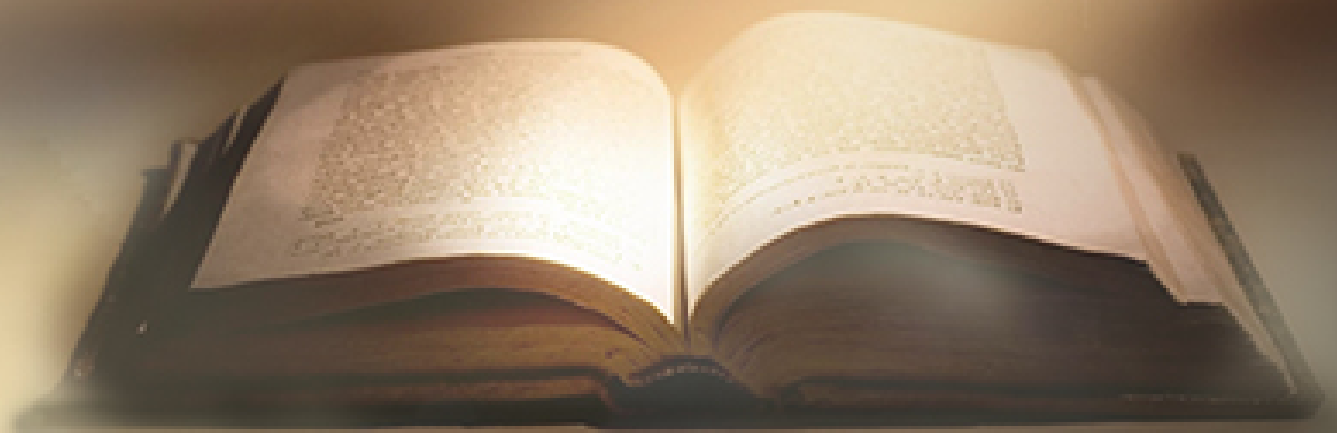


ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE

A PROPHET AMONG YOU



T. HOUSEL JEMISON

A Prophet Among You

Ellen G. White

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Overview

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About the Author

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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FOREWORD

A study of the Biblical doctrine of the gift of prophecy is vital for every Seventh-day Adventist, first, because Adventists accept the Bible as the inspired word of God, prepared for men through the operation of the gift of prophecy; and second, because Seventh-day Adventists believe that God has revived the gift of prophecy in the remnant church through the life and work of Ellen G. White. It is the purpose of this book to outline the reasons for, and the function of, the prophetic gift in both ancient and modern times, so that confidence in the current applicability of the teachings of the Bible and the Ellen White writings might be increased, and that their use might be more fully understood.

The subject matter of the book falls naturally into three categories: (1) a study of the practical working of the gift of prophecy as revealed in the Bible (chapters 1-9); (2) the second advent movement, and the life and work of Ellen White in relation to that movement (chapters 10-15); the place of the writings of Mrs. White in the church today, and a study of some of the topics on which she has written (chapters 16-24). In the first group of chapters no reference is made to the Ellen White writings. First the Scriptural foundation is laid. Then Mrs. White's life and experience are introduced and Bible tests are applied to her. Finally, her writings are brought into consideration.

While this book has been prepared primarily for use in college classes in the Gift of Prophecy, it should be useful to Seventh-day Adventist ministers and others who wish to make a careful study of the place of the prophetic gift in the church today. The importance of the subject increases with each passing year. "As the end draws near and the work of giving the last warning to the world extends, it becomes more important for those who accept present truth to have a clear understanding of the nature and influence of the Testimonies, which God in His providence has linked with the work of the third

angel's message from its very rise." [Testimonies for the Church 5:654](#).

Point will be given to the study if certain objectives are kept in mind:

1. To learn the need for and the function of the prophetic gift as a means of communication between God and His people.

2. To gather from the Bible information concerning the scope of the work and the lines of instruction given through the ancient prophets.

3. To note something of the characteristics of the men called to this work, and the individual style of their writings.

4. To discover the experiences that are characteristic of the prophets in receiving and passing on their messages.

5. To determine the results of various attitudes of individuals and nations toward the prophets and their messages.

6. To learn how to apply the Bible tests by which we may tell whether a prophet is true or false.

7. To learn whether the exercise of the gift of prophecy might be expected to end with the close of the writing of the canonical books of the Bible, or if we might expect to find the gift exercised in the remnant church in a manner similar to that in which it operated in ancient times.

8. To discover whether we may reasonably expect that the scope of work and lines of instruction covered by any manifestation of the gift of prophecy in the remnant church might be as varied and extensive as such work and instruction by the ancient prophets.

9. To draw conclusions regarding the responsibility of the individual members of the remnant church in view of an exercise of the gift of prophecy among them.

10. To investigate the claims of Ellen White to be a messenger of the Lord to the remnant church.

11. To apply to the life and work of Ellen White the Bible tests of a prophet.

12. To consider such portions of the Ellen White writings as are appropriate for those engaged in the study.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the Board of Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications, who greatly hastened the preparation of this book by granting me time to carry out the major portion of the project as part of my responsibility as associate secretary of the Ellen G. White Publications, and to Arthur L. White, secretary of the board, for his valued counsel and constant helpfulness. Thanks is given to the large group of college Bible teachers, administrators, and others who helped plan the outline for the book, and who read the complete manuscript and submitted constructive criticisms. Of this group K. J. Reynolds, J. C. Haussler, and R. W. Olsen have been especially helpful. The latter gave the book trial in the classroom by using it in mimeographed form as the textbook for his college class in the Gift of Prophecy for one year.

Supplementary materials and suggestions for classroom use of this book are available to college teachers from the office of the Department of Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Takoma Park, Washington 12, D.C.

It is hoped that this book will strengthen confidence in, and increase understanding of, the function and importance of the gift of prophecy among God's people in all ages.

T. Housel Jemison.

Washington, D.C.

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“If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.” [Numbers 12:6](#)

Chapter 1—What The Bible Says About Its Origin [1]

What does the Bible have to say about its origin? Interestingly enough, the authors of the sixty-six books that make up the Holy Scriptures do not attempt to prove their divine inspiration. They state simply that their messages are from God, and then pass on to deal with the messages rather than attempt to prove their assertions regarding the source of their information.

In our present investigation of the gift of prophecy, the divine inspiration of the Bible will be taken for granted, and no attempt will be made to prove it. It is the purpose of a study in Evidences of Christianity or in Bible Doctrines to gather the proofs for the inspiration of the Scriptures and study them in a systematic manner. This study is devoted to the operation of the prophetic gift through the ages, and presupposes a confidence in the Bible and its divinely inspired authorship.

“Thus Saith the Lord.”—A careful reading of the Bible reveals a remarkable unity, even uniformity, in the expressions of its authors regarding their understanding of the source of their messages. In some instances no comment is made indicating the writer’s convictions, but the messages themselves make clear that they are of the same origin as the books claiming inspiration. The regularity with which the writers claim their messages to be from God may appear repetitious, and yet every repetition is with a purpose that is not hard to discover.

These men did not want to take credit to themselves for what they wrote. Though their writings bore the impress of their own personality, education, background, and environment, the messages are from God, and the writers wanted no one to mistake that fact. [2] They were honest men, spiritual, keen-minded, having through experience considerable insight into the needs of their people. They were men capable of bearing responsibility and serving as leaders. But these personal qualifications were insufficient to make them safe guides for their nation, and the men themselves recognized that

fact. Consequently, when God had spoken to them, they wanted the people to know of a certainty that the message was of divine rather than human origin.

Again, the way of the prophet was seldom easy. In most instances the very nature of the messages borne tended to turn the people against the messengers. None enjoy, and few are willing, to receive rebuke; in fact, the denunciations of numerous Old Testament prophets have become proverbial. The words of Amos pronouncing judgment on Judah are typical: “Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept His commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked: but I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.” [Amos 2:4, 5](#). Who would have cared to preach such a message without attaching a “thus saith the Lord”?

On the other hand, human promises pertaining to the future are notably unreliable. A man may pledge in good faith, and tomorrow lose the means on which he had counted to fulfill his vow. The prophetic speakers and writers wanted their audiences to recognize and acknowledge that reproof, assurance, and prediction came from a source above and beyond themselves—the only Source on which they could always depend. Who but God could look into the future so much as forty-two literal months, to say nothing of forty-two prophetic months, in such a prediction as this: “And there was given [3] unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.” [Revelation 13:5](#). John, in the first few verses of the Revelation, traces his messages back to God Himself.

It is likely also that the circumstances existing at the time a prophet gave his message to the people had some influence on the use of a variety of expressions by which the prophet made plain that the message he brought was not his own, but God’s. Ezekiel was called to the prophetic office while he was with the captive people of Judah in Babylonia. Daniel and his companions of the royal family had been taken to Babylon in the first captivity of 605 B.C. A few years later, in the second captivity of 597 B.C., Ezekiel of the priestly family was among those uprooted from home and

taken to the pagan capital. Despite the prediction of Jeremiah that the captivity would last for seventy years, false prophets and leaders had encouraged the people to look forward to a speedy return from Babylon. They could hardly imagine God's allowing His people to remain subject to a foreign nation for so long a time.

To counter false hopes and provide spiritual leadership for the exiles, God called young Ezekiel to the prophetic office. The people were unwilling to believe that Jerusalem would be completely destroyed, that they would have to remain in Babylon the full span of Jeremiah's prediction, or that God was with them in their exile. What they needed was a vision of the glory of God, an assurance that all was under His watchful eye. They needed to be reminded of the surety of God's word. What He had said about the future of Jerusalem and of the exiles would surely come to pass.

Under these circumstances it is not difficult to see why Ezekiel repeatedly declared that his message was from the Lord. Three hundred or more times he used expressions like these: "The word of the Lord came," "Thus saith the Lord," "He said unto me," "Thou shalt speak My words," "I the Lord have spoken it," "I am the Lord," "Hear the word of the Lord." If ever a people needed assurance that God was speaking to them, the children of Israel in Babylonian captivity did. And God needed a representative among them. At the close of the prophetic period, He intended to take them back to Palestine and there re-establish them as a nation. In the meantime they had to be prepared for the return so that they would not lapse into the idolatry that had been largely responsible for their exile. Ezekiel's repeated assurance that the voice of God was speaking to them served as a major factor in leading many to recognize the hand of God in their captivity and in the plans for restoration.

[4]

"Given by Inspiration."—"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." [2 Timothy 3:16](#). "All scripture is God-breathed," is the way Paul expressed it originally. It is not the thought that God breathed His message only into man, but that He breathed it out, or spoke it, through man as His agent. Peter's words should be put along with Paul's. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." [2 Peter 1:21](#). God's word, spoken at

the prompting of the Holy Spirit, was the message of the prophets. They could recognize no other source. They confidently believed they were voicing the will of God for His people. Peter, preaching to the people in Solomon's porch, told of things "which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets." [Acts 3:18](#). The men were God's, the messages were His—God-breathed.

[5] *It "Shall Come to Pass."*—Prediction is cited by the prophets as a major indication of the divine source of their messages, and is the nearest approach to the presentation of evidences of inspiration. Isaiah issued God's challenge to the false gods so highly regarded by Israel as well as the heathen nations. "Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods." [Isaiah 41:22, 23](#). It is apparent from the language of the writers that they frequently recognized that the events they recorded were to take place in the far distant future. Neither men nor false gods could see into the future. Therefore, they said, you may have confidence our messages are from God, for He alone can predict things to come.

Daniel's reply to Nebuchadnezzar's request for an interpretation of his dream shows clearly the general attitude of the prophets. "The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, show unto the king; but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.... And He that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living." [Daniel 2:27-30](#). Disclaiming any credit for himself, and pointing out the inability of the king's counselors, Daniel gave full recognition to God's insight into the future. Before his specific interpretation of the dreams of the chief butler and chief baker, Joseph asked the men, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" [Genesis 40:8](#). A little later, while talking to Pharaoh concerning his dream, Joseph acknowledged, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." [Genesis 41:16](#). Throughout the Bible there are many similar indications. The last book of the New Testament opens in the same vein. "The Revelation of Jesus

Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.” [Revelation 1:1, 2](#).

Never did a prophet claim for himself any supernatural power to penetrate the future and predict coming events. Whenever prediction was involved in the messages of the prophets, they made it clear that they believed their enlightenment to be from God. [6]

The Writers Speak of Other Authors

Not only did the prophets claim for themselves divine inspiration, but they recognized the working of the prophetic gift in the experience of other men, both contemporary and of earlier generations. Zechariah decried the stubbornness of Israel: “Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in His Spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts.” [Zechariah 7:12](#). Hosea recognized the divine appointment of Moses to the prophetic leadership of Israel out of Egypt. “And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.” [Hosea 12:13](#). In New Testament times Peter proclaimed that God had spoken of the final restitution of all things “by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” [Acts 3:21](#). Peter also declared that the sufferings of Christ had been “showed by the mouth of all His prophets,” and that their predictions had been fulfilled. [Acts 3:18](#). The prophets knew that the manifestation of the gift of prophecy was not something peculiar to themselves or their generation. They acknowledge that the position of the former prophets was comparable with their own, and their words of equivalent value.

Perhaps even more striking than the mere recognition of the existence of former prophets are the references to their writings as “Scripture.” This is largely a New Testament expression, but several passages designate portions of both the Old and New Testaments as “Scripture.” Paul made a general statement, speaking of the gospel promise, “Which He had promised afore by His prophets in the

- [7] Holy Scriptures.” [Romans 1:2](#). Referring to the record of Abraham’s experience in Genesis, the apostle queries, “For what saith the Scripture?” [Romans 4:3](#). In [Romans 10:11](#) Paul alludes to statements made in both Isaiah and Jeremiah. A little later he speaks of the record of Elijah’s life in 1 Kings as “Scripture.” [Romans 11:2, 3](#). Peter adds his testimony regarding the book of Isaiah by saying that one of Isaiah’s Messianic prophecies “is contained in the Scripture.” [1 Peter 2:6](#). The same apostle witnesses that Paul’s epistles contain some things difficult to be understood “which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures.” [2 Peter 3:15, 16](#). Jesus Himself, quoting from the Psalms, asked, “Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?” [Matthew 21:42](#). Not only did Bible writers recognize the works of the earlier prophets as a part of the Scripture record, but, as in the case of Peter with Paul, there was recognition of a contemporary prophet as an author of sacred writings.

In addition to the designation of certain portions of the Bible as “Scripture,” we find multiplied quotations or paraphrases of words and verses introduced by “it is written” or a similar expression. Perhaps most noteworthy of these are the Saviour’s three quotations from Deuteronomy recorded in [Matthew 4:4, 7, 10](#). It will prove profitable to consult a concordance and look up a number of the passages referred to under “written.”

- Another expression appearing frequently in the New Testament is “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet.” [Matthew 1:22](#). Many variations of this thought appear. Here we find a clear recognition of the predictive element in the work of the prophet. Later prophets testified that they saw, or knew of, the fulfillment of predictions of the earlier prophets. Such statements are made frequently in the New Testament concerning the life experience of Jesus, because of the large number of Old Testament Messianic prophecies which were recognized as being fulfilled in Him. He
- [8] bore repeated testimony to the fulfillment of the prophecies of the early seers.

Use of Earlier Writings

Still another and more subtle mark of the confidence of the later Bible writers in the earlier group, and a clear indication of their careful study and wide knowledge of the former writings, is the manner in which the language of later books incorporates more of phraseology and ideas of earlier books. The simplest way to see something of the tie-in between the two Testaments is to use the ordinary marginal references in the Bible. Cross-checking will reveal scores of ideas and expressions taken directly from Old Testament language used by New Testament writers. A thorough study will produce hundreds of such items. The book of the Revelation is probably the best example. Of the approximately 400 verses in the Revelation, more than three-fifths contain old Testament language. About 550 references are made to passages in the Old Testament. It has been suggested that it is doubtful there is a single sentence not somewhat dependent on the Old Testament for some of its materials. Sometimes the quotations are exact, again there are allusions. As a sample of what may be found throughout the book to a greater or less degree, it will be of interest to notice in parallel columns selections from [Revelation 18](#) which reveal the similar expressions found in the Old Testament.

| Revelation 18 | Old Testament Parallels |
|---|--|
| Revelation 18:4 . “Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” | Jeremiah 51:45, 6 . “My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the Lord.” “Be not cut off in her iniquity.” |
| Revelation 18:7 . “How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.” | Isaiah 47:8 “Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children.” |

| | |
|--|---|
| Revelation 18:2 . “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.” | Isaiah 21:9 . “Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.” |
| [No comparision made] | Isaiah 13:21, 22 . “But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses.” |
| Revelation 18:8 . “She shall be utterly burned with fire.” | Jeremiah 50:32 . “I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him.” |

John’s mind must have been steeped in Old Testament language for him to draw so fully upon it to describe the things that were presented to him in “the Revelation of Jesus Christ.” Were it not for the similarity between the figures and symbols used in the New Testament and the Old, we would, in numerous instances, have scant basis for arriving at correct interpretations of prophecies. The regular use of the language of the older portions of the Scriptures gives us one of our best insights into the knowledge of earlier writings possessed by those prophets who came later. They searched diligently for an understanding of all that had been recorded before their time. “Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” [1 Peter 1:11](#). Daniel gives us an example of the type of studying done. “In the first year of his [Darius’s] reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations

of Jerusalem.” [Daniel 9:2](#); cf. [Jeremiah 25:11, 12](#). While Daniel and Jeremiah were contemporaneous prophets during the first part of the seventy-year period, Daniel studied diligently the product of his fellow prophet. The sentiment “It is written” runs throughout the whole of the Bible.

Claims of Unity

In presenting the prophecies of the first advent of Jesus, all the prophets played their part. This does not necessarily mean that every book of the Bible contains direct Messianic predictions, or that we have a record of predictions from each of the prophets whom God has used. It simply indicates that all of them introduced messages pertaining to the coming Savior in some phase of their work and teaching. “To Him give all the prophets witness.” [Acts 10:43](#). “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David; as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began.” [Luke 1:68-70](#). “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” “And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me.” [Luke 24:27, 44](#).

Jesus showed no hesitancy in turning to the record of the prophets and tracing the complete, unified story of the coming Savior, which had been fulfilled in His own life. There was no need to set aside portions as inaccurate and others as needless. The prophets had not made mistakes; their testimonies needed no apology. With a directness characteristic of Bible writings, these men pointed out in detail the events of the life and ministry of Christ long centuries before He was born in Bethlehem. They vividly portrayed His character and told of the influence of His life on other men. From varying viewpoints, but without contradictions, they made hundreds of references to the coming One. All fitted together so perfectly that one can still trace the events and be more certain today than ever before of the common source of inspiration of all the prophets.

SUMMARY

1. The Bible makes no direct attempt to prove its inspiration. It is repeatedly asserted that individual writers received their messages from God, but no general attempt at proof is undertaken.

2. In a variety of ways Bible writers claim inspiration for themselves, for earlier writers, and for contemporaries.

3. Multiplied quotations, references to the writings of earlier prophets, and allusions on the part of later Bible writers indicate the confidence these men had in the inspiration of their predecessors.

4. A unity exists throughout the Bible which reveals a common source of information for all the writers.

5. From the reading of the Bible one gains the impression that the prophets were convicted that God was using them to communicate to their fellows His messages of instruction, counsel, and admonition.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What significance do you attach to the fact that no real attempt is made in the Bible to prove the inspiration of the Bible writers? Would not such a presentation be particularly helpful to us today? ¹

[12] 2. Make a list of some of the many different expressions used by the various Bible authors showing that they believed they received their messages from God.

3. Expand the list of suggested reasons why the prophets wanted it clearly recognized that their messages were not their own, but God's.

4. How do you account for the fact that some books of the Bible lay no formal claim to divine inspiration? Can you defend their inclusion in the Bible canon?

5. Find a number of Old Testament passages that are quoted in the New Testament. What circumstances called for each quotation? Was it used for proof? For identification? For admonition? Are there some that at first glance seem to be taken out of their setting?

¹See [Psalm 22:18](#); [16:10](#); [69:21](#); [Isaiah 7:14](#); [53:3](#), [7](#), [9](#); [61:1](#); [Micah 5:2](#). See also marginal references throughout the four Gospels.

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Chapter 2—The Need For The Prophetic Gift

When Adam and Eve came from the hands of God, each was a perfect being. They had been made in the image of God, and were given “dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” [Genesis 1:26](#). The earth and all that it contained was to be under man’s dominion. As to his stewardship, he was accountable to no one but God.

Not only was man given a general supervision of all things, but he had a special responsibility in the area that had been set aside as his home. “And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed ... to dress it and to keep it.” [Genesis 2:8-15](#). God had spared no effort to make the first human home on this earth all that heart could desire. His particular attention and interest is indicated in the expression, “And the Lord God planted a garden.”

It was God’s plan that Adam and Eve should reproduce, and that their children should populate the whole earth. As the parents had been made in the image of God, so their children would reflect the divine likeness. Eve had been especially designed to be a perfect companion for her husband. God planned that she should be a helpmeet; that is, suitable, or becoming to him. A perfect husband, a perfect wife, a perfect home, a perfect environment—this was the divine blueprint for a perfect world.

[14] The first pair had free access to everything God had created except one tree which the Creator had designated “the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” [Genesis 2:9](#). They were clearly instructed that under no circumstances were they to eat of the fruit of this tree. They were not so much as to touch it. [Genesis 3:3](#). God had pronounced the whole creation “very good.” [Genesis 1:31](#). There was nothing harmful in this tree itself; but God knew it was essential that the love and obedience of these newly created ones be tested so that character might be developed.

In the mind of Adam and Eve there was no inclination to disobey their Creator, no tendency to do evil. On the other hand, every effort had been put forth by the Creator to enable man to live without ever yielding to the temptations that would be brought by Satan, who had been cast out of heaven as a result of the war between his forces and those of Christ. [Revelation 12:7-9](#). Every trait of character was noble, every desire holy. He was made only “a little lower than the angels,” and had been crowned with “glory and honor.” [Psalm 8:5](#). He was “the son of God.” [Luke 3:38](#). Provision had been made to supply his every need and desire. There was every reason why he should always be obedient to the will of God.

But the Bible record tells us that the first real test of Adam and Eve’s loyalty to God ended in their following their own inclination rather than the command of God. Satan, using the serpent as his mouthpiece, persuaded Eve that God was withholding from her and Adam something that would be good for her and her husband. While the temptation was apparently a trivial one, Satan had schemed cleverly to bring upon the unsuspecting Eve a synthesis of all temptations. By an appeal to what John calls “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (compare [1 John 2:16](#) with [Genesis 3:6](#)), the devil deceived Eve ([1 Timothy 2:14](#)) and led her to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When she offered the fruit to her husband, he ate also and thus sinned deliberately.

Changes in Man’s Relations and Thinking

[15]

With the entrance of sin into the world, there began a sequence of events and changes in man and in the natural world around him that made it impossible for man’s relation with God to remain as it had been from the day he was created. Even though God came again to the garden to talk with the transgressors, barriers had been erected which changed every relationship. Isaiah states the matter concisely: “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you.” [Isaiah 59:2](#). Not only were there barriers between the created ones and the Creator, but basic changes took place in the mind of man that made it impossible for God to deal with him as in the past. As a background for the study of the

place of the prophetic gift in the relation between God and man, it is essential that one understand the conditions that made the gift necessary. What happened to the mind of man as the result of sin?

He could no longer see God face to face. [Exodus 33:20](#). It seems obvious from [Genesis 3:8](#) that the coming of the Lord into the garden was a usual occurrence. Apparently Adam and Eve had enjoyed talking with the Creator on many occasions; but, because of God's nature it is impossible for sin to exist in His presence. To shield our first parents from the brightness of His glory, which would have brought them instant death, God veiled His face as He did later when talking with Moses. [Exodus 33:20-23](#). That Adam and Eve could no longer see God as He truly was, made a difference in their relation to Him. Two persons cannot maintain the same kind of fellowship at a distance that they do when constantly together. Adam's transgression caused the beginning of a separation which has continued for six thousand years. Small wonder that men who maintain that separation today know so little of their Creator.

[16] *He came to know evil as well as good.* [Genesis 3:22](#). It was God's plan that man should know nothing but good. It was not necessary to know evil in order to develop character. All that was essential was that evil should be resisted and good should be cherished. However, the impulses that led Adam and Eve to a knowledge of evil have been carefully cultivated by man, and it has become easier to yield to evil than to hold to good. God's plan would have meant a continual growth of good in the life of every man. Not only did man transgress the divine law, but there was introduced into his mind an entirely different kind of thinking. His mind could never again be exactly as it had been.

He became afraid. [Genesis 3:8-10](#). Adam and Eve had known no fear; there was nothing to cause them to be afraid. Their lives were in full harmony with the will of God, and every creature on the earth was subject to their command. They could see the character of God revealed in all things that had been made. As long as they remained away from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil there was nothing that could harm them. But when they had rebelled against God and He came to talk with them, they were afraid. What had happened? "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear." [1 John 4:18](#). They had failed in love. Where before there

had been constant devotion to the Creator and joy in His presence, now, when they heard His voice, they ran to hide. No longer did they have perfect love which would admit no fear. Seeds of terror sprang up to choke an ever-growing affection. Fear has increased steadily through the ages, until, in the last days, there will be an unprecedented time when “men’s hearts” fail “them for fear.” [Luke 21:26](#). This constitutes a sign of the nearness of the end.

He became subject to death. [Genesis 2:17](#); [Ecclesiastes 9:5](#). The work of Christ is described as being to “deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” [Hebrews 2:15](#). Death will be the last of man’s enemies to be destroyed. [1 Corinthians 15:26](#). The knowledge of the imminence of death has done much to shape man’s thinking and actions. Age, physical infirmity, senility, are factors to be reckoned with in every life—factors which would have had no need to be considered had it not been for the disobedience in Eden.

[17]

He began defending himself against God’s inquiries. [Genesis 3:12](#). Few persons are willing to accept their responsibility for sins of either omission or commission. Slyness and scheming have become an integral part of human thinking in an attempt to shift blame from self to another. Misrepresentation and outright lying have resulted, until today many persons endeavor to shift responsibility for wrong in an attempt to better their own position at the expense of others. Adam did not want to bear the consequences of his own rebellion, and his thinking had changed sufficiently to cause him to try to lay the blame for his action upon the one whom God had made to be his beloved companion.

His mind was corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. [2 Corinthians 11:3](#). “Simplicity” is used here in the sense of “purity.” Previously man’s mind had been uncontaminated by outside influences. Now, instead of working in a simple, straightforward manner, Adam’s mind was confused. The kind of thinking he had been accustomed to was spoiled. It was like the dead flies in the apothecary’s ointment that Solomon uses so vividly as an illustration of man’s folly.

He became blind, ignorant, alienated from God. [Ephesians 4:18](#). As the centuries passed, man degenerated more and more, so that Paul’s description of the spiritual condition of the Gentiles is ac-

[18] curate. The understanding has become darkened, not because God wants it that way, but because man has failed to concentrate on deep spiritual truths. He remains ignorant of the love and mercy of God and the plan of salvation. He is like a child who knows nothing of the love and care of a parent. Such a child is unable to comprehend the meaning of a true home where the interest of each member of the family is bound up with the interests of every other member. The thinking of that person becomes warped, and he remains an alien from his loved ones. Sin brought alienation, not only into the home relationship, but between man and his God. It is difficult for many to understand that God wants to establish a relationship that will bring man eternal life and happiness.

He became carnally minded. [Romans 8:6, 7](#). In one sense all the changes that took place in man's mind as the result of sin might be summarized by the expression "carnally minded." The word from which "carnal" comes is the one which designates the human body. Paul uses it to designate that which pertains to the material realm in contrast to the spiritual. Mere humanity is in contrast to the combination of humanity and divinity which God intends. All the other characteristics mentioned contribute to the condition of carnality where the thinking is focused on the things of earth and the body rather than on things above. As mentioned previously, "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." [1 John 2:16](#).

All of these changes did not take place immediately when Adam and Eve sinned. But the train of events and the changes which have resulted in humanity's present degenerate condition were initiated when Eve reached out and took of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

God's Problem

[19] God might have followed any one of several courses of action after sin entered the world. He might have blotted man out of existence. Had He chosen, He could have simply abandoned man to his own devices, allowing him to pursue the path he had chosen. Or, if He had seen best, He might have decided that since man had failed

as a free agent He would make him incapable of further sin, so that the universe would not feel the effects of rebellion on the earth.

