

ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE

# A GIFT OF LIGHT

The background of the cover features a pair of hands, one appearing to be from a child and the other from an adult, cupping a bright, glowing orb of light. The scene is set against a backdrop of soft, golden clouds. The entire image is overlaid with a faint, white grid pattern.

ROGER W. COON



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# **A Gift of Light**

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**Roger W. Coon**

**1998**

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Ellen G. White (1827-1915) is considered the most widely translated American author, her works having been published in more than 160 languages. She wrote more than 100,000 pages on a wide variety of spiritual and practical topics. Guided by the Holy Spirit, she exalted Jesus and pointed to the Scriptures as the basis of one's faith.

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By Roger W. Coon



## **“Honor to Whom Honor...” A Matter of Acknowledgment**

“No man is an island, no man stands alone.” With equal appropriateness John Donne’s words might be paraphrased “No author is an island,” for others helped make this book a reality. Recognizing the contribution of others is an ethical obligation and a pragmatic necessity. And so I wish here to say my thank-yous:

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With Tennyson’s “Ulysses,” I too “am a part of all that I have met.”

# Contents

Information about this Book . . . . .	i
“Honor to Whom Honor . . .” A Matter of Acknowledgment . . . .	v
A Beginning Word to the Reader . . . . .	vii
Chapter 1—The Prophet: “A Man for All Seasons”? . . . . .	xii
Chapter 2—“The Weakest of the Weak“: God’s Third Choice	xviii
Chapter 3—“Plumber’s Leaks” in the “Bedchamber“: A Problem With Prophets . . . . .	xxix
Chapter 4—A Scientist Looks at Ellen G. White . . . . .	xxxviii
Chapter 5—“Not Without Honor” . . . . .	xlvi
Chapter 6—A Parting Word to the Reader . . . . .	liv

## A Beginning Word to the Reader

In ranking religious organizations in terms of membership, the Seventh-day Adventist Church would not normally be considered a major player (nearly 860,000 baptized adult members in the United States and Canada, 9.3 million worldwide).<sup>1</sup> Yet the extraordinary outreach of this comparatively small, conservative, evangelically oriented Protestant denomination continues to bring it prominently to international awareness through media attention.

Understandably, Adventists are often mistakenly identified in the public mind with the three other “native American” Protestant bodies, as a Gallup poll has demonstrated.<sup>2</sup> Like the Mormons, they place a preeminent emphasis upon health/fitness and family values. As do the Jehovah’s Witnesses, they often conduct their door-to-door missionary endeavor in pairs (as Christ Himself recommended). And with the Christian Scientists, they place a high premium on prayer as a major agency in healing. But superficial similarities aside, there are major differences in Adventist doctrine, practice, and lifestyle.

Just who are these Seventh-day Adventists, anyway?

They are a *growing* people. In the mid-1980s *Christianity Today* identified them as the fourth most rapidly growing Protestant denomination in America,<sup>3</sup> and *U.S. News & World Report* noted their 36 percent growth rate for the most recent decade.<sup>4</sup>

They are a *giving* people. *Money* magazine once ranked Seventh-day Adventists as first among the top 10 major U.S. religions, contributing \$2,400 annually per household (Presbyterians came in second, with \$690; the United Church of Christ was third, with \$510;

[10]

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<sup>1</sup>134th Annual Statistical Report—1996 (Silver Spring, Md.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists [1997], p. 4).

<sup>2</sup>“The Public Attitude Toward the Seventh-day Adventist Church” (an unpublished report of a study conducted for the denomination by Gallup International, Princeton, New Jersey, 1970).

<sup>3</sup>*Christianity Today*, Jan. 7, 1983, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup>*U.S. News & World Report*, Apr. 4, 1983, pp. 36, 37, reporting upon the immediate past decade, 1972-1982.

and the Lutherans and Reform Jews tied for fourth place, with \$480 each).<sup>5</sup> Adventist tithe (a tenth of personal income) contributed in 1996 alone amounted to \$929.3 million worldwide, with \$507.4 million of it coming from North America.<sup>6</sup>

And they are a *long-living* people. A 1997 *Newsweek* cover story on longevity and the rapidly increasing number of centenarians in our society attributed the Seventh-day Adventist vegetarian lifestyle as a major factor in prolonging the lives of George (age 100) and Gaynel (age 98) Couron of Sacramento, California.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, a 1958-1965 scientific study of 50,000 California Adventists demonstrated not only that this group had a statistically significant lower incidence of death from virtually all forms of cancer, but also that Adventist males live six years longer than the average population, and their female counterparts live three years longer.<sup>8</sup>

With research funded by the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, and the U.S. Public Health Service, this particular study was merely one of an incredible—indeed, staggering—total of 254 major studies examining various facets of the Adventist health and lifestyle, published in scores of scientific journals from the early 1950s through September 15, 1997.<sup>9</sup>

So how does one explain the phenomenon of Seventh-day Adventists?

At the risk of oversimplification, perhaps three categories might aptly sum them up:

**Conviction.** Adventists are convicted that Jesus Christ will soon return to this world personally, visibly, and physically. He will

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<sup>5</sup>Money, April 1982, p. 98.

<sup>6</sup>134th Annual Statistical Report—1996, pp. 5, 22.

<sup>7</sup>“How to Live to 100,” *Newsweek*, June 30, 1997, p. 62.

<sup>8</sup>“Summary of Results of Adventist Mortality, 1958-1965” (Loma Linda, Calif.: Loma Linda University School of Health, undated). For a popular elaboration of the benefits of this lifestyle, see Lewis R. Walton, J.D., Jo Ellen Walton, M.D., and John A. Scharffenberg, M.D., *Now You Can Live Six Extra Years* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Woodbridge Press Pub. Co., 1981); and especially Chris Rucker and Jan Hoffman, *The Seventh-day Diet: How the “Healthiest People in America” Live Better, Longer, Slimmer—And How You Can Too* (New York: Random House, 1991).

<sup>9</sup>Interview with Gary E. Fraser, M.D., Ph.D., director, Center for Health Research, Loma Linda University Medical Center, and professor of medicine and professor of epidemiology, Loma Linda University Schools of Medicine and Public Health, respectively, Sept. 23, 1997.

then become its supreme ruler by abolishing all present political forms of government now in place on Planet Earth. Further, they are convicted that God has uniquely singled them out by calling them to help Him prepare a people for citizenship in this new world government. Finally, they are convicted that God has enabled them to pursue this task successfully by restoring within their midst the ancient gift of prophetic inspiration. They believe that this gift is embodied in the 70-year ministry of Ellen G. White [1827-1915], whose published writings in English today number more than 100 titles, with various individual works available in more than 140 languages.

[11]

**Commission.** Seventh-day Adventists believe that God has commissioned them to proclaim a special last-day message prefigured by the three angels depicted in [Revelation 14](#)—“to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” ([verse 6](#)). This has caused them to establish their evangelistic, educational, health-care, and disaster relief operations in 207 of the 233 nations or geographical entities recognized by the United Nations. They proclaim their message in 717 major languages and dialects around the world.<sup>10</sup>

**Commitment.** As a consequence of the foregoing, Seventh-day Adventists operate 118 colleges, universities, and seminaries, 942 secondary schools, and 4,395 elementary schools worldwide, employing 46,108 teachers, and serving 912,162 students,<sup>11</sup> constituting what is believed to be the largest unified Protestant K-16 system not only in North America but worldwide.<sup>12</sup>

Adventists also maintain 506 health-care institutions (hospitals, clinics, dispensaries, etc.), an additional 99 nursing homes, retirement centers, orphanages, and children’s homes, and some 30 aircraft and river going medical launches. All of this concern to relieve physical suffering occupies the full-time attention of 3,675 church employed physicians and dentists, another 6,972 technolo-

<sup>10</sup>133rd Annual Statistical Report—1995 (Silver Spring, Md.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists [1996]), pp. 46, 51.

<sup>11</sup>Letter, Humberto Rasi, director, Department of Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, Sept. 15, 1997, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.; Letter, Beverly Rumble, editor, Journal of Adventist Education, General Conference Department of Education, Silver Spring, Maryland, Sept. 15, 1997, p. 1.

gists and therapists, 15,439 graduate nurses, and 39,950 additional assistants in support roles. <sup>13</sup>

To help communicate their gospel message, as well as to aid in overcoming the worldwide plague of illiteracy, Seventh-day Adventists maintain 56 publishing houses. These produce literature in 78 languages, generating sales worth \$99.3 million in 1995 alone. Some 7,485 full-time “literature evangelists” gospel salespersons—help distribute these publications door-to-door on all six continents. <sup>14</sup>

[12] The Adventist Development and Relief Agency International (ADRA), an independent agency established by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1983 for the specific purpose of individual and community development, without regard to ethnic, political, or religious affiliation, is an outgrowth of the former Seventh-day Adventist World Service, Inc., which focused more narrowly and primarily on disaster relief.

ADRA today maintains offices in more than 140 nations around the globe, with a worldwide operating budget of goods and services that totaled \$250 million in 1995. At the heart of its development work are many projects that benefit mothers and children (oral rehydration therapy, breast feeding and immunization, parent education in nutrition, hygiene, child spacing, and child care). Agriculture projects, water resource projects, small-enterprise development, food-supported programs, and institutional development round out the basic frame of ADRA’s developmental activities. <sup>15</sup>

This, then, describes briefly who Seventh-day Adventists are and what they are doing as they strive to make a better world in the here and now. But it still does not explain how they came into being. It is impossible to tell the story of the beginning and subsequent development of the church apart from the story of one of its cofounders, Ellen G. White. While she herself preferred the designation “special messenger,” it is significant that she never contradicted anyone who happened to refer to her as a prophet.

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<sup>13</sup>133rd Annual Statistical Report—1995, pp. 7, 41.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 7, 42.

<sup>15</sup>Beth Schaefer, “A Look at ADRA,” background news release, ADRA central office, Silver Spring, Maryland, May 8, 1997, p. 1.

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The Scriptures metaphorically liken the gift of prophetic inspiration (which biblically has always included a great deal more than mere prediction of yet-future events) to a “gift” ([Ephesians 4:8](#); [1 Corinthians 12:1](#)) and to a “light” or “lamp” ([Psalm 119:105](#); [2 Peter 1:19](#)). I have written this little volume, *A Gift of Light*, to recount briefly the absorbing story of Ellen White’s amazing life and ministry. I also wish to document the fruitage that it has produced—and continues to produce.

Roger W. Coon

Berkeley Springs, West Virginia

March 1998

[13] **Chapter 1—The Prophet: “A Man for All Seasons”?**

[14]

[15] In 1842 William Ellis Foy, a mulatto, received two visions several weeks apart in Boston, Massachusetts. The first (on January 18) lasted 2 ½ hours, and the second (on February 4) an incredible 12 ½ hours! His physical condition in the trancelike 2 vision state resembled the description found in [Daniel 10](#). Like Daniel, he did not breathe (though his heart continued functioning normally) during the visions. (See especially [Daniel 10:17](#).)

