

The Demonology of Ellen G. White

By Marko Kolic

This article will briefly outline the demonology of Ellen G. White. To comprehensively cover this subject would require much more than can be covered here, so this presentation will limit itself to two major sections, (1) The Reality of Demons, and (2) The Work of Demons. The third section, The Weakness of Demons, is included to help put the material into perspective. It is not the intent of this paper to glorify demons or Satan, but simply to provide a synopsis of what Ellen White said in the area of demonology.



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The Reality of Demons

They Exist

According to the latest polls by the Barna Group, 57 percent of people in the United States believe that Satan is not a real being but only a *symbol* for evil. Even more alarming, 46 percent of Evangelicals and 65 percent of Catholics in America believe that Satan is either not real or simply a symbol (Barna). It may be one thing for the general population of the United States to not believe in the literal presence of Satan and evil angels, yet it is worrisome that so many Christians—Protestant and Catholic alike—hold similar views. Let us believe that this is simply a modern trend Ellen White tells us that there “is a growing tendency to disbelief in the existence of evil spirits” (White 1911:512). This tendency is exactly as Satan plans it as White reports that “as we approach the close of time, when Satan is to work with greatest power to deceive and destroy, he spreads everywhere the belief that he does not exist. It is his policy to conceal himself and his manner of working” (White 1911:517). Unlike a large por-

tion of Christians in the United States White's position is that Satan and devils are very real. To her they are not a mere symbol for evil, but they are real beings. The idea that "Satan has no existence as a personal being; that the name is used in Scripture merely to represent men's evil thoughts and desires" is a deadly snare (White 1911:524). Nor are they any more or less real in well developed nations such as the United States, Canada, Europe, and so forth as opposed to less developed ones. White is very clear that "the central power of the earth is a demon. His throne is in the midst of the world, where

beings who have emotions. Notice the following:

These spirits had become turbulent with disappointed hopes . . . they were experiencing the sad results. . . . Never more would these unhappy beings be swayed by the mild rule of Jesus Christ. Never more would their spirits be stirred by the deep, earnest love, peace, and joy which His presence had ever inspired in them, to be returned to Him in cheerful obedience and reverential honor. (White 1980a:26)

Symbols cannot be moved, disappointed, be sad, swayed, stirred, or inspired. Nor can they feel love, peace, or joy. Demons

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should have been seen the throne of God" (White 1979:28). White also warns that this power has been "patronized by the church" (1979:28). The implications are obvious. According to White Satan and his evil angels are real, are present in our world today, and are intimately involved in the affairs of men and women. White affirms that the world of angels and devils are "inseparably interwoven with human history" (White 1911:512).

Their Nature

White makes every effort to show that demons are personal

are real beings, not symbols; our warfare, as Christians, is not only against anti-Christian ideologies, worldly policies, satanic delusions, and half-truths, it is against very real creatures that interact with humans for destructive purposes. White says that these creatures have been with us since the beginning.

Their History

Who exactly is Satan, and what are devils? Writing of a time before creation White says that "before the creation of man, angels were in existence" (White 1996:25, 26). These angels were

created to be lovely, holy, and beautiful; and this included Lucifer, who would later become Satan (White 1996:26, 27). Speaking of Satan specifically White says that Lucifer was the “highest of all created beings” (White 1940a:758). However Satan and a group of angels that followed him eventually rebelled. At this point there was “war in heaven” and Satan and his evil angels were cast out from heaven. White writes that “then there was war in heaven. Angels were engaged in the battle; Satan wished to conquer the Son of God and those who were submissive to His will. But the good and true angels prevailed, and Satan, with his followers, was driven from heaven” (White 1945:145). Eventually, after the creation of man, Satan tempted Adam and Eve, and it was at this point that he became the *central power* of the earth.