Of course, none of these possibilities could be compatible with the thinking of the God of infinite love. The only course open to the Creator was to do everything possible to restore humanity to the original condition of perfection, so that they would once again be ready to associate with heavenly beings. But that restoration could be accomplished only on the basis of man's personal choice. It must not be imposed on him through the superior power of the Creator.

In order to bring this about, man must receive instruction concerning the loving Creator and His power to redeem all who choose to be saved. Since sin no longer permitted God to speak face to face with fallen humanity and to teach them as He had done formerly, some other means of communication had to be established. Through the centuries the Lord has used a variety of methods to maintain contact with men in order to instruct them in His will. Several of these methods will be considered briefly.

1. *Angels*. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" [Hebrews 1:14](#). "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." [Psalm 34:7](#). In addition to the guidance and protection which one ordinarily thinks of as angel ministry, angels have been used as agents of communication carrying messages from the throne of God to men.

Two angels brought Lot this message: "Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city." [Genesis 19:15](#). The angel of the Lord spoke to Balaam the message that convicted him and led him to confess, "I have sinned." [Numbers 22:31-35](#). It was an angel who gave Israel the emphatic instruction that no league should be made with the nations in the land of Canaan, lest the gods of the nations should become a snare to them. Gideon was called to his responsibility of delivering Israel from its enemies by an angel. He was instructed, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" [Judges 6:11-14](#). An angel announced to Joseph the true identity of the child to be born to Mary. [Matthew 1:18-25](#). Gabriel spoke to Zacharias of the coming birth

of John the Baptist. Throughout the Bible there are records of the appearance of angels with messages from God.

2. *Created works.* “For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.” [Romans 1:20](#). “Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” [Acts 14:17](#). “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.” [Psalm 19:1, 2](#). The silent witness of nature is an agent to bring to man messages which reveal the wisdom and power of the Creator.

3. *Urim and Thummim.* Two precious stones were set in the breastplate of Israel’s high priest, and by these the Lord guided the spiritual leader of the people in making decisions. At the time Joshua took up his work, God gave Moses this instruction for the new leader: “And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation.” [Numbers 27:21](#). The use of the Urim and Thummim apparently became an important factor in God’s communication with His people as the high priest brought before the Lord specific questions to which positive or negative replies could be given.

4. *Dreams.* Grouped with the Urim and the prophets is another frequently used method of communication. “And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.” [1 Samuel 28:6](#). Dreams were used to make revelations to prophets, as will be discussed later; but they also brought messages to those who had not been called to the prophetic office.

It seems that the youthful Joseph had not been called to be a prophet, but the dreams God sent him had vital prophetic significance to the family. [Genesis 37](#). The dreams of pharaoh’s out-of-favor butler and baker were interpreted by Joseph. [Genesis 40](#). They prepared the way for the later interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream. [Genesis 41](#). The dream of the Midianite soldier, interpreted by his fellow,

encouraged Gideon to go forward in response to God's command. Nebuchadnezzar's dreams ([Daniel 2:1ff.](#) and [4:5ff.](#)) prepared the way for the elevation of Daniel to a position of leadership, and they led to the eventual conversion of the king. The numerous examples of communication through dreams reveal the deep impression they made on the mind, and the significance attached to them.

5. *Voice from heaven.* As far as recorded incidents indicate, the number of times God spoke a message by a voice from heaven was limited. The major occasions were concentrated during the brief ministry of Jesus. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." [Matthew 3:17](#). These were the words the Almighty spoke from heaven at the baptism of Jesus of Nazareth. On the mount of transfiguration the words of approbation were repeated, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." [Matthew 17:5](#). Finally, during the last week of the life of the Saviour before His crucifixion, as He commented on the news that certain Greeks had come to see Him, the voice of the Father came again. His words in response to Jesus' request, "Father, glorify Thy name," were, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." [John 12:28](#).

[22]

Centuries earlier, God had come down on Mount Sinai to speak to Moses in such a fashion as to cause all the people to hear. [Exodus 19:9, 19](#). While this was somewhat different from the instances in the life of Jesus, apparently the purpose was similar, and this occasion may be fittingly grouped with the others. On other occasions God apparently spoke to Moses and Aaron from the pillar of cloud. [Number 12:5, 6](#).

6. *Holy Spirit and the individual.* One of the most encouraging of all God's promises is that He will constantly guide the individual who chooses to submit his ways to the Creator. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." [Proverbs 3:6](#). By the prompting of the human mind the Holy Spirit in a personal way draws each child of God within the sphere of influence of divine counsel. "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." [Isaiah 30:21](#). "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but

the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” [Matthew 10:19, 20](#).

[23] 7. *Christ in person*. Most impressive and influential of all God’s methods of communication with man is the one Paul mentions in the introduction to his letter to the Hebrews. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds.” [Hebrews 1:1, 2](#). Christ came to reveal to mankind the character of the Father in a fashion that could not be done by any sinful man. Only He could open men’s eyes to see “the Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” [Exodus 34:6](#). “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” [John 14:9](#). This was Christ’s assertion when Philip urged, “Lord, show us the Father.” [Verse 8](#). In Jesus the whole of the will of heaven was communicated to earth.

8. *Prophets*. Seven methods of communication which God has used have been mentioned. Each has had its place in the divine plan to reach the minds of fallen men. Each has been a part of the Lord’s plan to maintain communication with man in the attempt to bring him back to a condition where it will be possible to give him immortality. The barrier erected by sin necessitated a roundabout approach. The Lord chose to make that approach largely through the work of the prophets whom He selected to represent Him among the people.

“Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.” [Amos 3:7](#). The major revelations of the will of God for the instruction of the church in all ages have been given through the prophets. “Because He had compassion on His people” ([2 Chronicles 36:15](#)), He repeatedly sent His messengers to Israel to teach them His will, rebuke their backslidings, comfort their sorrows, encourage them to good works, and call them to repentance. So important did the Lord consider the work of the prophets that if the people persisted in rejecting the messages of these agents, God said there was nothing more He could do for them. “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.” [2 Chronicles 36:16](#).

Communications to the prophets generally came in the form of visions or dreams. “If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.” [Numbers 12:6](#). God opened to His chosen men scenes of the past, present, and future; and He directed them to speak, write, or retain their revelations as the occasion demanded. The nature of these revelations and their accompanying phenomena are to be considered at some length a little later. Our present objective is to discover why God used this method of communicating His messages to mankind. [24]

Why Prophets Were Used

1. The gift of prophecy was used to prepare the way for Christ’s first advent. “Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” [Hebrews 2:17](#). To work out the plan of salvation it was essential that God become man, partake fully of his nature, live among men, be tempted in all points as other men are, and in human flesh gain complete victory over sin. To bring man’s thinking and living back into harmony with God’s, a revelation had to be given through a life. Choosing men to work for other men and to pass on to them special messages from God is obviously the most effective general method that could have been chosen. Thus, through prophets the Creator accomplished the preparation needed before Jesus came to earth.

2. Prophets stood before the people as representatives of the Lord. Their very presence showed the people that God was sufficiently interested in them and close enough to them to choose men from among them to represent Him. They were men “subject to like passions” as their neighbors; not visitors from another world, but men among men. While the plan was subject to dangers because of the weakness of humanity in the persons selected, yet it possessed inherent possibilities for success not present in any other method.

In a sense all the prophets of the Old Testament were forerunners of Christ, types of the coming Messiah. Peter, addressing the people in Solomon’s porch, avouched that in Jesus was fulfilled Moses’ [25]

prediction. He said, “A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear.” [Acts 3:22](#). Compare [Deuteronomy 18:15](#). Jesus is listed among the prophets, for He represented God before the people, spoke the messages of heaven, by divine revelation penetrated the future and unveiled things to come, and called men to loyalty to the Father. Every loyal and devoted prophet either typified or memorialized the Master as the greatest of prophets. They did the same kind of work He did. They were His men, and as such did a work that could never have been done so effectively by an angel or a voice from heaven. As the life of Christ revealed to mankind God’s personal interest and love, so the lives of the prophets demonstrated that the Lord was going as far as He could to reveal Himself to His people. The presence of the prophet was a constant reminder of the presence of God.

3. Prophets kept men constantly aware of God’s instruction to them. They must never entertain the idea that they had no access to divine counsel. A prophet among them would be a continual reminder of the nearness and availability of all the instruction they needed. This was emphasized by the Lord in [Deuteronomy 30:11-14](#): “For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.”

What was true of times when a prophet was personally among God’s people is also true of those who have access to the written testimony of the prophets in the Bible. Counsel is always available and is never far off.

[26] 4. Through the prophets God could maintain direct connection with the people without talking with them face to face. Visions and dreams served the same purposes as would face-to-face conversation. In vision the prophet could be taken into the very presence of the Lord. His eyes could see the King in His glory on His throne, a sight that no natural eye could see. His reaction to what he had seen would be that of a man, his descriptions in human language. The Spirit of God guided as these revelations were passed on to the people,

so there was no misrepresentation. They were described in the best manner of which the prophet was capable. Messages through the chosen prophet were intended to accomplish the same purposes as a personal communication from the Creator.

5. It was essential that the people should have before them a demonstration of what fellowship with God could accomplish in a human life. Though “subject to like passions as we are,” the prophets were men who walked with God, and as such could give witness to the transforming grace of the Holy Spirit and the molding influence of His power in the daily life. While the evidences were not always so striking as when Moses came down from the mount with his face shining, yet there was no mistaking the fact that the personal communion of the prophet with God made a distinct difference in his experience. To the people who were receptive and responsive, this served as an invitation to a closer walk with God. This kind of witness could have been given only by one man to another.

6. The presence of the prophets tested the people as to their attitude toward God. The Lord knew that the way the people treated His prophets was the way they would treat Him if He was among them. His position appears to have been well taken when we consider the manner in which Christ was received.

7. Prophets assisted in the plan of salvation, for God has consistently used a combination of the human and the divine as His most effective means for reaching men. Noah and his family could have been saved without the building of an ark, but God wanted human effort combined with His. The tables of stone that were preserved in the earthly sanctuary were the ones cut out by the hands of Moses on which the law was inscribed by the finger of God. Man provided the fuel, but God kindled the fire that consumed the sacrifices of the sanctuary. Jesus Himself was the product of a mysterious blending of the divine with the human. Man, as God’s major means of communication, only rounds out the picture of His most effective method of dealing with the human race.

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8. As God worked through the prophets, He had in mind a broad plan which included the preparation of a written record that He would put into the hands of all men. The great principles of His government, and illustrations of how these principles had worked in the lives of men, were set forth. A consistent cumulative record,

a product of human effort under divine guidance, was intended to wield a constant influence and give a sense of continuity and unity in the working out of the plan of salvation. In every age the plan has been the same, but the teaching of it has been adapted to the particular needs of the people of the age. From the lives of men through the centuries have been selected those incidents best suited to teach succeeding generations the lessons they needed most. “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” [1 Corinthians 10:11](#).

Nothing, of course, was left entirely in the hands of men. God’s plan was, and still is, to link divine power with the communications given to the prophets so that they would be effective in the lives of those who were willing to accept them. The instruction itself would bring about the necessary transformation; that was the work of the Holy Spirit in making the word of God “quick, and powerful.”

[28] While there are obvious reasons for the general utilization of the prophets in communicating the divine will to mankind, yet each of the other methods revealed in the Scriptures has had its particular place. Each has been used in special instances when it served more effectively than the gift of prophecy. It is profitable to analyze the type of situation in which each method was used. Since God always uses the most effective means possible under the circumstances, it is clear that no single method would have served His purposes. He was endeavoring to turn men from sin to righteousness so it would be possible for Him to completely transform their minds and restore in them the image of Christ. The ministry of the prophets was the most effective general means God could devise for reaching man with the plan of salvation.

The outstanding product of the ministry of the prophets is the Bible. As Christ revealed God in His life, so the Bible stands in written form as the supreme revelation of the character and will of God. Had there been no personal ministry on the part of the prophets other than the writing of the Book, the word would reveal the way by which man might be restored to oneness with God. Earlier in this chapter we noted eight results of sin upon the human mind. Through the gift of prophecy—the ministry of individual prophets, and the writing of the Scriptures—God has revealed the correction for each

defect, the way of supplying each deficiency, the path of return from each defection. The changes in man's relations and thinking will be noted again, and with these will be the Bible remedy for each defect. Let us give particular attention to the close connection between the revelations through the prophets and the proposed means of restoration.

The Results of Sin and the Remedy for Each

Man could not see God face to face. "If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and *have seen Him*. Philip saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" [John 14:7-9](#). (Italics supplied.) Christ reveals the Father, and the Scriptures reveal Christ, for "they are they which testify of Me." [John 5:39](#). [29]

Man came to know evil as well as good. Unfortunately, no one can avoid being acquainted with some of the evil that exists around him. As long as we are in this world we cannot avoid some contact with evil and its results. But no mind needs to dwell on evil. Through the prophets enough of good has been made available that it is possible to feed the mind regularly with good. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." [Philippians 4:8](#).

Man was afraid. All fear may be eliminated from the life. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.... He that feareth is not made perfect in love." [1 John 4:18](#). "But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." [1 John 2:5](#).

He was subject to death. Although subject to death, Christ gave man hope, for He said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." [John 6:63](#).

Man began defending Himself. Through the straight testimony of the prophets the Lord has caused men to acknowledge their sins and to repent of them. David's experience is only one of many examples.

Nathan, the prophet, accused: “Thou art the man.” David confessed: “I have sinned.” [2 Samuel 12:7, 13](#). Like a sword, the word cuts deep into the mind, discerning its thoughts and intents. It convicts men of the truth that they cannot hide their actions or thoughts from God.

[30] *Man’s mind was corrupted.* The change of a corrupt mind calls for creative power. This, too, is provided through the word. “Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” [Ephesians 4:22-24](#).

Man became blind, ignorant, and alienated from God. Greatest of all the prophets, Jesus quoted another prophet when He outlined His work on earth. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.” [Luke 4:18](#). The assurance is given, “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling.” [Ephesians 1:17, 18](#).

Man became carnally minded. Divine provision is made so that the mind need not be devoted to the things of the flesh. “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” [Romans 12:2](#). The manner of cleansing is specified: “That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” [Ephesians 5:26](#).

The pattern for bringing about the transformation may be summarized in a few words:

“Christ in you, the hope of glory.” [Colossians 1:27](#). This is the great objective.

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” [Ephesians 3:17](#). This is the way Christ dwells within man.

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” [Romans 10:17](#). This is the path by which Christ finds entrance into the human life.

[31] Christ and the Bible are so closely associated in the working out

of the plan of salvation that each is called the “Word.” The grace of God, ministered through the agency of the Word, brings about the transformation and restores man’s mind to its original allegiance to God. The gift of prophecy has been the means of placing before men God’s plan of restoration.

SUMMARY

1. Man was created perfect, but without a fully developed character.
2. The first major test brought to Adam and Eve resulted in their yielding to Satan’s temptation.
3. Sin not only erected a barrier between man and God, but brought about changes in man’s thinking and in his basic relationship to God. It was essential for God to establish methods of communication with man in order to reclaim him.
4. Several methods of communication have been used, but the most general one has been the giving of instruction through the ministry of the prophets.
5. By revealing His will through prophets, God has offered to man the way by which he may be restored to his original relationship with God.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What made it impossible for God to talk face to face with man after sin was introduced into the world?
2. Study carefully each of the methods of communication listed. Find as many additional examples of these methods as possible. After checking on several incidents under each heading, what conclusion do you reach as to the kind of circumstances under which this particular variety of communication was generally used? What does it seem that God was trying to accomplish in each instance?
3. Compare the gift of prophecy with each of the other methods discussed. In what ways is it superior to the other methods as a means of communication? Make your comparison with each method separately. Do not generalize.

4. Find additional examples of God's use of a combination of the human and the divine in the working out of the plan of salvation.

5. How far can God go toward bringing about a complete transformation in the mind of a man in his present life?

6. In your opinion, have the prophets adequately fulfilled the purposes the Lord had in mind in calling them to their special work?

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Chapter 3—The Prophets And Their Function

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It is difficult to imagine a more diverse group of personalities than the ancient prophets. Besides their individual differences, with their work spread over a period longer than from the breakup of the Roman Empire to the present, there was little in their times or environment to draw them to unity. Who could have differed more than one man who had been drawn out of a nation of idolaters, and another who had been reared from childhood in the precincts of God's tabernacle? What more varied attitudes could have developed than those of a man trained for twenty-eight years to occupy the throne of the greatest nation of the day and those of a simple herdsman called to bear a message to a rebellious neighboring nation? There is no indication that God chose men of any particular kind of background, personality, talents, or education. He chose the man he could use best at the moment, or the one He could best prepare for future service. He apparently disregarded any set pattern, and gave attention only to the suitability of the man for the task. Some of the reasons for this procedure seem obvious, others are somewhat obscure.

Paul reveals something of the problem that faced him in his attempt to reach as many persons as possible in his generation. "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, ... that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." [1 Corinthians 9:19-22](#). A message to go to every nation, and tongue, and people must not be built in a restricted manner. Many minds, talents, personalities, environments, and lines of activity must lend their influence to make the message appealing to so wide a field.

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Men God Used

Among the workers for God there is a place for every kind of person who is willing to let himself be used. Race, nationality, or environment forms no barrier. Since our attention at present is focused on the Bible, naturally most of the men considered will be Hebrews; but God is not limited except as men disqualify themselves for His service.

The prophets did not differ greatly from other men. Even Elijah, one of the two of whom it is recorded that he was taken to heaven without seeing death, is spoken of by another prophet as “a man subject to like passions as we are.” [James 5:17](#). Paul and Barnabas placed themselves in that same classification after the Lycaonians declared, “The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.” [Acts 14:11](#). See [verse 15](#). Not only were prophets subject to like passions as we are, but, like Moses at Kadesh and David in his dealings with Uriah the Hittite, at times they were overcome by temptation and sinned against God. Elijah became discouraged and wished that he might die; Jonah was despondent when his prediction was not fulfilled. Abraham twice misrepresented his true relationship with Sarah because he was afraid. The list might be extended, not to excuse similar sins in ourselves, but to show that God does not create a special kind of man as a prophet. These were men among men whom the Lord used as best He could.

[35] One of the most notable characteristics of the Bible is that it fits the needs of every individual in every generation. No one can justifiably say that because of the point of view from which it was written it does not touch his case or problems. The true Author planned it thus. Each book bears the marks of the background, education, personality, and experience of its writer. Each portion of the record yields a richer harvest of spiritual truth when we learn of the life of the man behind it. Without any attempt at the moment to compare or contrast these lives, we will note something of the background, lifework, and personality of some of these Bible prophets, so we may see the variety of men God used to accomplish His purposes.

Abraham. Although Abraham wrote no book of the Bible, he holds a prominent place in both Old and New Testament thinking. When the Lord spoke to Abimelech, king of Gerar, in a dream

He called Abraham a prophet. [Genesis 20:7](#). His name is used repeatedly in connection with the promises of inheritance in the land of Canaan ([Deuteronomy 1:8](#)), the perpetuation of the worship of the true God ([Exodus 3:15](#)), and the final inheritance of the whole world by the righteous ([Romans 4:13](#)). Much of what was revealed to Abraham through the prophetic gift seems to have been related to these three thoughts.

Recent archaeological excavations have shown that Abraham's home city, Ur of the Chaldees, was a wealthy city with a high degree of cultural development. Abraham himself was probably well educated, and the Bible record seems to indicate that the family was prosperous. Unfortunately some of the members of the family fell into the idolatrous ways of the city, and even Terah, Abraham's father, served other gods in Ur. [Joshua 24:2](#). At an advanced age Abraham was called to leave the culture and comparative ease of Ur and go into a land of which he knew nothing. He was unaware of his goal, but he was ready to follow God's leading.

Subsequent events reveal much of the character and personality of this man who became "the Friend of God." [James 2:23](#). He led his household in spiritual activities. His unselfishness is demonstrated in his dealings with Lot. The firmness of his faith is commended in [Hebrews 11](#), despite the failures recorded in Genesis. God used him and his son to give one of the clearest pictures of what the sacrifice of the Son of God meant to both the Father and the Son. Abraham was widely and favorably known among the surrounding tribes in Canaan. He was a man of stature and influence.

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Moses. Born into the home of slaves at a time when all male children of the Israelites were condemned to die, Moses' life was protected by the favor of the daughter of the pharaoh of Egypt. The child's early years were spent in his own home, but his parents were constantly aware that soon he would leave that home for the royal palace. Every effort was made to prepare him to stand true in the time when he would be exposed to pagan customs, society, and religion. Then came the years in the court of Egypt with their broad civil and military training. Every enticement was offered the young adopted prince, but he made his choice on the basis of eternal values rather than on the fleeting "pleasures of sin."

Principles of truth had become so firmly implanted in the life of the young Moses that later influences could not turn him from them. Despite Egypt's offers, Moses adhered to his faith in God. He was willing to risk everything to accomplish what he thought God wanted him to do for the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. His remarkable adaptability is revealed in [Exodus 2:21](#), describing Moses' attitude toward his life in the wilderness after his escape from Egypt: "And Moses was content to dwell with the man." The change from the constant activity of the royal court and the army headquarters to the quiet solitude of a desert dwelling would not have brought contentment to many a man with the energy and capability of Moses. Few princes of a powerful royal house would have been content to spend their days as shepherds. Instead of attendants gratifying his every wish, he now cared for the needs of a flock of sheep. His home was a tent instead of a palace. In these circumstances Moses spent forty years under the tutorship of God to prepare him to serve as leader of his people. All this background contributed to the formation of an unusual type of character and personality. Moses came out of his training period a kind, considerate, compassionate man with rare abilities as an organizer, administrator, lawmaker, and judge. His dependence was on God, and faith was a reality in his life.

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Samuel. In his youth Samuel left his parents and home as did Moses, but instead of being taken to the royal court of a pagan king this boy went to live with the high priest at the sanctuary of God. Although the environment would ordinarily be thought to be the best possible, it must be remembered that Eli had utterly failed in the rearing of his own sons. The Lord accused Eli of not restraining his sons and of honoring them above God. But while he was still a child, Samuel grew in favor with both the Lord and men. As the years passed, "all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord." [1 Samuel 3:20](#). Surrounded by the obvious corruption existing in the lives of many of the priests, Samuel maintained strict integrity and purity of character. Although he lacked the firm, guiding hand of an earthly father, he developed into the strong man who could in old age demand of the people: "Witness against me before the Lord, and before His anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I

taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand." [1 Samuel 12:3, 4.](#)

As priest, prophet, and judge, Samuel had led the people fairly, sympathetically, and honestly. Yet he had to listen to their demand for a king to be appointed over them, and at God's direction he anointed the king. Instead of resenting the loss of authority, the prophet became the friend and counselor of the new king; and he loved Saul like a son. Samuel ranks high among the great men whose lives are pictured in the Scriptures.

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David. Were there no other characterization of David than the words of Samuel, one might well visualize the kind of man he was. "The Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people." [1 Samuel 13:14.](#) As a young man, David enters the Bible story when God directs Samuel to anoint him to be king over Israel. The tales of his bravery in combat with wild animals and with men are well known. His rise from shepherd to the throne was a perilous time, and it gave abundant opportunity for him to develop strong traits of character and an abiding confidence in God. Though filled with youthful enthusiasm and eager to press forward, David was willing to wait for God to designate the time when he should occupy the throne. He refused to take things into his own hands and kill Saul. His later sin reveals the constant danger confronting even the most earnest Christian. His recovery is a demonstration of the long-suffering of God and the power of His grace.

Few men have shown a wider range of capabilities than David. As musician, poet, singer, military man in both subordinate and commanding positions, lawmaker, counselor, king, architect, organizer, and executive, he revealed large native abilities well developed through education and experience. His psalms indicate deep insight into the working of the human mind, a practical knowledge of spiritual realities, and a personal acquaintance with God.

Amos. Under inspiration of the Spirit of God, a rugged herdsman of Tekoa became a heroic messenger for the Lord. Amos must have led his sheep over some of the same hills where David had spent his

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youth and where he had been a fugitive. He was an outdoor man who had lacked the opportunity for education in the schools of the prophets; but he was sturdy and fearless. Amos is a striking example of the way God can take a man who is technically untrained and make him an effective worker. Little is said of the man himself, but his words help us to penetrate his thinking.

When Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, tried to send Amos home to Judah to do his prophesying, the herdsman-prophet made no defense other than that God had called him from the flock and had said, “Go, prophesy unto My people Israel.” The prophet clearly implied that he was not in Israel from personal choice, and that he would stay until his work was done, for God had sent him. See [Amos 7:10-17](#). His knowledge of outdoor life echoes in figures of speech through the book, and the type of illustrations reveal the mind of the man. The tempest and whirlwind (1:14), the height of the cedar, the strength of the oak (2:9), the cart full of sheaves (2:13), the lion roaring in the forest (3:4), the bird in the snare (3:5), the remains of a sheep snatched from a lion (3:12), the kine of Bashan (4:1), the palmerworm and the drought (4:7-10), proclaim the individualistic thinking, the powers of observation, and the spiritual insight of the prophet. Much of this grew out of his early training and environment. The response of the man to the call of God, and the brilliant way in which he discharged his responsibility place him high in the ranks of a notable company of men of God.

[40] *Daniel*. “And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king’s seed, and of the princes; children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.” [Daniel 1:3, 4](#). Little needs to be added to this Spirit-prompted characterization to gain a picture of the kind of person Daniel was. Handsome of feature, sturdy of body, brilliant of mind, he received the best education available to a Hebrew lad of the royal line. His mind was stored with the Scriptures, and his character developed in harmony with its principles.

In Babylon, Daniel rose from the status of prisoner of war to prime minister, and he held that position under the kings of two rival empires. His firmness to principle has become proverbial; his wisdom and tact command respect. From our point of view it is almost inconceivable that a man who, on the night of the collapse of the Babylonian kingdom was its “third ruler” ([Daniel 5:29](#)), should soon afterward be made chief aide to its conqueror. “It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first.... Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.” [Daniel 6:1-3](#). Because of their association with Daniel, mighty rulers were led to acknowledge the power of Daniel’s God. “The king [Nebuchadnezzar] answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets.” [Daniel 2:47](#). “Then King Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages.... I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and steadfast forever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end.” [Daniel 6:25, 26](#).

Through this man, whose confidence in God remained unwavering whether he faced monarchs or lions or enemies in high places, the Lord chose to reveal long-term prophecies that reach from Daniel’s time to the day when “the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness [41] of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.” [Daniel 7:27](#). His character ranks him among the noblest of the royal line of the kingdom of God. His revelations classify him as unsurpassed in importance among the prophets. His unchanging constancy in the things of God, his control of his mental and physical powers, his dignity and courtesy, set him before us as an exemplar among men and prophets.

Paul. A “Hebrew of the Hebrews,” “a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee,” was the way Paul described his ancestry and religion. Paul knew no method of working other than to throw every energy into doing the task at hand. Study in the school of Gamaliel, persecution of the hated Christians, as the apostle to the Gentiles, preaching

Christ—each, in turn, received the same fervent devotion. His brilliant mind, superior education, pure Hebrew ancestry, Roman citizenship, thorough conversion, and unflagging zeal made Paul the kind of man God could use for one of the most difficult tasks ever to face any man—introducing Christianity to the Gentile world.

Of all Christian preachers, other than the Saviour Himself, Paul has commanded the greatest respect. His clear grasp of the principles of righteousness by faith in contrast with attempts to be saved as a reward for good works grew out of the two phases of his own life experience, as a Pharisee and as a servant of Jesus Christ. His ability as preacher, teacher, and apologist sets him apart from the preacher multitude, and declares him to be in a classification where he has few companions. His fearlessness and conclusiveness in dealing with heresies left both legalists and antinomians with little argument to support them. Paul might well have added to his description of himself that he was “a preacher of preachers,” and the “teacher of teachers.”

[42] These few incomplete biographical notes are intended to start the thinking of the student upon the men God chose to serve Him as prophets. Nothing in a man’s background, education, or occupation in itself excluded him from being called to the sacred office. In fact, it appears that it was part of God’s plan to choose men from as wide a range of heritages and as diverse characteristics as possible in order to make an appeal with the gospel message to every kind of mind. The man’s nature and personality in no wise altered the import of his message or the fact of its inspiration.

