

BIBLE ADVENTISM. -- BY ELDER JAMES WHITE.

p. 1, Para. 1, [INTRODUC].

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p. 2, Para. 1, [INTRODUC].

SERMON ONE -- INTRODUCTION. p. 3, Para. 1, [INTRODUC].

Text: But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. 1 Pet. 3:15. p. 3, Para. 2, [INTRODUC].

OUR name, Seventh-day Adventists, is expressive of two prominent features of our faith and hope. As Adventists, we are looking for the personal appearing and reign of Jesus Christ. And in seeking for that readiness necessary to meet our soon-coming Lord with joy, we have been led to the observance of the seventh-day of the week as the hallowed rest-day of the Creator. p. 3, Para. 3, [INTRODUC].

These distinguishing features of our religious faith are unpopular. We are fully aware that much prejudice exists in the religious world against many of our opinions of Bible truth. This, however, exists mainly for want of information as to our real positions, and probably, in some degree, for the want of intelligence and piety on the part of some who have represented our views. May God help us to overcome this prejudice by a clear and intelligent defense of the truth, and by well ordered lives, and the spirit of humility and love, that shall melt its way into the hearts of the people. The text suggests:-- p. 3, Para. 4, [INTRODUC].

1. A preparation of heart before engaging in the work of teaching our fellows. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." In our hearts we should set apart the Lord God as the being of our supreme love and the only object of worship. We should be cleansed from sin and should be imbued with the Spirit of God before engaging in the responsible work of teaching the truth of God to others, lest we mar the work, and create prejudice, instead of removing that already existing. p. 3, Para. 5, [INTRODUC].

2. A preparation of the mind of study is suggested in the

text. This is necessary in order to be always ready to teach those of inquiring minds. "And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." Divine truth appeals to the understanding. The people ask for reasons, not assertions merely. Those who teach should be intelligent. They should be ready. They should be "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh." The veriest novice in heavenly things may give assertions with all the confidence of experienced Bible students, and yet for want of disposition to "search the Scriptures," and to "study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed," he may not be able to give one forcible reason. p. 4, Para. 1, [INTRODUC].

3. The people have a right to demand the reasons of our faith and hope. This is clearly shown in the language of the apostle, requiring readiness to answer every man that asketh. It is also seen in the prophetic inquiry and answer, especially applicable to our time, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the Night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night. If ye will inquire, inquire ye. Return, come." p. 4, Para. 2, [INTRODUC].

4. The manner in which the reasons of our faith and hope should be given, is expressly stated, -- "with meekness and fear." In the absence of meekness, and fear to offend God, his truth is feeble, and is almost sure to be reproached. But when it is taught with meekness and fear, it appears in its beauty and strength. Christ in his life was a pattern of meekness. The first ministers of Jesus, who went forth to the world newly baptized with the Spirit of their Master, were meek men. With meekness they presented Jesus as the only Saviour of men. And with fear and trembling, lest they should fail to fulfill their high and holy mission, they went out leaning upon the strength of Him who had said, "Lo, I am with you alway." p. 4, Para. 3, [INTRODUC].

All who are really imbued with the Spirit of their divine Master, will manifest in a good degree the meekness which characterized his life. When such speak in defense of Bible truth, they will do it with meekness and fear. The great apostle, in view of the responsibilities of teaching the word of God, uses these forcible words: "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in

them that perish. To the one we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" 2 Cor. 2:15,16. p. 5, Para. 1, [INTRODUC].

How beautiful, and how efficient will be that church whose ministry and membership bear the happy burden of truth, intelligent in the word of God, ready always, with meekness and fear, to give an answer to all who inquire for the reasons of the hope they cherish! Seventh-day Adventists are making some efforts to reach this position. Would God that our zeal in the work of preparation was proportionate to our wants and to the great work before us. p. 5, Para. 2, [INTRODUC].

It is true that we differ in some respects with other religious bodies of the present time, and with most of them we differ widely. But we do not differ with others from choice. We do not love to differ for the sake of being odd. No; we choose to be in harmony, if possible, with our fellow-men, especially with those who revere God and his word. We believe it to be a sin to differ with others, unless there be good reasons why we should differ. p. 6, Para. 1, [INTRODUC].

We do not believe as we do for the sake of advantages in this life. It is not always convenient to observe the seventh-day Sabbath. It is often inconvenient to be out of harmony with all the rest of the world two days in the week. We frequently sustain losses of friends and worldly advantages on account of our adherence to the Bible Sabbath. p. 6, Para. 2, [INTRODUC].

We do not believe as we do from being of the same cast of mind. We differ in respect to natural temperament and education, probably, as much as the members of any other religious body in existence. p. 6, Para. 3, [INTRODUC].

We do not believe as we do from denominational mold. We are gathered from Methodists, Regular Baptists, Free-will Baptists, Seventh-day Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Disciples, Dutch Reformed, Christians, Lutherans, Catholics, United Brethren, Universalists, worldlings, and infidels. p. 7, Para. 1, [INTRODUC].

Neither is it from national cast that we believe as we do.

We are largely composed of native Americans, while many are gathered from the English, Welsh, Scotch, Irish, French, Germans, Norwegians, Danes, Swedes, Poles, Swiss, Italians, and others. The labor of bringing together a body of believers composed of such material, affected more or less by the religious sentiments and forms of the several denominations, with all their national peculiarities -- enjoying, in a very large degree, unity of sentiment and spirit -- is evidently the work of God. p. 7, Para. 2, [INTRODUC].