Their Organization

Satanic agencies are not without organization. White says concerning these beings that

they are leagued together for the dishonor of God and the destruction of men. United with Satan in his rebellion, and with him cast out from heaven, they have, through all succeeding ages, co-operated with him in his warfare against the divine authority. We are told in Scripture of their confederacy and government, of their various orders, of their intelligence and subtlety, and of their malicious designs against the peace and happiness of men. (White 1911:513)

White also indicates that while there is some division among those who are Satan’s followers, they are decidedly united in one goal, and that is to fight Christ and his church (White 1948, 1:346, 347). This organization reaches to every part of the globe. “Satanic agencies are in every city, busily organizing into parties those opposed to the law of God. Professed saints and avowed unbelievers take their stand with these parties” (White 1948, 8:42).

The Work of Demons

Having understood something of the reality of evil spirits this section will examine White’s view of their work and purpose. Doing so will give Christians an advantage when dealing with evil spirits.

Satan’s Primary Objective

As in the beginning of the conflict between Christ and Satan, Satan’s goals have not changed. One of the devil’s primary goals is to smear God’s character before all of heaven and the unfallen worlds. White writes that “after the fall of man, Satan declared that human beings were proved to be incapable of keeping the law of God, and he sought to carry the universe with him in this belief” (White 1986:253). White reiterates the same thought saying “Satan declared that he would prove to the worlds which God has created, and to the heavenly intelligences, that it was an impossibility to keep the

law of God” (White 1901:567). This smear campaign against Christ is carried on primarily by Satan working to lead Christians into sin.

Satan and his angels mark all the mean and covetous acts of these persons, and present them to Jesus and His holy angels, saying reproachfully: ‘These are Christ’s followers! They are preparing to be translated!’ Satan compares their course with passages of Scripture in which it is plainly rebuked, and then taunts the heavenly angels, saying: ‘These are following Christ and His word! These are the fruits of Christ’s sacrifice and redemption!’ Angels turn in disgust from the scene. (White 1940b:174)

work to undo Satan’s plan by showing the devil’s arguments to be false before all the intelligences of God’s creation, as well as on earth. Since Satan cannot attack God directly, he attacks God indirectly through the failures of Christians and the sins of God’s people. Yet White also notes that

when Satan comes to tell you that you are a great sinner, look up to your Redeemer and talk of His merits. . . . Acknowledge your sin, but tell the enemy that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” and that you may be saved by His matchless love. (White 1956:35, 36)

Satan has so organized the evil spirits that they are given specific tasks.

That this is Satan’s primary work is further corroborated by White’s statement concerning the work of Christ:

But it was not merely to accomplish the redemption of man that Christ came to the earth to suffer and to die. He came to “magnify the law” and to “make it honorable.” Not alone that the inhabitants of this world might regard the law as it should be regarded; but it was to demonstrate to all the worlds of the universe that God’s law is unchangeable. (White 1911:504)

Just as Satan is attempting to smear God’s character before the people of this world and before the universe, so it is Christ’s

Also Christ “came to expel the demons that had controlled the will” (White 1940a:513).

The Demon of . . .

Satan’s plan of attack requires that he lead others into sin. In order to further that purpose Satan has so organized the evil spirits that they are given specific tasks. Notice the following:

through devotion to worldly interests, Satan receives all the homage he asks. The door is left open for him to enter as he pleases, with his evil train of impatience, love of self, pride, avarice, overreaching, and his whole catalogue of evil spirits. (White 1948, 4:45)

This catalogue of evil spirits may well be what White refers to at times as the “demon of . . .” indicating an evil spirit that specializes in some type of sin or temptation. She mentions this phrase in connection with a specific demon in her published writings several times; of these, there seem to be twelve unique entities that she refers to as ‘the demon of’ (see list at end of article). White’s statements should not be taken to mean that there is only one demonic entity for each category, nor do White’s statements exhaust the possibility that there are other such categories of satanic spirits who are identified by their work or purpose.