Function of the Prophets

What use did God make of these men of diversified talents, experience, training, and education? What was the range of the activities of prophets in carrying out their prophetic function? In consideration of the exercise of the prophetic gift, attention has been focused so largely on the element of prediction that many times the broader aspects of the function of the prophets have been obscured or entirely lost from view. Theirs was a broad work, by no means restricted to foretelling the future. These were men who filled an important place in the history of God’s people, not only because

of their multiplied responsibilities in the community or nation, but because of the nature of the messages sent to the people through them. Not only were they used to reach the professed people of God; they were delegated to carry the word of the Lord to the world.

Spoke for God. The primary reason for the calling of a prophet was that he might serve as a mouthpiece for God. He was to say to the people what God would say if He should veil His glory and come personally among them as a man. The people's needs were numerous and diverse. Messages were needed by individuals, families, cities, and nations. To God's personal representative, the prophet, was entrusted the responsibility of delivering the messages.

Revealed God's purposes. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets." [Amos 3:7](#). In the purposes of God, His plans are revealed to His people so that they might know how to co-operate with them. Long ago Christians would have given up in despair had it not been for the assurance, "I will come again." [John 14:3](#). To the Old Testament believer the promise of the coming Messiah was his sustenance when he saw the sin of his nation and the decay of its leadership. To the bitterly disappointed and disillusioned Israelites in Babylonian captivity Jeremiah's prediction of deliverance at the conclusion of seventy years of bondage was a star of hope. Insight into God's purposes for the future was intended to strengthen and encourage, to fortify and prepare men and women to meet the crisis. There were times when the most courageous hearts would have failed had it not been for the repeated assurances of the Lord's purpose to bring deliverance. [43]

Because God can penetrate the future and man cannot, the Lord has used His knowledge of the future as one of the evidences that He is God. The striking nature of the predictions has directed such attention to them that other, equally important, phases of the work of the prophets have received scant thought. To many, "prophet" connotes "predictor." When one recognizes the broader nature of the prophets' work he gains a better understanding of God's plan and has a deeper confidence in it.

Strengthened and guided rulers. An Assyrian army over which Sennacherib had placed Rabshakeh ([Isaiah 36:2](#)) surrounded the city of Jerusalem. Rabshakeh mocked Hezekiah and scorned the God

[44] of Israel. Hezekiah in his terror and grief sent a group to talk with Isaiah and to seek counsel from the Lord through the prophet. “And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumor [report], and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.” [Isaiah 37:6, 7](#).

How courage and strength must have surged through Hezekiah when his servants hurried back with the word, “Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid.” Had there been no explanation of the Lord’s plan attached to the message, Hezekiah would have been strengthened by the assurance that the Lord had promised to be with him in the crisis.

When David decided that he wanted to build a house for the Lord, he talked his plan over with Nathan the prophet. Nathan instantly agreed that the plan was a wise one, and he encouraged David to go forward with it. But this was not according to God’s purpose, and that night the Lord spoke to Nathan and told him to give David the message that his son was to build the Lord’s house. [2 Samuel 7](#). The word of the prophet was accepted as the word of the Lord to guide the king, and his cherished plan was abandoned. David’s disappointment was at least partly relieved by the fact that he was permitted to gather materials for the temple, even though he was not to undertake its building. [1 Chronicles 22:14](#).

In war or peace, prosperity or adversity, the leaders who wished counsel might have it. Unfortunately many sought no help, and others to whom it was sent rejected it. Men in places of leadership were particular objects of God’s concern. He made every approach possible to reach them and to give them the aid He knew they needed, even if they recognized no need themselves. He wanted them to be steadfast in their allegiance to Him and in upholding the high principles of the theocratic government. He desired to direct them so that they would make no mistakes in their leadership. With such backing and counsel, every one of the kings of ancient Israel might have made his reign an outstanding success and the people would have been greatly blessed.

[45] *Encouraged the people to faithfulness.* “If ye forsake the Lord,”

Joshua warned the people shortly before his death, “and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good.... Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel.” [Joshua 24:20-23](#).

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” [Revelation 2:10](#). This was the Lord’s encouraging message to His faithful children as given through John the revelator.

“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.” [Luke 16:10](#). “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” were the words of the greatest of the prophets. [Matthew 25:21](#).

Frequently words of encouragement are interwoven with re-proofs and rebukes; seldom are they found standing alone. There are always new steps forward to be taken by God’s people. One of the leading activities of the prophets was to encourage the people to hold fast the ground they had already gained and press on to new accomplishments. Every forward step meant that some fault needed to be overcome, some weakness strengthened, some desire subdued. Encouragement could in no way be separated from the instruction and reproof that also came through the messengers.

Protested against evils. Whether their burden was to resist social injustice, to root out idolatry, or to protest against immorality, the prophets were equally vigorous in their approaches. At times it seemed to the prophet that no other dissenting voice than his was raised, but in such a case his responsibility was increased rather than lessened. The prophet’s protests were God’s protests, and were delivered regardless of consequences.

“Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks.” [Micah 2:1-3](#).

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings.... Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house.” [Malachi 3:8-10](#).

“Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.” [Hosea 4:1, 2](#).

In imagination we can see the prophets standing alone, as did Jesus in the court of the temple, proclaiming: “Take these things hence; make not My Father’s house an house of merchandise.” [John 2:16](#). Usually their words of protest were not their own, but were prefaced with “Thus saith the Lord.” Perhaps they would not have had courage to speak out if it had been left to their own initiative, but as God’s spokesmen they could not refrain. At one time Jeremiah decided that he would speak no more. “Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name. But His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.” [Jeremiah 20:9](#). Evil was rampant in Israel and Judah during the lifetime of most of the prophets, and through these men the Lord maintained a constant protest against corrupt practices and personal sins.

[47] *Directed activities.* Destruction and building were both essential parts of the work of a prophet. The dual responsibility is well expressed in the Lord’s commission to Jeremiah: “See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.” [Jeremiah 1:10](#). Many a modern city is engaged in a slum-clearing project in which handsome buildings replace dilapidated tenements. First, the ground must be cleared of the old before the new can be built. Tearing down is as essential as building up. Although it may appear that the words of the prophets were more of tearing down than of building, it must be remembered that this task had to be performed repeatedly. It is easier to allow a building to slip into decay than it is to keep it new in appearance. Each time the old timbers must be removed and replaced before more new building can be done. In every forward move in God’s work the prophets were present, either in positions of leadership or in close counsel with the leaders.

As a prophet, Moses directed the building of the sanctuary. The Holy Spirit, through whom the prophets were guided, gave David

detailed plans for the construction of the house of God that became Solomon's temple. [1 Chronicles 28:11, 12](#). In the days of the rebuilding of the temple, after the Babylonian exile, "Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them." [Ezra 5:2](#). On the Day of Pentecost the spirit of prophecy possessed the apostles and directed them in the establishment of the early Christian church. Paul was called to enter new territory and to open new areas for the preaching of the gospel. He went forward or held back as the Spirit indicated that he should do.

It is not difficult to trace through the Old and New Testaments the direct influence of the prophets in the constructive activities of God's people. The tragedy of the situation is that their counsel was seldom fully heeded. Had the instruction of the Lord, given through the prophets, been followed, the neighbors of Israel would have said, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." [Deuteronomy 4:6](#).

Taught. The prophets were not classroom teachers as such, although some of them seem to have taught in this fashion. However, it was through them that the people learned the principles of the kingdom of heaven. They made plain the high standard required of all God's people. Their sermons were teaching sermons, filled with practical, helpful instruction. So fully does the Bible, given through the prophets, set forth the kind of life and character exemplified by Christ that it shares with Him the name "the Word." Precept is laid upon precept, and line is added to line to round out the concept of a godly life. In true teaching fashion, problems are approached repeatedly from a variety of angles so that none need fail to understand how to apply the principles in his own life. To give this instruction to all generations "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." [2 Peter 1:21](#).

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Other responsibilities. It can also be shown that the men God chose as prophets served their nation as consultants and counselors for every phase of individual and national activity. In addition, they gave warnings of what would result from certain courses of action. They reproved sin in individuals and in the nation as a whole. They pronounced the judgments of God as consequences of sinful

policies and evil conduct. There was no matter too small or too large to warrant the attention of God through the prophet, no corner so dark that light could not penetrate it and help be given. At times the performance of miracles figured prominently, as in the days of Elisha. Again, the preaching ministry was outstanding, as in the experience of Samuel and Jeremiah. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, these men did all the things that needed to be done. They were serving in God's stead, speaking for Him, acting for Him, representing Him before their fellow men.

[49] The ministry of the prophets was not limited to the Hebrew nations. Through some of the prophetic messengers the Lord tried to win the Gentile nations to the truth. Abraham was sent to witness for the true God in Egypt, where multiplied deities were worshiped. At least partly because of the failure of Abraham it was necessary for the Lord to send Joseph, and later to raise up Moses to give the Egyptians opportunity to learn of the true God. The story of Jonah is highlighted by the repentance of Nineveh in response to the preaching of the reluctant prophet. Daniel's prophetic ministry led to his elevation to one of the highest positions in Babylon, and resulted ultimately in the conversion of its greatest monarch. In freedom or captivity Paul reached out into Asia Minor, Greece, some of the Mediterranean islands, and Rome. All these and others, undoubtedly many unmentioned in the Bible, touched the lives of the nations with the word of the Lord. "Go ye into all the world" is not only a last-day injunction; it has been the Lord's objective for His people in every generation.

Prophets, then, were not unlike other men. They were men who needed the converting power of the Holy Spirit, who struggled with the temptations that are common to men, and they sometimes lost the battle in their own lives. They were men whose sorrows affected their lives as deeply as ours move us. They married, reared families, taught their children and learned from them, rejoiced in their triumphs, and grieved over their failures. They knew what it meant to see beloved children turn from the Lord. At least one knew what it meant to have an unfaithful wife. Another was not permitted to grieve over the death of his wife. They became weary and discouraged as did other men, and at times they chafed under the tasks the Lord gave them.

If you had lived in ancient Palestine, a prophet might have been your father. If so, he would have held you on his knee, smiled at you, talked to you, played with you as fathers always have. Or he might have been your next-door neighbor with whom you would have visited while he hoed his garden. Or you might have climbed trees with him when he and you were boys.

At the same time prophets were men in whom the Lord placed great confidence. A sense of responsibility weighed heavily on them. Whether they came from the royal palace, the plow, the herd, or the service of the temple, an inner compulsion made it impossible for them ever to be unconscious of their calling. These prophets were carefully chosen with attention given to their talents, weaknesses, and mental quirks. They were individuals whose personalities might be classified today as introverted or extroverted. Sometimes the tasks to which they were called were extremely distasteful to them, but God knew His men and used them to the extent of their abilities, even empowering them to go beyond what they or we would consider possible. [50]

These little insights lurk everywhere through the Scriptures. When we find them, they make the men of the Bible, and the Bible itself, warmer and more alive. They enable us to put ourselves into the Bible picture to see how we belong to it and it to us. Far from taking away any of the dignity of the men or the solemnity of their messages, these pictures open doors of understanding that might otherwise be closed permanently to us. If we consider the ministry of Jesus, and then try to understand how God called men in many generations from all walks of life, and sought to accomplish through them as much as possible the same kind of ministry that Jesus performed, we will begin to gain a more adequate view of the significance and function of the Bible prophets.

SUMMARY

1. God used a varied group of men to achieve His purpose of reaching nations and individuals.
2. The prophets came from various walks of life and engaged in a variety of occupations.

3. Varied backgrounds and training were useful to the Lord, and made the men of greater service.

[51] 4. While prediction of coming events figured prominently in a prophet's work, his function was much broader and more varied than this.

5. The humanity of the prophets helps us to better understand them, their work, and their messages.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Are there any particular types or classes of men who appear to predominate among the Bible prophets?

2. Choose a Bible prophet and prepare a character sketch entirely on the basis of what you read about him in the Bible.

3. Which prophets seem to have differed most from other prophets in personality, background, and training? Have the differences been revealed prominently in their writings?

4. Which man appears to have been the most unlikely prospect to make a good prophet? Which seems to have had the best preparation and possibilities?

5. List several ways other than those mentioned under "Function of the Prophets" in which prophets were used by God in His dealing with the nations. Give an example of each.

6. Which prophets seem to have carried on the broadest work, and which presented the most varied types of messages?

7. What is there about the prophets that makes them seem most real and personal to you?

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Chapter 4—The Prophet And His Message

[52]

What Is a Prophet?

Among the last words of David, the statesman-prophet, were these: “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue.” [2 Samuel 23:2](#). He was one of the “holy men of God” who “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” [2 Peter 1:21](#). When these men were moved by the Holy Spirit to speak, they gave their messages as words from God. The Bible idea of a prophet is that he is a spokesman for the Lord.

In almost every instance in the Old Testament the word prophet is translated from the Hebrew nabi. The Old Testament usage of the word gives a clearer concept of its meaning than does philology. In [Exodus 7:1, 2](#), the thought is apparent: “And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a God to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land.” Moses was to stand in relation to Pharaoh as God stood in relation to the people. Aaron was to be Moses’ mouthpiece, and God would communicate His will to Moses. Moses would pass the word along to Aaron, and Aaron would speak forth the message to Pharaoh. While this was not the Lord’s usual way of working, it portrays vividly the function of the prophet as a speaker of a message received from a higher source than his own thinking.

[Deuteronomy 18](#) presents a prophecy that was completely fulfilled only in the ministry of Jesus. It serves as a basic passage to help in understanding the work of a prophet. The heart of the matter is expressed in these words: “I ... will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.” [Deuteronomy 18:18](#). The “prophet” referred to in the verse is a nabi—a man who speaks forth God’s message.

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Notice the sequence in the conversation between God and Jeremiah when the Lord called Jeremiah to be one of His prophets. “Before I formed thee ... I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” [Jeremiah 1:5](#). “Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.” [Verse 6](#). As soon as the Lord told him he was to be a prophet, Jeremiah’s mind turned to speaking. He felt that he could not accept the responsibility because of his lack of ability to proclaim God’s message. The Lord recognized the same significance in the call to the prophetic office. “Say not, I am a child: ... whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.... Then the Lord put forth His hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth.” [Verses 7-9](#). Even more to the point was the Lord’s later word to Jeremiah, “Thou shalt be as My mouth.” [Jeremiah 15:19](#). God was fulfilling the prophecy of [Deuteronomy 18:18](#), that He would put His words into the mouth of the prophet, and that the messenger should speak all that he was commanded.

Amos, the herdsman of Tekoa, had had no thought of prophetic service. But, as he explained to Amaziah when that priest tried to stop him from prophesying, the Lord took him as he followed the flock and said, “Go, prophesy unto My people Israel. Now therefore,” he commanded Amaziah, “hear thou the word of the Lord.” [Amos 7:15, 16](#). Then, in spite of Amaziah’s protests, Amos spoke a “thus saith the Lord” concerning the future of the priest and his family. This was not Amos’s message, but God’s. Amos, as a speaker in the Lord’s stead, was merely giving information that the Lord Himself would have given if He had spoken personally to the priest of Bethel.

[54] The same thought is borne out in the language of the New Testament. There the Greek word translated prophet is *prophetes*, and means “one who speaks forth.” In most cases the New Testament usage of the word makes reference to prophets of Old Testament times. *Prophetes* is used as the equivalent of *nabi*; both words infer a recognition of the prophet as a speaker for God. Commenting on the appearance of the angel to Joseph before the birth of Jesus, Matthew said, “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet.” [Matthew 1:22](#), R.S.V. Peter, speaking to the people at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, told them of the death and resurrection

of the Prince of life. Then he continued, “But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled.” [Acts 3:18](#). A moment later he told them of the refreshing to come, which was to be followed by the return of Jesus. He declared that the restitution of all things would come, “which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” [Acts 3:21](#). God speaking through the mouths of men who were delegated to speak for God—this has been heaven’s way of making known to mankind His purposes and will.

Another term is introduced in [1 Samuel 9:9](#), which is used synonymously with the Hebrew word *nabi* to designate a prophet. “Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a prophet [*nabi*] was beforetime called a seer [*roeh*].” A seer is one who perceives things that do not lie in the realm of natural sight or hearing. Although used synonymously to indicate a person who possesses the prophetic gift, the two words illustrate basically different phases of the experience of the prophet. “Seer” denotes the reception of the message from God by the prophet. It indicates that God has opened to the view and hearing of the prophet that which is indiscernible to one who does not possess the prophetic gift. Similar in meaning is another Old Testament word translated “seer.” *Chozeh* is derived from a word meaning “to see” or “to behold.” From the same source comes the word for “vision,” in the sense of a divinely inspired vision. Here is another indication of the fact that the prophet sees supernaturally. These two words are used as synonyms in [Isaiah 30:10](#). “Which say to the seers [*roeh*], See not; and to the prophets [*chozeh*], Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits.” Both terms generally stress the reception rather than the delivery of the message, although it is difficult at times to make any distinction.

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To summarize the terms used to designate prophets, we may say that *nabi* serves as the principal Old Testament word for this purpose. Its New Testament equivalent is *prophetes*. Both words have as their primary meaning one who declares the message received from God by divine inspiration. The other two words used, *roeh*, and *chozeh*, emphasize the receiving of the revelation by divinely enlightened

vision. Even when the latter words are used, the obvious function of the terms is that of declaring the message received by inspiration. Thus we see that while the words give us various insights into the relationship of the prophet to God's message, all the words designate the prophet in his office as spokesman for God.

Relation of the Prophet to God

[56] As an individual the prophet was fundamentally no different from any other devout follower of God. There was something that set him apart from the crowd, however, and that was his unusual relationship with God. No man who had ever had a vision of the throne of God, and had the privilege of conversing with the angels, or of hearing his name called by the divine voice to the prophetic office, could again be the same man. As a young man, Isaiah in vision saw "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up." [Isaiah 6:1](#). That gave him the clearest insight he had ever gained of his spiritual condition. Almost immediately conviction caused him to cry, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips: ... for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." [Verse 5](#). His desire for cleansing was granted, and he was told, "Thy sin [is] purged." Then followed the Lord's inquiry, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Isaiah's response was instantaneous, "Here am I; send me." [Verse 8](#). How could his answer have been other than it was, after such a vision? The call did not settle all of the young prophet's problems; it did not assure him of success in every enterprise. But from that time forward Isaiah could never forget that he was God's man.

A careful study of the written and spoken language of the prophets reveals a subtle blend of awe and intimacy in their attitude toward God. Isaiah's vision of the might and glory of the Lord, such as had not been vouchsafed to others, inspired in him a reverence and veneration unknown to other men. Small wonder that the Scriptures are the most exalted literature known to man. Isaiah exclaims: "O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy name; for Thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." [Isaiah 25:1](#). But the love of God was revealed in a marked manner, as was His willingness

to be questioned and reasoned with. Therefore, the prophet feels free to ask, “Where are thy zeal and thy might? The yearning of thy heart and thy compassion are withheld from Me.” [Isaiah 63:15](#), R.S.V. Attention given to the books of Jeremiah and Habakkuk with these thoughts in mind will also be rewarding.

How the hearts of these men of God must have swelled with holy joy as they realized that they had been selected from the millions of earth to receive the divine word and to be God’s personal representatives to circulate that word. How this partnership must have caused them to search their lives to remove anything that might be unworthy. How their attitude toward their fellow men must have changed as they began to look at them through God’s eyes and see for the first time what had been hidden from their view.

The prophets came to be close friends with the Most High God. [57] What did this relationship mean to the Lord? It meant that He had fellowship with men, which approached, as nearly as possible, the intimacy of the days in the Garden of Eden. It meant, too, that He had a personal representative to instruct men. There seems to have been a special tie between the Lord and His prophets. We can sense the warmth of the declaration, “But thou, Israel, art My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham My friend.” [Isaiah 41:8](#). “I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after Mine own heart.” [Acts 13:22](#). This expresses the Lord’s delight in the psalmist. The angel told Daniel the reason for the swift response to his plea for understanding of his vision. “I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved.” [Daniel 9:23](#). Of Enoch it is said that he “walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” [Genesis 5:24](#). Manifestly the Lord found pleasure in His association with those He chose for His special service.

How God Reached the Prophets

Nowhere in the Bible is there an exact description of how God proceeded to give the prophet the revelation He wanted conveyed to the people. The concept we form is the result of incidents and descriptions which reveal to us the way God must have worked in the majority of cases.

A pattern for the giving of a prophecy is found in the early verses of the book of the Revelation. Here are the steps or agencies through which the revelation came to the prophet and eventually to the people. “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.... John to the seven churches which are in Asia.” [Revelation 1:1-4](#).

[58] This was a revelation which was given—

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| By God (the Father) | to Jesus Christ, |
| By Christ | to His angel, |
| By Christ’s angel | to John, |
| By John | to the seven churches. |

Descriptions given elsewhere in the Scriptures fit well into this pattern except in one detail. The question may be asked immediately, What about the part played by the Holy Spirit? Does not Peter say that “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”? [2 Peter 1:21](#). The work of the Spirit is not mentioned in the Revelation passage. Is this not something different from what has taken place in the experience of the other prophets? It would appear that the place of the Holy Spirit in the giving of prophecy is so fully presented in other portions of the Bible that there was no necessity for presenting it again in the introduction to the Revelation. But lest there be any mistake as to the source of the message he is bringing, John immediately goes on ([Revelation 1:4, 5](#)) to express a salutation from the Father (“Him which is, and which was, and which is to come”), the Holy Spirit (“the seven Spirits which are before His throne”), and the Son (“Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness”). Thus it appears that the Spirit must be closely connected with each step in the giving of the prophecy.

Of the members of the Godhead, Christ is the One entrusted with the responsibility of seeing that the planned communications reach man. Since the entrance of sin, all communication from heaven to man has been through Christ. He is the link between earth and

heaven, the ladder on which the angels ascend and descend. [John 1:51](#). Obviously the message would not need to be guarded while it was in Christ's hands, but as soon as it passed from the divine being into the hands of a created being, even though that created being was an angel, it would need special attention and protection. It seems that in the transfer of the message from the angel to the prophet, the Holy Spirit was present to safeguard the transaction. [59]

"He sent and signified it by His angel," appears to indicate that there was a particular angel through whom Christ carried on this ministry. It is interesting that the only angel whose name is given in the Bible is mentioned in connection with the giving and explanation of prophecy. In fact, the only times he is called by name are in connection with the giving of prophecies. Only two of these, however, are communications to an individual who is recognized as a prophet. In [Daniel 8:16](#) the angel was instructed, "Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision." Later, after the prophet had prayed for enlightenment, he commented, "Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation." [Daniel 9:21](#). Other messages given by Gabriel are recorded in [Luke 1:19, 26](#). It appears that Gabriel served in a special way as a messenger. It is logical to conclude that he is the one referred to as "His angel."

The office of the Holy Spirit in the giving of prophecy, and His close relationship with Christ is made prominent in the passing on of the communication to the prophet. Numerous statements describe the action of the Holy Spirit as He prepared the prophet to receive his message. The prophets clearly recognized the working of the Spirit in their experience. They emphasize how they speak the Spirit's message rather than describe how the Spirit gave the message. A few describe the coming of the Spirit to them, as is exemplified by the one who recorded Saul's experience. "And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and *the Spirit of God came upon him*, and he prophesied among them." [1 Samuel 10:10](#). (Italics supplied.) "And *the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: and he went out to meet Asa*." [2 Chronicles 15:1, 2](#). Ezekiel speaks of this experience more frequently than do any of the other prophets. "And the Spirit entered into me when He spake [60]

unto me, and set me upon my feet, that *I heard Him that spake unto me.*” [Ezekiel 2:2](#). “Then the Spirit took me up.” [Ezekiel 3:12](#). “So the Spirit *lifted me up, and took me away.*” [Ezekiel 3:14](#). “Then the Spirit *entered into me, ... and spake with me.*” [Ezekiel 3:24](#). “The Spirit *lifted me up* between the earth and the heaven, and *brought me* in the visions of God to *Jerusalem.*” [Ezekiel 8:3](#). “And the Spirit of the Lord *fell upon me*, and said unto me, Speak; Thus saith the Lord.” [Ezekiel 11:5](#). “The hand of the Lord was upon me, and *carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord.*” [Ezekiel 37:1](#). Speaking of the last days, Joel quotes the Lord as saying, “I will *pour out My Spirit* upon all flesh.” [Joel 2:28](#). John tells how the Revelation came to him. “I was *in the Spirit* on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.” [Revelation 1:10](#).

Some of the physical and mental results of the coming of the Spirit upon the prophet will be studied a little later. The prophets clearly recognized the power that controlled them at the time they received a divine revelation. Their experience was real to them, fully as real as their ordinary everyday activities. There was no question regarding the source of their revelations.

What happened when the Spirit of God came upon a prophet and gave him a communication from heaven? “Hear now My words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.” [Numbers 12:6](#). The experience of Daniel at the time of what must have been one of his last visions gives an insight into what happened in the reception of a vision by one prophet. In the third year of Cyrus, Daniel was beside the river Hiddekel. [Daniel 10:4ff](#). While the prophet was there he saw in vision a glorious being who had come to speak to him. The description of the being is similar to that given of Christ in other passages. Daniel was accompanied by a group of men, but they did not see the vision, although they were aware that something unusual was taking place, and they ran to hide themselves. Daniel then describes in detail his reaction to the appearance of the heavenly being.

“Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of His words: and when I heard the voice of His words, then was I in a

deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.... And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.” [Daniel 10:8-19](#). (Italics supplied.)

Summarized, the experience was like this:

1. A glorious being appeared to Daniel.
2. The prophet lost his strength and fell to the ground in a deep sleep.
3. Despite the sleep, he heard the voice of the angelic being.
4. In the vision, and possibly in physical action, the prophet arose to his hands and knees and then to his feet when the being touched him. [62]
5. At first he was dumb; but when his lips were touched, he was enabled to speak.
6. He did not breathe.
7. Strength was given to him.

To supplement the story of Daniel’s vision, we may use an item from the record of Balaam found in [Numbers 24](#). Balaam was not a true prophet of the Lord at this time, but God was using him to speak prophetically, and apparently his physical experience resembled that of Daniel. When telling the message that God had given him, he spoke of himself as the one who “saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open.” [Numbers 24:4](#). Twice the mention of the eyes being open during the “trance,” or vision,

is repeated. This may have been a part of the experience of Daniel, even though he does not mention it specifically. If so, it is obvious that even though his eyes were open, he saw only the vision.

Paul speaks of seeming to be “caught up into paradise,” and of hearing “unspeakable words.” It was impossible for him to tell whether he was “in the body” or “out of the body.” [2 Corinthians 12:2-4](#).

There is no evidence in the Bible that all of these phenomena always accompanied the visions of every prophet. In fact, they probably did not. Therefore, they cannot be used as a basic test of a prophet’s experience. However, the presence of some of these characteristics do serve as strong evidence that his communications are of supernatural origin. It is unwise to place great emphasis on the physical manifestations in attempting to demonstrate whether or not any individual is a true prophet, for these may be more easily counterfeited than the other evidences called for in the Bible. The Lord has not made these physical evidences the test of the professed prophet, but they must be taken into consideration.

[63] *Visions and dreams.* When we return to a study of [Numbers 12:6](#) we notice the Lord’s declaration regarding the ways He revealed Himself to the prophets in ordinary circumstances. “If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.” No clear line of distinction is drawn between the prophetic vision and the prophetic dream. It is recognized that there are false visions and dreams, but the terms used to describe the true prophetic vision seem at times to be used interchangeably.

Although there is no discernible difference between the type of subject matter presented to a prophet in a vision and in a prophetic dream, Daniel’s emphasis in [chapters 7 and 8](#) is worthy of careful note. In [Daniel 7:1](#) he tells how he had “a dream and visions of his head upon his bed.” Then three times more in the chapter he speaks of the night vision in these words: “I saw in my vision by night;” “I saw in the night visions;” “I saw in the night visions.” [Verses 2, 7, 13](#). In [chapter 8](#) Daniel speaks differently: “A vision appeared unto me” ([verse 1](#)); “And I saw in a vision; ... and I saw in a vision” ([verse 2](#)); “when I ... had seen the vision” ([verse 15](#)); “make this man to understand the vision” ([verse 16](#)); “at the time of the end shall be

the vision” (verse 17). The prophet does not explain his reasons for making this distinction between a night vision given him in a dream, and another vision covering much of the same subject matter from a different viewpoint. However, it is apparent that to him the two visions were of equal import and value. The prophetic dream and the vision attended by physical manifestations were revelations of the divine will to the prophet, and one cannot be placed above the other as a method of communication from the Lord to the prophet.