Why, then, do we believe as we do? It is out of respect for the Bible we love, and the God of the Bible we revere, that we believe what we do, and are what we are. The governing principle of our faith and practice, as Seventh-day Adventists, is our respect for the great God, his living word, and the recompense of the reward. p. 7, Para. 3, [INTRODUC].

Our people have adopted a denominational name which expresses the two leading features of our religious faith. We are Adventists, and are observers of the ancient Sabbath of the Lord. The reason why we are Adventists is because we take the Bible as meaning just what it says. And why should we not believe that when God speaks to his people his words mean what they say? If he does not mean what he says in his word, then pray tell us what he does mean. If his words do not have their plain, simple, and obvious meaning, then the Bible ceases to be a revelation, and God should give us another book to tell us what this one means. But the Bible is its own interpreter. p. 7, Para. 4, [INTRODUC].

We admit that the Lord in his word has used figures and parables, but in every case these are explained in the context. In all cases where there are no unmistakable proofs that a figure is employed, we should understand the sacred Scriptures as meaning word for word just what they express. Figures are given for the clearer elucidation of the subject. Certainly the Author of our blessed Bible has not introduced parables to obscure his meaning, and confuse our minds. Young speakers sometimes employ figures more intricate than the subject they wish to illustrate. The Lord does not do this. It is said of Dr. Scott, who published an edition of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, with notes, that he gave a copy of the work to a poor washer-woman of his parish. A few days after, he met her, when the following conversation took place:-- p. 8, Para. 1,

[INTRODUC].

"Have you read the book I gave you?" "Yes, sir." "How do you like it?" "Very much." "Do you understand it?" "I understand what Mr. Bunyan has said very well, and I hope in a few days to be able to understand the notes." A poor compliment indeed for the Doctor's notes! This simple-hearted, sensible woman knew no other way to understand language, only that it meant what it said. p. 8, Para. 2, [INTRODUC].

We are Seventh-day Adventists; but an Adventist is not necessarily a time-setter. From the fulfillment of prophecy, and the signs of the times, we believe in the soon advent of our Lord; but we are not time-setters; we do not hold to any future, definite time. The great Second Advent movement brought us to the time of waiting for the advent of Christ, which is the especial watching, praying time, in view of the nearness of that event. Probably no text of Scripture as fully expresses our real position as the words of our Lord: "Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is." Mark 13:33. We hold that the Adventists were correct on three fundamental points out of four. p. 9, Para. 1, [INTRODUC].

1. They were correct as to the premillennial second appearing of Christ. No doctrine is more plainly stated, and more fully sustained by direct Bible testimony, than the personal appearing and reign of Christ. p. 9, Para. 2, [INTRODUC].

And, whatever may be said of the Adventists, this fact will not be denied, that hundreds of ministers who believed the coming and reign of Christ to be *spiritual*, have given up their mystical interpretation of the Scriptures, and have adopted the literal; consequently they are Adventists. Among these are revivalist Moody, and Mr. Patterson, author of "Fables of Infidelity, and Facts of Faith." p. 9, Para. 3, [INTRODUC].

2. The Adventists were correct in their application of the prophetic symbols of Daniel and John. In this application, they are sustained by Protestant expositors of note. p. 10, Para. 1, [INTRODUC].

3. They were also correct in their application of the prophetic periods. The dates fixed upon have stood the test

of the most rigid criticism. p. 10, Para. 2, [INTRODUC].

4. But we were mistaken only in the event to occur at the close of the prophetic periods. Hence the disappointment; but that disappointment is now seen, in the light of the heavenly sanctuary, to be a fulfillment of prophecy; hence a sign of the soon coming of Christ. p. 10, Para. 3, [INTRODUC].

But if it be objected that the Second Advent movement could not have been in harmony with Providence, in fulfillment of prophecy, because those who engaged in it were disappointed, then we suggest that, if God's people never have been disappointed on the very point of their expectation when prophecy was being fulfilled in their experience and history, then it may be that prophecy has not been fulfilled in the Advent movement. p. 10, Para. 4, [INTRODUC].

But if one instance can be shown in Sacred History where prophecy was fulfilled by those who were entirely incorrect on the vital point of their confident expectation, then, after all, prophecy may have been fulfilled in the great Second Advent movement of 1840-4. This matter should be fully tested. p. 10, Para. 5, [INTRODUC].

The prophet of God had uttered these words about five hundred years before their fulfillment: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass." Zech. 9:9. In fulfillment of this prophecy, while Christ was riding into Jerusalem in the very humble manner expressed by the prophet, the chosen twelve and the shouting multitude cried, "Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" Matt. 21:9. The people, and even the disciples, did not as yet understand the nature of Christ's kingdom; and they verily thought that Jesus would on that occasion claim his right to the throne of David, and then, and there, be crowned king of Israel. p. 11, Para. 1, [INTRODUC].

And when Jesus was requested to rebuke his disciples, he replied, "I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. "Prophecy had gone forth, and must be fulfilled, if the Spirit of God from necessity should call hosannas from the very stones. p.

11, Para. 2, [INTRODUC].

But the people did not understand the nature of prophetic fulfillment of their time; and their disappointment was complete. In a few days they witnessed the dying agonies of the Son of God upon the cross; and as Christ died, their hopes in him died also. Nevertheless, prophecy was fulfilled in the ardent hopes as well as the triumphant hosannas of those who were so soon overwhelmed with bitterest disappointment. p. 11, Para. 3, [INTRODUC].

Again, there were three distinct messages to be given, symbolized by three angels in Revelation 14:6-12. The first announced the time of the Judgment as at hand. Had Christ then come, when would the second message have been given? Not after the second advent, certainly. Therefore there must be a delay, and a disappointment, to give room for the second and third messages. p. 12, Para. 1, [INTRODUC].