William Foy, however, did not actively pursue his calling to the prophetic office. By the summer of 1844 God called another man, Hazen Foss. Foss, likewise, defaulted after temporizing. And so in December 1844 God turned to one who was “the weakest of the weak” but that story remains to be told in the next chapter. <sup>16</sup>

*Prophet.* What images that word instantly brings to the mind of someone familiar with those larger-than-life figures of sacred Scripture!

Almost instinctively we picture a lonely figure, perhaps like Elijah in the Old Testament, standing alone in defense of God. Elijah challenged more than 400 priests of Baal and called down fire from heaven—a fire so hungry it consumed not only his sacrifice but also the water that drenched it and the stones of the altar that supported it ([1 Kings 18](#)).

Or perhaps we hear the distant echo of “the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord” ([Matthew 3:3](#), RSV; cf. [Isaiah 40:3](#)) coming from the lips of the austere John the Baptist. Clad in a robe of camel’s skins, John was not a self-indulgent man.

[16] His diet consisted chiefly of the Middle Eastern locust-bean pods and wild honey from the desert ([Matthew 3:4](#); [Mark 1:6](#)).

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<sup>16</sup>A brief description of the experience of Foss and Foy is given in Appendix C of T. Housel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1955), pp. 485–489; see also biographical sketches in the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1996).



Indeed, it is utterly impossible to think about the Bible at all without immediately thinking of the approximately 40 authors of its 66 books. We popularly call them “prophets” “holy men of God [who] spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). And it all began with a man named Enoch. A mere seven generations from Adam, Enoch is the first recorded prophet in human history (Jude 14). The prophets from Enoch to Moses presented their messages orally. Moses marks the watershed in historical prophethood by using the written word to share prophetic communication.

Then the literary branch of the stream subdivided. On the one hand were those authors whose writings are preserved in Scripture, and on the other hand were prophets whose writings were not preserved as Scripture. These prophets (or seers, as they were first called) whose writings were not included in the Bible—Jasher, Gad, Nathan, Ahijah the Shilonite, Shemaiah, Iddo, Jehu, and Elijah—were just as inspired as their biblical counterparts. But their works were not preserved for posterity.

By the time of Jesus, students of the Old Testament divided it into three parts: the law (the writings of Moses), the prophets, and the sacred writings.

God, who is “no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34)—or of gender—gave the prophetic gift in Bible times to women as well as men. In the Old Testament we read about Miriam (the sister of Moses), Deborah, and Huldah. In the New Testament there are Anna and the four daughters of an evangelist named Philip.

Today we usually associate the office of “prophet” with the prediction of future events, but in biblical times the prophet engaged in a broad range of spiritual activity. The prophets had many functions. 1. They spoke for God. 2. They revealed God’s purposes. 3. They strengthened and guided rulers. 4. They encouraged the people to faithfulness. 5. They protested against evils. 6. They directed activities. 7. They taught. 8. They served as consultants and counselors for every phase of individual and national activity. 9. They gave warnings. 10. They reproved sin. 11. They pronounced the judgments of God. 12. They sometimes performed miracles. 13. They preached. Furthermore, their ministry was not limited to the Hebrew nation. God used some to win Gentile nations to His truth.

Prophets and Bible times just seem to go together quite comfortably. But some Christians become quite *uncomfortable* when the discussion of prophethood after New Testament times comes up. There is, however, evidence (direct as well as indirect) in both Old and New Testaments that the Holy Spirit's function as the Inspirer of human prophets would not cease once the "canon" (the books making up our Bible as a whole) was fixed.

Jesus Himself promised the *presence* of the Spirit within the Christian church until the end of time. One of the Spirit's specific ministries, He said, would be to teach the truth of God (see [John 14:15-17, 26](#)). In connection with the signs of His soon return, Jesus pointedly warned against *false* prophets ([Matthew 7:15; 24:11, 24](#)). If no true prophets would arise at the end of time, Jesus would merely have needed to say, "Beware of prophets." The inclusion of the adjective "false" implies that both true and false prophets would coexist before the Second Coming.

Paul's doctrine of "spiritual gifts" provides some of the most striking evidence in favor of prophetic activity after New Testament times. He clearly referred to prophecy as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit ([Ephesians 4; 1 Corinthians 12; and Romans 12](#)). In fact, in order of merit, prophecy is second in significance only to apostleship. The New Testament uses three terms interchangeably for the same concept: "the gift of prophecy" ([1 Corinthians 13:2](#)), "the testimony of Jesus," and "the spirit of prophecy" ([Revelation 19:10](#)). All refer to the divine gift of supernatural revelations and visions. <sup>17</sup> The context of Paul's various pronouncements about these gifts of the Spirit—including prophecy—makes it clear that these various ministries will exist in the church until the end of time.

[18] All these gifts will serve their function until the church is ready for Christ's return (see [Ephesians 4:12-15](#)). Paul does not give even the slightest hint that one gift (namely, prophecy) would drop out, while all the rest would continue.

Paul's Epistles are undoubtedly the first documents of the New Testament to be penned, and 1 Thessalonians was one of the earliest of these Epistles. Near the end of this letter Paul admonishes the early

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<sup>17</sup>L. H. Christian, *The Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1947), p. 9.

Christian believers: “Quench not the [Holy] Spirit.” He then points out how to comply with his advice: “Despise not prophesyings.” Instead, the Christian is to “prove all things” and then “hold fast [to] that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21). (The apostle John phrased this admonition in a slightly different way: “Try the spirits.” Why? Not every spirit comes from God, and “many false prophets are gone out into the world” [1 John 4:1].)

Most likely something was happening in the early Christian church that happens in some Christian circles today. Perhaps those earliest Christians, who had converted from Judaism, were saying among themselves, “We don’t need any more prophetic writings. If the Old Testament was good enough for Jesus, it’s good enough for me.” Today some Christians repeat this erroneous idea. In effect, they would limit the work of the Holy Spirit to the past by suggesting that since the biblical canon is closed, we don’t need any further prophetic writings today. It may well have been to forestall this idea that Paul urged the “proving” of prophetic claims—rather than the dismissal of them out of hand.

In Joel 2:28-32, probably written some 800 years before the *first* coming of Christ as the Babe of Bethlehem, this prophet of antiquity looked down the long corridor of time to the *second* coming of Christ. And he saw God honoring the people at the end of time by a special bestowal of the gift of prophecy. Both men and women, young and old, would experience prophetic dreams and visions.

Some Christians have objected to seeing the fulfillment of this passage later than Pentecost, 50 days after the crucifixion of Christ. They refer to Acts 2:16-21, where Peter pointed to the phenomenon of Pentecost as a fulfillment of Joel 2. However, for two important reasons Pentecost must be viewed as only a *partial* fulfillment of Joel 2.

[19]

First, the prophecy of Joel 2 makes specific reference to the gift of *prophecy* in the end-time. The spiritual gift most in evidence at Pentecost, however, was the gift of *tongues* (the miraculous speaking of contemporary languages the individual Christian had not previously studied). The gift of prophecy was not in evidence at Pentecost.

Second, Joel pointed to signs in the heavens—in the sun and moon particularly—at the time when the gift of prophecy would be

restored ([Joel 2:19, 20](#)). We find no scriptural evidence that these signs in the heavens accompanied the scene at Pentecost.

Were there no prophets between the end of apostolic times and the middle of the nineteenth century? Paul King Jewett, in a thoughtful article in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, points out that “with the death of the apostles, who had no successors, gradually those with the gift of prophecy also disappeared, so that from the third century onward, of the original triad of apostles, prophets, and teachers, there remained only the teachers.” Jewett also adds that “by the time of Hippolytus (235) and Origen (250), the word ‘prophecy’ is limited to the prophetic portions of Scripture.”<sup>18</sup>

According to the Bible, however, there is no question: The gift of prophecy did *not* end with the Apostolic Age. Arguments given in favor of the proposition of abolition (which many Catholics and Protestants hold) are interesting, but subject to refutation. According to one such view, the apostle John placed a curse upon anyone who adds to (or takes away from) the Bible ([Revelation 22:18, 19](#)). Thus with the close of the canon of Scripture, the gift of prophecy ceased, according to this view.

[20] In response, we would suggest that (1) the proscription against adding or subtracting refers to the book of Revelation itself (it does not apply to the entire Bible, of which it now appears sequentially as the last volume); (2) there is no evidence that Revelation was the last book of the New Testament to be *written* (some scholars believe that First, Second, and Third John, and even John’s Gospel, may have been written *after* he completed Revelation); and (3) not until the fourth century A.D. did the Christian church finally arrive at a consensus as to which books should be included in the New Testament.

John’s warning at the end of Revelation does not preclude the gift of prophetic inspiration after A.D. 100.

Some scholars maintain that the close of the New Testament canon rules out the possibility of any fresh revelation of divine truth.

<sup>18</sup>Paul King Jewett, “Prophecy,” in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, revised edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1978), pp. 806, 807.

<sup>19</sup> In response to this argument, the British scholar J. P. Baker declares:

“Others have sometimes sought to identify this completion of the NT canon with the time when prophecy will pass away according to [1 Corinthians 13:8ff.](#); but this does violence to the context, which clearly shows that these gifts will pass away ‘when the perfect comes,’ which is defined as when we ‘see face to face’ (i.e., beyond this life and age altogether)....

“All may agree that there is no new revelation to be expected concerning God in Christ, the way of salvation, the principles of the Christian life, etc. *But there appears to be no good reason why the living God, who speaks and acts (in contrast to the dead idols), cannot use the gift of prophecy to give particular local guidance to a church, nation, or individual, or to warn or encourage by way of prediction as well as by reminders, in full accord with the written word of Scripture, by which all such utterances must be tested.*” <sup>20</sup>

The existence of the Bible today does not rule out other inspired authorities. On the contrary, God’s Word, in both Old and New Testaments, tells its latter-day readers that the gifts of the Holy Spirit (including prophecy) will still appear among His people until Jesus returns. It is not a matter of either/or. We may (and must) have both!

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<sup>19</sup>John R. W. Stott, *Baptism and Fullness* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), pp. 100-102.

<sup>20</sup>J. P. Baker, “Prophecy, Prophets,” cited in *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), Vol. III, pp. 1286, 1287. (Italics supplied.)