Daniel, in his vision recorded in chapter 10, tells of being in a “deep sleep,” yet he is able to hear the words spoken to him. He was unconscious of his natural surroundings, but fully aware of what was being shown him and told him in the vision. It was essential, of course, that in some fashion the Lord should safeguard the revelation so that it might not be confused by the interference of other thoughts in the mind of the prophet. The Holy Spirit came upon the prophet and prepared him to receive the vision by closing his mind to any impressions other than the ones to be brought supernaturally. In a sense he was insulated from the world about him so that the Spirit might have free access to his mind. The prophet’s entire attention was focused on what he was being shown. The presence of other persons around him, the pressures and problems of daily living and witnessing for God, war, confusion, opposition, persecution, physical suffering—none of these could affect the prophet’s view or mar the clarity of the picture. The seer must know that what he had seen was all supernaturally revealed, and not an admixture of revelation with natural impressions and dispositions. And, for the Lord’s purposes, it was necessary that the message should be received undistorted.

[64]

At times the prophet was taken in vision from the place where he was to distant localities. His physical body was not transported to these spots, but the things he saw were as real and vivid as though he were present in the flesh and viewing them with the natural eye. Ezekiel describes several such instances. “And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the Spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel

was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain.” [Ezekiel 8:3, 4](#). The rest of the chapter describes in graphic detail the corrupt condition of the temple and many of its priests. So far as Ezekiel was concerned, he was in Jerusalem, walking through the court of the temple, digging a hole in the wall, entering doors, or shuddering at the abominations he saw portrayed.

[65] Through [chapters 9-11](#) Ezekiel continues to record the events shown him in the vision. Then he comments, “Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the Captivity.” [Ezekiel 11:24](#). Still in vision, Ezekiel was returned to the land of the Captivity. In concept he had traveled hundreds of miles and viewed startling events; in actuality he had not left Babylon. His remark at the conclusion of the vision indicates his recognition of this fact. “So the vision that I had seen went up from me.” [Ezekiel 11:24](#). The book of Ezekiel sheds more light than any other book of the Bible on how visions affected the prophet.

The Prophet’s Relation to His Message

Since the message was not the prophet’s own, it was not his to say what should be done with it when he had received it. There were times—no doubt many times—when the prophet did not understand the significance of the message entrusted to him. Particularly was this true when the communication contained predictions of future events. For instance, the Old Testament records hundreds of predictions pointing to the first and second advents of Christ. We have not yet seen the fulfillment of all of these, and we cannot fully understand any particular one of them until it has been fulfilled. It is possible that the picture flashed before the eyes of the prophet enabled him to grasp more fully than we can the meaning of some of the prophecies, but in speaking of the great objective of our faith, that is, the salvation of our souls, Peter says, “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” [1 Peter 1:10, 11](#). The prophets were students of

their own prophecies in order that they might grasp all that it was possible for them to know at the time; but failure to understand a message did not excuse them from delivering it as God instructed them to do. [66]

Again, there were occasions when the prophet was certain in his own mind that the people would reject the word that he was to bring to them. But the acceptance or the rejection of the message was not his responsibility. It was his duty to deliver the communication and leave the results with the Lord. When the Lord commissioned Ezekiel for his work, He gave as one of His reasons for sending the prophet to Israel, "For they are impudent children and stiff hearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, ... yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them. And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words.... And thou shalt speak My words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house." [Ezekiel 2:4-8](#). The attitude of the people constituted no excuse for the prophet to withhold his message.

On occasion the prophet was instructed exactly where he should go to deliver his message. "Thus saith the Lord; Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word." [Jeremiah 26:2](#). Note that the prophet is instructed to give the complete message. To Jonah the word was, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it." [Jonah 1:2](#). Isaiah was instructed, "Go forth now to meet Ahaz; ... and say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted." [Isaiah 7:3, 4](#).

The Lord knew what He wanted done with the messages He sent. The prophets could not see the results of the delivery of these communications except as the Lord revealed them. Unaware, as they were many times, of the real significance of the words they were to deliver, their complete confidence in the One who had called them to the prophetic office is demonstrated repeatedly. They occupied places of prominence in the nation, for thousands of persons became [67]

aware of their words. Only a clear recognition of the fact that the messages were not their own, and a boundless confidence in their Author, could have given men the courage to stand before their own kings and before foreign rulers to proclaim the word of the Lord. Many of the proclamations were not complimentary and were likely to antagonize the listener against the prophet. A message of encouragement in the days of the restoration after the Babylonian Captivity summarizes well the relation of the prophet to his message: “Then *spake Haggai the Lord’s messenger in the Lord’s message* unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord.” [Haggai 1:13](#). (Italics supplied.)

How the Messages Were Passed on to the People

Even as the Lord called different types of persons to be His prophets and sent various kinds of messages through them, so He employed many methods in delivering the prophecies to the people. What we know of the messages of the prophets has come to us through the portions recorded in the Bible. However, all messages were not presented originally in written form. Many of them must have been sermons or discussions which were later recorded. Some were written as letters to friends, or church groups, or as official communications of kings to their subjects. Some of the communications recorded by the prophets were not originally given by the prophets themselves. The Lord has had preserved in written form the portions of the messages He sent in ancient times which are of particular help to us. [1 Corinthians 10:11](#). There were three basic methods of delivery:

1. Oral.
2. Written.
3. Enacted.

[68] *Oral delivery.* Perhaps the best remembered of the forms of delivery is that of the regular sermon type of presentation. These were not always formal sermons, but they were at least oral presentations before a group of persons for the purpose of instructing, warning, or rebuking them. Among these are Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount ([Matthew 5-7](#)); Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost ([Acts 2](#)); Paul’s declaration before Agrippa ([Acts 26](#)); Moses’ review of the

history of Israel (Deuteronomy); Amos's denunciation of the nations ([Amos 1, 2](#)); Jonah's proclamation to Nineveh ([Jonah 3:4](#)). It is not always possible to know certainly whether or not a particular message was first delivered in this form, but this seems to be indicated in large portions of the messages of the prophets.

In addition to these more formal oral presentations, there were interviews with the prophets in which answers to specific questions and problems were desired from the Lord. We have already mentioned Hezekiah's inquiry of Isaiah and the prophet's response. [Isaiah 37](#). At the time of Ezekiel's vision recorded in [chapters 8 to 11](#), he mentions that "I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me." [Ezekiel 8:1](#). Later he tells of another visit and its purpose in these words: "And it came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth month, the tenth day of the month, that certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord, and sat before me." [Ezekiel 20:1](#). Jesus' disciples "Came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be?" [Matthew 24:3](#). His response makes up the wellknown series of predictions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the events that should precede His return.

Beyond these group interviews were the important personal conversations which occurred in the lives of the prophets. Jesus opened the eyes of Nicodemus to spiritual truth ([John 3](#)); Nathan related to David the parable of his guilt and the king's pronouncement of the merited punishment ([2 Samuel 12:1-7](#)); Jeremiah repeated to Zedekiah the counsel of the Lord that he should surrender to the Babylonians ([Jeremiah 38:14-19](#))— these were weighty matters in which particular individuals were involved and where much depended on personal decisions. The prophets were not so busy giving messages for the multitudes that they could not bring God's counsel to one man who had a special need. [69]

Written delivery. The clearest description in the Bible of the preparation of a manuscript containing the word of the Lord is found in [Jeremiah 36](#). During the reign of Jehoiakim, the Lord spoke to Jeremiah, saying, "Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day." [Verse 2](#). "Then Jeremiah called Baruch: ... and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all

the words of the Lord, which He had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book.” [Verse 4](#). In [verse 3](#) the Lord intimates that the reason for writing the record is to give the nation a full written report of its sins and the threatened punishment in order that it may lead to repentance. A book can be read again and again; the message can be repeated verbatim to people in many places. It is not so readily subject to errors that creep in when a message is transmitted orally.

Later on Daniel tells how he studied the word of the Lord that was recorded in the messages of Jeremiah, and he learned there of the promise of deliverance at the end of the seventy years’ Captivity. [Daniel 9:2](#). He also gives instruction concerning his own writings, for he says, “Shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end.” [Daniel 12:4](#). Isaiah, too, was commanded to take a great roll and write on it some of the things God had revealed to him. [Isaiah 8:1](#). At the direction of the Lord manuscripts were prepared, and some of them have become a part of the sacred record in our possession today.

[70] Letters also figure largely in the Bible record, especially in the New Testament. We find that the fourteen books by Paul were originally written as letters. “When this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea,” Paul wrote to the Christians at Colosse. [Colossians 4:16](#). To those at Corinth he explained, “I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.” [1 Corinthians 4:14](#).

Nor was Paul the only letter writer among the authors of the New Testament. To the Christians scattered in many places, Peter commented, “I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying.” [1 Peter 5:12](#). Sometime later he wrote, “This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you.” [2 Peter 3:1](#). “These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full,” declared John the beloved to those who should read his letter, [1 John 1:4](#). His second epistle begins, “The elder unto the elect lady and her children.” [2 John 1](#).

The Old Testament contains at least two examples of messages which were originally addressed to individuals or groups as letters from the prophets. Jeremiah’s letter to the Jewish captives in Babylon contains a message fully as applicable to the church today as it was to the Hebrew exiles. See [Jeremiah 29](#). Elijah wrote a letter to

Jehoram, king of Judah, in which he rebuked the king for his sinful course, and predicted a fatal sickness to afflict the rule. [2 Chronicles 21:12-15](#).

Letters written by the prophets as messages from God to the persons addressed were to be accepted as of equal significance with any other kind of message given through the prophet. In one sense it is because these messages were sent as letters that they prove to be especially helpful. They were written to help persons who were meeting particular problems or battling specific temptations. They apply eternal principles to the everyday situations of life. It is no wonder that the epistles of Paul and John and Peter have become popular today with those who are seeking to live the Christian life. It was not necessary for the prophet to deliver messages in person, and some of the letters thus written have become a vital part of the sacred record.

Enacted communications. Parables occupy a prominent place in Bible teachings, both in the Old Testament and in the New. They were employed to awaken inquiry, to present truths that the people were unready or unwilling to accept, to teach lessons in a manner that would not arouse the people against the prophet, or to make especially vivid an important truth or prediction. Some of the prophets seem to have used none, while others utilized them as one of their most helpful devices. [71]

After Saul had failed to carry out the commandment of the Lord to destroy the Amalekites, Samuel told the king that because he had rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord had rejected him. As Samuel turned to leave, Saul took hold of the prophet's mantle, and as Samuel moved away the mantle was torn. Samuel used the incident as a parable of the removal of the kingdom from Saul's family. "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou." [1 Samuel 15:28](#). Jeremiah was forbidden by the Lord to marry and rear a family in order that he might be a constant reminder to the Jews of the cruel suffering that would be the lot of mothers, fathers, and children in the destruction of Jerusalem. [Jeremiah 16:1-6](#).

The most notable example in the Old Testament of one who taught by enacted parables is Ezekiel. Even the prophet becomes a sign to the people. Ezekiel is pictured as happily married to one

whom the Lord calls “the desire of thine eyes.” However, one evening the Lord revealed to him that his wife was to die of a sudden illness, and by the next evening she was dead. Ezekiel was not permitted to weep or mourn for her, because he was to represent the time when Jerusalem would be destroyed without mourning and weeping. “Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign: according to all that he hath done shall ye do: and when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord God.” [Ezekiel 24:24](#).

[72] We should also note that the entire sacrificial system of ancient times was a parable illustrating the plan of salvation.

Enacted parables as instruction or prediction are more common in the Old Testament than in the New; but the example of Agabus, who “took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles,” shows that the technique had not been lost.

Why such variety? One of the most remarkable features of the Bible is the way its truths fit the needs of every individual in every generation. Second only to this is the perpetual and effective appeal to young and old in every station of life and every degree of education. Much of its appeal and adaptability stem from the fact that its materials were originally presented to meet the needs of men and women whose experience and problems are common to those of every other age. Therefore, they were brought forth in a fashion that will be most impressive and of greatest benefit. It must be kept continually in mind that these messages of the prophets came from one common source, and they repeatedly manifested that in their declarations, “Thus saith the Lord.” The divine inspiration was not affected by the method of communication. Thus Jeremiah’s letter, Ezekiel’s enacted parable, Peter’s sermon, Isaiah’s manuscript, Jesus’ interview,—all were prompted by the Spirit of God. In all these methods “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” The Bible does not, and we cannot, emphasize the value of one variety of communication above another. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” [2 Timothy 3:16](#).

Some messages not preserved. It is obvious that the Bible does not contain a complete account of all that was taught to God’s people

by the prophets. In the life of the Master we have only a sketch of His numerous sermons and interviews. See [John 21:25](#). As far as their messages are concerned, prophets may be placed in four groups: [73]

1. Prophets who wrote some portion of the Holy Scriptures, such as Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Paul.

2. Prophets who wrote none of the Bible, but whose life and teachings are sketched in the Scriptures, such as Elijah, Elisha, and Enoch.

3. Prophets who seemingly gave only oral testimonies, no portion of which has been preserved. In this group are many unnamed prophets, such as the seventy elders who received the Holy Spirit and prophesied during the time of Moses ([Numbers 11:24, 25](#)), and the group that Saul joined after he had been anointed king over Israel ([1 Samuel 10:5, 6, 10](#)). See also [1 Samuel 19:18-24](#). Again, there are the godly men who were hidden in caves by Obadiah during the drought and famine. [1 Kings 18:4, 13](#).

4. Prophets who wrote books that have not been preserved—the book of Nathan the prophet ([1 Chronicles 29:29](#)), the book of Gad the seer ([1 Chronicles 29:29](#)), the book of Shemaiah the prophet ([2 Chronicles 12:15](#)), the book of Jasher ([Joshua 10:13](#); [2 Samuel 1:18](#)), the book of Iddo the seer ([2 Chronicles 12:15](#); [9:29](#)), the prophecy of Oded the prophet ([2 Chronicles 15:8](#)), the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite ([2 Chronicles 9:29](#)), the book of Jehu the son of Hanani ([2 Chronicles 20:34](#)), Paul's epistle to the Laodiceans ([Colossians 4:16](#)).

What of the oral messages of those prophets in group 3? Does the fact that we know nothing of what these men said under inspiration mean that their words were inconsequential? Not at all. It simply indicates that their messages were of local and relatively temporary value, and not of a character that would be profitable to preserve for future generations.

What of the messages recorded in books that have not been kept? Were these records unimportant? God does not occupy His prophets with the unimportant. However, the significance of the writings was not such that later generations of God's people would be benefited. Consequently the Lord did not see fit to preserve them. [74]

They served their purpose, and it was a purpose vital to those to whom the messages were directed.

What relation did these written messages sustain to the prophetic writings that were included in the canon of the Scriptures? Did they conflict? Certainly not, for all the prophets were moved by the same Spirit. [2 Peter 1:21](#). Did these writings form an addition to the canon? They did not. They served at a particular time in communicating the purpose of God to those who needed the messages. Inspired by the same Spirit who prompted the writers of the Bible books, these writings moved the people to more faithful obedience to divine truth.

SUMMARY

1. The Bible designates the prophet as a spokesman for God.
2. Old and New Testament word study gives insight into both the reception and delivery of messages by the prophet.
3. Between God and the prophet there existed a fellowship closer than between those who had not received such intimate views of truth.
4. All the members of the Godhead, and at least one of the angelic host, were involved in revelations to the prophets.
5. At times there were certain physical manifestations connected with the receiving of visions.
6. The vision was as real to the prophet as though he had been experiencing it with his physical body.
7. The prophet's responsibility was to give his message in the way God directed, regardless of his own lack of understanding or opposition from the people.
- [75] 8. Some communications were passed on to the people orally, some were written, and others were visibly enacted.
9. The fact of inspiration was unaffected by the identity of the prophet or the method of communication.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Make a study of the experience of John the Baptist to see how he measured up as a mouthpiece for God. Note his own words, the

comments of others concerning him, particularly the words of Jesus. To what extent was his message a new one? How far did it point out and clarify the messages of earlier prophets? The same study might be made of Jesus, Paul, and John the revelator.

2. How was it possible for a prophet to accurately express and rightly represent a message he did not understand?

3. Can you find indications that the Holy Spirit dealt with other prophets in the way He did with Ezekiel, though they did not so fully describe the events?

4. Read carefully the entire book of Ezekiel. Tabulate items that show how God dealt with Ezekiel as a prophet. What effect did his call have on his occupation, his home life, and his relation to other leaders among the Jews?

5. What do you think is the strongest evidence, other than the oft-repeated "thus saith the Lord," that the prophets did not consider their messages as their own to be dealt with as they pleased?

6. What do you consider the most effective means of making the original presentation of a prophetic message? Is the effect the most enduring? If the method you consider originally most effective, and the one you think the most enduring are different, can you cite examples where both methods have been used with the same messages?

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Chapter 5—Instruction By The Prophets

Of the various types of prophetic messages recorded in the Bible, the most important are those that have come as instruction in the will of God for His people. Prediction is vital because it confirms God's ability to penetrate the future in a fashion that cannot be duplicated by man or idols, and because it guides Christians in their relation to the plan of salvation. Rebuke is necessary because of the natural perverseness of the sinful human being and because of his tendency to wander from the pattern of Christian living. History gives an insight into the way God has dealt with His people in the past; and in a sense it serves the dual purpose of providing information and, by example, instruction for God's faithful ones. Each kind of communication serves its own peculiar function, and when the various types are combined they constitute a comprehensive picture of God's relation to man—past, present, and future. But to God's people, instruction as to what God expects of them and how they can fulfill His expectations is the most important contribution of the Scriptures.

For example, the Bible record of the origin of sin, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the atonement for sin, and the predictions of His second advent to destroy sin would, by themselves, accomplish little except give information and perhaps send fear into the hearts of human beings. The denunciation of [Matthew 23](#), if it stood alone, would not enlighten men and women as to what they might do to avoid coming under the same condemnation. Observing the fulfillment of predictions would be an interesting and, under some circumstances, an awe-inspiring occupation; but one would have no idea how he could prepare to escape the destruction to come. These and other phases of the Bible account have significance and value to the individual only as they are considered in the light of God's instruction. In this instruction He makes clear His great objectives for human beings and for the earth, and He prescribes clearly and simply the course that will lead to the achievement of the objectives.

A quick review of some of the changes that came about in man's thinking as a result of sin (see [chapter 2](#)) will remind one of the problem God faced in trying to restore human beings to their original sinless state. The plan of salvation provided for instruction so that man could be led step by step to fulfill God's requirements. While redemption through the sacrifice of Christ is the only means by which we have eternal life, and the transformation of the human heart is a miracle brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit, the introduction of man to the plan, his knowledge of how to accept it, and his information about how to grow as a Christian are all part of an educational program. In this sense the objectives of the plan of salvation and those of Christian education are the same.

Not long before His crucifixion Jesus expressed the aim of the plan of salvation: "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." [John 17:21](#). Oneness of human beings with each other and with God is the goal to be reached, and the human family can achieve unity only as they meet "in Us" that is, in God and Christ. In His plans for the revelation of His will to us through the Bible, the Lord took into consideration all that was essential to accomplish His purposes. A partial restoration of man to harmony with God will not prepare him to live with heavenly beings throughout eternity. God's plan is to lead His people into perfect concord with Himself. This harmony must be known in every phase of human life and endeavor. It does not involve merely a preparation of the mind to understand and appreciate heavenly things; but it comprehends every power, every attitude, and every relationship of life. Guiding principles for the growth of spiritual experience, the balanced development of the mind, proper attitudes toward, and the care of, the physical being, social contact with all its ramifications, were needed in order that the process of restoration might be carried out successfully. All these the Lord has made available in the Scriptures. A way of life is revealed there. The Lord's interest in the minute details of our daily living is as thoroughly made known as are the great outlines of history and prophecy. All this was pointed out through the prophets and placed in a setting that would render it most useful—the daily lives of men and women in centuries past.

Of course, the instruction given was not intended to apply only to the persons or groups to whom it was originally sent. “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” [1 Corinthians 10:11](#). “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” [2 Timothy 3:16, 17](#). The incidents that took place in the lives of God’s people have been used by the Lord to illustrate the working of the principles of life. If, as Paul declares, the whole Bible is profitable for our study, it is obvious that these are principles that apply to human beings in every age. The basic principles of right and truth never change.

[80] The Bible is concerned with two vital elements—what we believe, and how we act. Right action stems from right belief and understanding. Both belief and action must be based on principle. In the realm of belief, a principle is a fundamental truth from which other truths are derived; by its very nature it is unchangeable. This does not imply that the application and understanding of the principle are the same for each individual, or at all times. If we take the Bible declaration, “God is love” ([1 John 4:8](#)), we may readily discern that this fundamental proposition has endless meanings. Each person’s understanding of the love of God is conditioned by his knowledge of the Bible and his own experience in spiritual matters. To the reclaimed drunkard the love of God means rescue from bondage, satisfaction of an insatiable appetite, recovery of self-respect and community esteem. It means that there is One who is not only interested in his welfare, but who has the power to bring about a transformation in mind and body. It means the assurance of continued victory, of companionship. But to the youth who has been reared in a Christian home, daily advancing in a knowledge of God and growing in personal spiritual life, the love of God means something vastly different. Through his life there has been a growing awareness of the presence of the Lord, an increasing sense of fellowship. If these two persons were to write down what the love of God has meant to them, the two lists would have little in common. But this would in no wise affect the principle that God is love.

Similar illustrations might be given concerning the understanding of great Bible principles. Here are a few of them:

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” [Acts 4:12](#).

“Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.” [Habakkuk 2:4](#).

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” [Matthew 6:21](#).

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” [Romans 8:14](#).

“For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything.” [Ecclesiastes 9:5](#).

These are basic, unchangeable truths, belonging to all future generations as well as to the one to whom they were first stated. We will give attention to only the first principle in this list—all salvation is through Christ. That was true before the first advent of Christ as well as afterward. It was as true for Adam and Eve as for John the revelator. No other means of salvation can be provided for heathen, or for the civilized and educated. If some men are saved who have never heard the name of Christ,—and it seems apparent that some will be,—it will be through the salvation that was provided by Jesus Christ, of whom they knew nothing. His sacrifice has brought about the reconciliation of man to God. The price He paid with His own life is ransom for any and all who permit Him to apply the price for their purchase. The wages of sin is death. Had it not been for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, every sinner would have to die the second time. Anyone who is granted immortal life will receive it only because Christ died to make it possible. There can be no deviation from this principle, even though men are called by different means. Their understanding of the plan may vary, but that does not change the divine principle.

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What is true of principles involved in belief is also true of those pertaining to action. In this connection a principle is to be understood as a settled rule of action or a governing law of conduct. Again we must recognize that the principle may not guide every life into exactly the same channel. The golden rule is fundamental, but it can scarcely be followed by everyone in exactly the same fashion.

[82] “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” [Matthew 7:12](#). The wealthy man, because of his love for God and his desire to serve Him by serving his fellow men, may provide a hospital, finance education for young people, clothe and house the unfortunate, and make great strides in fulfilling Christ’s command. The poor man who perhaps has received some of the rich man’s favors cannot duplicate the work of his benefactor. But it may be that his kind word, his cheery smile, his expression of gratitude will be as useful in the hands of God to lead someone to a decision to accept Christ as are the actions of the rich man. The responsibility to act in harmony with this principle is as binding today as it was when Cain killed Abel. No person is excluded from its claims.

Once more it is possible to gather from the Bible, examples of the principles which reveal God’s purposes for His children.

“But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” [1 John 1:7](#).

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.” [James 1:5](#).

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” [2 Timothy 2:15](#).

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” [Matthew 6:33](#).

“In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.” [Proverbs 3:6](#).

Again let us notice [1 John 1:7](#), in regard to walking in the light. No two minds are enlightened to exactly the same degree. Each individual’s heredity, environment, and opportunities help to determine to a large extent the light he can or does receive. Therefore, walking in the light does not mean exactly the same thing to any two persons. Human beings are incapable of evaluating another’s light and knowing just how the Lord views his response to the light he has been given. That was why Jesus counseled, “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” [Matthew 7:1](#). The African native, or the Australian aborigine, is as responsible to walk in the light he obtains as is the man who has had the advantage of Christian education throughout

his lifetime. The amount of light differs, but the obligation to “walk in the light” remains constant. It is an unchanging principle from whose note of urgency none may escape.

A correct use of the messages of the prophets depends upon a grasp of this fact. Truth can be made to apply in the life of every person regardless of his age or location, or the century in which he lives. From every page of Scripture there are lessons to be learned, lessons that bring light and truth to the conscientious seeker. No page is obsolete or uninformative to the twentieth-century Christian. We turn our attention now to several of the general lines of instruction given in the Bible. In these we see something of the Lord’s interest in our daily life and the counsel He gave us based upon eternal principles.

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The Spiritual Life

In one sense all Bible instruction has to do with the spiritual life, but for our present purpose we will give attention to some of the teachings that bear directly on what is usually thought of as religious experience. In each case note the specific nature of the instruction, and also the general applicability of these steps in Christian birth and growth.

Come: [Matthew 11:28, 29](#). “Come unto Me.... Take My yoke: ... and ye shall find rest.”

Confess: [1 John 1:9](#). “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.”

Repent: [Acts 2:38](#). “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ.”

Be Born Again: [John 3:5](#). “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

Study: [2 Timothy 2:15](#). “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.” (“Study” in this case means more than to search for knowledge. It means to put forth an earnest, reasoned effort to show oneself approved of God. A part of this is the study of God’s instruction.)

Develop Faith: [Romans 10:17](#). “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

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Pray: [1 Thessalonians 5:17](#). “Pray without ceasing.” [Matthew 6:9](#). “After this manner therefore pray ye.”

Meet With Others: [Hebrews 10:25](#). “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together; ... but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

Overcome by Faith: [1 John 5:4](#). “And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

Look for Coming: [Hebrews 9:28](#). “Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time.”

Go to Others: [Matthew 28:19](#). “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.”

Endure: [Matthew 24:13](#). “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”

Thousands of related verses might be brought together to form a complete picture of what God intends the spiritual life of the Christian to be. In many of the texts, as in the ones cited, it is possible to discover a principle of truth which makes it applicable at all times. The instruction is so detailed and so easily understood that none need mistake the way.

Intellectual Development

[85] The Bible presents no plan for teaching the three R's or any of the other subjects that are today considered basic in elementary education. By no means does this imply that education was lacking among the Israelites in Bible times, but simply that the problem is not formally treated in the Scriptures. Isaiah refers to the ability of a child to write ([Isaiah 10:19](#)), and makes a distinction between one who “is learned” (literally, “knoweth letters”) and one who is not ([Isaiah 29:11, 12](#)). Jesus had not attended the schools of the Jews, so when He appeared before them obviously better educated than they, it amazed them, and they asked, “How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?” [John 7:15](#). The selection of such men as Daniel and his companions to receive training in the Babylonian schools indicates that they had already been well educated in their own land. “Sons of the prophets” were brought together in groups for educational purposes. [2 Kings 2:3-5; 4:38](#). In the Bible these groups are not called “schools of the prophets,” but it is easily recognizable

that they served that purpose. Had we no other evidence of the high standard of Jewish education in ancient times, the quality of the writings of the prophets would be sufficient. Still recognized as masterpieces of literature entirely apart from their spiritual value, these writings could only have been the product of a people of considerable educational accomplishments.

Church and civil government were one in ancient Israel. So, also, were religion and education. As it is viewed in the Bible, religion is not something added to life; it is life itself. Paul's admonition in harmony with this principle is, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." [Colossians 3:17](#). Life, for the genuine Christian, permits of no compartments in which he may separate his religion, his education, and his business. Thus the Bible recognizes only that education which acknowledges God as its author and His instruction as its basis. The Lord's interest in this kind of education, and some of the principles it involves, are made clear in numerous Bible passages.

Objectives. The aims of the Bible plan of education are well summarized in Solomon's words as he tells of the objectives of the Proverbs. "To know wisdom and instruction; to discern the words of understanding; to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness and justice and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion: that the wise man may hear, and increase in learning; and that the man of understanding may attain unto sound counsels." [Proverbs 1:2-5](#), A.R.V.

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Source: [Proverbs 1:7](#). "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."

