

A Question Answered

By ELDER URIAH SMITH

In an editorial in the *Review and Herald* for October 18, 1887, Elder Smith writes regarding objections to the work of Mrs. White:

"The statement is made, 'I know her words are not inspired; for I have seen manuscripts revised for the press. She quotes sometimes from history; are all historians inspired?' But who has ever claimed that her words were inspired? Where or when has such a thing ever been intimated?"

Regarding this statement one questioner wrote: "Is not a word a sign of an idea? how then can an idea be inspired, and the signs that transfer the idea be uninspired?" To this Elder Smith replied in the issue for March 13, 1888:

"If there was but one word by which an idea could be expressed, this would be so; but when there are perhaps a hundred ways of expressing the same idea, the case becomes very different. Of course, if the Holy Spirit should give a person words to write, he would be obliged to use those very words without change; but when simply a scene or view is presented before a person, and no language is given, he would be at liberty to describe it in his own words, as might seem best to him to express the truth in the case. And, if having written it out once, a better way of expressing it should occur to him, it would be perfectly legitimate for him to scratch out all he had written, and write it over again, keeping strictly to the ideas and facts which had been shown him. And in the second writing there would be the divinely communicated idea just as much as in the first, while in neither case could it be said that the words employed were dictated by the Holy Spirit, but were left to the judgment of the individual himself.

"The same method of reasoning which opposers adopt in regard to Sister White when they ask if her amanuenses, and the historians she quotes were inspired too, the infidel uses against the word of God itself. We call our English Bible an inspired book; but the English is a translation from the original Hebrew. Other translations have been made, and the translators differ much in the phraseology of their translations; whereupon the infidel asks, are these translators all inspired to? and he asks it on just as good grounds and with just as much reason, as those referred to above ask the same question with reference to the writings of Sister White."

THE VIEW HELD BY THE GENERAL CONFERENCE.

The following action of the General Conference of 1883 shows how our leading brethren then regarded the matter of verbal inspiration:

"32. *Whereas*, Some of the bound volumes of the 'Testimonies to the Church' are out of print so that full sets cannot be obtained at the office; and

Whereas, there is a constant and urgent call for the re-printing of these volumes; therefore,—

Resolved, that we recommend their republication in such a form as to make four volumes of seven or eight hundred pages each.

"33. *Whereas*, many of these testimonies were written under the most unfavorable circumstances, the writer being too heavily pressed with anxiety and labor to devote critical thought to the grammatical perfection of the writings, and they were printed in such haste as to allow these imperfections to pass uncorrected; and.—

Whereas, we believe the light given by God to His servants is by the enlightenment of the mind, thus imparting the thoughts, and not (except in rare cases) the very words in which the ideas should be expressed; therefore,—

Resolved that in the re-publication of these volumes, such verbal changes be made as to remove the above-named imperfections, as far as possible, without in any measure changing the thought." See *Review and Herald*, Nov. 27, 1883.