[21] **Chapter 2—“The Weakest of the Weak“: God’s**  
[22] **Third Choice**

Prior to her marriage to James White, Ellen Gould Harmon lived for some eight months in the home of Otis Nichols, an Adventist lithographer, in Dorchester (now part of Boston), Massachusetts. Nichols’ home served as her home away from home while she bore her testimony in the area. Three men (Sargent, Robbins, and French) dismissed her trancelike vision state as merely the product of hypnosis induced by her fiancé, James White. They said she could have no visions unless James was present. In 1845, in company with her sister Sarah (and during the absence of James White), Ellen was in the Nichols home when Sargent and Robbins dropped by. Mr. Nichols invited them in so that they could meet Ellen Harmon. Since they had not previously met her, they would now be able to judge for themselves the nature and source of her experience. They suddenly remembered a pressing appointment in Boston, but suggested that a confrontation take place the following Sunday in Boston at the home of a certain believer where Millerites customarily worshiped week by week. Nichols promised to bring Miss Harmon for the showdown.

[23] Saturday night Ellen had a vision, and she told Nichols that instead of going six miles north to Boston, they must go seven miles south to Randolph. Nichols protested. Ellen’s credibility and his own were on the line. She remained firm, and said the angel had told her that they would understand the reason for the change when they got to the home of a family named Thayer. Upon arrival, they discovered Sargent and Robbins already there; they had gone south in an effort to evade meeting Miss Harmon, whom they expected would go to Boston that day. Now there was no escape, and a confrontation did take place.

Shortly after 1:00 p.m. Ellen Harmon was taken into vision and remained in that condition until about 5:00 p.m. It was the longest of her nearly 2,000 prophetic dreams and visions.

Although she did not breathe during this period, Ellen was nevertheless supernaturally enabled to speak, which she did rather loudly. Sargent and Robbins, incredibly, tried to drown out her voice by singing and praying aloud, but their voices soon became hoarse, and they lapsed into silence.

During the vision Ellen hefted aloft on her left hand the Thayers’ “heavy, large quarto family Bible.” With the Bible high above her head she turned the pages with her free hand and pointed to texts that exposed the fallacies of Sargent’s and Robbins’ doctrines. Nichols himself stood on a chair to see whether she was quoting correctly the texts to which she allegedly pointed. They were indeed the right texts! <sup>21</sup>

How did Ellen perform such amazing feats? Just who was she, and what was her role?

Ellen G. White had a formal education that consisted of less than three full years of elementary school. Yet when she died she left behind 25 million written words and 100,000 printed and handwritten pages. In 1997 her most translated book, *Steps to Christ*, was available in more than 140 languages.

Concerning translations, radio personality and syndicated columnist Paul Harvey, in his noontime ABC radiobroadcast of September 27, 1997, reported:

“Women have been honored on American postage stamps for more than 100 years, starting with one woman who was not an American, Queen Isabella, in 1893. Since then, 86 women have been honored, ranging from Martha Washington to Marilyn Monroe. Also many women authors like Louisa May Alcott, Emily Dickinson, Willa Cather, and Rachel Carson. [24]

“But I can name an American woman author who has never been honored thus, though her writings have been translated into 148 languages. More than Marx or Tolstoy, more than Agatha Christie, more than William Shakespeare. Only now is the world coming to appreciate her recommended prescription for optimum spiritual and physical health: Ellen White.

“Ellen White!

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<sup>21</sup>The story is recounted by historian Arthur W. Spalding in his *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1961), vol. 1, pp. 138-141.

“You don’t know her?”

“Get to know her.”

On the basis of research in the Library of Congress, I have been able to identify literature’s 10 most translated authors (as of 1983). Mrs. White is the fourth most translated author in the entire history of literature, its most translated woman writer, and the most translated American author of either sex.

Cofounder (with her husband, James White, and retired sea captain Joseph Bates) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, she was born near the village of Gorham, Maine, on November 26, 1827. She and her twin sister, Elizabeth, were the seventh and eighth children of farmer Robert Harmon and his wife, Eunice.

In Ellen’s early childhood the Harmon family moved 12 miles east to the city of Portland, where her father turned to hat-making. Ellen was “a cheerful, buoyant, active child.”<sup>22</sup> At the age of 9, while in the third grade of the Brackett Street public school, she was injured by a stone thrown by an angry classmate. Her nose was broken, disfiguring her for life, and she also probably suffered a concussion. For three weeks she lay in a coma.

After the accident she could not breathe through her nose, and her health remained poor. She became so nervous that she was unable to hold her hand sufficiently steady to write. As a result, her formal schooling was spasmodic and intermittent. Her last brief attempt at education was at age 12, but her health began to fail again. Some thought she would not live through her teens. Physicians offered little hope of recovery.

[25] The Harmon family worshiped at the Pine Street Methodist Church, where Robert served as a deacon. In March 1840 the family heard an itinerant speaker named William Miller lecture on the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. He related his conviction that Christ would return sometime between 1843 and 1844. Ellen gave her heart to Jesus, and on June 26, 1842, she was baptized by immersion

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<sup>22</sup>This chapter is based upon two primary and two secondary sources: Ellen White’s autobiographical *Spiritual Gifts* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Steam Press, 1860), volume 2, and *Life Sketches* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), and brief biographical sketches in the *SDA Encyclopedia* and in *The Spirit of Prophecy Treasure Chest* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1960), pp. 153-161.



in nearby Casco Bay. The same day she was received into the Methodist Church.

Miller, a Baptist farmer turned lay preacher, had begun an intensive study of biblical prophecies following his conversion in 1816. His interpretation of certain time prophecies (especially [Daniel 8:14](#)) led him to believe that Jesus Christ would return to this earth somewhere between 1843 and 1844. He began preaching his views in 1831, and by the early 1840s he attracted increasingly large audiences from New England to the Mississippi.

Because the Harmon family had identified themselves with the Millerite movement, the Methodist Church disfellowshipped them in September of 1843. As an earnest young Christian, Ellen worked for the conversion of her youthful associates. When her health would permit, she assisted her father in making hats, while her sister Sarah knitted stockings. They eagerly provided funds to aid the spread of the Millerite views on the Second Advent. Young Ellen knew self-denial and privation firsthand.

With other Millerites, Ellen and her family were deeply affected by the Great Disappointment following October 22, 1844, when Jesus did not return according to the expectations of Miller and his followers. With her fellow “Adventists,” Ellen earnestly sought God for light and guidance during the ensuing weeks.

Two months later, on an unknown day in December 1844, Ellen was kneeling in prayer with four other women in the home of a Mrs. Haines, a family friend, in south Portland. Suddenly the Holy Spirit rested upon her, and she was taken off in vision in a manner reminiscent of the holy prophets of Scripture. She was 17 years old, in ill health, and weighed about 80 pounds.

Ellen knew about the prior visions of William Foy and Hazen Foss mentioned in the previous chapter. She realized that Foy was no longer active and that Foss had refused the assignment offered him. With great reluctance she accepted her responsibility, but not without misgivings. Thus she became God’s third choice, “the weakest of the weak.”

[26]

On a trip to Orrington, Maine, in early 1845 to bear her testimony, Ellen met a Millerite preacher six years her senior, James S. White. Their work occasionally brought them together, and an attachment developed that ripened into marriage on August 30, 1846.

Shortly after their marriage James and Ellen White read a copy of a 48-page pamphlet written by retired sea captain Joseph Bates. He had written about “perpetual” sanctity of the seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath for New Testament Christians. Later they met Bates personally. Interestingly, the initial reaction of Mrs. White and Captain Bates toward each other was negative. She thought Bates stressed the fourth (Sabbath) commandment entirely too much, and he questioned the authenticity of her prophetic gift. In the end both changed their minds.

The Whites began to keep the Sabbath entirely on the basis of arguments adduced from Scripture. Seven months later Ellen had a vision (on April 3, 1847) in which God showed her the binding claims of His law today. (It is important to note that Adventist doctrine does not have its origin in the visions of Ellen White. The visions either confirmed if conclusions from intensive Bible study were headed in the right direction or corrected if they were not. Never did they initiate doctrine.)

During their first years of marriage the Whites generally lived in poverty and often in distress. There was as yet no church organization with financial support for its clergy. Thus James White had to divide his time between travel and preaching on the one hand and earning a livelihood from forestry work, railroad construction, or hayfield harvest on the other.

[27] James White published his wife’s first book, a modest volume of 64 pages, in 1851. A supplement followed in 1854. James began publishing the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, known today simply as the *Adventist Review*, in 1850. A periodical for teenagers, the *Youth’s Instructor*, followed in 1852.

From 1852 to 1855 a modest house in Rochester, New York, provided not only room for the newly acquired printing press but also living accommodation for the Whites and the publishing staff.

Those days required great financial sacrifice. Hiram Edson, a pioneer Adventist minister, sold a farm and lent a substantial portion to the Whites to cover the cost of that first handpress. His wife sold some of her silverware (a wedding gift) and donated the proceeds to publish a special issue of the *Day-Dawn*. It carried the first

exposition of the Adventist views on the high priesthood of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary.<sup>23</sup>

The Whites shared the self-denial. James brought home 10 old chairs (no two alike), and Ellen provided the seating from drilling. Because butter and potatoes cost too much, the Whites substituted sauce and turnips. Their first meals in the publishing house-cum-parsonage were taken on a fireboard placed on two empty flour barrels. Said Ellen, “We are willing to endure privations if the work of God can be advanced.”

In 1855 the Whites and their modest publishing venture moved to more spacious quarters at Battle Creek, Michigan. With the incorporation of the printing establishment in 1861 (the first legal organization of Seventh-day Adventists), Battle Creek became the Adventists’ headquarters. The organization of the General Conference followed in 1863. The Western Health Reform Institute was established three years later. (It would later be renamed Battle Creek Sanitarium under the aegis of its world-famous medical superintendent and cornflakes inventor, Dr. John Harvey Kellogg.) The opening of Battle Creek College (now Andrews University, relocated at Berrien Springs, Michigan) took place in 1874. And the erection of the 3,000-seat “Dime Tabernacle” (the largest church sanctuary in Michigan at the time and so named because Adventists were encouraged to contribute dimes toward the cost of construction) followed in 1879. (The tabernacle burned to the ground in 1922 and was replaced by a smaller edifice.) [28]

While at Battle Creek, the Whites journeyed 35 miles southwest to Parkville on Sabbath, January 12, 1861, for the dedication of a meetinghouse of Sabbathkeeping Adventists, where Ellen White was the featured speaker. Concluding her message, she sat down and almost immediately was taken off in vision.

Present in the congregation was a certain Dr. Brown. A local spiritualist physician, Dr. Brown (like the “electric physicians” and “magnetic healers” that Ellen White would later warn against) used hypnotism as an aid to healing. He had previously boasted to local Adventists that Mrs. White’s visions were nothing more than

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<sup>23</sup>Pioneer Stories Retold (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 30.

hypnotic trances. If she ever had one in his presence, he could bring her out of it in one minute. Someone now reminded him of his claim and asked him to make good on it.