Teacher: [Isaiah 54:13](#). "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord."

Nature: [James 3:17](#). "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated."

Spiritual Quality: [Deuteronomy 6:6, 7](#). "These words ... shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children."

Repeated: [Deuteronomy 6:7](#). "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Balanced: [Luke 2:52](#). “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”

Details as to how the educational program was to be adapted to each age and situation are not included; but the principles are clear, and God, by His Spirit, has guided men so that they may know how to put the principles into practice at the right time and place.

The Physical Body

[87] In God’s plan human beings cannot exist apart from their physical body. When the body perishes, the mind also ceases to function. There is no intelligence that continues to live after the physical being dies. But during the lifetime of an individual there exists a close relationship between the working of the body and the mind. Because of this relationship, and because God is the Creator and owner of the whole man, He is intensely interested in what men do with their bodies. For the most part, the Bible deals with principles rather than with details in this matter, although there are a few specific commands and prohibitions.

Temple: [1 Corinthians 6:19, 20](#). “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

Subject to Mind: [1 Corinthians 9:27](#). “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.”

Mind Affects Body: [Proverbs 17:22](#). “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.”

Care of Body:

Eating [1 Corinthians 10:31](#). “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

[Deuteronomy 14:3](#). “Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing.”

Drinking. [1 Corinthians 10:31](#). “Do all to the glory of God.”

[Proverbs 20:1](#). “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging.”

Dressing. [1 Peter 3:3, 4](#). “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, ... even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.”

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Medical care and sanitation. [Deuteronomy 24:8](#). Levites gave instruction.

[Leviticus 13 to 15](#). Instruction for the diagnosis of certain diseases and how the patient should be dealt with.

[Leviticus 13:54, 57](#). Washing or burning for cleansing.

[Leviticus 15:13](#). Running water for cleansing.

[Isaiah 38:21](#). Fig poultice suggested for Hezekiah’s boil.

[Leviticus 15:5, 6, 9-12](#). Methods of contamination.

[Leviticus 13:46](#). Isolation.

Few specific remedies and few details as to the proper food and clothing of the body are given in the Bible, but fundamental principles are indicated. These principles may be adapted to the age and condition of people anywhere. With the prompting of the Holy Spirit, who will guide men “into all truth,” it is not difficult to apply Scriptural principles to the individual life or to the life of the church.

Social Relationships

It has never been God’s plan that men should live hermit lives or seek to perfect character away from the regular round of daily activity. While Enoch was walking with God for three hundred years, he continued to carry on normal family relationships. [Genesis 5:21-24](#). Social contact is one means for the development of character and for bringing blessing to others. Men cannot fully accomplish God’s purposes by living to themselves.

The Family. Of all social groups the family ties are the strongest and most intimate. Two of the Ten Commandments are aimed at

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preserving the integrity of the home (“Honor thy father and thy mother,” and “Thou shalt not commit adultery”). Another command recognizes the potent influence of parents on children (“Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments”). The Lord’s interest in the family and the basic principles for its conduct are made plain in passages like the following:

Separate Unit: [Genesis 2:24](#). “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

Like Christ and the Church: [Ephesians 5:22-26](#). “Wives, submit.... For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.... Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.” See also [Colossians 3:18](#).

High Regard: [Ephesians 5:28-33](#). “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.... Even as the Lord the church.... And the wife see that she reverence her husband.”

Purity: [Matthew 5:27, 28](#). “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

Regard for Parents: [Exodus 20:12](#). “Honor thy father and thy mother.” See also [Colossians 3:20](#).

Consideration for Children: [Colossians 3:21](#). “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger.”

[90] **Being a Responsible Person:** [1 Timothy 5:8](#). “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

The family relationship has been used by the Father to illustrate our relationship to Him, His relationship to Christ, and Christ’s to us. Under inspiration, Paul pictures the inhabitants of heaven and the children of God on earth as all one family. “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” [Ephesians 3:14, 15](#). Much instruction has been given through the prophets to help God’s family on earth represent aright the heavenly portion of the family and prepare to be part of a united family.

Relationships With Others

The family forms only a small part of the circle of acquaintances and associates of the Christian. For some the circle widens daily, while for others it may be much more restricted. Nevertheless, dealing with other persons outside the family is an important phase of everyday living. God has demonstrated His interest in these associations by enunciating fundamental principles to serve as guides. As in the other instances, these principles are for the most part stated in connection with specific instruction, but their general application is easily discerned.

Love to Neighbor: [Leviticus 19:18](#). “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

Service: [Matthew 25:40](#). “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”

Golden Rule: [Matthew 7:12](#). “Therefore all things whatsoever ye [91] would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

Forgiveness: [Luke 23:34](#). “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

Patience and Goodness: [1 Thessalonians 5:13-15](#). “Esteem them [spiritual leaders] very highly.... Be at peace.... Warn, ... comfort, ... support, ... be patient.... Follow that which is good.”

Love Enemies: [Matthew 5:44](#). “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

Business

The religious experience of a professed Christian is frequently judged by the character of his business dealings. Even men who are not strictly honest expect to find honesty and fair dealing among Christians. The Lord’s intention is that in business, as well as elsewhere, scrupulous honesty and justice shall be maintained. Note a few Bible principles.

Honest Measures: [Leviticus 19:35, 36](#), R.S.V. “You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measures of length or weight or quantity. You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin.”

Not Slothful: [Romans 12:11](#). “Not slothful in business.”

Diligent: [Proverbs 22:29](#). “Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings.”

Fair With Servants: [Deuteronomy 24:14, 15](#). “Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant.” See also [James 5:1-6](#).

[92] **Give Good Service** [Ephesians 6:5-7](#). “Servants, be obedient; ... not with eyeservice; ... but as the servants of Christ; ... with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.”

Avoid Lawsuits: [1 Corinthians 6:7](#). “Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong?”

Range of Instruction

No phase of the Christian life has been overlooked, and God has given principles to guide one in making decisions. In order to show the practical working of the principles, most of them have been given in connection with specific problems rather than being stated theoretically. With regard to the statement of the clear principles that He desires to be carried out in the lives of His people, the Lord might ask, as He did concerning His care for the children of Israel, “What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?” [Isaiah 5:4](#).

IMPORTANCE OF FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTION OF THE PROPHETS

Since the operation of the gift of prophecy through chosen men is God’s appointed method of communicating His will to the world, it follows that the relation of the individual or the nation to the prophet and to the instruction given is a clear indication of the relation of the individual or the nation to the God who sent the messages. Prophets were spokesmen for the Lord, and God felt justified in holding His people responsible for whatever attitude they might assume toward these men. The importance and results of accepting or rejecting the messages is perhaps best pointed out by the contrast between two verses of Scripture found in 2 Chronicles. On the positive side are the

[93] words of Jehoshaphat: “Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be

established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper.” [2 Chronicles 20:20](#). In marked contrast are the words of the messenger regarding the fate of the people who had ignored the work of the prophets: “And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, 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.” [2 Chronicles 36:15, 16](#).

A secure way of life with prosperity added were promised to those who would believe God and the word of His prophets. They might be weak, faulty, or misguided; but if they placed their confidence in the Lord and His work, God could bring about a transformation in due time that would make them the wonder of the world. On the other hand, what could He do for any who rejected the only means provided for their help? The study of several examples of individuals and nations will show the results of a variety of attitudes toward the prophets. Again it should be emphasized that “all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” [1 Corinthians 10:11](#). Each case will be considered as a separate unit for the purpose of discovering the attitudes involved and the results reached.

Pharaoh. When Moses and Aaron gave Pharaoh God’s message, “Let My people go,” his retort was, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.” [Exodus 5:2](#). His inquiry, “Who is the Lord?” was not a request for enlightenment, but a defiant disclaimer of any knowledge of the Lord that would cause a king to respect His wishes as expressed by the two messengers. It is impossible to say how much truth there was in his statement that he did not know the Lord. Obviously he had no personal acquaintance with God, but the records of the works of Joseph, and the presence of the children of Israel among the Egyptians, must have given him some knowledge of the God they served. On the other hand, it must be remembered that Israel had largely stopped their Sabbath observance, and had in many other ways drifted from God. Then, too, forty years before, Moses, the crown prince, had taken the life of an Egyptian and was

forced to flee the country. Since the days of Joseph the witness of God's people had been weak. Conflicting influences and his own reluctance to lose the services of the Israelites caused him to deny Moses' repeated requests that Israel be permitted to leave Egypt.

But God did not leave Pharaoh without a knowledge of Himself and a clear demonstration of His power. One plague after another gave him opportunity to recognize the Lord and follow His instruction. During the plague of the locusts, "Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and entreat the Lord your God, that He may take away from me this death only." [Exodus 10:16, 17](#). His good intention was soon forgotten, however, and it was not until after death struck the first-born of Egypt that the monarch was willing that Israel leave. Then it was not in response to the command of God, but because of fear that all the land would be destroyed. When Pharaoh's defiance caused him to reject Moses' message, there was nothing more the Lord could do for him.

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Rebellion took place also within the ranks of Israel. Jealousy caused Korah, Dathan, and Abiram to reject the appointment of Moses as their leader, and to claim that any one of them had as much right to lead the people as he did. [Numbers 16:1-3](#). Moses made a special appeal to Korah as a Levite, but apparently accomplished nothing.

[95] [Verses 8-11](#). Then he sent for Dathan and Abiram, but they refused to recognize his leadership or come to talk with him. [Verses 12-14](#). Their rebellion and insolence placed God in a position where He could do nothing more for them. They were destroyed when the earth opened and swallowed them up. [Verses 24-33](#).

Achan. Through Joshua the Lord had instructed the children of Israel that none of the treasures of Jericho were to be taken for themselves, in order that all credit might be given God for the conquest of the city. Achan's disobedience resulted in a stinging defeat for the nation at Ai and eventually his sin brought the punishment of death by stoning. [Joshua 6:18, 19; 7:1-26](#).

Saul. Through Samuel the Lord delegated Saul to destroy the nation of the Amalekites. Israel's king carried out part of the command, but he failed to complete his task. When challenged by the

prophet, his response was, "I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites." [1 Samuel 15:20](#). The king of Israel blamed the soldiers for wanting to bring back sheep and oxen, but apparently Saul was persuaded in his own mind that he had completed his mission. A partial fulfillment of the commandment was insufficient, and excuses were unacceptable. On that day the prophet announced to Saul that his kingdom was to be taken from him and given to another.

David. Despite God's special blessing on him from the days of his youth, David committed a heinous sin. Nathan the prophet faced the king first with a parable to arouse him to see the sinfulness of his act, and then spoke a direct accusation, "Thou art the man." [2 Samuel 12:7](#). David confessed his guilt, returned to the Lord, and was fully accepted. God's spokesman had been used to bring conviction that led to transformation.

Nebuchadnezzar. Records of the conversion of heathen kings are few in the Scriptures. It happened in the days of Jonah, and in the book of Daniel we find another instance. Step by step Nebuchadnezzar was led to the truth by divine revelations given directly to him and interpreted by Daniel the prophet, and by messages given to him by Daniel. His thinking was changed, and in his proclamation to the nation he declared his conviction and conversion. "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride His is able to abase." [Daniel 4:37](#). Early in his association with Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the power of God, but many years passed before he permitted that power to bring a complete change in his own life. Finally the work of the prophet, combined with divine interposition to reduce the king's pride, accomplished the divine purpose.

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Ninevites. Jonah was much more reluctant to take the message of God to the people of Nineveh than they were to receive it. The proclamation of the impending destruction of the city led the inhabitants to believe in God and repent of sin. "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them." [Jonah 3:5](#).

[97] *Israel.* The Lord continually held before the children of Israel the high destiny that was theirs if they were obedient to the instruction He sent them through His prophets. They would be exalted in the eyes of the nations round about, who would exclaim, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” [Deuteronomy 4:6](#). Again He promised, “And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath.” [Deuteronomy 28:13](#). But the favored nation refused to accept the counsel of the prophets. In some of His parables the Savior indicated how rejection of the prophets was only a step toward the rejection of the Son of God Himself. He told of the householder who went to a far country, leaving his property in the hands of husbandmen. At the harvest time he sent servants to receive the harvest, but the servants were beaten and stoned. After repeated attempts to gather what was his own, he decided to send his son to deal with the husbandmen, saying, “They will reverence my son.” [Matthew 21:37](#). But the son fared no better, for “they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.” [Verse 39](#). In another place Jesus summarized the situation thus: “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” [Luke 16:31](#). Taking into consideration the total reaction of Israel to the messages of the prophets, as the Lord viewed the case, we can agree that “there was no remedy.” [2 Chronicles 36:16](#).

It mattered little on what basis or with what attitude ancient Israel or others rejected a message of any of the prophets. Some were defiant, others accepted only part of the counsel, still others were simply careless or slow about putting the instruction into practice; but in each instance the practical result was rejection. God regarded the attitudes they took toward the instruction given through the prophets as their attitudes toward Him.

SUMMARY

1. Instruction from God to men forms the most important single phase of the Bible record.
2. The Bible provides a basis for making a correct decision in every situation man may face.

3. The Bible gives principles to guide in correct thinking and right conduct.

4. The instruction was intended not only for those to whom it was originally given, but, in principle, for every generation.

5. Since the messages of the prophets are God's counsels to the human family, disregarding them is equivalent to disregarding God. [98]

6. The Bible well illustrates the results of certain attitudes toward the prophets. These results are clearly contrasted in [2 Chronicles 20:20](#); [36:15](#), [16](#).

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. List several general classes of instruction given in the Bible other than those mentioned in this chapter.

2. Select two or three Bible principles for the guidance of conduct, and show how they operate in present-day situations. Make application in specific instances.

3. Discuss the implications of Paul's statement that all Scripture is profitable.

4. Distinguish clearly between a principle and the application of a principle.

5. Is God justified in using our attitude toward His prophets and their messages as a guide in determining our attitude toward Him?

6. Find additional examples of principles in the fields of belief and conduct.

7. Are there reasons why the Bible as an ancient Book can be of greater value to us than if it had been written in recent times?

8. Can you think of reasons why God would need to help us adapt anciently stated Bible principles to fit present-day needs?

SELECTED REFERENCE

Young, Edward J., *My Servants the Prophets*, pp. 95-124.

Chapter 6—Tests Of A Prophet

Satan has attempted to counterfeit everything God has done for the benefit of His people. Thus some of the Lord's greatest blessings have been perverted into agencies of destruction. Presumption has been mistaken and substituted for faith. For most of the professed Christian world the day of worship originated by the deceiver has replaced the Sabbath of the Lord. Forms and ceremonies in worship have taken the place of genuine worship of God in spirit and in truth. Salvation through faith has been supplanted by an almost infinite variety of systems of salvation by works. Some of the most healthful and nourishing of foods—grains and fruits—have been made into intoxicating drinks that destroy men's minds and bodies.

Seldom does Satan deal in error unmixed with truth, for error alone would not be sufficiently deceptive. Many of his teachings contain much that is true and good, and the more truth they contain the more deceptive is the counterfeit. The Sabbath and Sunday question is a good illustration of Satan's methods. The Sabbath is a memorial of creation; Sunday is said to memorialize the resurrection of Christ. The Sabbath is a day of rest from the usual activities of the week, so that God may be worshiped and His work of bringing blessing to others may be done in a special way. Sunday, for the majority of professed Christians, is a day off from regular work so they might do whatever pleases them. For some persons this includes a brief period of worship, but for most it does not. The Sabbath is the mark of God's authority in the individual life, the seal of Christian experience; but Satan has attempted to make it a mark of peculiar notions or fanaticism. The Sabbath, which was intended by God to be a sign of sanctification through faith, has been perverted by the enemy so that many persons delude themselves by saying that keeping it is an indication that one is attempting to be saved by legalism and good works.

God's plan for reaching the minds of men through the messages of the prophets has been counterfeited by Satan, usually in the form

of false prophets. These false witnesses have accomplished two major objectives in Satan's scheme: (1) They have turned men's minds away from God's messages and led them to accept error. (2) They have, through their misrepresentations, either in message or in life, caused reproach and discredit to be cast upon all prophets. Satan cares little what attitude leads one to reject light, as long as the light is rejected.

No one need be deceived as to whether a professed prophet is true or false. Standards have been established in the Bible that make it possible to determine which messengers have come with messages from God and which are counterfeits. If the Bible tests are applied consistently and persistently to the life and teachings of any prophet, they will reveal the source of his communications. Four major tests of a prophet are mentioned in the Bible. It is essential that all four of the tests be applied to anyone who claims to possess the gift of prophecy. All the requirements must be met. In addition to the major tests, there are several minor tests or evidences that should be noted.

Applying the Tests

Test 1. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." [Isaiah 8:20](#).

Numerous questions have been raised as to the exact meaning of the "law" and the "testimony," but they are clearly references to the divinely inspired instruction given through the prophets. If any teaching or action deviates from the pattern prescribed in the revealed standard of truth, it is to be recognized as coming from the realm of darkness rather than light. Prophets spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit never contradicts His former instruction. All else that stems from the same source will harmonize with what has already been given.

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It is not difficult to trace through the Bible what its writers have said on many subjects. In an earlier chapter we have already commented on the unbroken unity of the Scriptures. Though words, methods of expression, and emphases vary, we find that the testimony of each writer dealing with the same subject is substantially the same. We may take the teaching regarding the condition of man

in death as a well-known example. Note the harmony of the Bible writers as recorded in their books.

Job. “So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.” [Job 14:12](#).

Psalmist. “The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.” [Psalm 115:17](#).

Solomon. “The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything.” [Ecclesiastes 9:5](#).

Isaiah. “For the grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth.” [Isaiah 38:18](#).

Ezekiel. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” [Ezekiel 18:20](#).

Jesus. “Lazarus sleepeth.... Lazarus is dead.” [John 11:11-14](#).

Paul. “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” [1 Thessalonians 4:13](#).

[102] Jesus and the Gospel writers bore witness to the accuracy of the predictions of the earlier prophets concerning His first advent. The following sampling from the book of Matthew will give some idea of the scores of references that might be included.

| | |
|--|---|
| Matthew 1:23 refers to Isaiah 7:14 . | Matthew 8:17 refers to Isaiah 53:4 . |
| Matthew 2:6 refers to Micah 5:2 . | Matthew 11:10 refers to Malachi 3:1 . |
| Matthew 2:17 refers to Jeremiah 31:15 . | Matthew 12:18 refers to Isaiah 42:1 . |
| Matthew 3:3 refers to Isaiah 40:3 . | Matthew 13:14 refers to Isaiah 6:9 . |
| Matthew 4:14, 15 refers to Isaiah 9:1, 2 . | Matthew 13:35 refers to Psalm 78:2 . |
| | Matthew 21:16 refers to Psalm 8:2 . |

The same consistency runs through the predictions of the second advent of Christ, the doctrines of God’s Creatorship, righteousness

by faith, and all other Bible teachings. It was not difficult for God's people in ancient times to apply this test to the messages of anyone who professed to possess the gift of prophecy. An outstanding example of how a prophet applied the test to another who claimed to be a prophet is found in [Jeremiah 28](#).

In the fourth year of King Jehoiakim, Jeremiah, under inspiration, had foretold that the period of captivity of Judah in Babylon would be seventy years. [Jeremiah 25:1, 11, 12](#). This was the first time the specific number of years had been revealed, but more than a century before, Isaiah had indicated that the desolation of the land should be for "many days and years." [Isaiah 32:9-14](#). He foretold that the deliverance should not take place until the days of Cyrus ([Isaiah 44:24 to 45:5](#)), and that the Medes would help to bring about the downfall of Babylon, the glory of kingdoms ([Isaiah 13:17-22](#)). In the fourth year of Zedekiah, eleven years after the prediction of the seventy years' Captivity, Jeremiah was challenged by a professed prophet who said the deliverance would come within a brief period. The full story is recorded in [Jeremiah 28](#). Hananiah declared that the Lord had spoken to him ([verses 1, 2](#)), that Babylon's yoke would be removed from the neck of Judah within two years ([verse 3](#)), and that all the vessels of the Lord's house would be returned to Jerusalem.

Jeremiah's response contains a touch of pathos. "Amen," he said, "the Lord do so." [Verse 6](#). "I hope the Lord will do it that way," is the thought. "Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears; ... The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him." [Verses 7-9](#). What Jeremiah was telling Hananiah was this, "Hananiah, you have said that peace and restoration will come quickly. The older prophets have predicted war and evil for years to come. In order to know for certain which is right, we will have to see whose predictions are fulfilled." Later Jeremiah faced Hananiah with the specific accusation that the Lord had not sent him ([verse 15](#)), and told him that because he was leading people to rebel against God he would die that year ([verse 16](#)). The chapter ends

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with the sad record, “So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.”

In his first encounter with Hananiah, Jeremiah made reference only to the predictions of the former prophets to confirm his own position that the restoration would be long delayed. It was not necessary that the Lord give him a special revelation that would condemn Hananiah. Jeremiah knew that if Hananiah’s message was out of harmony with what had been given earlier by men who had met the tests of a prophet, his message had not come from the Lord. Later his conclusion was confirmed by a revelation, and the word about the death of Hananiah was added. Here is a practical application of the test, “To the law and to the testimony.”

[104] Jesus’ warning to His disciples again emphasizes the need for care in verifying the claims of any prophet to be certain they harmonize with Scripture. After telling of the time of tribulation that might be expected, Jesus said, “Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before.” [Matthew 24:23-25](#). Then Jesus enumerated the signs that would indicate His coming was near. Any prophet in any age to come who talked of the second advent would be tested by these and all other statements of earlier prophets. When a person meets the test of harmonizing his messages with earlier divinely inspired predictions and teachings, then we are ready to apply other tests.

Test 2. “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” [Matthew 7:20](#).

The setting for this statement is the latter part of the Sermon on the Mount in connection with the warning Jesus gave to His disciples, “Beware of false prophets.” [Verse 15](#). On the basis that every good tree produces good fruit, and that a corrupt tree produces corrupt fruit, Jesus presents another test to be applied to prophets. What kind of fruit is brought forth in their lives? What influence do their teachings have on others? What results show up in the life of the church as a whole?

Sometimes the life and influence of the professed prophet is so completely out of harmony with the Scriptures that there is no

difficulty in placing him in his proper classification. But ordinarily this is not the case. Generally speaking, the application of this test requires more time and is harder to check than the first test. There are several factors to be considered in determining whether the fruit is good or bad.

A. The life of the prophet must be worthy of God's personal representative. There must be no question about the trend of his thinking and actions. He should be recognized as different from other men, because in vision he has seen and talked with God and angels.

On the other hand, as has been suggested earlier, receiving the prophetic gift does not make a man infallible; it does not ensure that he will never make a mistake. After nearly forty years as the Lord's messenger, Moses lost his temper on the borders of the Promised Land and was denied entrance to it. In other instances recorded in the Bible, we have seen even more calamitous consequences as the result of the actions of those who possessed the prophetic gift. None should be recognized as having met this test because of a few outstandingly good traits of character, and none should be labeled a failure because he has made some mistakes. It is the trend of the life as a whole that must be considered, rather than any occasional good deed or misdeed. What kind of man is he—good or bad?

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B. The influence of the prophet's life and messages upon individuals and the church as a whole must be good. Frequently the Lord has had to use prophets to tear down before they could build up, but the net result of the work of a true prophet will be constructive rather than destructive. Jesus found it necessary to unmask some of the sins of the Jewish leaders and to tear down their traditions, but He tore down only that He might build again; He wounded that He might heal.

Again there is a problem to be faced before final conclusions are reached. There were times in the history of God's people when with one or more prophets among them they became progressively worse. Was this the fault of the prophet? Did this mean that his messages were not from heaven? God did not regard it so. He told Ezekiel, "Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, everyone to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you,

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and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.” [Ezekiel 33:30, 31](#). People listened, they urged others to come and hear the words of the prophet; but no one put into practice what he heard. Could this be charged against the prophet? There were those among the followers of the Master who continued in their evil ways even though they claimed allegiance to Him. Sometimes it is necessary to study what the influence of the prophet’s messages would have been if they had been heeded. Are they messages that lead to godliness, or do they turn the mind away from right living and heavenly things?

C. A man may live a good life and have an excellent influence on others, but this does not necessarily prove that he is a prophet. All the other tests of a true prophet must be met.

D. The application of the tests is cumulative. If, in addition to speaking in full accord with the former prophets, the prophet’s own life has been a godly one, and if the tenor of his messages is such as would lead to genuine piety, we may conclude that he has passed another of the tests which may eventually identify him as a prophet of God.

Test 3. “When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.” [Jeremiah 28:9](#).

Prediction is not the major work of the prophet; but in many instances the prophets claimed that by divine inspiration they had been given insight into the future. Part of the testing of a prophet is observing whether or not his predictions are fulfilled. Confidence is established in the word of God through the fulfillment of the many specific predictions it contains. Confidence would be quickly destroyed should the prophecies prove to be incorrect. See also [Deuteronomy 13:1-3; 18:22](#). Earlier in this chapter mention was made of Jeremiah’s declaration that Hananiah would die that year. Apparently many heard the prediction, and when they saw its fulfillment, their confidence in Jeremiah’s prophecy of the seventy years of captivity was confirmed. However, if the prophecy regarding

Hananiah had failed, it is unlikely that many would have believed the time prophecy of the Captivity.

Examples of predictions fulfilled are numerous throughout the Bible. In some cases the prophecies were not fulfilled in Bible times, but we find the fulfillments recorded in history or have seen them take place in our own times. Most of the Old Testament books tell of the Messiah who was to come, and the New Testament verifies the accuracy of the prophecies. Daniel outlined the history of nations from the days of Babylon to the end of time, and it is a simple matter to trace through history the amazing foreknowledge of events that God gave him. Occasionally specific time periods were predicted. These, too, have been exactly fulfilled. All of a prophet's predictions must be carefully scrutinized and their fulfillments observed, although, because of the time involved, this may prove to span more than one lifetime.

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But the matter is not as simple as it might appear to be. The Bible introduces another principle that must be considered before final decisions are reached. This is the principle of conditional prophecy, as stated by Jeremiah: "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in My sight, that it obey not My voice, then I will repent of the good, where-with I said I would benefit them." [Jeremiah 18:7-10](#). This must be given careful consideration in dealing with the identification of a true prophet.

In certain instances conditional prophecy poses no real problem, for the conditions are stated, and it is easy to see that if the conditions are not met there is no reason for the fulfillment of the prediction. But in other cases, no conditions are stated. The Lord has said that when conditions change He will act differently, either for reward or punishment. Does this not create a loophole through which any false prophet may escape if we permit him to say, "That was a conditional prophecy I made, even though I did not state the conditions; now that the conditions have changed there is no reason why the prophecy should be fulfilled"?

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The Bible's best illustration of the principle set forth by Jeremiah is in the book of Jonah. The rebellious prophet proclaimed, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." [Jonah 3:4](#). No mention is made of any conditions attached. In fact, it seems obvious that no suggestion was made of a way of escape, for in his decree the king asked, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" [Verse 9](#). Had a condition been offered he would have known that there was the possibility of deliverance. The time passed, the city was not overthrown, and Jonah was angry with the Lord because he felt he would be considered a false prophet.

Was Jonah a false prophet? Our text reads: "When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him." Jonah's word did not come to pass, and yet he had taken to Nineveh the exact message the Lord had given him. In fact, it was because of his recognition of the principle that the Lord would withhold punishment if the people repented that he had not wanted to go to Nineveh in the first place. In his prayer to the Lord after Nineveh had been spared, he complained, "Was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil." [Jonah 4:2](#). Had he been permitted to enumerate the conditions on which punishment would be withheld, there would have been no problem in his mind on this particular point. But was he a false prophet? God did not consider him so, and as we study the case carefully we conclude that he was a true prophet of God despite the fact that what may have been the most prominent prediction of his career was unfulfilled.

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What makes the difference? Why is one man whose prediction is not fulfilled called a false prophet, and another true? The answer is this: God has explained to us a principle governing all prophecy in which men's decisions and attitudes are involved. We understand on the basis of the [Jeremiah 18](#) statement that all of God's promises of blessing or threatenings of punishment are made on condition, whether the conditions are stated or not, because their fulfillment depends upon man's relationship to God.

