of Sr. White as given by the Spirit of God. But the use which we make of the doctrine of spiritual gifts, and particularly of the visions of Sr. White, is very generally misunderstood.

1. We understand that the Holy Scriptures are divinely inspired, and that they contain the truth of God which is able to make us wise unto salvation.
2. But we do not understand that the gift of the Scriptures to mankind, supersedes the gift of the Holy Spirit to the people of God.
3. On the contrary, we do believe that the Scriptures plainly reveal the office and work of the Holy Spirit; which office and work can never cease while man remains upon probation.
4. This work of the Holy Spirit is revealed to us in the Bible doctrine of spiritual gifts.
5. While therefore we do heartily accept the Scriptures as teaching man's whole duty toward God, we do not deny the Holy Spirit that place in the church which the Scriptures assign to it.
6. The office of the Holy Spirit is to reprove men of sin (John 16:8); to take away the carnal mind, and to change our evil nature by removing guilt from the conscience; to make us new creatures (Rom. 8:1-9); and to shed abroad in our hearts the love of God (Rom. 5:5); and to bear witness with our spirits that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16); and to lead into all truth (John 16:13); and finally to change the

saints to immortality at the last day. Rom. 8:11; 2 Cor. 5:4, 5.

7. The Scriptures contain the truth of God, as the precious metals are contained in a mine. The work of the Spirit of God in leading men into all truth is to search out, lay open, bring to light and vindicate the truth of God. And in reproofing sin, it has not only the work of impressing the conscience of the sinner by powerful convictions of guilt, but also in showing to chosen servants of God the guilt of others; and revealing wrongs which otherwise would remain hidden to the great detriment of the church, and to the ruin of the sinner.
8. The work of the Holy Spirit may be divided into two parts: First, that which is designed simply to convert and to sanctify the person affected by it. Second, that which is for the purpose of opening the truth of God, and of correcting error, and of reproofing and rebuking secret sins. This part of the work is wrought by what the Scriptures term spiritual gifts. These exist, not for the especial good of the person to whose trust they are committed, but for the benefit of the whole body of the church.
9. Now it is plain that those who reject the work of the Spirit of God under the plea that the Scriptures are sufficient, do deny and reject all that part of the Bible which reveals the office and work of the Holy Spirit.
10. Thus 1 Cor. 12, and Eph. 4, which define the gifts of the Spirit of God, cannot really form a part of the rule of life of those who affirm that the Scriptures are so sufficient in themselves that the gifts of the Spirit are unnecessary.
11. The Spirit of God gave the Scriptures. But it is plain that it did not give them for the purpose of shutting itself out from all participation in the work of God among men. And what the Bible says of the gifts of the Spirit shows just what relation the Spirit of God sustains to the work of the gospel.
12. Thus Paul states the matter in two of his epistles: [Quote 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:11-13].
13. Now the Bible expressly teaches that the existence of these gifts is as necessary to the church of Christ, as the different members are necessary to the well-being of the body. While, therefore, the Bible recognizes the gifts of the Spirit, these are not given to supersede the Bible, nor yet to fill the same place as the Bible.
14. The object of spiritual gifts is to maintain the living work of God in the church. They enable the Spirit of God to speak in the correction of wrongs, and in the exposure of iniquity. They are the means whereby God teaches his people when they are in danger of taking wrong steps. They are the means by which the Spirit of God sheds light upon church difficulties, when otherwise their adjustment would be impossible. They also constitute the means whereby God preserves his

people from confusion by pointing out errors, by correcting false interpretations of the Scriptures, and causing light to shine out upon that which is in danger of being wrongly understood, and therefore of being the cause of evil and division to the people of God. In short, their work is to unite the people of God in the same mind and in the same judgment upon the meaning of the Scriptures. Mere human judgment, with no direct instruction from Heaven, can never search out hidden iniquity, nor adjust dark and complicated church difficulties, nor prevent different and conflicting interpretations of the Scriptures. It would be sad indeed if God could not still converse with his people.

15. But here it is proper to say that these uses of the gifts of the Spirit pertain almost wholly to the household of faith. Men who have no acquaintance with them cannot be affected by them. And also, where men have had little opportunity to be acquainted with the manifestations of the Spirit of God, they cannot be asked to accept such work as specially wrought by God. It is but just that they should have clear and convincing evidence for themselves that the Spirit of God is in the work.
16. For this purpose we hold that all the tests presented in the Bible should be applied to the gifts, and that they should be found to sustain the test of such examination.
17. We therefore do not test the world in any manner by these gifts. Nor do we in our intercourse with other religious bodies who are striving to walk in the fear of God, in any way make these a test of Christian character. Upon none of these persons do we urge these manifestations of the Spirit of God, nor test them by their teaching.
18. There is such a thing, however, as men having in the providence of God an opportunity to become acquainted with the special work of the Spirit of God, so that they shall acknowledge that their light is clear, convincing, and satisfactory. To such persons, we consider the gifts of the Spirit are clearly a test. Not only has God spoken, but they have had opportunity to ascertain that fact, and to know it for themselves. In all such cases, spiritual gifts are manifestly a test that cannot be disregarded except at the peril of eternal ruin.
19. One of the chief gifts of the Spirit of God that he has placed in the New Testament church is the gift of prophecy. Joel 2:28; Acts 2:1-4, 17, 18; 1 Cor. 12:1-31; 14:1-5; Eph. 4:11-13. This gift the Bible connects with the closing work of this dispensation. Rev. 12:17; 14:12; 19:10. Spiritual gifts do not, therefore, cease to be of importance in the sight of God, nor in that of his true people. And that message which is to accomplish the perfecting of the saints and to fit them for translation, has the Spirit of God connected with it, and speaking out in the management of its work.
20. Finally, in the reception of members into our churches, we desire on this subject to know two things: 1. That they believe the Bible doctrine of Spiritual gifts; 2.

That they will candidly acquaint themselves with the visions of Sr. White, which have ever held so prominent place in this work. We believe that every person standing thus and carrying out this purpose will be guided in the way of truth and righteousness. And those who occupy this ground, are never denied all the time they desire to decide in this matter.