J. N. Loughborough, an eyewitness, gave this vivid account of the confrontation:

“The doctor came forward, but before he had half completed his examination, he turned deathly pale, and shook like an aspen leaf. Elder White said, ‘Will the doctor report her condition?’ He replied, ‘She does not breathe,’ and rapidly made his way to the door. Those at the door who knew of his boasting said, ‘Go back, and do as you said you would do; bring that woman out of the vision.’ In great agitation he grasped the knob of the door, but was not permitted to open it until inquiry was made by those near the door, ‘Doctor, what is it?’ He replied, ‘*God only knows; let me out of this house.*’”<sup>24</sup>

Of perhaps even greater interest is the content of the remarkable vision. Mrs. White saw events yet future in connection with the impending Civil War. At that time the prevailing opinion in the North was that (1) there would simply be no civil war; (2) in the unlikely event that war came, however, it would not last long; and (3) the North would most assuredly win.

[29] South Carolina had seceded from the Union about three weeks earlier. Then three additional states had followed suit—one each day—on Wednesday through Friday immediately before the Saturday of this vision. The firing on Fort Sumter, which would ignite the war, was still three months distant. When newly inaugurated President Lincoln would call for an army, he would seek only 75,000 volunteers to serve for a three-month period.

Mrs. White’s vision contradicted the prevailing “conventional wisdom” in several respects: (1) she flatly declared that there would be war; (2) a large number of states would secede (11 finally did); (3) large armies would face each other in savage hand-to-hand combat; (4) the carnage would be unbelievably widespread; and (5) great suffering would extend to men “wasting away” in prisons and to many families who would lose “husbands, sons, or brothers.” Upon coming out of vision, Mrs. White somberly surveyed the faces of

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<sup>24</sup>J. N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1905), pp. 210, 211.

those before her. She said, “There are those in this house who will lose sons in that war.”<sup>25</sup>

Some 22 years later eyewitness Loughborough sought out the lay elder of the Parkville church who had presided over the services that Sabbath. He asked the elder about the accuracy of the prediction that some families present would lose sons in the war. The elder immediately identified five specific instances, and, upon reflection, expressed the conviction that there may well have been an additional five cases.<sup>26</sup>

Mrs. White later saw in vision a variety of reasons the war dragged on so long (one such: God would not permit victory for the North until slavery replaced preservation of the Union as the key issue).<sup>27</sup> She also was shown the widespread extent to which generals and high-ranking officers employed spirit mediums to obtain tactical advice on how to conduct the war.<sup>28</sup>

During the Battle Creek years five-foot-two-inch Mrs. White, with her brown hair and gray eyes, became a well-known figure on its streets. Cheerful, unselfish, and somewhat of an extrovert, Mrs. White earned a reputation as a sensible buyer, a hospitable host, a forceful public speaker, and a careful homemaker. Over the years she gave birth to four sons. Henry, born in 1847, died at age 16 from pneumonia. John Herbert, born in 1860, lived only a few months before he died from erysipelas. James Edson, born in 1849, and William C., born in 1854, both lived to old age.

[30]

Edson published several books, including the denomination’s first hymnal (which included a number of his own compositions). He built the *Morning Star*, a Mississippi River steamboat, which he sailed down the Mississippi to Vicksburg. There it did yeoman service as a floating auditorium and classroom where illiterate Blacks received their first reading lessons. It also provided space for a printshop and living quarters.

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 337-339.

<sup>26</sup>J. N. Loughborough, *Rise and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists* (Battle Creek, Mich.: General Conference Association of Seventh-day Adventists, 1892), pp. 238, 239.

<sup>27</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church 1:264-268, 366, 367*, (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948).

<sup>28</sup>*Testimonies for the Church 1:363, 364, 366.*

William C. White became an ordained minister of his church. Following the death of his father in 1881, he became the confidant and traveling companion of his mother, now 53 years old.

After her husband's death Mrs. White spent two years in Europe (1885-1887) and nine years in Australia and New Zealand (1891-1900). She helped establish and develop new medical, educational, and publishing enterprises. As a result of her counsel, the work of the rapidly growing denomination was placed on a firm footing. (When the General Conference was organized in 1863, the church had 3,500 adult baptized members. By 1890 the figure stood at 29,700. In 1900 it had risen to more than 75,000, and by 1909 it reached the 100,000-member mark.)

For the last 15 years of her life Ellen White lived on a modest estate near St. Helena, California, some 60 miles north of San Francisco. She named her estate "Elmshaven." Here she completed her last nine book manuscripts (*Education*, *The Ministry of Healing*, *Testimonies for the Church*, volumes 7-9, *The Acts of the Apostles*, *Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, a revision of *Gospel Workers*, and *Prophets and Kings*). It was one of her most prolific literary periods.

[31] During the Elmshaven years she oversaw the expansion of the church's healing ministry through the development of sanitariums, which today have evolved into primary acute-care community hospitals located at Paradise Valley (near San Diego), Glendale, and Loma Linda, California. At the latter location she led out in the additional establishment of the Adventists' medical school. First known as the College of Medical Evangelists, it was the forerunner of today's Loma Linda University, a premier Adventist educational institution.

Ellen White's last known "open vision," with its attendant impressive physical phenomena, came at Portland, Oregon, in June 1884. However, prophetic dreams at night continued to communicate special messages from the Lord until near the time of her death on July 16, 1915.

In both the "open visions" of the day and the prophetic dreams of the night she saw the same angel standing by her side. He served as a divine validation of the authenticity of her experience. Sometimes she saw events or happenings—past, present, or future. Sometimes

she simply received information or instruction. At other times she was given parables.

To communicate the message, Mrs. White, like the Bible prophets before her, had three options: She could quote the divine messenger; she might use the writings of another author (the Bible writers often resorted to this method);<sup>29</sup> or she might phrase the message of God in words of her own composition.

Although Ellen White’s formal education was limited to less than three years, it would be incorrect to infer that she was not a knowledgeable or well-informed person. Education comes not alone from the formal classroom setting. The sources of Mrs. White’s education included (1) books—she had some 1,400 titles in her personal and office libraries; (2) travel on three continents; (3) rubbing shoulders with well-educated, knowledgeable persons (which many of her fellow church leaders were); and (4) approximately 2,000 separate “conversations” with heavenly beings in vision.

Perhaps Ellen White’s three best-known books are *Steps to Christ* (1892), a small manual on how to become a Christian and maintain the experience; *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (1888); and *The Desire of Ages* (1898), an incomparable biography of our Lord. *The Desire of Ages* serves as the anchor of the trilogy dealing with Christ and His teachings (the others are *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, an exposition on Christ’s sermon on the mount, and *Christ’s Object Lessons*, an interpretation of the major parables of Jesus).

[32]

Edith Deen’s *Great Women of the Christian Faith* contains full biographical studies of 47 spiritual leaders in Christianity and concise sketches of 76 others. Mrs. Deen made these observations in her major treatment of Ellen G. White:

“Not only did she foretell the future, but she also gave wise counsel in the present. Certainly she was a spokesman for God. Like the prophets of old, her life was marked by humility, simplicity, austerity, divine learning, and devotion. And like them, she turned to God for healing and help. So firm did her faith become that she accomplished the miraculous for Adventists....

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<sup>29</sup>Robert W. Olson, *One Hundred and One Questions on the Sanctuary Doctrine* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1981), pp. 71-107.

“[In all of her writings, which] have reached a circulation running into millions, ... she represents the Bible as the Book of all books, the supreme guide for the whole human family.

“Although the Seventh-day Adventist movement has developed still more since her death in 1915, she lived to enjoy much of its progress. Before her death, membership had grown to 140,000, the clergy had increased to 2,500, there were forty publishing houses scattered around the world, eighty medical institutions, and Adventist missions on every continent. All this began seventy years earlier on nothing but faith, which Ellen White kept in constant exercise.”

[30](#)

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<sup>30</sup>Edith Deen, *Great Women of the Christian Faith* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), pp. 230-236. (Some later editions of this work, published by both Harper & Row and Christian Herald, inexplicably omit the biographical sketch of Ellen White and also that of Mary Baker Eddy.)



### Chapter 3—“Plumber’s Leaks” in the “Bedchamber“: A Problem With Prophets

[33]

[34]

In the early 1870s James and Ellen White were visiting summer camp meetings in Wisconsin and Minnesota. They had arrived on the grounds of one encampment after the meetings had begun. The people were assembled, probably in a large circus-type tent, and the speaker was well into his message.

The Whites paused momentarily on the edge of the gathering. Then Ellen took the arm of James, and together they walked down the center aisle, all the way down to the front row of seats. James took his seat, but Ellen remained standing. Looking up at the minister and pointing her finger at him in a way that only prophets can point, she interrupted the sermon. In an exceedingly loud voice she said, “You have no business to be standing by that desk. You are not a fit man to be bringing a message to these people.”

The speaker stopped short. Amazement crossed the faces of all in the congregation. Had the people known (as they later learned) that Ellen White had never met or even seen this man before, nor did she know anything about him except what the Lord had revealed to her in vision, their awe would have been compounded.

Mrs. White earlier had only heard the sound of this man’s voice in vision. And then the Lord had instructed her that when she heard this voice, she was to deliver this message: “Tell him that he is not a fit man to preach to the people. There is a woman in another state who calls him husband and a child who calls him father, and there is a woman here on this campground who calls him husband and a child who calls him father.”

[35]

When Ellen White delivered that message, the preacher bolted from the platform and disappeared. His sermon, like Schubert’s Symphony No. 8, remained forever unfinished.

Sitting in the congregation that morning was the speaker’s own brother. He now came forward and admitted that what Ellen White had said was true. The speaker had indeed been living a double life

for some time, and most certainly he deserved this unusual rebuke. The Spirit of God blessed that camp meeting, and a great revival of godliness and holy living followed in its wake. <sup>31</sup>

Who told Mrs. White these intimate details of another person's life? There must have been a "plumber's leak in the bedchamber." Clearly Presidents Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, and Richard Nixon are not the only government leaders who have had problems with leaks of "classified" secrets. They are only recent examples. Such leakage can be annoying and frustrating at best, and destructive of professional career and reputation at worst. Trying to "plumb" the leaks at Watergate eventually cost Nixon his presidency.

One of the earliest cases of leakage of state secrets took place some 2,800 years ago, about 850 B.C. Benhadad II, ruler of the Aramaean (Syrian) kingdom of Damascus, called his chief advisers together to discuss a most unsettling, vexatious problem. Every time the king deployed his soldiers to ambush the forces of Israel, against whom he was waging war, the Israelites seemed to learn of the strategy in advance. As a result, the Israelites would avoid casualties. The Syrian king concluded, reasonably enough, that there must be a traitor in Damascus, and he determined to ferret him out.