The Power of Demons

White reports that demons have many abilities. Notice the following statement: “It has been your misfortune to come under the power of that satanic delusion, spiritualism. . . . Your imagination and nerves have been under the control of demons . . . he controls your thoughts and actions” (White 1948, 3:418). It appears from this statement that demons are able to affect the nervous system, imagination, and can control the thoughts and actions of *those who come under their power by believing their delusions*. White comments further on demonic powers saying that they are able to do “numerous miracles” (White 1946:594). Notice the following statement:

While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, he will bring

disease and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation. Even now he is at work. In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous. (White 1911:589, 590)

One of the most disturbing aspects of evil powers is demon possession; White writes that

the fact that men have been possessed with demons, is clearly stated in the New Testament. The persons thus afflicted were not merely suffering with disease from natural causes. Christ . . . recognized the direct presence and agency of evil spirits. (White 1911:514)

Thankfully there are also limits to that power. According to White, when God turned Moses’ rod into a serpent, the magicians could only ‘appear’ to do so by the power of Satan (White 1958:264). White also says that while Satan “may cause pain, distress, and human agony [he] cannot defile the soul. He may cause affliction to the people of God as he did to Christ, but he cannot cause one of Christ’s little ones to perish” (White 1976:1153).

The Weakness of Demons

While the catalogue of Satan’s evil may be impressive it must be

put in the context where White reminds us that

it is this resistance that Satan dreads. He knows better than we do the limit of his power and how easily he can be overcome if we resist and face him. Through divine strength the weakest saint is more than a match for him and all his angels, and if brought to the test he would be able to prove his superior power. (White 1948, 5:293)

White emphatically states that while the devil, or demons, are able to do many things, they are still limited by the power of Jesus Christ. One of Christ's servants is 'more than a match' for

by dying, Christ brought to light life and immortality through the gospel" (White 1976:924). White acknowledges the powers, organization, evil, and cunning of demons. However these truths are set in the context of Christ's victory on the cross of Calvary, and his work to uplift all of those caught in the great controversy.

The Demon of:

Strife: "If the law of God is obeyed, the demon of strife will be kept out of the family, and no separation of interests will take place, no alienation of affection will be permitted" (White 1980b:107).

White emphatically states that while the devil, or demons, are able to do many things, they are still limited by the power of Jesus Christ.

Satan or any demon. "Christ feels the woes of every sufferer. When evil spirits rend a human frame, Christ feels the curse. . . . And He is just as willing to heal the sick now as when He was personally on earth" (White 1947:135). She also writes that "through His servants, God designs that the sick, the unfortunate, and those possessed of evil spirits, shall hear His voice" (White 1947:135).

White triumphantly states that "Satan bruised Christ's heel, but Christ bruised Satan's head. . . . In the very act of grasping his prey, death was vanquished; for

Intemperance: "The demon of intemperance is not easily conquered. It is of giant strength and hard to overcome" (White 1923:143).

Selfishness: "If he would open his heart to Christ, divine grace would banish the demon of selfishness, and even Judas might become a subject of the kingdom of God" (White 1940a:295).

Greed: "Mercy's pleading resisted, the impulse of evil bore final sway. Judas, angered at an implied rebuke and made desperate by the disappointment of his ambitious dreams, surrendered

his soul to the demon of greed and determined upon the betrayal of his Master” (White 1952:92).

Ambition: “Christ came to a people who were deceived and deluded by the demon of ambition. At that time they were under the Roman yoke, but they expected One to come who would establish a kingdom from which would be excluded every other people on the earth” (White 1988:135).

Jealousy: “The demon of jealousy entered the heart of the king” (White 1958:650).

Passion: “This intelligence aroused the demon of passion that had been slumbering in Saul’s breast” (White 1958:668).

Unkindness: “Some who profess to be servants of Christ have so long cherished the demon of unkindness that they seem to love the unhallowed element and to take pleasure in speaking words that displease and irritate. These men must be converted before Christ will acknowledge them as His children” (White 1965:16).

Darkness: “A great work of saving souls remains yet to be done. Every angel in glory is engaged in this work, while every demon of darkness is opposing it” (White 1983:278).

Hysterics and Satanic imaginings: “Though it must be painful, this is the only thing for him to do, if he would not be ruined spiritually, sacrificed to the demon of hysterics and satanic imaginings” (White 1989:78).

Heresy: “The demon of heresy has mapped out the world, and has resolved to possess it as his

kingdom” (White 1982:275).

Appetite for liquor: “The demon of appetite in the intoxicating cup has robbed thousands of their reason” (White 1899).

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