This understanding in no wise applies to the portions of God's plan that are not subject to modification by the decisions of men. For instance, Jesus Christ is going to return to this earth to gather the faithful and destroy the wicked. This is a part of God's unalterable purpose, and it will come to pass despite any decision that might be made by any individual or group. Peter says that it is possible for us to hasten the day of His coming (2 Peter 3:12—see the margin, which in this case is the preferable rendering), and conversely, it is possible for us to delay the coming through the slowness of our preparation; but we cannot alter the fact that He is coming.

We have no difficulty in understanding the case of Jonah and Nineveh. It is obvious that the changed circumstances justified the Lord's decision to withhold the threatened destruction. Must we not recognize the same principle in judging any other case? If it can be clearly seen that the circumstances which called forth a condemnation have been so altered that the condemnation is no longer warranted, then the Lord's alteration of His course of action is in full harmony with Jeremiah 18. When He has openly stated the circumstances under which this will be done, there is no reason why any prophet must declare all the specific details that might be attached to a conditional prophecy. A prophet whose prediction does not come to pass under these circumstances is not to be condemned as a false prophet, for we must always remember that the reasons for the change will be clearly evident. This procedure in no way leaves a way of escape for the false prophet; all of the tests are still to be applied to him and his teachings.

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Test 4. "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." 1 John 4:2.

In presenting this test John is dealing directly with the matter of those who profess to be prophets. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." 1 John 4:1, 2. This test is broader than simply claiming to believe that Jesus Christ lived. In its fullest sense it involves all that the Bible teaches concerning Christ. It is the recognition that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,

(and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” [John 1:14](#).

The Word becoming flesh is the incarnation of the Son of God as man. Earlier verses in the first chapter of John set forth the Word as God, the Creator, the Source of life, and the Light of mankind. His virgin birth, His sinless life, His atoning death, His resurrection and ascension, His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary as High Priest, and His second coming, are all closely related to His coming in the flesh. The first four are parts of His earthly life and experience. The others are made possible by what He accomplished while He was here on earth. All of these must be recognized and taught by the one accepted as a true prophet. And this is not to be a mere theoretical acknowledgment of the truths; the life of the prophet will correspond to the profession. One who denies the teaching of the Bible in any of these truths pertaining to Christ, His life, and His redemption is not confessing that “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,” and is not “of God.” See [2 John 7](#).

[111] The four major Biblical tests are sufficient in themselves to enable us to determine who is a true prophet and who is false. In addition, however, there are other factors that give added proof that the true prophet’s messages are from the Lord. They are not as conclusive as the major tests, but they serve a useful purpose.

Additional Evidences

Physical manifestations. In chapter 4 mention was made of certain physical manifestations which at times accompanied the revelations of a true prophet. Taken with the other evidences, these manifestations form convincing added testimony.

Timeliness is another striking feature of these revelations. Ordinarily we think of messages being given years, or even centuries before their full significance is realized; but many have been given at exactly the time they were needed.

There is the fascinating story of Elisha and the king of Syria, recorded in [2 Kings 6:8-23](#). The king of Syria had marched against Israel. As a wise military leader, he took counsel with his associates as to his plan of procedure. But every time an ambush was planned or a move made, Elisha the prophet warned the king of Israel, “Beware

that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down.” In a gem of understatement the chronicler tells how Israel’s king “saved himself there, not once nor twice.” So accurate was Elisha’s information that the king of Syria was certain there was a traitor in his camp. An intelligence service providing such timely and accurate information would be highly prized by any army. It is a part of God’s plan to make available to His children, in any age, well-timed guidance to meet their needs.

The certainty and the fearlessness with which the prophets gave their testimonies add weight to their claims to have God’s messages. There was no hesitation, no hedging, no note of apology when Nathan stood before David and declared, “Thou art the man.” [2 Samuel 12:7](#). Elijah, appearing before Ahab after the long period of drought that had devastated Israel, was challenged by the king, “Art thou he that troubleth Israel?” [1 Kings 18:17](#). The response was certain and fearless, despite the personal danger faced by the prophet. “I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou has followed Baalim.” [Verse 18](#). No equivocation was permitted in the delivery of the messages of the prophets.

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High spiritual plane. In the messages of true prophets there is nothing cheap or common or childish. While their writings deal with ordinary, everyday affairs of life, they do so in a dignified and fitting manner. Though great truths are expressed simply enough for children to understand, they are not childish, but profound enough to engage the keenest scholars in ever-expanding research. The spiritual principles laid down are the most lofty known to the human mind. Both the theme of the Bible and its mode of expression are worthy of, and command the respect of, the most learned as well as the most humble.

Practical nature. Messages brought by the prophets are of a practical and useful nature. There are no weird fantasies or pointless ramblings in their communications. Though some messages are given in symbolic language, their intent may be discovered by following clearly discernible rules of interpretation. We may repeat Paul’s statement that all Scripture is profitable.

A Contrast

The contrast between true and false prophets stands out sharply in the experience of Ahab and Jehoshaphat, kings of Israel and Judah, with Micaiah the prophet. [1 Kings 22](#). Jehoshaphat, of the southern kingdom, was visiting Ahab, king of Israel, when Ahab proposed that together they do battle with the king of Syria for Ramothgilead. [113] With a sweeping pledge Jehoshaphat agreed. Then, apparently a bit doubtful of the wisdom of his decision, he asked Ahab if there were not a prophet nearby of whom they could inquire the will of God. In response, Israel's king called in four hundred professed prophets of God, and asked them, "Shall I go against Ramothgilead to battle?" As one man they replied, "Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." Under the circumstances this was exactly the message Ahab wanted in order to impress his prospective partner in battle.

While Jehoshaphat may have been impressed, he was not satisfied with the advice. There must have been something in the manner or the message of the men that caused him to question that their word was from the Lord, for he pressed Ahab, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him?" Ahab admitted that there was one more who might be consulted, a man named Micaiah, "but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

Micaiah was sent for, despite Ahab's misgivings, and during the messenger's absence the prophets continued to prophesy. One of the most enlightening episodes in this account is that in which the king's messenger tried to tell Micaiah what he should say when he came before the two monarchs. It is possible that the messenger had been sent before to gather prophets, and he had found that they greatly desired information as to what others had said to the king so their testimony might harmonize. At least, he seems to have felt that he was doing Micaiah a favor by reporting to him what the four hundred had counseled the king. "Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good." He may have had a distinct memory of some of Micaiah's former predictions of evil.

But the prophet of God was not interested in what the other prophets had said. His attention was focused on what the Lord had to say. His revealing reply was, “As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak.” No true prophet could have taken any other attitude. We have mentioned previously the basic Bible passage dealing with the call of a prophet ([Deuteronomy 18:15-22](#)) in which these words appear: “And will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.... But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, ... even that prophet shall die.” [114]

When the question about the battle was put to Micaiah, he responded in a way that at first glance appears strange. “Go, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.” A more careful scrutiny of the passage helps us to catch the irony in Micaiah’s voice. “Go ahead and do what you’ve been counseled to do. This is the message you want.” This time it was Ahab who was dissatisfied even though the word of the prophet appeared to be the same as what had already been said. He detected without difficulty the derisive note in the prophet’s voice, and demanded to know the Lord’s message. Micaiah’s words were solemn and majestic: “I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace.” Ahab turned to Jehoshaphat. “Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?” A short time later Micaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled when Ahab lost his life in the battle for Ramothgilead.

Satan is a liar and a deceiver. If it were possible he will deceive the very elect. This is true in dealing with prophets as well as every other human being. What he cannot do through false prophets, he will attempt to do by discrediting and counteracting the work of true prophets. In either case we need to be aware of the methods of testing prophets. Not only are we to detect and reject the false, but we must be diligent to discover and receive the true.

No one test is a full and sufficient identification of a prophet. It is frequently easier to detect the false prophet than it is to be certain of the true, for if he obviously violates one of the major tests we have no difficulty in knowing the source of his messages. On the other hand, before it can be finally determined that one is a true [115]

prophet, all the tests must be painstakingly applied and sufficient time permitted to make thorough investigation.

The words of the Master clearly point out that one of the spiritual problems of those who live in the days preceding His second advent is that of dealing with false christs and false prophets. These imposters will have little success among those who have been fortified with the truth and who know how to apply the tests. Every member of the remnant church should be so familiar with these criteria that he will automatically apply them in every instance where they are needed without having to ask, “How can I tell whether this prophet is true or false?”

SUMMARY

1. Through the centuries Satan’s attempts to deceive God’s people have been multiplied.

2. The importance of God’s plan to reach men through prophets makes it a special target of the enemy.

3. Satan attempts to introduce false prophets and to discredit the true.

4. There is no reason to be deceived, for the Bible presents clear tests to be applied to the professed prophet.

“To the law and to the testimony.” [Isaiah 8:20](#).

“By their fruits.” [Matthew 7:20](#).

“When the word ... shall come to pass.” [Jeremiah 28:9](#).

“Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” [1 John 4:2](#).

5. Added evidences that help to confirm confidence in true prophets are: (1) physical manifestations, (2) timeliness, (3) certainty, (4) high spiritual plane, (5) practical nature.

[116] 6. All the tests must be applied to the prophet, over a long period of time if necessary. The evidence is cumulative and must be carefully noted before a final decision is made.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What are the most deceptive of Satan’s counterfeits? Why?

2. Is it possible for Satan's deceptions to nullify the influence of a prophet so completely that an individual will not realize the prophet ever existed?

3. Is a true prophet susceptible to influence from others in receiving or communicating his messages? Give Bible incidents to prove your answer.

4. Apply the tests of a prophet to the life and work of Daniel, Paul, Moses. Do not simply state that Daniel spoke according to the law and the testimony; present evidence that he did so. Do the same with the remaining tests.

5. In addition to the ones mentioned in this chapter, find one example of a conditional prophecy in which no conditions are stated. Has it been fulfilled, or not? Find two conditional prophecies in which the conditions are clearly stated. Have they been fulfilled?

6. Select from the Bible incidents an example of one who claimed to be a prophet and whose "fruit" sustained his claim. Give an example of one who showed that he was a false prophet by bringing forth evil fruit. Give texts and a brief summary of the incident.

7. Find two topics that are mentioned by at least three Bible writers, and show how their testimony is substantially the same, although it does not appear in exactly the same words.

SELECTED REFERENCES

Haynes, Carlyle B., *The Book of All Nations*, pp. 153-187.

-----, *The Gift of Prophecy*, pp. 101-1:24.

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[117] **Chapter 7—Some Relationships Of The Prophets**

Certain relationships of the prophets to other individuals or groups should be clearly understood. At times there is overlapping, but never duplication or conflict, in carrying out God's plan if each workman occupies his designated place and does the task assigned to him. Sometimes God has appointed certain men to do two or more types of work at the same time. What relation existed between prophets and prophetesses, between prophets and priests, between Old and New Testament prophets, and between Jesus and the prophets? These relationships have a bearing upon our comprehension of the prophetic gift.

Prophetesses

The Bible tells of a few women who were called to the prophetic office. Both Old and New Testament incidents reveal that women were not excluded from a place among those who served as spokesmen for God. Let us discover the time when each of these women served, the nature of her work, the results of her activities, and the manner in which her work was received.

[118] *Miriam.* Three times we glimpse the life of the first woman mentioned as a prophetess. We see her as Moses' loving elder sister suggesting to Pharaoh's daughter that she call a nurse for the baby boy whom the princess had taken from the ark floating in the Nile River. Next she appears as leader of a choir of women singing the triumphal song after Israel had successfully crossed the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army had been destroyed. The third view is not so pleasant. Miriam and Aaron, critical of Moses' marriage, and blinded by a selfish desire for position equal to that of their younger brother, made this challenge: "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath He not spoken also by us?" [Numbers 12:2](#). Jehovah heard the complaint and punished Miriam by smiting her with leprosy. Her

subsequent healing did not in the least detract from the severity of the rebuke.

Immediately after the Red Sea crossing, “sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord.” [Exodus 15:1](#). There follows an anthem of praise that resounded over desert and sea. Then the tone changed, as Miriam and the women took up the song. “And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.” [Exodus 15:20, 21](#).

Whether Miriam is called a prophetess because of the poetical inspiration of her song on this occasion, or for other reasons, is not indicated. Although this is the only recorded instance of her speaking under inspiration, it does not necessarily mean it was the only time. She is included by the Lord as among the three “sent before” the children of Israel as leaders. “For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.” [Micah 6:4](#). Miriam was highly regarded and honored in Israel, and this made her later rebellion against Moses all the more reprehensible. It must be that during the years of her ministry at the side of her two brothers there was sufficient evidence of her prophetic call by the Holy Spirit to prompt Moses to designate his sister as “the prophetess.” Beyond these meager references we have insufficient information as to the definite type of work done by Miriam or the kind of messages sent through her, but the testimony is unmistakable that she possessed the prophetic gift. [119]

Deborah. For twenty years northern Israel had been oppressed by the Canaanite king Jabin, who ruled at Hazor, about ten miles north of the lake later known as the Sea of Galilee. Twice before, since the days of “the elders that overlived Joshua,” Israel had been in bondage. [Joshua 24:31](#). Twice the Lord had delivered the nation—by Othniel and Ehud. These men were called to be judges; they were raised up to lead revolts against foreign oppressors. Conditions in Israel that called for repeated punitive invasions by heathen nations are summarized in [Judges 2](#). “And there arose another generation after them, who did not know the Lord or the work which He had

done for Israel.... So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and He gave them over to plunderers.... Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the power of those who plundered them. And yet they did not listen to their judges; for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed down to them; they soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord.” [Verses 10-17](#), R.S.V. After twenty years of servitude, Israel was again calling for deliverance, and the Lord prepared the way by sending a message to the one acting as judge.

[120] This time the judge was a woman, and she is designated not only as judge, but as a prophetess. “And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.” [Judges 4:4](#). The former judges are not mentioned as prophets. Deborah had not been called upon first to lead out in a revolt, but as she sat beneath a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel “the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.” [Verse 5](#). When the word of the Lord came to her, she sent for Barak of Kedesh Naphtali, and told him he was to take an army of ten thousand men to the river Kishon and there engage Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s forces, in battle. Promise was made regarding the outcome of the battle, for Deborah remembered God’s promise to her, “I will deliver him into thine hand.” [Verse 7](#). Barak refused to undertake the task unless Deborah would accompany him. He wanted all the people to recognize that the Lord had commissioned him to lead the army in revolt. If the prophetess would support him by her presence, it would be clear that God, not Barak, had launched the campaign. Deborah agreed, but she included with her words of agreement a warning that no honor would come to Barak as a result of the battle. She predicted, “Notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.” [Verse 9](#). As the story reveals, she was not speaking of herself, but of Jael, at whose hand Sisera died. [Verses 21, 22](#).

Here is a picture very different from that of Miriam. Deborah served in a prominent position, for men and women came from many parts of Israel to consult her about their problems and to obtain judgment. Her reputation was built not merely on the fact that she rendered good judgment—she was recognized by all as a

prophet of the Lord. When she called on Barak, evidently a man of considerable prestige in Israel, he did not question the source of the message which called him to organize and lead an army against the Canaanites. He would be in an unenviable position should the rebellion fail. He did not mistrust Deborah's assurance that the battle would result in victory for his army. He did, however, insist on her going along with him on the expedition. Barak's motives are difficult to determine; but, at any rate, we get some insight into his attitude toward the prophetess. If she would stay with him, he was willing to undertake what must have appeared a hopeless task—to face Jabin's nine hundred chariots of iron. [Verse 3](#). Then, too, one can imagine the attitude of the ten thousand if they had not been persuaded that Deborah was a true prophetess.

In the account of Deborah and Barak we find details relating to the experience of a woman called to the prophetic office similar to those concerning men called to the same position. She held a place commanding the respect of the nation, and filled it in a worthy manner. She spoke the word of the Lord with authority to a leader in the nation. She gave predictions as to what might be expected in the future, and these predictions were fulfilled. She did not hesitate to follow the course of action she had pointed out for others. She pressed boldly forward in the assurance that God had spoken to her, and through her to Israel. Brief as is the account of Deborah's part in the drama, it is a revelation of the kind of responsibility the Lord laid upon women as well as men in ancient times. Whether the messenger was male or female was immaterial, the messages bore the same weight and were to be accepted without prejudice and put into practice. The story of Deborah is the fullest account we have of a prophetess in Bible times.

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Huldah. Josiah's days were days of change, for the young king was a true reformer. He plunged wholeheartedly into the work. First he tore down the idols and the places of idol worship, then he renovated the temple and prepared it to fill its rightful place for the nation. In the process of directing the restoration of the temple, Hilkiah, the high priest, came upon "the book of the law" from the description of its contents it must have been Deuteronomy, "repetition of the law." He passed the scroll to Shaphan the scribe, who in turn read it to the king. Josiah had not before read the book,

and as he listened he was stirred. He had endeavored to bring about a reformation, but now the need came home to him with a force he had not sensed before. He decided that he must learn more about the message of the book, and what it meant to him and his people. Hilkiah and a group of Josiah's counselors heard this command: "Go ye, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found." [2 Kings 22:13](#).

[122] The action of the high priest and his companions in response to the injunction, "Go ye, inquire of the Lord for me," is significant. "So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess; ... and they communed with her." [2 Kings 22:14](#). For them to inquire of the Lord signified to inquire of the prophet, and in this case they turned to a woman to make their inquiry. The interest in this incident is heightened when we realize that by this time Jeremiah had been a prophet in Judah for five years. Compare [2 Kings 22:3](#) and [Jeremiah 1:2](#). Huldah was held in high esteem by the king and the important delegation he sent to her.

Huldah could offer no hope that the threatened judgments would be withheld. Conditions at that time did not warrant God's application of the principle of [Jeremiah 18:7-10](#), in which He promised to change His course of action if the life of the nation changed. "My wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched." [2 Kings 22:17](#). However, she predicted that because of Josiah's humility of heart, the destruction would not take place in his lifetime ([verses 19, 20](#)). This prophecy was subsequently fulfilled.

Again, as in the case of Deborah, the Bible record makes plain that when the Lord bestowed on Huldah the prophetic gift, she was accepted by the people without question. King, high priest, and counselors were willing and eager to turn to the prophetess to gain a deeper understanding of Moses' words, written under inspiration of God and now part of the sacred writings of Israel. She opened their eyes regarding the things already written, and with the help of the Holy Spirit made additional predictions. Her message was not challenged, for the fact that she was a prophetess had already been firmly established, and her word of instruction was accepted as counsel from the Lord.

Noadiah. In [Nehemiah 6:14](#) we read the words of Nehemiah, “My God, think Thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.” Noadiah is included in this list of prophetesses only because she is mentioned by that term. We know nothing of her except what is told in this one verse. She was associated with Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, and Tobiah, his servant, in their opposition to the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem under the leadership of Nehemiah. Since she is grouped with “the rest of the prophets” by Nehemiah, it may be that she claimed to be a prophetess of God among the Samaritans. [123]

Isaiah’s wife. In speaking of his wife, Isaiah calls her “the prophetess.” [Isaiah 8:3](#). On what basis he does this we do not know, as this is the only reference to her, and the statement is not made in connection with any work of a prophetess, but simply in reference to the birth of a son.

Anna. When Joseph and Mary took the Baby Jesus to the temple for the prescribed service of dedication, they met not only the priest who performed the service, but two other persons who were present. One of these was Simeon, who was led to the temple by the Holy Spirit ([Luke 2:27](#)), and who pronounced a blessing on the child. He also made a prediction regarding the future of the child and the sorrow that would come to Mary. In addition to Simeon, they met “one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser.” [Verse 36](#). Anna was an aged widow, of the tribe of Asher, famous, according to tradition, for the intelligence and beauty of its women. Her life was dedicated to prayer and spiritual service. Along with Simeon, she recognized in the child the promised Redeemer. Following the most natural procedure for one with such a conviction, she “spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” [Verse 38](#). No added light is shed on Anna’s service as a prophetess, but it is evident that, as one possessing the gift of prophecy, her recognition of the Messiah was not dependent upon this incident in the temple.

Philip’s daughters. Luke’s note in [Acts 21:9](#) is a brief one. In speaking of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the original seven deacons, he said, “And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.” This is the only occasion where they are men- [124]

tioned. However, prophecy was not an uncommon gift in the early church. Paul indicates that among the spiritual gifts it was one to be greatly desired, [1 Corinthians 14:1](#). It must have been clear in the minds of those who knew these women that they possessed the gift of prophecy.

These are the women whom the Bible writers call prophetesses. Despite our limited knowledge of them and their activities, several vital points are apparent. While they are fewer in number than the male prophets, yet there is every reason to believe that their sex caused no distinction to be made in their prophetic function. They are pictured as leading the nation, explaining the Scriptures, counseling leaders, and making predictions. They were recognized as God's spokesmen, and their testimonies were accepted as the messages of Jehovah.

The Prophet and the Priest

In the leadership of ancient Israel was a triple representation of Jesus Christ and His work, for prophets, priests, and kings, in one way or another, typified the coming Redeemer. This was particularly true of the high priests and the kings, the two who were anointed in a special fashion that distinguished them from all others. For our present purpose we are interested in prophets and priests, and their relationship to the people and to each other. As spiritual leaders and types of the Saviour their work was vital.

[125] We need do no more than again call attention to the place of the prophet. Primarily, it was his responsibility to speak for God to the people. He might occupy any other type of position among the people and still be a prophet, for the reception of the gift of prophecy was not dependent on family or occupation. The voice of the prophet speaking instruction given him by divine inspiration served as the equivalent of the voice of God speaking directly. There are other implications of the term prophet as revealed in the experience of some in both Old and New Testament times, but they need not concern us in our present study.

Priests stood in a different relationship to both the Lord and the people. Whereas the prophet represented God before the people, the priest stood for the people before God. Men separated from God

by sin needed someone to act for them in things pertaining to God. As types of the Saviour, the priests were empowered to serve in this way. Paul, though speaking particularly of Christ, well describes this phase of the function of the priest. “Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” [Hebrews 2:17](#). In the fullest sense this was the function of the high priest, who was the true priest of Israel. Other priests served as his assistants. It was the high priest who bore the names of the tribes of the children of Israel “before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial,” as the breastplate was fastened on him. [Exodus 28:12](#). It was he who was so closely identified with the people that if they sinned, it was regarded as his sin also. On the other hand, if he sinned, the people sinned. The priest was one of the people, but set apart from them for a special ministry as their representative. Others who were not so set apart undertook the duties of the priest at times, but this proved disastrous.

As in the case of the prophet, the priest was not selected by the people. But, unlike the prophets, eligibility for the priesthood depended on being a member of the family of Aaron. By no means does this indicate that every member of Aaron’s family was regarded by God as an acceptable candidate for the priesthood. Physical imperfections and disabilities disqualified a man to serve as priest, and other strict rules for eligibility were laid down. [Leviticus 21:17-24](#). Only the man who was recognized by God to be a priest was genuine. What was true of the high priest was true also of the common priest: “For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God.... And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.” [Hebrews 5:1-4](#).

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Prominent among the duties of the priests was that of offering sacrifices—“that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.” [Verse 1](#). There would have been no point to his service if he had nothing to offer. [Hebrews 8:3](#). As the shedding of the blood of the Saviour was necessary to make atonement for the sins of the world, so the offering of the typical sacrifices was essential in bringing

about reconciliation between man and God through the ministry of the priest.

One of the distinctions between the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary and that of the priests in the earthly is that Christ “ever liveth to make intercession for them.” [Hebrews 7:25](#). In connection with the offering of their sacrifices, earthly priests made intercession for those for whom they ministered; but theirs was a limited ministry. “And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death.” [Verse 23](#). Intercession was a natural outgrowth of the sacrificial offerings for the expiation of sin. The work of a priest was the work of an advocate.

The requirements and functions of the priesthood were not in the realm of the prophet as such. Although God chose the prophet, there was no particular requirement of family or tribal relationship. He was a representative of the Lord rather than of the people. His ministry did not involve the offering of sacrifices or the making of intercession in connection with them.

[127] There were times when a priest was called to be a prophet, as in the cases of Samuel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Then, of course, he bore the dual responsibility and could perform the functions of both offices. We are concerned, in this chapter, only with men who occupied one place or the other.

Thus far we have noticed only the relation of prophet and priest to the Lord and to the people. We have done this to form a setting for our consideration of the relationship of the two to each other.

The ministry of the priesthood was a perpetual ministry, while that of the prophets was used to fill special needs. There were not always prophets, but there were always priests. As we think back over the total function of the prophet, and compare it with the responsibilities of the priest, we can see how the two offices could have been used regularly to complement one another. This was not always the case, and we will notice some of the methods of co-operation as well as some of the conflicts between prophets and priests.

1. The revelations of God’s will, in the form of instruction for the people, came through the prophets. Through their religious services and dealings with the people, the priests were to help them put the principles of prophetic instruction into practice. The priests were

the guardians of the law and were responsible for its observance. The whole plan for the conduct of the sanctuary had been revealed to Moses the prophet, but it was under the administration of Aaron and his sons.

2. As a man speaking for God, the prophet brought rebuke, pointed out sin, and called the people to repentance. When the people came to confess their sins and present their offerings as a token of their confidence in the Redeemer who would remove their transgression, it was the priest who received them, guided in the making of the offering, and took upon himself the sin to be transferred to the sanctuary. It was he who made intercession for the sins of the people.

3. At times the prophet came suddenly on the scene to bring his message. Some of these messengers functioned for only a brief period. On other occasions prophets ministered through several decades. Some lived and worked among the people, while others did not. It was to the priests that the people could turn regularly for help. Their multiplied numbers and the nature of their work made approach to them easier than to the prophets.

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4. Frequently it was necessary for priests to be included among the group to whom the prophetic messages of reproof were sent. Samuel's first revelation pictured conditions in Eli's family and told of the approaching punishment. Later prophets frequently denounced sin in the ranks of the priesthood. Priests had as much responsibility to accept the correction of the prophet's message as did the people. In fact, because of their position and influence, their obligation was greater than that of others.

5. Both prophet and priest were essential to complete the great circle of communication and ministry for needy humans. In cooperation, each made the work of the other more effective. When priest and people strayed from the path, the word of the prophet showed the way back. In turn, the priest could bring that word home to the individual heart. When the priest was having a difficult time holding the people to the way of right, the prophet's message strengthened his hand.

The relationship of priest and prophet did not differ greatly from that of the modern ministry and the word of God. Men set aside for the work of the ministry are counterparts of the Levitical priesthood.

It is their duty to minister the word, to expound and teach it, to lead the people to accept its principles and practice them. They seek to lead the people to make their offering—a living sacrifice. They carry on their hearts the sins and weaknesses of their friends who sit in the pews. The people have access to the ministers for guidance and spiritual association. The administration of the services and activities of the church rests upon the ministry.

[129] But always the word of God, spoken by the prophets, stands as the voice of the Lord, as though He were present to speak in audible tones. It continues to instruct, to convict, to rebuke. When modern men wander, God's word shows them the way back. Minister and people alike are under its principles.

Old and New Testament Prophets

A gap of four centuries stretches between the last of the Old Testament prophets and the first of the New. Malachi is regarded by the Jews as the last of the prophets to write a portion of the Scriptures. They accept none later as canonical. As Christians we recognize John the Baptist as the successor to Malachi in the great prophetic line. Malachi had predicted the coming of one to prepare the way for the appearance of the long-foretold Messiah. [Malachi 3:1](#). John also partly fulfilled the prediction of the last of the Old Testament prophets that Elijah would be sent before the coming of the day of the Lord. Compare [Malachi 4:5](#) with [Matthew 11:14](#). The break in the continuity of the prophetic line poses no problem when we recognize the conditions that existed during the inter-testament period, and also when we remember that there is no record of a prophet during the four-century span from the Flood to Abraham. Nor is it difficult to identify a true prophet when one arises even after a lapse of centuries.

Basically there is no difference between the men and the messages of the Old and the spokesmen and the writings of the New Testament. As suggested in Malachi's prediction, there is much of the spirit and character of Elijah in John the Baptist. It took the same kind of man with the same holy boldness to say to Herod, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" ([Mark 6:18](#)), as it did to proclaim to Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth,

before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word” (1 Kings 17:1). Paul, reasoning with Felix of “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,” while the governor trembled (Acts 24:25), might easily have exchanged places with Daniel to bear the testimony to the king of Babylon, “And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this” (Daniel 5:22), as Belshazzar’s “knees smote one against another” (verse 6). Ezekiel’s grand views of the glory of God on His throne would fit as well into John’s account in the Revelation as they do in the places where they are recorded.