After the king stated the case, one of his counselors provided an alternative scenario. There was no disloyalty in the Syrian camp, he assured the king. Instead, the prophet Elisha was telling "the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber" ([2 Kings 6:12](#)).

[36] The royal counselor thus stated a truth that has puzzled, distressed, and even angered people in various ages. Prophets seem to have a hidden pipeline through which secret information comes to them. By revealing this information, they can create all kinds of "problems" by way of unpleasant consequences in subsequent exposure and loss.

As we have already seen, it was so in the experience of Ellen White.

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<sup>31</sup>Denton E. Rebok, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church," in *Our Firm Foundation* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1953), vol. 1, pp. 233, 234. This story came to Arthur L. White through veteran pioneer leader George B. Starr; White subsequently shared it orally with Rebok.

Another interesting experience took place during the early-morning hours on June 11, 1887. Ellen White (who had just arrived in Moss, Norway, from Copenhagen, Denmark) arose to write a letter to the business manager of an Adventist sanitarium in California, some 8,000 miles distant. She told him:

“In the night season I saw you in the company of the matron of the institution. As far as your intentions to each other were concerned, you might have been man and wife.... Sister \_\_\_\_\_ will never again be what she once was. Both of you are guilty before God.” <sup>32</sup>

Ellen White did not accuse these two married employees of adultery, although she did imply it. It was almost as though God were giving the guilty pair an opportunity to confess and repent. The business manager, however, denied any wrongdoing. He countercharged that Ellen White was undermining his influence in the institution. Then, given no choice, Ellen White several months later wrote further:

“While in Europe the things that transpired in \_\_\_\_\_ were opened before me. A voice said, ‘Follow me, and I will show you the sins that are practiced by those who stand in responsible positions.’ I went through the rooms, and I saw you, a watchman upon the walls of Zion, were very intimate with another man’s wife, betraying sacred trusts, crucifying your Lord afresh....

“She was sitting on your lap; you were kissing her, and she was kissing you. Other scenes of fondness, sensual looks and deportment, were presented before me, which sent a thrill of horror through my soul. Your arm encircled her waist, and the fondness expressed was having a bewitching influence. Then a curtain was lifted, and I was shown you in bed with \_\_\_\_\_. My Guide said, ‘Iniquity, adultery....’

[37]

“You were never alone. The same hand that traced the characters over against the wall of Belshazzar’s palace was registering in the books of heaven the deeds and words that made Christ ashamed of you.” <sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Ellen G. White *letter 30, 1887.*

<sup>33</sup>Ellen G. White *letter 16, 1888.*

Even then the prophet of the Lord did not expose the couple publicly. As a result of this second letter a private meeting was held in which “humble confessions were made by Elder R and Brother and Sister H.”<sup>34</sup>

But it was not alone—or even often—in cases of sexual infidelity that the prophet was called to bear her testimony to things witnessed in visions. Two instances of remarkable occurrences were related to me in person by individuals who had rather dramatic experiences in their associations with Ellen White.

I met Elbe (better known by his nickname, Sam) Hamilton in Los Angeles in 1950. He was about 65, and I was a young pastor. At the turn of the century Sam was about 16 years old and living in St. Helena, California, when Ellen White returned from Australia and purchased her Elmshaven estate in the same community. Sam was not well and had been to many doctors, but none had adequately diagnosed his particular medical problem.

Sam had heard about this little septuagenarian, whom some called a prophet, over at the foot of Howell Mountain. He also learned that when she prayed for persons, they promptly got cured. He decided to approach her for help. One day Sam went over to Elmshaven and found 73-year-old Ellen White on her hands and knees, weeding in her garden. Seeing two legs approaching her, Ellen White looked up and got to her feet, dusting her hands as she did so.

[38] After hearing the lad out, Mrs. White looked at him intently and declared, “Sam, you are not well. In fact, you are dying. But you don’t need to die. And if you do what I now tell you to do, you will live to be an old man.” She explained that he had contracted trichinosis. He should give up eating pork immediately. For that matter, he would do well to give up all flesh meats, but he must have an adequate nutritional substitute for them in order to get a balanced diet. She told him how to change his eating habits, but noted his look of perplexity. He was wondering how he could persuade his mother to make such a radical departure from their family dietary habits. And even if he succeeded, how could he remember all these recipes Mrs. White was now sharing with him?

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<sup>34</sup>Ellen G. White [letter 27](#), 1888.

Sensing the situation immediately, Ellen White abruptly asked him, “Sam, would you like to come to my kitchen and have me *show* you how to prepare these things?”

“Oh, yes,” he quickly and gratefully responded.

“Then come here tomorrow afternoon at 2:00.”

He did, and he continued to come the next day, and the next, and the next. Then, when the lessons were finished, Ellen White asked him if he would like a job as apprentice cook for her fairly large extended family. She needed one and thought he would do just fine. Sam jumped at the chance.

One day Ellen White entered her kitchen and told Sam, “Pack your bags.” Wondering if this meant that she was dismissing him from her service, Sam asked her why. “You’re going to come with me to Paradise Valley, near San Diego. I have purchased a bankrupt medical spa on 20 acres of land upon which I am going to establish another sanitarium in southern California. I’m going down to supervise the workmen in renovation.”

Paradise Valley had once been a lush semitropical area worthy of its name. But near the turn of the century a drought set in that continued for eight or nine years. Lawns died, trees shriveled up, wells evaporated, and soil turned to sand. Far from “Paradise,” it looked like the “other place”! People were selling their property for pennies on the dollar, or abandoning it altogether. To locate a sanitarium (which, of all institutions, needed an adequate supply of water) here seemed the height of irrationality.

The 50-room defunct spa had cost \$25,000 in construction costs alone, but Mrs. White was able to purchase the 20 acres and the building for \$4,000. (She borrowed part of the amount from an Adventist widow of means, Josephine Gotzian, and the other part from a bank.) And so Ellen and Sam left for San Diego. [39]

Workers were hired, and two large tents were erected on the ground—one for cooking meals for the laborers and the other for dining purposes. An Adventist well driller from Nebraska, Salem Hamilton, was brought in to find water, and Mrs. White signed a contract for 100 feet. (There was already one well on the property, but its water was brackish and the supply totally inadequate.)

One morning Salem Hamilton strode into the cooking tent, where Ellen White was supervising the preparation of the noon meal. He

was discouraged. He had gone down 98 feet and was bringing up nothing but dry dirt and sand. “I have a question to ask you. Did the Lord tell you to buy this property?” he asked.

“Yes! Yes!” Mrs. White replied energetically. “*Three* times I was shown that we should secure this particular property.”

“All right,” said Salem, “I have my answer. The Lord would not give us an elephant without providing water for it to drink.”

Perhaps less than an hour later he returned to the cook tent. He thought he heard running water—lots of it—as though there was an underground river nearby! Sam overheard the news and begged to be allowed to go down in the hole so he could hear the “river” too. “All right, Sam. Take your apron off first,” Mrs. White said with a smile.

The well diggers wrapped a rope around young Sam and dropped him into the hole. When he heard the sound of rapidly moving water, he feared it might come through and he’d be trapped down there. He gave the signal—several yanks on the rope—and they hauled him back to the surface. Then they lowered Salem back down, and he *tap-tap-tapped* his way until moisture began to seep through. Soon water flowed in so quickly that Salem left his digging tools at the bottom and was pulled out.

[40] That night the water rose 18 feet. The next morning they pumped it out and dug a lateral miner’s shaft. The institutional water supply was assured.

A half century later Sam Hamilton told me his personal tale. He remarked that many, even church leaders, doubted the prophet’s wisdom in purchasing this property. No underground river showed on any U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey map of the area. But *God* knew there was water there, and “he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” ([Amos 3:7](#)).

“I never doubted the prophet’s gift when I was a boy,” Sam Hamilton reflected, “and I never doubted after I became a man. She was all she claimed to be, and all the church ever claimed for her. I know. I was there. I was an eyewitness.” <sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>This story of the founding of the Paradise Valley Sanitarium (now Hospital) is told more fully in the SDA Encyclopedia (1996), 11, 299-301.

Harold M. Blunden was about 12 or 13 and living in North Fitzroy, Australia, when word came that the American prophet would speak on the following Sabbath afternoon. Harold was skeptical about modern-day prophets, certainly about *American* prophets, and especially about *female* prophets!

Harold felt, though, that he had to make up his mind for himself, so he determined to go early the next week and take a seat on the second row right on the aisle. He wanted to see and hear everything that happened.

That afternoon there was standing room only. The rostrum was filled with church officials, and only two seats in the center were empty. The train bringing Ellen White had been delayed two hours. The ministers present kept the congregation’s attention by songs, prayers, testimonies, and brief remarks. Finally the door opened, and the diminutive woman prophet walked in, holding the arm of a distinguished American missionary, A. G. Daniells. Daniells introduced her from the pulpit and then retired to take one of the empty seats behind. Ellen White stood at the desk, laid her manuscript down, adjusted her shawl and manuscript, looked up at the people, smiled, and opened her mouth to speak. But no words came out.

She looked somewhat surprised, as did her hearers. Slowly she scanned the audience, then looked down at the pulpit, adjusted her manuscript and shawl, looked up, smiled, and opened her mouth to speak. Again no words came. A look of consternation crossed the prophet’s face, and a ripple of anxiety spread through the congregation.

[41]

Again she scanned her audience, this time more slowly—intently, as if looking for someone in particular. This time she didn’t stop upon reaching the far side, but turned around and looked at the faces of the ministers in the seats behind her. Nathaniel Davis, a tall, lanky man, was sitting on the end. She turned to Daniells and said in disbelief, “What is this man doing on the platform with me?”

Since her back was to the congregation, few caught the strange remark. But Harold Blunden, on the second row, heard the question and was dumbfounded. Why shouldn’t Nathaniel Davis be on the same platform with her? he questioned silently. Davis was a leader, even if he was a relatively new Adventist. He was editor of the

Australian Adventist magazine *Signs of the Times*. He had every right to be on that platform!

Suddenly Nathaniel Davis stood to his full height, towering above the diminutive American. He scowled and gave her the most hateful look one human could ever give another. He then turned on his heel, stalked off the platform, down the aisle, and out the chapel door.

Unperturbedly, Ellen White turned back to the pulpit, adjusted her manuscript and shawl, looked up, smiled, opened her mouth, and the words finally came. The people sat as if entranced for the hour and a quarter during which she spoke. At the close they crowded around her at the door to meet her personally.

Young Harold did not head for the door. He headed for the platform instead. He just *had* to know the meaning of this strange development. He hadn't heard a word of the entire sermon, because his thoughts bumped against themselves in his head. And this is what he learned.

