

ADVENT REVIEW



And Sabbath Herald.

"Here is the patience of the Saints: Here are they that keep the Commandments of God, and the Faith of Jesus." Rev. xiv, 12.

VOL. XXXI.

BATTLE CREEK, MICH., THIRD-DAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1868.

NO. 11.

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Entire number available [here](#)

TIME TO COMMENCE THE SABBATH

By James White

It is generally known to most of the readers of the Review, that for several years in the early history of Seventh-day Adventists, believers adopted six o'clock p.m. as the time for the Sabbath to commence and close. It is also known that in the autumn of 1855, the *Review* taught that sunset was the Bible time to commence the Sabbath, and that our people generally changed from six o'clock to sunset. Some of the circumstances connected with this change I wish here to state:

1. The six o'clock time was called in question by a portion of the believers as early as 1847, some maintaining that the Sabbath commenced as sunrise, while others claimed Bible evidence in favor of sunset.

2. Elder Joseph Bates, who was the first to teach the Sabbath in its importance, and faithfully labor to bring out a people from among the Adventists to observe it, was very decided upon the question, and respect for his years, and his godly life, might have been among the reasons why this point was not sooner investigated as thoroughly as some other points.

3. In the autumn of 1855, Elder J. N. Andrews called on me at Battle Creek, on his way to Iowa, and set before me the scriptural reasons for commencing the Sabbath at sunset. He had written a clear article upon the subject, which he left with me, and which appeared in the *Review* for December 4, 1855. This article, however, before it appeared in the *Review* was read at the Conference at Battle Creek about that time, and the subject was discussed, resulting in settling the minds of the brethren on the sunset-time, with the exception of Bro. Bates, and a few others. Since that time there has been general agreement among us upon the subject.

But there are persons who seek to injure us as a people - and this class we hope to help by this article - who report and publish to the world that Mrs. White did profess to be shown that the time to commence the Sabbath was six o'clock, and that at a later period she was shown that sunset was the true time. It is also stated that in vision she saw the dial-plate of a clock with one hand pointing to the 6, and other to 12, showing that six o'clock was the commencement and close of the Sabbath.

A simple statement of the facts in the case are sufficient to show these reports false. Hence we give the following statements, which we are ready to prove by most competent witnesses:

1. Mrs. White has in two visions been shown something in regard to the time of the commencement of the Sabbath. The first was as early as 1847, at Topsham, Me. In the vision she was shown that to commence the Sabbath at sunrise was wrong. She then heard an angel repeat these words, "From even unto even shall ye celebrate your Sabbaths." Bro. Bates was present and succeeded in satisfying all present that "even" was six o'clock. Mark this: The vision at Topsham did not teach the six o'clock time. It only corrected sunrise time. I never received the idea that the six

o'clock time was sustained by the visions, hence the following which I copy from a statement I made in the *Review* upon the subject, December 4, 1855, as follows:

“We have never been fully satisfied with the testimony presented in favor of six o'clock, while the various communications received for a few years past advocating both sunrise and sunset time, have been almost destitute of argument, and the spirit of humility and candor. The subject has troubled us, yet we have never found time to thoroughly investigate it.

“In June, 1854, we urged Elder D. P. Hall to prepare an article on the subject for the *Review*. When with him in Pennsylvania, last winter, we repeated the request. When in Maine, last summer, we stated our feelings on this subject to Bro. Andrews, and have fears of division unless the question could be settled by good testimony. He decided to devote his time to the subject till he ascertained what the Bible taught in regard to it, and his article in this number is the result of his investigation. Some have the impression that six o'clock time has been taught among us by the direct manifestation of the Holy Spirit. This is a mistake; ‘From even unto even’ was the teaching from which six o'clock time has been inferred.”

2. In regard to the clock-face, twenty competent witnesses are ready to testify that neither Mrs. W. nor her visions had anything to do with it whatever. When at Rocky Hill, Conn., in 1849, at a meeting on the Sabbath at the house of Bro. Albert Belden, the time to commence the Sabbath was agitated. A brother present in whose spiritual exercises there was great confidence, seemed to be very powerfully exercised, and, amid groans and tears, he called for the chalk, and marked out upon the floor the figure of a clock face, the hands pointing out six o'clock. A general impression prevailed that this was the work of the Spirit of God; but Mrs. W. had nothing to do with it whatever.

3. At the close of the conference at Battle Creek referred to above, the ministers and others, especially interested in the cause had a special season of prayer for the prosperity of the cause, and in that meeting Mrs. W. had a vision, one item of which was that sunset time was correct. This settled the matter with Bro. Bates and others, and general harmony has since prevailed among us upon this point.

But the question naturally arises, If the visions are given to correct the erring, why did she not sooner see the error of the six o'clock time? For one I have ever been thankful that God corrected the error in his own good time, and did not suffer an unhappy division to exist among us upon the point. But, dear reader, the work of the Lord upon this point is in perfect harmony with his manifestations to us on others, and in harmony with the correct position upon spiritual gifts.

It does not appear to be the desire of the Lord to teach his people by the gifts of the Spirit on the Bible questions until his servants have diligently searched his word. When this was done upon the subject of time to commence the Sabbath, and most were established, and some were in danger of being out of harmony with the body on this subject, then, *then*, was the very time for God to magnify his goodness in the manifestation of the gift of his Spirit in the accomplishment of its proper work. The sacred Scriptures are given us as the rule of faith and duty, and we are commanded to search them. If we fail to understand and fully obey the truths in consequences of not searching the Scriptures as we should, or a want of consecration and spiritual discernment, and God in mercy in his own time corrects us by some manifestation of the gifts of his Holy Spirit, instead of murmuring that he did not do it before, let us humbly acknowledge his mercy, and praise him for his infinite goodness in condescending to correct us at all. Let the gifts have their proper place in the church. God has never set them in the very front, and commanded us to look to them to lead us in the path of truth, and the way to Heaven. His word he has magnified. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are man's lamp to light up his path to the kingdom. Follow that. But if you err from Bible truth, and are in danger of being lost, it may be that God will in time of his choice correct you, and bring you back to the Bible and save you. And would it become you in such a case to murmur and say, “Lord, why didst thou not do this before?” Take care! “Be still, and know that I am God.” Our necessity is his opportunity to teach us by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

JAMES WHITE.