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It is true that in the New Testament are detailed numerous fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies. But this does not mean that the men who served as prophets, and the messages they brought, were distinctly different from the ones who had gone before. It simply indicates that a new stage had been reached in the outworking of God’s plan; and the prophets were proclaiming that fact, and they were trying to lead the people into a correct relationship to their times as had been done in the past. The later prophets merely took up where the earlier ones left off, and continued to unfold and chronicle the development of the plan of salvation.

The relationship of the New Testament prophets to those who wrote in Old Testament times is exactly the same as the relationship of the Old Testament prophets to one another. They are to be tested by the same standards. Their messages are consistent, harmonious, and progressive. They quoted the former prophets and revealed the greatest respect for what had been written. They filled their divinely appointed places as speakers for God in the same noble, faithful, God-fearing manner as had their predecessors.

Jesus and the Prophets

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” Matthew 5:17. A standard Greek lexicon defines the word here translated “fulfill,” as follows: “Universally and absolutely, to fulfill, i.e. to cause God’s will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God’s promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfillment: Matthew 5:17.” J. H. Thayer, *A Greek- English Lexicon of the New*

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Testament, page 518. Christ came to demonstrate that it was possible to live the whole of God's will as expressed in His word. His words in this verse voice the theme of Jesus' relationship to the prophets during the years of His earthly life. However, there was much more than that to the total relationship.

Christ's interest in and contact with the prophets did not begin when He was a man in Galilee and Judea. As a member of the Godhead, before His incarnation, He was responsible, with the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, for every communication that reached the prophets. It was "the Spirit of Christ" in the prophets, Peter declared, that "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." [1 Peter 1:11](#). The predictions Jesus fulfilled during His earthly life and ministry were the exact ones His Spirit had prompted the prophets to record. As a child He had studied them at His mother's knee as He "increased in wisdom and stature" with the passing years. [Luke 2:52](#). He revealed His respect for the messages of the prophets not only by formal statements, but by repeated reference to the things they had recorded. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." [Luke 24:27](#). "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." [Luke 16:31](#).

The relation becomes closer when we realize that Jesus Himself was a prophet. Speaking prophetically of His imminent rejection at Nazareth, the Saviour said of Himself, "Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country." [Luke 4:24](#). He abundantly fulfilled all the requirements for a true prophet, even using some of His predictions as verification of His Messiahship. "Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He." [John 13:19](#). Among His best-known prophecies are those of the signs of His second advent, recorded in [Matthew 24](#), [Mark 13](#), and [Luke 21](#).

[132] In His rebuke to the scribes and Pharisees in [Matthew 23](#), Jesus assured them that there were more prophets yet to come. [Verse 34](#). He revealed His divinity in His statement that He would send the prophets. "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute

them from city to city.” The prophetic ministry, originated to communicate with fallen men, was used by the Son of God to perpetuate His own ministry. Now that He had come to earth as a living revelation of the character of His Father, it would be necessary for additional prophets and prophetic writers to herald His first advent, and they would focus particular attention on His second coming. It would need to be made clear that the ceremonial system with its sacrifices had come to an end. Principles would need to be applied in the light of the way demonstrated in the life of the Redeemer. Studied in the light of these developments, Old Testament predictions would take on new meaning, and the significance of the whole would need to be explained to old and new believers. New lands were to be reached with the gospel message, and they would need the word to be brought to them in the light of their situation and problems. Prophets would be needed, and they would be sent to do a special work.

The association of Jesus with the prophets, personally and through their writings, was intimate. His words indicate clearly that through these same writings we may enjoy an intimate fellowship. Our Bible is made up of the communications sent through the prophets. The word of God presents to us the message the Lord would bring if He were to communicate to each one personally. It is the written word; but the expression “Word” is used in another significant way. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” [John 1:1, 14](#). As the Bible is the written expression of the will of God, so Christ is the living manifestation of that will. Thus the messages of the prophets and the life of the Saviour become one in their purpose, theme, and accomplishment. Christ can never be separated from His unique relationship to the prophets.

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SUMMARY

1. A study of various relationships of the prophets to God and to other individuals and groups reveals much that helps us to understand them and their work.

2. No distinction is made between men and women who served as prophets. Prophetesses were fewer in number, but their relationships to God and to the people were the same as those of the prophets.

3. Prophet and priest were intended to be associated closely in achieving their objectives. The prophet representing God and the priest representing the people helped to form a two-way system of communication.

4. No distinction can be made between Old and New Testament prophets. All were called by God, and they served in the same capacities and worked toward the same objectives.

5. Jesus identified Himself with the prophets from the beginning, and He declared Himself to be one of them during His earthly ministry. Their messages and His life unite to form the revelation of God's character in the written and living Word.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Can you discover additional significant relationships of the prophets that are not mentioned in this chapter?

2. What reasons can you give why God should use women at times for prophets rather than restrict this office to men?

[134] 3. Were there functions strictly within the scope of the prophetic office that were performed by the prophets but not by prophetesses?

4. State the parallel responsibilities of the Levitical priest and his relation to the prophets and their writings, with those of the Seventh-day Adventist minister and his relation to the Scriptures.

5. What might have been accomplished if prophet and priest had always co-operated as God intended?

6. Can you find any New Testament truth that does not have its roots in the Old Testament?

7. What would have been lost in the first advent of Jesus if there had been no prophetic messages concerning it?

8. Notice the increased emphasis on the second advent in the New Testament books. Give particular attention to the New Testament predictions that clarify some of the Old Testament prophecies whose significance we might not have grasped without the additional light.

SELECTED REFERENCES

Haynes, Carlyle B., *The Book of All Nations*, pp. 314-323, 324-351.
Read, W. E., *The Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the Church*, pp.
93, 94 (Women and the Prophetic Gift).

[135] **Chapter 8—Prophecy After New Testament Times**

Most believers in the Bible take it for granted that the gift of prophecy was withdrawn from the church when the writing of the New Testament was completed. Few Christians give serious consideration to the idea that the gift might have operated after that time. The purpose of this chapter is to study the Scriptural evidences which reveal God's purpose to continue to send revelations to His church through prophets, whenever special messages might be necessary or desirable. In particular we will find that the gift should be present in the remnant church shortly before the return of the Saviour. About a dozen Bible passages, divided into four groups, present the evidence. Since there are no texts that even hint that the manifestations of the gift should end, it is not necessary to compare and weigh evidence to discover whether or not the gift should be present in post-Biblical times. Particular attention must be given to the circumstances under which it is indicated that the presence of the gift might be expected.

Bible Evidences

[136] 1. *From the Old Testament.* "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." [Joel 2:28-32](#).

The time setting of the prediction of the outpouring of the Spirit is important, in order that we may understand the significance of “afterward” in [verse 28](#). According to the next verses, this was to be fulfilled at the time when certain wonders would be shown in the heavens and on the earth, and in close proximity to the deliverance of “the remnant whom the Lord shall call.” The first two verses of [chapter 3](#) help to complete the picture of the time involved. [Joel 2:30](#) may be subject to a variety of understandings, but there can be no question about the events of [verse 31](#), “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.” In His enumeration of occurrences portending His return, Jesus included this sign among others: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven.” [Matthew 24:29, 30](#). Another parallel passage is found in [Revelation 6:12-17](#), “And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth.... And the heaven departed as a scroll.... For the great day of His wrath is come.” These signs, referred to by Joel, Jesus, and John point to the dark day of May 19, 1780. Other related signs, closely associated with the second advent of Christ, are witnesses that the event is near. The indication is that in the same general time period the Lord would pour out His Spirit in an unusual manner upon “all flesh.”

The prediction reveals that in the days preceding the second advent of Jesus Christ, God will pour out His Spirit in a remarkable way. We need not now delve into the variety of the manifestations of the Spirit. It is sufficient for our purpose to know that one of the results of the coming of the Spirit will be to cause some persons to prophesy, after having received visions and dreams. Therefore, a revival of prophetism is to be a mark of preadvent times.

One question must be answered before we leave this prophecy of Joel, a question raised by the use Peter made of this text on the Day of Pentecost. Explaining to those who mocked the miracle of that day, the apostle declared, “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.” [Acts 2:16](#). Then he went on to quote the verses

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we have been considering. Was the prophecy completely fulfilled at Pentecost? If so, it cannot help us in our present problem. Louis M. Sweet proposes the same query, and virtually answers it in the asking. “The promise through Joel is an undeniable prediction (every promise is such), which in a measure would be fulfilled in any exceptional manifestation of God’s Spirit among men. The only question which can possibly be raised in connection with Peter’s use of this passage is whether the Pentecostal outpouring was the climactic realization of the promise: that is, the establishment of the era of blessing foretold by the prophet.”—*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, p. 2517. He approves Peter’s use of the text to apply to the occasion, but he wonders if enough happened on the Day of Pentecost to warrant maintaining that the prediction of Joel was completely fulfilled that day.

[138] A brief review of the events shows that Joel’s prediction did not then meet its complete fulfillment. The wonders in the heavens and on the earth that were foretold did not take place. There is no Biblical evidence that visions and dreams were given that day, and if the whole prophecy was fulfilled in one day, that would have been necessary. The prophet named events to take place with a view to the soon coming of deliverance for God’s remnant, but other predictions of the rise of the remnant were not completed for many centuries. On the Day of Pentecost a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit of God was given, and Peter rightly used Joel’s prophecy to show that God had foretold such blessings; but by no means can we say that the prophecy had not further significance. In fact, what happened at Pentecost was simply a foretaste of what is to be seen in the outpouring of the Spirit in the days preceding the second event. Putting [Acts 2](#) beside [Joel 2](#) merely emphasizes that something greater was ahead in the demonstration of the gift of prophecy in the remnant church.

A second Old Testament prediction must receive consideration in this connection. “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” [Malachi 4:5, 6](#). Who was Elijah the prophet, and what has he to do with a continuation of the prophetic gift after Biblical times?

Is there to be a literal return of this prophet of God who fulfilled his mission so nobly that the Lord took him to heaven in a chariot of fire without experiencing death? [2 Kings 2:11](#).

Jesus gives insight on this subject in His words regarding John the Baptist. He had spoken of John as “more than a prophet,” ([Matthew 11:9](#)), and had told how John fulfilled the prediction of a messenger to prepare the way for Jesus’ coming. Then He said, “And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.” [Verse 14](#). On another occasion the disciples inquired, “Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not.... Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist.” [Matthew 17:10-13](#). It will be recalled, however, that when John had been questioned, “Art thou Elias?” he had answered, “I am not.” [John 1:21](#). How, then, are the words of Jesus to be understood? Another verse gives the explanation. “And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” [Luke 1:17](#). These were Gabriel’s words to John’s father, Zacharias, when he told the priest of the miraculous birth of his long-hoped-for son. John was not Elijah once more appearing in the flesh, but the spirit and power of his message was the same, and he was to help prepare the people for the coming of the Lord.

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By coming in the spirit and power of Elijah, preaching repentance and serving as a forerunner of Christ, John fulfilled the prophecy of [Malachi 4](#). But something more is involved in that prophecy that does not find its fulfillment in John’s work. Elijah was to come before “the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” The situation is similar to that of Peter’s use of Joel’s prophecy on the Day of Pentecost. There was only a partial fulfillment at that time. The great and dreadful day of the Lord is the second coming of Christ. Before that time the prophet Elijah will help prepare the people for the event. As John the Baptist partially fulfilled the prediction by announcing and preparing the way for the coming of Christ the first time, so those who announce His second coming and help to prepare the people for it will carry their message with the spirit and power of Elijah.

Elijah was a prophet, John was a prophet; and it may be anticipated that in fulfillment of this particular prediction, the prophetic gift will again be prominent in leading people to make preparation for the second advent.

[140] 2. *From the words of Jesus.* Jesus Christ, in His talks with His disciples and with the people, did not declare specifically that the gift of prophecy would continue to the end; but some of His other declarations and warnings can be understood only in the light of this truth. Sitting on the Mount of Olives, He described for His disciples the signs that would signify that His second advent was near. One of the indications, He said, would be the rise of false christs and false prophets. [Matthew 24:11, 24](#). Much earlier in His ministry He had given a general warning, “Beware of false prophets,” ([Matthew 7:15](#)); but this time the warning was given in the setting of events to occur just preceding His second coming.

If Christ had not anticipated that there would be the true manifestation of the gift of prophecy at the same time that He warned of the false, He would no doubt have said something like this: “Beware of anyone who professes to be a prophet, for there will be no prophets in those days.” Jesus made no such statement as that; He simply issued a warning for all to be careful about the kind of prophets they heeded. The implication is clear that the true gift would coexist with the false, and that it would be necessary for the remnant people to choose between good and evil prophets.

Another important, although indirect, indication that Jesus recognized that the gift of prophecy would not end with the completion of the New Testament is found in His promise to His disciples that the Holy Spirit would be with them continually ([John 14:15-17](#)), and teach them all things. [John 14:26](#). As will be particularly noted later, it is through the ministry of the Holy Spirit that the gifts Christ bestowed on the church are made effective. It is the Spirit who divides the gifts “to every man severally as He will.” [1 Corinthians 12:11](#). See also [Ephesians 4:8, 11-13](#). In Jesus’ promise of the coming of the Spirit was wrapped up the promise of the gifts of the Spirit, even though they were not enumerated until later.

3. *From the words of Paul.* The bulk of evidence for the continuance of the prophetic gift after apostolic times is found in Paul’s letters to the churches. Some of his statements are of a general

nature, showing that all the gifts that Christ placed in the church would continue to the end. Others are more specific in pointing to the presence of prophecy in the remnant church. [141]

“Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” [1 Thessalonians 5:19-21](#).

These words appear near the close of a chapter that deals with the problem of the preparation for the coming of the Lord. The apostle to the Gentiles talks of the times and seasons, showing that the advent is near. He says the coming of the Lord will be as a thief in the night, that the peace-and-safety cry will come at a time of sudden destruction; he calls all Christians to be awake and sober, to comfort, edify, and admonish one another, to hold fast to the truth. Under these circumstances, he says they are not to despise prophesyings, but that they should test all things and hold fast the good. This is a positive statement of the same thought Christ stated negatively, when He warned, “There shall arise ... false prophets.” Thus we see that Paul anticipated that the true prophetic voice would be heard in the days preceding the second advent of Christ.

“That in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” [1 Corinthians 1:5-8](#). Notice that Paul expected the Corinthians to be enriched in all things by the Lord “even as,” or, to the extent that, “the testimony of Christ was confirmed” in them. “The testimony of Christ” referred to is the same as “the testimony of Jesus” mentioned in [Revelation 19:10](#), and there defined as “the spirit of prophecy.” They would grow spiritually to the extent that the messages of God through the prophets of all ages were established in their minds.

These declarations were made with reference to the people who were “waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The apostle’s desire for this group was that they should come behind in none of the gifts Christ had placed in the church. Listed prominently among the gifts, as we shall see in reference to other passages from Paul’s pen, is the gift of prophecy. This statement in 1 Corinthians is one of the strongest the apostle made foretelling that this gift was to remain in the church until the return of Jesus Christ. It is interesting that in [142]

this instance, when talking of the continuity of the gifts, Paul uses prophecy as his illustration. By this means the remnant church is to be built up and strengthened while waiting for the coming of the Saviour.

“Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.... And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” [Ephesians 4:8-13](#). Do the saints still need perfecting? Does the ministry need any particular help in carrying out its work? Does the body of Christ, the church, need to be edified and enlightened today? If the answers to these questions are positive, there is still need for the gifts of the Spirit in the church. Is it essential that the church have apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers? If so, the gifts are to continue. As long as the need remains, the gifts remain. In fact, the greatest time of need in the life of the church will be during the period when the final preparation is being made for the end of all things. We have seen that the Lord has made special provision for an outpouring of His Spirit at that time, and for a manifestation of the spirit of prophecy. [Joel 2](#).

[143] “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” [1 Corinthians 12:12, 27, 28](#). It is of interest to note that the only gift mentioned in all three of Paul’s lists ([1 Corinthians 12:8-10](#); [1 Corinthians 12:128](#); [Ephesians 4:11](#)) is the gift of prophecy.

In the first chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul had told his friends at Corinth that they were to come behind in no gift as they waited for the coming of the Lord. Now, before closing his letter, he sets before them the purposes and functions of the gifts in the church. He shows how every gift is related to every other one, and how the body cannot be complete and carry on its work in the most efficient manner if one

of the gifts is missing. He tells them that the gifts are not bestowed on the members of the church generally, but the Holy Spirit selects those who will be able to make most effective use of the gifts. The possession of any one gift, then, cannot be made a test of Christian experience, for the indication is clear that not every member will receive every gift or even any one gift. While the enumeration of the gifts in this chapter is similar to that in [Ephesians 4](#), [1 1 Corinthians 12](#) gives a much fuller explanation of their place in the church, and again emphasizes that they were to be a permanent possession of the church. No one of them was expected to cease while the Lord was trying to teach the church His will.

4. *From the words of John.* In the book of the Revelation we are given a clear view of the struggle between Satan and the people of God from the apostolic age to the final destruction of sin and sinners. In more detail than other Bible writers, John describes the conflict between the powers of darkness and the remnant church of God.

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” [Revelation 12:17](#). This chapter of the Revelation presents a series of events, some of which were history in John’s day, and others were prophecy. In the first part of the chapter there appears a woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and a crown with twelve stars on her head. She represents the true church. Then we see a great red dragon who attempts to destroy the Man-child born of the woman. The dragon is identified as the same enemy that warred against Michael and His angels and was banished from heaven. He is called the accuser of the brethren. It is made clear that through the blood of the Lamb and the word of the testimony of the saints, many have overcome him. Because of the shortening of the time, the efforts of the dragon increased and his persecution drove the woman into a place of refuge for “a time, and times, and half a time,” the 1260-year period from A.D. 538 to 1798. The woman was nourished during this time and received help that kept her from being destroyed completely. Many, but not all, who comprised the seed—the children of the woman—were put to death, forced into renunciation of their faith, or led astray through false doctrines and deceptive practices. A few,

only a remnant, remained to launch once more God's program of sending to all the world a message of His love and redeeming power.

With this remnant the dragon renewed his warfare in an attempt to destroy it through either persecution or deception. So there might be no mistake as to the identity of the remnant, two of its leading characteristics are mentioned—characteristics that in an unusual way set the remnant apart from all other professed followers of God. Attention is focused on those who keep the commandments of God and possess “the testimony of Jesus Christ.” “The testimony of Jesus” is identified in [Revelation 19:10](#) as “the spirit of prophecy.” Keeping the commandments of God and having the spirit of prophecy are two marks to help determine the identity of the true remnant. In these two verses in Revelation we have brought to focal point the various predictions of the presence of the gift of prophecy in the last days.

[145] Joel, Malachi, Jesus, and Paul have, directly or indirectly, indicated a manifestation of the gift in the days shortly preceding the return of Christ. Now John points out that the remnant church, the last before the second advent, is to have the gift of prophecy as one of its major marks of identification. Again is illustrated the remarkable unity and common objective of the whole of the Bible.

“And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” [Revelation 19:10](#). A consideration of the entire verse in its context, rather than merely the last clause, adds significance to the incident of which this verse records but a portion. John had been given a revelation of the judgment to fall on the apostate power in the final day of retribution; he had seen the gathering of the saints to enjoy the marriage supper of the Lamb. Then the angel, apparently Gabriel again, said to the prophet, “Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” [Revelation 19:9](#). So impressed was John with what he had seen that he fell down at the feet of the angel to worship him. But the instantaneous rebuke of the messenger was, “See thou do it not.” He went on to explain why he could not accept the worship of the seer. He was not God, but one of John's fellow servants. But of even greater importance to us is the next fact he announced: he was the fellow servant of John's “brethren that have the testimony of Jesus.”

Fellowship with the angel of prophecy is the privilege of the remnant church possessing the spirit of prophecy.

Later the scene was repeated as John again fell at the feet of the angel, and was once more restrained by the messenger, who this time declared himself to be “thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book.” [Revelation 22:9](#). Next in the series of events enumerated leading up to the second advent is the close of probation. “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: ... he that is holy, let him be holy still.” [Verse 11](#). The group with whom the angel of prophecy said he would have fellowship because they keep the sayings of the book is the remnant church. What a privilege it is for the remnant to receive the fulfillment of these promises of special fellowship with Christ’s angelic representative!

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SUMMARY

1. Two lines of thought are set forth in the texts presented. First, Paul’s words in [Ephesians 4](#) and [1 Corinthians 12](#) make plain that the gifts of the Spirit, placed in the church by Christ, are to remain in the church until the end. Though not all of the gifts need appear in the church at any one moment, to try to remove the gift of prophecy and maintain that all the other gifts should be found in the modern church, is like taking the fourth commandment out of the Decalogue and urging that all the others be kept.

2. In the second line of thought we turn our attention to the church, immediately preceding Christ’s second advent. Specific application of the general promise given in [1 Corinthians 12](#) and [Ephesians 4](#).

3. Words of Joel, Malachi, Jesus, Paul, and John indicate that the Spirit of prophecy will be operating in the last days. The context of each text of this group places it in the setting of events taking place shortly before the second advent.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Present additional evidence from [Joel 2 and 3](#), showing the correct chronology of [Joel 2:28-32](#).

2. Why is not the list of last-day signs complete in [Joel 2](#), in [Matthew 24](#), or in [Revelation 6](#)? If the context is studied and the texts are compared, is there danger of confusion because of the incompleteness?

[147] 3. Outline ways in which Elijah and John the Baptist typify the remnant church.

4. Since there are no Bible texts indicating that prophecy should end with the completion of the New Testament, how do you account for the general absence of the gift from the churches today?

SELECTED REFERENCE

Haynes, Carlye B., *The Gilt of Prophecy*, pp. 21-62.

Man's awareness of the presence of God is the heart of Christianity. The promise of Jesus Christ, "Lo, I am with you alway," is a solemn but happy assurance of guidance and victory to His children. The church, too, is strengthened by the knowledge that the divine presence overshadows it for good.

The deist believes in a personal God who created the universe and who will finally serve as Judge of all mankind. But to him God is afar off—transcendent—not revealed in personal Christian experience, in nature, or in history. To the pantheist, all the forces and laws of the existing universe combine to form God. Although He is everywhere present, He is as impersonal as gravitation or the rays of the sun.

However, to the Bible Christian—to the Seventh-day Adventist—God is a personal Being, both transcendent and immanent. He is exalted above the world, and supreme Ruler of all; and at the same time He dwells in the world and in man as a personal friend and companion. Our concept is formed on the basis of such texts as these:

"The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven: His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men." [Psalm 11:4](#).

"And He changeth the times and the seasons: He removeth kings, and setteth up kings: He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding." [Daniel 2:21](#).

"I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims.... And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." [Isaiah 6:1-3](#).

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"And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." [Isaiah 30:21](#).

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye." [Psalm 32:8](#).

The Bible record indicates that there is never a moment when the world in general, and God's people in a particular way, are out of range of the all-seeing eye of the Lord of heaven. Those who have accepted Him fully may know that they have come within the sphere of His protection and guidance, and that every word, act, and influence will be shaped by Him to help achieve good. This is true in the routine of life as well as in test, trial, and crisis. Through His word, by the impressions of the Holy Spirit, and by the workings of His providence, He guides to right decisions and right acts. This holds in the life of the individual and in the body of God's people as a whole.

On numerous occasions through the centuries the Lord saw that the type of guidance He gave day by day to individuals or through prophets to larger groups was not sufficient to meet the needs of a coming crisis. In preparation for such a crisis He gave special guidance through the prophets, with messages calculated to prepare the people for the critical event. It seems to be to this kind of circumstance that the prophet is referring when he says, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets." [Amos 3:7](#). Here Amos is recording the prediction of the coming punishment of Israel for her apostasy. Punishment was foretold for surrounding nations for some of their sins, but Israel's chastisement was to be for all her iniquities. [Verse 2](#). The nation must be made fully aware of what lay ahead, so the prophet outlined in detail the reasons for the coming punishment and something of its nature.

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Noah

This was only one example of a principle followed by the Lord throughout Old and New Testament times. Another striking illustration is found in the ministry of Noah for 120 years before the Flood. Not only did the prophet proclaim the message of the imminence of the destruction of the world by water, but he demonstrated his confidence in the word of the Lord by spending more than a century building a boat to carry himself and his family through the Flood. This lengthy period was allowed so that there might be abundant opportunity for both the people's character and Noah's faith to be

thoroughly tested. There was no necessity for any to be ignorant of what was ahead.

Abraham

Some four centuries later the Lord was ready for another kind of move among men. This time it was not destruction, but the forming of a nation through whom He planned to make known to the world His love and power. These centuries had seen a tremendous increase in the population,—only eight had survived the Flood,—yet their knowledge of God had not kept pace. Few were left whose worship had not become corrupted with idolatry. Of the few, one stood out as a prospect to become the father of a great nation that would eventually fill the whole earth. Abram was called out from Ur of the Chaldees, out of a family that had lapsed into idol worship. He was made a prophet and the founder of a nation to do God's bidding. [Genesis 20:7](#). His work was different from that of Noah, but it was nonetheless the work of a prophet. Through Abram came the promises of the everlasting covenant that pledged to God's faithful ones the whole earth for their inheritance. He also received the promise of the coming of One through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed. His own son, the child of promise, [151] whose seed were to be as numerous as the sand of the sea, typified this One who would bring blessing to all. As the friend of God ([James 2:23](#)), and as the father of those who accept the grace of God through faith ([Romans 4:16](#)), Abram became the progenitor not only of the literal nation of Israel, but also of spiritual Israel, to whom the promise of the inheritance of the world would ultimately be fulfilled ([Romans 4:13](#); [Galatians 3:29](#)). One to whom the Lord could give the prophetic gift was chosen to accomplish the work and give the demonstrations necessary to launch a literal and a spiritual kingdom.

Joseph

To preserve the nation fathered by Abraham, and still so small that it could be measured by the size of Jacob's family, the Lord raised up another prophet. Even in his youth Joseph was given dreams that foretold events of the future. [Genesis 37](#).

His sale as a slave to be taken to Egypt, his years in Potiphar's household and in the Egyptian prison, his interpretation of the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker, the revelation of the meaning of Pharaoh's dream, his elevation to second place in the kingdom of Egypt, were all steps in preparing Joseph for the task of preserving the budding nation and giving it a place to grow.

In Joseph's words to his brothers after the death of their father, he makes it clear that he saw in all that had happened the working of God's far-reaching providence. "And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones." [Genesis 50:19-21](#). Preservation of the individual or nation in critical times has frequently been the function of the prophet.

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Moses

In Moses and his relation to Israel, we see leadership and preservation combined. "And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved." [Hosea 12:13](#). More than two centuries in Egypt, perhaps half of that time in bondage, had reduced Israel to a host of slaves without leadership and without hope. But eighty years before the time of their release God began to prepare them for that momentous hour when they would be delivered. He impressed the daughter of Egypt's monarch not only to spare the life of the baby boy she found at the Nile's edge, but to adopt him as her own son. He prompted her to leave the child with his own mother until there had been opportunity to teach him unforgettable lessons about his God and his people. At the age of twelve years he began a quarter of a century of training for leadership, so that he might know how to organize and direct his people when they would go forth to the Promised Land. Forty years more were needed to soften the heart of the general of the armies of Egypt, that he might be qualified to be shepherd of the flocks of the Lord when Israel should leave Egypt.

During the days in the desert the Lord called the shepherd of Midian to be His prophet. He opened to him views of the events of

creation week, the fall of man, the days of evil, the Flood, Abraham's call to become the father of God's nation, and the early experiences of Israel in Egypt. These things Moses recorded, and they have come to us in the book of Genesis. He became God's historian of the beginnings of the world. Then one day he was called to active service as the Lord's representative to lead Israel out of Egypt. From the land of bondage to Mount Sinai, and then through forty years of wilderness wandering, and finally to the banks of the Jordan, ready to enter the Promised Land, Moses led the chosen nation. Not permitted to cross the Jordan himself, he was given a panoramic view of the land. He died and was buried by angels, and later he was resurrected and taken to heaven. In New Testament times he appeared with Elijah on the mount of transfiguration, and he thus encouraged Christ when He faced the hour of trial and suffering.