[42] Nathaniel Davis had problems—serious problems—and Ellen White had written him a five-page letter on August 16, 1897. She had started it at 3:00 a.m. Paragraph 1 on page 2 began at 2:30 a.m. the day following. Then she continued the letter two days later. Mrs. White spelled out Brother Davis's problems with money, spiritualism, and loose morals. ("Your course is immoral. You are bringing disgrace upon the cause of truth.... You are a dangerous man to be left to yourself anywhere.")<sup>36</sup> As a mother might plead with a wayward son, Ellen White urged this new convert to mend his errant ways. But he had not heeded her advice. That Sabbath afternoon he was a living representative of the kingdom of darkness. God would not allow His ambassador from the kingdom of light to speak until Nathaniel Davis was banished!<sup>37</sup>

"I never had any problems or questions about Ellen White after that!" Harold Blunden mused after telling me this story. "Some doubted and disbelieved there in Australia, but my mind was made

<sup>36</sup>Ellen G. White *letter 36, 1897*.

<sup>37</sup>Harold Blunden related this story in part of his sermon "Guidance for Earth's Last Generation," published by the White Estate for the annual Spirit of Prophecy Emphasis Day, April 12, 1958, pp. 6, 7.



up. And I never had occasion to change it! I know. I was there. I was an eyewitness.”

Blunden died shortly after telling me his story, at the age of 89, never knowing what had happened to Nathaniel Davis. Nor did I, until some years later. One day one of my colleagues, knowing of my interest in the rest of the story, came into my office. He excitedly waved a document in his hand.

When Ellen White left Australia in 1900, the church workers gave her a large loose-leaf autograph album as a farewell gift. Each page had been inscribed by someone whom Mrs. White’s nine-year ministry on that continent had blessed. And one of the pages was in the handwriting of Nathaniel Davis!

“It affords me the most sincere pleasure to have the privilege of putting on record my appreciation of Sister E. G. White’s work and my gratitude to my heavenly Father for the messages sent through her to His people.

“The faithful witness, thus bourne, revealed to me the means whereby the bondage of Satan was broken when, owing to the influence of spiritualism, I had well nigh become a spiritual wreck.

“I have every reason to be positive in my confidence in Sister E. G. White as a true prophet.

“May the Lord of love, and mercy, grace and truth, guide and guard her safely to the end, and lengthen her days so that she may continue to warn, admonish, and strengthen the remnant people of God.

“[signed] N. A. Davis

“Geelong, Victoria, Australia

“6 August 1900”<sup>38</sup>

It is as true today as it was when King Jehoshaphat first uttered the words about 850 B.C.: “Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper” (2 [Chronicles 20:20](#)).

[43]

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<sup>38</sup>This autograph album is today preserved in the archives of the White Estate.

## Chapter 4—A Scientist Looks at Ellen G. White

The university professor was thoroughly dumbfounded! “Where did this book come from?” he asked the 20-year-old Chinese-American graduate student. Helen Chen had come to Cornell University to earn an M.S. degree in foods and nutrition on a National Science Foundation Fellowship. She had enrolled in Clive McCay’s popular History of Nutrition course.

“It’s a compilation of writings by Ellen G. White, one of the founders of my church,” Helen replied. “*Counsels on Diet and Foods* was published posthumously, in 1938, and covers nutritional counsels from Mrs. White’s pen from the time of the American Civil War to her death at the outbreak of the First World War.”

What absolutely stunned the professor was the historical milieu in which Ellen White had originally made each of her statements. The volume that McCay held in his hand in his laboratory that autumn afternoon was unique among Mrs. White’s books. At the beginning of each statement the date and facts of original publication are given.

McCay’s field of special interest was the history of nutrition. Challenge him with a date, and computer like he would almost instantly respond by citing names of writers in nutrition. He would then go on to explain what they had contributed. During Ellen White’s lifetime many, if not most, of contemporary nutritional “experts” were writing arrant nonsense. That a comparatively uneducated layperson was advocating such advanced ideas totally astonished him. He wanted to know more.

[45] Clive McCay earned his Ph.D. in 1925 at the University of California at Berkeley. He then spent two years at Yale as a National Research Council Fellow in biochemistry. He next moved to Cornell, where he spent the next 35 years in developing a progressively distinguished academic career. McCay’s professional stature is attested to in many ways. For one, he published more than 150 scientific papers on various aspects of nutrition, especially in the aging pro-

cess. Among many other achievements, he served as president of the American Gerontological Society (1949) and the American Institute of Nutrition (1951).

After his death in 1967, the *Journal of Nutrition* devoted 10 full pages to a retrospective look at his life and contribution to science and humanity,<sup>39</sup> and the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* published a comprehensive life sketch. McCay was recognized as an international pioneer and authority in the field of nutritional theory, research, and history.

Ellen White's *Counsels on Diet and Foods* created in McCay a strong desire to learn more about its remarkable author. He entered into a lively correspondence with Helen Chen's father (a scientist who had published a book on soybeans, a subject close to McCay's professional heart), and the senior Chen lent him a number of Ellen White's books.

Following a lecture on April 9, 1958, before the men's club of the Ithaca Unitarian Church (of which he was a member) on the remarkable life and teachings of Mrs. White, McCay came to the attention of Francis D. Nichol, then editor of the Seventh-day Adventists' international weekly, the *Review and Herald* (now *Adventist Review*). Editor Nichol immediately drove to Ithaca, New York, to meet McCay in person. Almost the first question the scientist asked the clergyman was: "How did Mrs. White, with virtually no education, set forth health teachings so far in advance of her time?"

Nichol figured that this Unitarian scientist might have difficulty understanding the nature and function of "inspiration" as Adventists and many other Christians hold this doctrine. So he parried by saying that some of her enemies dismissed the question by alleging that she simply copied her contemporaries. "Nonsense," retorted McCay. "That only creates a bigger problem than it resolves!" "How so?" "If she merely copied her contemporaries, how did she know which ideas to borrow and which to reject out of the bewildering array of theories and health teachings current in the nineteenth century? Most were quite irrational and have now been repudiated! She would have

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<sup>39</sup>"Clive Maine McCay (1889-1967)—A Biographical Sketch," *Journal of Nutrition* 103 (January 1973): 1-10.

had to be a most amazing person with knowledge beyond her times in order to do this successfully!”<sup>40</sup>

What was Mrs. White’s counsel that this authority in nutrition found so advanced for her day? We present here a summary of some of Ellen White’s counsels.<sup>41</sup>

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Abuse:

1871—“Alcohol and tobacco pollute the blood of men, and thousands of lives are yearly sacrificed to these poisons” ([Temperance, 57](#)).

1905—“Tobacco is a slow, insidious, but most malignant poison” ([The Ministry of Healing, 327](#)). Fats:

1869—“Grains and fruits prepared free from grease, and in as natural condition as possible, should be the food for the tables of all who claim to be preparing for translation to heaven” ([Testimonies for the Church 2:352](#)).

1890—“The grease cooked in the food renders it difficult of digestion” ([Counsels on Diet and Foods, 354](#)).

[47] 1896—“Both the blood and the fat of animals are consumed as a luxury. But the Lord gave special directions that these should not be eaten. Why? Because their use would make a diseased current of blood in the human system. The disregard of the Lord’s special directions has brought a variety of difficulties and diseases upon human beings” ([Counsels on Diet and Foods, 393, 394](#)).

Salt: 1883—“Food should be prepared in as simple a manner as possible, free from condiments and spices, and even from an undue amount of salt” ([Counsels on Diet and Foods, 340](#)). 1884—“Do not eat largely of salt; give up bottled pickles; keep fiery spiced food out of your stomach; eat fruit with your meals, and the irritation which calls for so much drink [water, milk, etc.] will cease to exist” ([Counsels on Diet and Foods, 420](#)).

Fluids with Meals: 1884—“Many make a mistake in drinking cold water with their meals. Taken with meals, water diminishes the flow of the salivary glands.... Food should not be washed down; no drink is needed with meals. Eat slowly, and allow the saliva to mingle with the food. The more liquid there is taken into the

<sup>40</sup>Francis D. Nichol, *Why I Believe in Mrs. E. G. White* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1964), pp. 57-59.

<sup>41</sup>Adapted from a one-page compilation, *Adventist Review*, July 29, 1982, p. 9.

stomach with the meals, the more difficult it is for the food to digest; for the liquid must first be absorbed” (*Ibid.*).

Sugar, and in Combination with Milk: 1870—“Large quantities of milk and sugar eaten together are injurious” ([Testimonies for the Church 2:369](#)). 1890—“The free use of sugar in any form tends to clog the system and is not unfrequently a cause of disease” ([Counsels on Health, 154](#)).

Meat (Including Poultry and Fish): 1864—“Many die of disease caused wholly by meat-eating, yet the world does not seem to be the wiser” ([Spiritual Gifts 4a:147](#)).

1868—“The liability to take disease is increased tenfold by meat eating” ([Testimonies for the Church 2:64](#)). Breadmaking and Nutrition:

1898—“All wheat flour is not best for a continuous diet. A mixture of wheat, oatmeal, and rye would be more nutritious than the wheat with the nutritive properties separated from it” ([Counsels on Diet and Foods, 321](#)). 1905—“Fine-flour bread is lacking in nutritive elements to be found in bread made from the whole wheat” ([The Ministry of Healing, 300](#)).

[48]

The Ideal Diet: 1868—“Eat largely of fruits and vegetables” ([Counsels on Diet and Foods, 200](#)).

1890—“Fruits, grains, and vegetables, prepared in a simple way, free from spice and grease of all kinds, make, with milk or cream, the most healthful diet” ([Counsels on Diet and Foods, 314](#)).

What was Clive McCay’s evaluation of Mrs. White’s views? At the conclusion of a three-article series in the *Review and Herald*, written at the request of Editor Nichol and based upon talks that McCay was giving to various professional and learned societies, the professor of nutrition drew four conclusions:

“To sum up the discussion: Every modern specialist in nutrition whose life is dedicated to human welfare must be impressed in four respects by the writings and leadership of Ellen G. White.

“In the first place, her basic concepts about the relation between diet and health have been verified to an unusual degree by scientific advances of the past decades....

“In the second place, everyone who attempts to teach nutrition can hardly conceive of leadership such as that of Mrs. White that

was able to induce a substantial number of people to improve their diets.

“In the third place, one can only speculate about the large number of sufferers during the past century who could have had improved health if they had accepted the teachings of Mrs. White.

“Finally, one can wonder how to make her teachings more widely known to benefit the overcrowded earth that seems inevitable tomorrow unless the present rate of increase of the world’s population is decreased.

[49] “In spite of the fact that the works of Mrs. White were written long before the advent of modern scientific nutrition, no better overall guide is available today.”<sup>42</sup>

Three decades after Clive McCay’s decease (1967), the scientific nutrition community in the United States seems finally to have gotten around to “catching up” to Ellen White’s counsels given in the past four decades of the nineteenth century. In 1992 the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) introduced its “Food Guide Pyramid—A Guide to Daily Food Choices” a visual aid that “captured the imagination of nutrition educators, teachers, the media, and the food industry. It now appears widely in curricula, articles, food packaging, and advertising designed to show the composition of a healthy diet and the contribution of specific food products to such diets.”

<sup>43</sup> The foundational level 1 base of the pyramid consists of whole grains, cereals, and breads.

Next, level 2 emphasizes the need for substantial daily servings of vegetables and fruits. (Ellen White couldn’t have agreed more!)

Level 3 calls for adequate daily intake of protein, recommending dairy products on the one hand and meat/poultry/fish products, dry beans, eggs, and nuts on the other. (Ellen White would totally support the principle of the imperative necessity of an adequate

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<sup>42</sup>Clive M. McCay, “A Nutritional Authority Discusses Mrs. E. G. White,” [The Review and Herald, February 12, 19, and 26, 1959](#) (and reprinted in the same journal with slight abridgment on Jan. 8 and 15, 1981; reprinted in brochure form; cited in Nichol, pp. 58, 59).

<sup>43</sup>Anne Shaw, Lois Fulton, Carole Davis, and Myrtle Hogbin, *Using the Food Guide Pyramid: A Resource for Nutrition Educators* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Agriculture: Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services; Center for Nutrition Policy Promotion [1996]), pp. 1, 3.

daily protein intake, but in looking ahead to the end of the twentieth century, and recognizing the steadily increasing incidence of disease throughout the entire animal kingdom, she would urge the substitution of non-animal products to meet this legitimate need for protein.)

Level 4—the apex and narrowest part of the pyramid—provides for a *sparing* use of fats and oils (preferably naturally occurring), and dessert sweets, with ingestion of sugars to be kept to a minimum. (And again, Mrs. White, while not totally banning sugar in its varied forms—her own Gravenstein applesauce was artificially sweetened before being brought to her table, and her favorite dessert reportedly was lemon meringue pie—she repeatedly cautioned against overdoing a good thing.<sup>44</sup>

On January 2, 1996, at a joint news conference, Agriculture secretary Dan Glickman and Health and Human Services secretary Donna E. Shalala introduced the fourth edition of *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, providing easily understood, sound, no-nonsense, science-based information on how Americans can choose diets that promote good health. [50]

“Moderation and variety in food choices are essential to healthy diets,” Secretary Glickman stated.

“For most Americans, who do not smoke or engage in substance abuse, a good balanced diet is the most important thing we can do for ourselves to promote health and long life,” Secretary Shalala added. [51]

Little from the first edition’s dietary guidelines had changed in the current version, which now places increased emphasis on physical exercise (30 minutes recommended daily); and the seven guidelines continue to call for balance, moderation, and variety in food choices, with special emphasis on grain products, fruits, and vegetables.

1. Eat a variety of foods.
2. Balance the food you eat with physical activity—  
maintain or improve your weight.

<sup>44</sup>See Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1938), noting especially Sections XVIII (Fruits, Cereals, and Vegetables), XIX (Desserts), XXI (Fats), XXII (Proteins), and XXIII (Flesh Meats).

3. Choose a diet with plenty of grain products, vegetables, and fruits.
4. Choose a diet low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol.
5. Choose a diet moderate in sugars.
6. Choose a diet moderate in salt and sodium.
7. If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.<sup>45</sup>

Except for this last recommendation (Ellen White called for total abstinence of alcoholic beverages), this government report does not depart in any significant detail from the counsels given by Mrs. White nearly a century ago.

Ellen White, while acknowledging certain problems in the Scriptures,<sup>46</sup> as well as in her own writings,<sup>47</sup> nevertheless appealed to her readers to “decide from the weight of evidence.”<sup>48</sup> No one was perhaps better qualified to judge from “the weight of evidence,” at least as far as her counsels on diet were concerned, than Clive M. McCay.

Four years before his retirement, recognizing the value of Ellen White’s dietary program for optimum healthful living, he began to share his discoveries and convictions with a number of professional and scholarly circles. In a printed newsletter, which served as a Christmas greeting for the McCays to their many colleagues and friends in December 1958, Mrs. McCay reported that “Clive continues his reading and discussion in religion, and new and interesting friends have been gained thereby.”

On the reverse side of the newsletter, left blank for personal messages to individual recipients, McCay wrote a personal note to Helen Chen:

“Ithaca, New York  
 “December 18, 1958 “

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<sup>45</sup>“USDA, HHS Release Updated Guidelines for Americans,” joint departmental press release.

<sup>46</sup>See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 527.

<sup>47</sup>See Ellen G. White, [Testimonies for the Church 5:675, 676](#).

<sup>48</sup>[Testimonies for the Church 5:675](#).



Dear Helen:

“You added to my interest in the Adventist program, and your father helped me by lending me books about Ellen G. White. Cornell libraries are very poor in this respect.

“If I were to start life again I would like to be an Adventist. I believe their philosophy has the best solution of the problems of living amidst the strains of the American culture. I have only made a slight beginning of discovering the wisdom of Mrs. White. I am sorry the former Adventist minister has been transferred. He was Mr. [Carlyle A.] Nelson and a very fine person. He and his wife as well as some of the other local Adventists were our guests at the Unitarian church the night I discussed Mrs. White.

“Sincerely, “[signed] Clive McCay”<sup>49</sup> Clive McCay judged from the “weight of evidence,” and his verdict was favorable.

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<sup>49</sup>Printed newsletter, “1958: Christmastime at Green Barn Farm, Route 1, Ithaca, N.Y.”

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## Chapter 5—“Not Without Honor”

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William Foxwell Albright (1891-1971) was America’s—and perhaps the world’s—foremost archaeologist in the twentieth century. He earned his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University at the age of 25, and during the next 50 years he received 25 honorary doctorates from colleges, universities, and seminaries of Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish faiths. He wrote more than 800 publications on archaeology, the Bible, and Eastern subjects. In the 1950s one of his doctoral candidates at Johns Hopkins (the late Alger Johns) introduced Albright to Ellen White’s writings. His curiosity piqued, the famous archaeologist undertook his own investigation of the life, work, and claims of Ellen White. And in his book *From the Stone Age to Christianity* Albright named Mrs. White as one of five individuals whom he considered to be authentic “prophets” during the past 250 years.<sup>50</sup>

Traditionally, however, prophets have not had a particularly easy time in pursuing their professional objectives. Invariably—and inevitably—they are not popular. In the final book of the Old Testament (as it was constituted in Jesus’ day) the chronicler of the history of God’s people sadly penned these revealing words: “And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes [“continually and carefully,” margin], and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy [“healing,” margin]” (2 Chronicles 36:15, 16). Jesus added the following disappointing benediction to His discussion of the ironic fact that prophets are often not recognized and accepted by their own community: “A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house” (Matthew 13:57).

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<sup>50</sup>William Foxwell Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, second edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), pp. 18, 19.

So it was with Ellen G. White. Many members of her church dismissed and discarded her testimonies and counsels. Contrariwise, many not of her religious persuasion recognized the wisdom, beauty, and power of her words—as did Albright. The testimonials included in this chapter come not from Seventh-day Adventists (who might be presumed to be biased) but rather from the pens of those who were not (and did not become) Seventh-day Adventists. They have, however, given Mrs. White the honor due her.

In 1960 Paul Harvey, American Broadcasting Company news commentator and United Features syndicated columnist, wrote a 16-paragraph article featuring Ellen White. It began:

“Once upon a time, a hundred years ago, there lived a young lady named Ellen White. She was frail as a child, completed only grammar school [actually, she never really finished the third grade], and had no technical training, and yet she lived to write scores of articles and many books on the subject of ‘healthful living.’

“Remember, this was in the days when doctors were still blood-letting and performing surgery with unwashed hands. This was in an era of medical ignorance bordering on barbarism. Yet Ellen White wrote with such profound understanding of the subject of nutrition that all but two of the many principles she espoused have been scientifically established.”<sup>51</sup>

Harvey then pointed out how she was correct about the preference for olive oil over animal fat in the diet. We recognize now her wisdom in scoring refined white flour as lacking in nutritive value. Her warnings concerning the dangers of overuse of salt and irregularity in eating have proved correct. In 1960 there were two unverified statements from her pen: the use of multigrains instead of merely whole wheat in breadmaking, and vegetarianism.<sup>52</sup>

Nine years later columnist Harvey did an update on Mrs. White for his newspaper readers across America. After citing the low incidence of strokes, respiratory diseases, and cancer among Adventists, he continued:

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<sup>51</sup>From Lima, Ohio, News, Aug. 11, 1960; cited in *Notes and Papers Concerning Ellen G. White and the Spirit of Prophecy*, seventh printing (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1974), pp. 193, 194.

<sup>52</sup>“Perhaps We Should Reread What Ellen White Taught,” *Today’s Food* 5, No. 4 (Winter 1960): 8.

“It has tended to reaffirm the faith of the faithful to discover that the most advanced scientific findings support what was written and taught by this amazing little lady, Ellen White, more than a century ago. If future scientific findings continue to support hers, let’s see what tomorrow’s doctors will be prescribing:

“Ellen White advised against overeating. Also against crash dieting. (‘Do not go to extremes.’) Minimal sweets. (She said that sugar is not good for the stomach.)

“She recommended grains, vegetables, fruits—especially apples. (‘Apples are superior to any fruit.’)

“She recommended against meat. Coffee, and tea. And, sorry, no hot biscuits.

“If some of her recommendations sound extreme, imagine how they must have sounded in 1863. Yet modern science continues more and more to say, ‘She was right!’” <sup>53</sup>

A graduate student working on an advanced degree at Teachers’ College, Columbia University, in 1959 discovered a copy of Ellen White’s *Education* in the personal reference library of Florence Stratemeyer. Stratemeyer, a leading educator and professor of education, was invited to give an address before a convention of Adventist teachers in Washington, D.C. In it she said, among other things:

“Recently the book *Education*, by Ellen G. White, has been brought to my attention. Written at the turn of the century, this volume was more than fifty years ahead of its times. And I was surprised to learn that it was written by a woman with but three years of schooling.

“The breadth and depth of its philosophy amazed me. Its concepts of balanced education, harmonious development, and of thinking and acting on principle are advanced educational concepts.

“The objective of restoring in man the image of God, the teaching of parental responsibility, and the emphasis on self-control in the child are ideals that the world desperately needs.

[57] “Mrs. White did not necessarily use current terms. In fact, she did not use the word *curriculum* in her writing. But the book *Education* in certain parts treats of important curriculum principles. She

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<sup>53</sup>Cited in *Today’s Food* 14, No. 4 (Winter 1969): 8.

was concerned with the whole learner—the harmonious development of mental, physical, and spiritual powers.

“Today many are stressing the development of the intellect. But feelings and emotional development are equally important. In our changing society, the ability to act on thought and in terms of principle is central. It is this harmonious development that is so greatly needed, yet so generally neglected today.

“I am not surprised that members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church hold the writings of Mrs. White in great respect and make them central in developing the educational program in their schools.”

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Stratemeyer was doubtless familiar with educational viewpoints current in 1903 when *Education* was published, as well as those of an earlier era. If Mrs. White had merely reshuffled various views in vogue in the past, the Columbia University professor would hardly have dared publicly to call Ellen White’s views “advanced”!

Six years earlier Professor Tsunekichi Mizuno of Japan’s Tamagawa University (and formerly head of the Tokyo Museum of Science and director of social education for the Japanese Ministry of Education) recommended *Education* to parents, teachers, and students. He called it “most profitable reading in our understanding of the ‘New Education.’”

“Education, written with the inspired pen of Ellen G. White, has for fifty some years been a well-known book which has rendered the greatest possible service and joy to students, teachers, and parents the world over.

“When I was studying at the University of Illinois, it was my privilege to read the book in its original language. I was profoundly moved by the book at that time [Professor Mizuno is not a Christian and professes no particular religion], and it has been my desire ever since to recommend it to the educators in Japan. It is my sincere joy to hear that the book has been finally translated into the Japanese language.”<sup>55</sup>

[58]

The minister of education of a Southern European country had been studying at Teachers’ College, Columbia University. He had

<sup>54</sup>See *The Review and Herald*, August 6, 1959; cited in Notes and Papers, p. 316.

<sup>55</sup>Cited in Notes and Papers, pp. 314, 315.

come to the United States for the newest and best in educational policy and program of his newborn state.

Upon his return to Southern Europe, Raja R. Radosavlyevish “authored” a work on religious and moral education. It was written in the Serbian language, published by the state university press, and acclaimed by that institution as the “best book” on religious education in that language.

When Adventist church leaders in Serbia read the work, they recognized it immediately—it was a translation of Ellen White’s *Education*, with an introduction written by the Serbian minister of education. Eighty percent of the new book came directly from Ellen White’s pen! <sup>56</sup> Was it plagiarism? Who knows the good man’s motivation? If Charles Caleb Colton is correct in his dictum (“Imitation is the sincerest [form] of flattery”), then Adventists should indeed feel flattered!

In 1965 a German sociologist, Irmgard Simon, published her doctoral dissertation in Münster, Westphalia. It dealt with Seventh-day Adventists and Ellen White. She said, in part:

“As to the question of how it was possible that a woman who had never received a real education, and also suffered from poor health, would fill such an important and far-reaching office in spite of these handicaps—many answers have been given.

“The most important reason was to be found in her powerful faith, in her strong religious equipment, and in her visionary capacities, things that rendered her absolutely certain of being one especially called.... The feeling of being one especially chosen gave her energy, persistency, and patience.

[59] “She was filled with lofty moral ideas, which she met in her own personal life and which she also expected her fellow beings to live up to. In addition to this, she knew human beings as few have.... She looked upon people in the modern way in the wholeness of their beings, with body, mind and spirit. She was without fear of men; courageous and consistent, she struggled within the movement to

<sup>56</sup>William A. Spicer, *The Spirit of Prophecy in the Advent Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1937), pp. 81, 82; see also transcript of television sermon “She Never Owned a Crystal Ball,” by George E. Vandeman, It Is Written Productions, Thousand Oaks, California, for more details than it was polite to include in the 1937 account by Spicer.

solve the many problems. She solved problems which the churches did not expect to see solved in many decades.

“In spite of her strong, yes, ecstatic union with God, she rarely lost the ground of reality. On the contrary, she tackled many practical questions in life. Ellen G. White lived for only one purpose, to benefit and expand the denomination she served, in order that her church members might be well prepared, and by a God-pleasing life belong to the number of ‘the remnant church.’

“Her knowledge of the various subjects she would practice with all emphasis, yet not in an overzealous way, for she rebuked all kind of fanaticism, but in such a way as to fit prevailing circumstances. E. G. White was a wise and commanding woman, and she had a strong soul. She thought of and lived for the movement which she formed. She disdained ‘the world’ and worked untiringly for the purpose of breaking its ties and winning people to Christ.

“It is easy to understand that a person involved in such a work, and being its central figure, would receive severe criticism, especially being a woman.”<sup>57</sup>

Simon discussed the question of whether Mrs. White was one of the renowned of the Christian church throughout the various ages. Simon was unable to find adequate scientific explanation for Ellen White’s visions and remarkable experiences. She held the opinion that had Ellen White been a Roman Catholic instead of a Seventh-day Adventist, she might very well be canonized in due course!

“Undoubtedly it was the established fact of her mystic vision of God which worked as a powerful radiance on her fellow believers, enabling her to be their leader without holding an official office in the church. She functioned as a messenger between God and the churches. Through her the members had a part in the divine Being. This explains the strong position E. G. White has won among Adventists. In spite of her high position, E. G. White never fell for the temptation other founders of various movements have done, where they claimed to be elevated themselves above the weaknesses of human flesh, but was a servant and did not claim the honor that belongs to God.

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<sup>57</sup>Translated from German by Ingemar Linden in “Would Catholics Have Canonized E. G. White?” Northern Light, September 1968, p. 7.

“The Seventh-day Adventists still live on the spirit of E. G. White and only so far as this heritage lives on do the Adventists have a future.”<sup>58</sup>

At the time of her death Mrs. White received considerable editorial comment in the secular press. Two examples are fairly typical of the observations of non-Adventist newspaper editors concerning her life and the significance of her accomplishments. The editor of the Toledo (Ohio) *Blade* wrote:

“Mrs. White ...early manifested some of the gifts of prophecy. With the formation of the church of the Seventh-day Adventists, she immediately developed an influence, and that influence was maintained to the hour of her death, a period of seventy years. Besides unusual talents as a preacher, she had organizational and administrative powers. These were all given to her church. It prospered and grew until it has spread through many lands. Universities were founded, medical schools, hospitals and schools for teachers and missionaries.

“Mrs. White was a remarkable woman. Had she lived in an earlier period of the career of Christianity and escaped the bigots and the fire she would most surely have been canonized. She was of the flesh of which saints are made.”<sup>59</sup>

The New York City *Independent* editorialized first concerning the results, and then the life that produced them, stating:

“Of course, these teachings were based on the strictest doctrine of inspiration of the Scriptures. Seventh-day Adventism could be got in no other way. And the gift of prophecy was to be expected as promised to the ‘remnant church,’ who had held fast to the truth. This faith gave great purity of life and incessant zeal. No body of Christians excels them in moral character and religious earnestness.

[61] “Their work began in 1853 in Battle Creek, and it has grown until now they have thirty-seven publishing houses throughout the world, with literature in eighty different languages, and an annual output of \$2 million. They have now seventy colleges and academies, and about forty sanitariums; and in all this, Ellen G. White has been the

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Editorial, “A Modern Prophetess,” Toledo Blade, July 19, 1915; cited in [The Review and Herald](#), May 27, 1971, p. 24.



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inspiration and a guide. Here is a noble record, and she deserves great honor.

“Did she really receive divine visions, and was she really chosen by the Holy Spirit to be endued with the charisma of prophecy? Or was she the victim of an excited imagination? Why should we answer? One’s doctrine of the Bible may affect the conclusion. At any rate, she was absolutely honest in her belief in her revelations. Her life was worthy of them. She showed no spiritual pride and she sought no filthy lucre. She lived the life and did the work of a worthy prophetess, the most admirable of the American succession.” <sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Editorial, “An American Prophetess,” *The Independent*, Aug. 23, 1915, pp. 249, 250; cited in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1982), p. 444.

## Chapter 6—A Parting Word to the Reader

In the previous chapter I related the unsolicited testimonials from non-Adventists. My purpose—at least as far as Seventh-day Adventists are concerned—was not to inspire faith, but rather to confirm it. The Scriptures gave several tests for authenticating the validity of one’s claim to the prophetic office. I have applied them, carefully and scrupulously, to Ellen White, and she passes muster. Therefore, I would believe in her and her gift whether any famous people did or did not accept her. You see, *their* acceptance (or lack of it) is no criterion, and is ultimately irrelevant, as far as establishing whether or not she was a prophet.

Jesus said to “doubting” Thomas, “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” ([John 20:29](#)).

Faith is important, but faith must always rest upon adequate evidence. What is my evidence? Why do I believe in Ellen G. White as a legitimate, authentic, last-day prophet of God?

1. As noted above, I have applied the various biblical tests of a true prophet. I find that Ellen White meets every requirement. She has written—and written authoritatively—upon a wide range of topics (see [chapter 2](#)). There is a vast body of material upon which the test of fruitage may be made.

2. I have proved the worth of her testimonials and counsels in my own ministry in North America, in West Africa, and in other parts of the world since, for instance, in Nigeria we were privileged to assist in the founding of the newest Adventist institution of higher learning in that part of the world, the Adventist Seminary of West Africa.

We started literally from the grass roots on 370 acres in the heart of a virgin rain forest. The first year we had two teachers and seven students. And we had an opportunity to apply Ellen White’s various counsels on education here in this new laboratory in a unique way.

We implemented the work-study program advocated by Ellen White, in which a portion of each day is devoted by *both* teachers and students to nonclassroom work experience. In large Adventist colleges and universities today, the logistics make the introduction of this program a rather formidable undertaking. But with only two teachers and seven students that first year, we were able to do it. We conducted classes in the morning and devoted the afternoons to manual labor. And we proved the value of her counsels. For we found that we *really* got acquainted, individually, with our students in this informal setting—got to know them personally, intimately. And we also were able to put across concepts and ideas as we worked side by side that we never could have presented in the more formal setting of the classroom.

Mrs. White's counsels *work*, at the pragmatic level. And for this reason too I believe.

3. My final reason is, admittedly, very subjective. I find that the writings of Ellen White feed my soul as no other writings, save Scripture, can do. I find Jesus as nowhere else (except in the Gospels) in her incomparable biography *The Desire of Ages*, and in the remaining volumes of her trilogy on Christ, *Christ's Object Lessons* and *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*.

I have read Ellen White's published writings in my parsonage study. I have read them in my college office. And—most recently—I have sat in the archival vault of the White Estate at Adventist world headquarters, where I have read original manuscripts and letters. Each time I have heard the voice of God's Holy Spirit speaking *directly* to my soul.

From personal encounters too numerous to recount here, I am satisfied that Mrs. White was a genuine prophet of the Lord. [64]

And I invite you to read these writings and to decide for yourself. As the Imperial Creamery in Los Angeles used to advertise its ice cream: "Tis the taste that tells the tale."