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In this prince turned prophet, this general turned shepherd, are illustrated all the functions of the prophet. Moses was the greatest of them until the coming of the One who was to be "like unto" him. Writer of Scripture, leader, judge, messenger of God, psalmist, preacher, guide, protector, worker of miracles,—Moses was all these and more. He fills his own peculiar place in sacred history; his position is unique because his task was unique. The Exodus of Israel typifies the experience of the remnant church in its preparation for entrance to the heavenly Canaan. Because of this, the life of Moses and the journeys of the children of Israel deserve our intensive study in order that we may learn their lessons without having to repeat all their mistakes. Through the crises the prophet of God guided the destiny of the vast multitude who would have lost their way completely had they ignored the divine instruction.

Samuel

The three centuries between Moses and Samuel produced no great prophets, although the prophetic gift was bestowed on a number of individuals. Samuel's career marked the transition from the full-fledged theocracy, begun when the people voluntarily placed themselves under God's leadership at Mount Sinai, to a modified form with kings as the visible heads of the government. Thus Samuel was the last of the prophet-leaders who had been frequently known

since the days of Moses. His leadership was a period of unification and instruction. Knowing what was coming, God was using Samuel to prepare the way for the establishment of the monarchy, even though that was not His desire for the nation.

[154] Samuel was one of those in whom the offices of prophet and priest were combined. It was in his boyhood, during his training for the priesthood, that the Lord first gave him a message to be delivered to Eli. Through the years that followed, “Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.” [1 Samuel 3:19, 20](#). The people’s respect and high regard for Samuel is apparent all through the record of his ministry. In many ways Samuel occupies a place in the history of Israel second only to that of Moses. It is not without reason that the Lord linked the two as He denounced the sin of Israel to Jeremiah. “Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of My sight, and let them go forth.” [Jeremiah 15:1](#). Often these men had stood before God to plead for the people, and if the intercession of any man could have availed, it would have been theirs. Each was responsible for the deliverance of the nation from the hand of the enemy. Each marked the closing of an old order and the beginning of a new. As it was Moses’ privilege to anoint the first of the high priests, so it was Samuel’s to set apart the first king of Israel, and later the first king from the tribe of Judah, the founder of the line in which Messiah was to be born. When a man of strong character, virtue, and leadership was needed, the Lord took the best man he could find, called him to the prophetic office, taught and directed the nation through him.

Through the years when the kings reigned, the prophets did not occupy the same positions of authority as they had previously. Their role was that of counselor more than of leader, except as leadership was shown in spiritual activities. For more than four hundred years after the beginning of the monarchy the quality of kings shifted back and forth from good to evil, and prophets were used to co-operate with the worthy rulers, or to rebuke and correct those who were going in sinful ways. Samuel warned Saul that the kingdom had
[155] been taken from him and his house; Nathan pointed to the sin in

David's life; Huldah counseled Josiah concerning the roll of the law uncovered in the temple; Elijah denounced Ahab and later destroyed the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel; Isaiah assured Ahaz that Rezin and Pekah would fail in their attack on Judah. These are but samples of what the Lord did for the kings of the united and divided monarchies. Crisis after crisis was foreseen, and, if the word of the prophet had been heeded, these would have been averted. But as the centuries progressed, the word of the Lord through His messengers had less and less effect on the kings and the people as a whole. "Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which He had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, 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. Therefore He brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: He gave them all into his hand." [2 Chronicles 36:14-17](#).

Two Captivities

The chronicler was here telling of the fate of Judah; but a little more than a century earlier a similar doom had overtaken the northern kingdom, Israel, when it was conquered by the Assyrians. However, neither invasion nor captivity had taken place without adequate warning and counsel by the prophets. In the northern kingdom Amos and Hosea had sharply portrayed conditions within Israel that called for intervention on the Lord's part, but with their messages of accusation and rebuke was an invitation to return to the Lord. In Hosea's message, especially, the love of God for His erring people was depicted, and with it was an expression of His eagerness to receive them back. Hosea's appeal was the last, and because of its nature perhaps the strongest, sent to Israel. It is possible that his ministry continued until the fall of Samaria to the Assyrians in 722

B.C. When it became apparent that the evils that covered the land had gone beyond remedy, the sentence was pronounced: “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.” [Hosea 4:17](#). “The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know it.” [Hosea 9:7](#). “Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword.” [Hosea 13:16](#). But the final chapter of the book is one of invitation: “O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God.... I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from him.” [Hosea 14:1-4](#).

Judah’s time of probation continued more than a hundred years longer than Israel’s, but the same doom came to both. The division of the kingdom in the days of Rehoboam helped slow the spread of idolatry in the southern nation. Isaiah made strong pleas for the people to turn from the worship of idols and to remember the God who was the Creator and who could foretell the future. He predicted their captivity and eventual deliverance. At the same time Micah was preaching against their presumptuous sin. “They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us.” [Micah 3:10, 11](#). He pointed out the result of their course: “Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.” [Verse 12](#). Repeatedly he brought appeals for repentance. “He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” [Micah 7:19](#).

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By the time Jeremiah began his ministry, about twenty years before the first Babylonian Captivity, the situation appeared to be beyond hope; but still God worked through the prophet to try to avert the coming disaster. Even after the first and second invasions, in 605 and 597 B.C., the complete destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the temple might have been avoided if Zedekiah had been willing to surrender to the Babylonians instead of staging a hopeless resistance. The prophet was at hand to give counsel as to how to meet the critical times successfully, but his words were ignored even after they were asked for by the Reubenlike king.

Since the Assyrians scattered thousands of the people of Israel throughout their empire in an attempt to destroy the unity and identity of the nation, we have no record of prophets working directly among them. Judah, on the other hand, went into captivity in Babylon, and was not scattered as was Israel. It was the Lord's plan that those who would remain faithful during the Captivity should be brought back again to Palestine, and made a nucleus of a nation that would perform His will by giving to the world a revelation of His love and power. This was the same purpose He had in mind for His people originally. If ever God's people in ancient times faced a crisis, it was then. The Babylonians had no intention of permitting the Jews to return and revive the nation that had been so much trouble to them through the years. Satan's purposes, too, could be well served by having Israel swallowed up by this heathen nation. God's plan for the future depended on the preservation of a knowledge of Himself and of the true worship during the period of the Captivity.

As spiritual leader of Judah in exile, the Lord chose Ezekiel, a young priest, and called him to be His prophet. It was he who ministered to the people in Babylon during many years of the Captivity. Daniel, who occupied important positions in the royal court, supplemented the work of Ezekiel, but it was this prophet-priest who maintained contact with the people and was their spiritual guide. He held before them the glory of God as it had been revealed to him, and taught them that the Lord could be with them where they were as well as in Jerusalem. [Ezekiel 11:16](#). Daniel's presence in Babylon after the death of Ezekiel undoubtedly did much to hold the people faithful until the time of deliverance by the decree of Cyrus. It is possible that he showed Cyrus the prophecies of Isaiah that told of the deliverer of Israel; he would be a general who would persuade the king to send back to Palestine the Israelites who wished to go. This gap in the national life of the chosen nation was bridged through the ministry and leadership of prophets, so that Judah had another opportunity to prove itself worthy of God's confidence.

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Restoration

For fifteen years after the first captives returned to Palestine from Babylon, little was done to restore the temple that had been destroyed

by Nebuchadnezzar. Most of the people seemed satisfied to build homes for themselves and settle down. They were not prospering, but they seemed to make no connection between this fact and their failure to fulfill the Lord's command. Under such circumstances there could be no restoration and rebirth of the nation. Was God's plan to fail even after He had preserved Judah and brought some of them back to start over again? Here was another task calling for prophets in places of leadership and counsel.

[159] "Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways." [Haggai 1:3-5](#). As a result of the challenge, work was begun on the temple. The testimony of Zechariah was added to Haggai's, and within four years the rebuilding was completed. Later Ezra and Nehemiah, who were used to help re-establish the Jews, instructed them in the word of God, and led out in reform movements. So the temple was completed and its services reinstated, the city and the walls rebuilt, and government re-established. God had again used the prophets to meet the exigencies of the situation.

John the Baptist

The coming of the next of the prophets was predicted in the last book of the Old Testament. Knowing that for some time there was to come a lapse in the frequency and prominence of prophetic messages, the Spirit of the Lord prompted Malachi to insert the message: "Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in." [Chapter 3:1](#). Again he told of a prophet like Elijah coming to prepare the way of the Lord. [Chapter 4:5](#). The role of John the Baptist as prophet-forerunner of Christ fulfilled Malachi's prediction and served to link the Old and New Testament prophets. Since the days of Abraham there had not been so long a period without a prophet. It was necessary that the continuation of the prophetic gift be divinely predicted, lest the people should feel that the lengthy time gap indicated the discontinuance of the prophetic office.

The time had come for the Jewish nation to make the greatest of all decisions: “What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?” [Matthew 27:22](#). This was the occasion for which the Lord had been trying to prepare His people since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The future of the nation and their usefulness to God in His plan to win the world was to be determined by this final response. That there might be no mistake in the identity of this One who had been so long predicted, Simeon, the prophet, had testified in the temple when the Babe Jesus was presented to the Lord: “Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou has prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.” [Luke 2:30-32](#). Also Anna, the prophetess, “gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” [Verse 38](#). John the Baptist was prepared to direct attention to Him. “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” he had declared at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. After Christ’s baptism, John spoke again as he saw the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descend upon the Messiah. The prophet said, “And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.” [John 1:29, 34](#).

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Identification of Jesus Christ was unmistakable to the ones whose eyes were not blinded by pride, superstition, or sin. It was the testimony of the prophets Simeon, Anna, and John the Baptist that confirmed in many minds the conviction brought home by their knowledge of the Scriptures and their observation of the life and works of Christ. It was the testimony of the prophets that left without excuse those who did not see in Jesus Christ the fulfillment of the Old Testament predictions of Messiah to come for their redemption.

Paul

The succession of calamities that plagued the Jewish nation, because of their rejection of the prophets and finally of Christ, reached its climax at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in A.D. 70. It was of importance not only to the Jewish nation as such, but also to the Christian Jews scattered in all places. Even the Christians had never turned their eyes away from the temple as the center of worship. What was to be the effect upon them when the

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temple should be destroyed? Unless they were prepared, the result could be disastrous. Again the Lord turned to His familiar method for preparing His people for the crisis. Through Paul, called not only to be an apostle but also a prophet, there was sent to the Hebrew Christians a message to direct their attention to Christ as their High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. In this way alone could they be brought to understand that the temple at Jerusalem was unnecessary to their true worship. The value of the Levitical priesthood had already ended; the presence of God had long since departed from the most holy place. A High Priest in a heavenly sanctuary whose ministration is accessible to all men everywhere at all times, had taken the place of the visible earthly services. Blood had been shed once that this ministry might be carried on for all. A full revelation of these facts would help to revolutionize the thinking of the early Christians and prepare them for the crisis when the temple fell. The gift of prophecy again met a crisis successfully.

John

More than nineteen centuries have passed since the first advent of Christ. Indications are abundant and clear that His second coming is near. Between the two advents stretches a vast gulf through which the church has had to pass. At every step of the way Satan has placed snares to trap Christians. The way would have seemed too long, if not impossible, had it not been for the preparation the Lord made for the enlightenment and encouragement of His people. In the subtle combination of sweeping outline and precise detail characteristic of Bible writing, and so rare elsewhere, the story of the centuries was told so the true church might not be misguided or discouraged.

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On Patmos, the beloved disciple received “the Revelation of Jesus Christ,” which told of “things which must shortly come to pass.” [Revelation 1:1](#). Seven phases in the experience of the church were pictured to the prophet. They span the period from his day to the promised time when he “that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne.” [Revelation 3:21](#). The relation of the church and the world, as well as major events in secular history, were foretold. Satan’s attempts to deceive and coerce were unveiled in advance.

The whole was brought to a climax with a portrayal of the destruction of all wickedness, and the creation of new heavens and a new earth.

All this was revealed as a preparation for the succession of tests and crises God knew lay before His church. The prophet was the agent to convey to the believers a knowledge of these coming events: “He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John.... John to the seven churches.” [Revelation 1:1-4](#).

The remnant church is brought into prominent view, for on it are fixed Satan’s final hopes of victory in his warfare against the government of God. Because of the shortness of time, he redoubles his deceptions. As “the accuser of our brethren,” he attempts to persuade God that those who profess to be His people are not worthy of His attention and care, and he tries to persuade the church that its unworthiness has cut it off from God’s protection and communication. So there may be no misunderstanding about His plan to reveal Himself anew in the last days, the Lord, through the prophet, states that the gift of prophecy is to be found in that same remnant church against which Satan is warring with all his terrible energies.

Faced with the commission to warn the whole world of the nearness of the second advent, and at the same time finding it necessary to wage constant war against the adversary, the remnant church needs the prophetic gift as much as any previous group in history, if not more. Prophecy clearly indicates that God has not forgotten or ignored this need. He has planned that all the gifts placed in the church shall continue as long as the need exists. Special guidance is needed to meet the problems of preparing the world for the end of all things earthly and to bring the people of God to that spiritual condition that they can endure the final conflict.

A Period of Silence

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We recognize clearly that the operation of the prophetic gift was to continue to the close of New Testament times. We acknowledge also the fact that Jesus Christ placed in the church certain gifts, including the gift of prophecy, that He intended to continue to function until His second advent. Finally, we affirm that in the last days the remnant church has particular need of the gift, and that its manifestation is plainly indicated. Thus far we have dealt extensively

with the gift in Bible times, and have observed numerous reasons for anticipating its presence in the remnant church, but have given no attention to the period between the close of the apostolic age and the last days. Did not the prophecies concerning the presence of the gifts of the Spirit apply to all the centuries spanned by the history of the church? Were there not crises to be met among God's people during those years of apostasy, darkness, and reformation?

Though the records are sparse and inconclusive, we can hardly conceive that God would withhold the prophetic guidance from these faithful Christians. Historians mention a number of individuals who were looked upon as prophets at one time or another during the period. See A. G. Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, pages 175-228. Unfortunately it is not possible to point to a fully authenticated instance and say, beyond a reasonable doubt, that that person was a true prophet. This does not mean that the gift was inoperative, but it does mean that for some reason God did not see fit to preserve sufficient information to enable us to reach definite conclusions in regard to this matter. And this is not strange, for the writers of the Bible apparently make up only a portion of the individuals of their times who possessed the prophetic gift. Other persons are referred to in the Bible as prophets, but we have no information by which we may test their experience and none of their writings that we may study today. The silence is of the same kind that reigns between the Old and New Testaments.

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It is likely that because of the apostasy and spiritual darkness of those centuries, manifestations were either limited or only local in their influence. An increase of prophetic revelation seems to be linked with increased attention to the will of God as revealed in His commandments. While the major trend during those years was away from Scriptural truth, it seems clear that there were always some who observed the commandments and did their best to conform to principles of truth. Certainly to these God fulfilled His promise of divine guidance through the working of the prophetic gift in one way or another.

It must not be forgotten, however, that all of the specific indications of the manifestations of the gift of prophecy following Bible times are given in the setting of the days immediately preceding the second advent. As has been mentioned, this fact does not indicate

the absence of the gift during the intervening centuries. The implication is that there will be a revival of the gift rather than simply a continuation of something that had been common throughout the centuries.

SUMMARY

1. A knowledge of God's presence with the individual is essential to living Christianity.

2. Those who trust God may be always within the sphere of His protection and guidance.

3. Guidance such as is vouchsafed the individual is available to the church and to the nation.

4. Numerous Bible examples illustrate that in times of crisis God has guided His church through the ministry of prophets.

5. The ministry of prophets that has been experienced in the past is promised to the remnant church prior to the return of Jesus.

6. Never has the need for such guidance been greater than in the last days. [165]

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Which of the incidents used in this chapter to illustrate prophetic guidance are employed in the Bible to typify last-day experiences of the remnant?

2. Find two or three incidents in the personal lives of individuals showing the guidance of prophets in times of crisis.

3. Gather all the evidence you can to show that not all that the prophets said or wrote is found in the Bible, and that there were prophets of whose sayings and writings we have nothing preserved. What purpose was accomplished by sayings or writings not perpetuated in the Bible record?

4. Is there recorded any crisis among God's people anciently for which God did not make preparation through the prophets?

5. Since God has guided His people by specially chosen leadership in the past, is it not logical and Biblical to expect that He will do the same in the last days?

6. If this special leadership has been consistently directed through the agency of prophets, is it not natural to conclude that He will do the same thing now?

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Haynes, Carlyle B., *The Gilt of Prophecy*, pp. 63-69.
Our Firm Foundation, vol. 2, pp. 185-235.

Chapter 10—Backgrounds Of The Advent Movement

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The focal point of prophecy beyond the apostolic age is the second advent of Christ. While the experience of the church and the world during the intervening centuries receives attention, from the viewpoint of prophecy it seems to be largely for the purpose of centering the mind of the believers on the climactic conclusion. Predictions of intermediate events serve the dual end of revealing the progress of the plan of salvation, and confirming confidence in the fulfillment of the whole plan.

In the vision of the seven seals ([Revelation 6 and 8](#)) we find a summation of the major lines of prophecy pointing to the second advent. We get a preview of how paganism would enter the early church and destroy its purity, how Satan would attempt to blot out God's faithful ones by persecution when they stood for their faith. The vision also foretells how the testimony of God's word would speak out continually against corrupt conditions, and how the second advent would be dramatically foretold by major signs that would be fulfilled just before Christ came.

Portions of the description, with emphasis on a variety of particulars, may be found in the prophecies of [Daniel 2; 7; 11; 12; Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; 2 Thessalonians 1; 2; 2 Peter 3; Revelation 2; 3; 6-14](#). No prophecy gives a complete picture, and all of them must be fitted together in the same way that the four Gospels must be combined to obtain a full understanding of the events of the first advent. But no matter which phase of the coming events is stressed, everything moves resistlessly toward the time when "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ." [Revelation 11:15](#). Once again we see the singleness of purpose characteristic of the Bible writers.

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As we study of the predictions of the prominence of the gift of prophecy during the period preceding Christ's second coming, our attention turns to the signs of the advent that are found in the context

of some of the predictions. These signs not only emphasize the imminence of the second advent, but they also show the relation of the gift of prophecy to the remnant church. The prophecies indicate that the gift was to be revealed in the setting of these signs.

Joel said, “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.” [Joel 2:31](#). Christ added to the details of the prophecy: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.” [Matthew 24:29](#). John the revelator, in describing the sixth seal, adds still another item: “And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.” [Revelation 6:12, 13](#).

The blending of the three passages produces a list of three prominent signs calculated to indicate the approach of the end: (1) a great earthquake, (2) a darkening of the sun, (3) a falling of the stars. It is not necessary to repeat here the evidences that these signs have been fulfilled. Seventh-day Adventist literature has stated the facts many times. We will simply note the event fulfilling the prediction: (1) the Lisbon earthquake, November 1, 1755; (2) the dark day, May 19, 1780; (3) the meteoric shower, November 13, 1833. Another key event of the preadvent days was to be the emergence of the remnant church, the seed of the woman, spoken of in [Revelation 12:17](#). This group is identified as keeping the commandments of God and pos-

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sessing the testimony of Jesus Christ. To grasp the significance of the signs to those who saw them and to those who came after, we must glance at the world in which they took place. Since the first signs appeared in the natural world, events have shaped toward fulfillment of predicted conditions in the political and religious world.

Lisbon Earthquake

For Europe and the American colonies 1755, the year of the Lisbon earthquake, was a momentous one. Boundary disputes led to hostilities between French and English forces in North America

before any formal declaration of war. Later Austria, Prussia, Spain, Portugal, Russia, and other nations became involved. Known in its European phase as the Seven Years' War, and in its American phase as the French and Indian War, the conflict involved fighting on land in America and Europe, and on the sea in many parts of the world, until its conclusion with the treaties of Hubertusburg and Paris in 1763. During the years 1755-1763, war dominated the political scene. As the world moved on in its course, God launched His program of preparation for the return of Christ.

The middle of the eighteenth century witnessed a widespread religious awakening. Its roots went back to the 1730's, when a revival began with the preaching of Jonathan Edwards in America, the Wesleyan revival among the masses of London, and the ministry of George Whitefield, who within a year after his graduation from Oxford was acclaimed the greatest preacher of his day. In America all of the colonies, New England, middle, and southern, were affected by the revival that became known as the "Great Awakening." The actual revival was not long-lived, but its effects were widespread. William W. Sweet comments: "The series of great religious awakenings which swept over the American colonies in the middle of the eighteenth century were in many respects the most far-reaching social movements of the whole colonial period." *The Story of Religion in America*, page 201. [169]

Viewing the situation from the standpoint of Bible prophecy, we can see the hand of God in this stirring of minds concerning religious matters. Looking back, it is easy for us to recognize the significance of the Lisbon earthquake. Now we can see it in its relation to other predicted events, and its place is unmistakable. But, as has always been the case when prophecies were fulfilled, there were those at the time of the occurrence who recognized it as an indication of the nearness of the end. In *The Gentleman's Magazine* (London), of February, 1756, appeared an article signed by "A. B." declaring that the Lisbon earthquake could not fail to "awaken the world to serious and devout contemplations," and to "compare it with the prophecies relating to, and now fulfilling in this its last days." He called it "one of the infallible omens," a "signal from the King of heaven." He continued:

“For my own part, I do really suppose, from the present condition of *Europe* compared with [Luke 21:25, 26](#), that this is surely nothing less than *the outstretched arm of God prepared to break the earth in pieces with a rod of iron, and to cleanse and purify it from all pollutions and filthiness both of flesh and spirit, to make way for the glorious kingdom of the millennium; like the voice of the first angel (chap. 14. vs. 6, 7.) to call all nations everywhere to repent while it is day, and make all pious men now look up, for their redemption draweth nigh; when he shall appear again with healing in his wings.*”—Quoted in L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vol. 2, p. 675.

[170] In England some time later a day of fasting was appointed to call attention especially to the recent earthquake. Henry Stebbing, D.D., chaplain in ordinary to His Majesty, prepared a sermon entitled, “A Discourse Preparatory to the Religious Observance of the Day of Publick Fasting and Humiliation, Appointed by Authority, to Be Kept on Friday the Sixth of February 1756, on the Occasion of the Late Earthquakes Abroad, and Particularly at Lisbon.” *Ibid.*, p. 676. A packet of twenty-one sermons and pamphlets preserved in the British Museum indicates that numerous sermons were preached on the occasion. Thomas Alcock, at Plymouth, preached “A Sermon on the Late Earthquakes, More Particularly That at Lisbon,” in which he stated:

“The affrighted Inhabitants of *Lisbon*, and of many other Places, thought the *Lord was come to smite the Earth with a Curse*—thought the *great and terrible Day of Judgment* was at Hand, in the which the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat: The Earth also and all the Works that are therein shall be burnt up.” *Ibid.*, p. 676.

Note the reasons Alcock gives for agreeing that the fears of the inhabitants of Lisbon were not without foundation.

“Nor was it without Reason, that they entertained these Apprehensions: As there were Signs almost sufficient to make them expect that Catastrophe. For our Saviour has foretold; *that there shall be Wars and Rumors of Wars, Nation shall rise against Nation, and great Earthquakes shall be in divers Places, and Famines, and Pestilences, and fearful Sight, the Sea and the Waves roaring; Mens Hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those Things*

which are coming on the Earth: For the Powers of Heaven shall be shaken: That these shall be the Beginnings of Sorrows, and some of the previous Signs of his Coming. And though the Lord still delayeth his Coming, yet seeing all these Things most certainly shall be dissolved, we know not how soon, what Manner of Persons ought we to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness! Looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the day of God!" Ibid., p. 676.

The words of George Lavington, Bishop of Exeter, are recorded in "A Sermon Preached in the Cathedral-Church of Exeter, on the General Fast-Day, February 6, 1756." In part, he said:

"I do not think that we have Light enough in these Matters to pin down this Prophecy to these Events; nor to determine how near or how far off Christ's second Coming may be. There seem to be other Prophecies not yet accomplished, which must be accomplished before this comes to pass. But, as the *Resemblance* between what we now see, and what shall be seen, when the last Catastrophe comes, naturally connects them together in our Thoughts; so it will always be our Wisdom, when we see such Signs as these, so far to be apprehensive that the *End of all Things is at Hand, as to be sober and watch unto Prayer.*" *Ibid.*, p. 677. [171]

The Bible prophecies were sufficiently clear, and the events that fulfilled them striking enough, that men who knew the Bible and those who observed the events could easily discern the connection between the two. This has become increasingly true as the years have passed. The more signs we see fulfilled, the easier it is to detect additional ones.

Dark Day

Twenty-five years were to elapse before the coming of the next impressive sign of the second advent—the dark day of May 19, 1780. In the intervening years tension increased between England and the American colonies, until the war for independence began, April 19, 1775, at Concord and Lexington. For the next eight years America was busy prosecuting the war. Only a week before the dark day the American forces suffered a major loss when Charleston, South Carolina, fell into the hands of British troops.

[172] While the unifying influence of the Great Awakening and the leadership of a large majority of the clergy did much to draw the colonies together, the period preceding and during the Revolution was not one of spiritual prosperity. “At the time that the Thirteen Colonies achieved their political independence, and in spite of the efforts of the churches for more than a century and of some marked religious awakenings, only a minority of the population had membership in any religious body.” Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol. 3, p. 190.

But even in such a time the dark day made a profound impression on many men and women. Timothy Dwight, president of Yale College for twenty-one years, later commented: “A very general opinion prevailed that the day of judgment was at hand.” Quoted by John W. Barber in *Connecticut Historical Collections*, p. 403.

References to the occasion are multiplied, but statements of those who saw the dark day as a fulfillment of Bible prophecy are limited. However, the prophetic significance of the day was not passed by unnoticed. In 1781 Samuel Gatchel, deacon of the Second Congregational Church, at Marblehead, Massachusetts, wrote a tract bearing the title, “The Signs of the Times: or Some Expositions and Remarks on Sundry Texts of Scripture, relative to the remarkable Phenomenon, or Dark-Day, which appeared in New-England on the Nineteenth of May, 1780.” Gatchel maintained that the dark day was a fulfillment of [Joel 3:15](#), which predicted a darkening of the sun and moon. Joshua Spalding, pastor of the Tabernacle Church at Salem, Massachusetts, in his book, *Sentiments, Concerning the Coming and Kingdom of Christ, Collected From the Bible, and From the Writings of Many Antient, and Some Modern, Believers* (1796), commented: “We have seen wonderful and alarming phenomena of darkness of the sun and moon.” Quoted in L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vol. 3, p. 233. These signs, he believed, indicated that the glorious advent might soon take place.

Falling Stars

[173] More than fifty years passed before the third of the remarkable signs mentioned in connection with the sixth seal took place. [Revelation 6:12, 13](#). Of the three omens, it appears to have been the one

to receive the most comment. The background of events emphasized this sign as the climax of an unusual series. Going back as far as 1821, we find Champollion making modern Egyptology possible by the first deciphering of hieroglyphics. Leopold von Ranke laid the foundation for modern historical criticism in his historical writing in 1824. Sir Charles Lyell established the basis of modern geology in 1830-33 by presenting the results of his research in *The Principles of Geology*. Michael Faraday, in 1831, demonstrated the fact of electromagnetic induction, and prepared the way for numerous branches of electrical science, 1838, Matthias Jakob Schleiden, German botanist, formulated the cell theory in physiology. In 1832, Samuel F. B. Morse developed the first practical electrical telegraph, and two years later Cyrus McCormick patented the harvester.

In 1833, a bill emancipating the slaves in British colonies was passed, crowning the long and tireless efforts of the abolitionists led by William Wilberforce. That same year England made progress toward the regulation of child labor, with the Factory Act. The previous year, in Italy, Giuseppe Mazzini failed in his attempt to bring about a general uprising to free his country from her rulers and to create a republic. In the Near East, a crisis arose when the Turkish army was defeated by Egyptian troops, and England and France were alarmed when Russian troops arrived on the scene.

The same year, 1833, saw Andrew Jackson, representative of frontier democracy, complete his first term as President of the United States. William Lloyd Garrison was pressing his effort to liberate the slaves. Two years before, he had established *The Liberator* to advocate emancipation. In 1833, Oberlin College opened its doors—the first American college to adopt coeducation and admit students regardless of race. The Mormon Church had been organized by Joseph Smith. Everywhere men and nations were astir.

Into the center of these stirrings, God dropped another token [174] of the nearness of the end. “The most sublime phenomenon of shooting stars, of which the world has furnished any record, was witnessed throughout the United States on the morning of the 13th of November, 1833.” Elijah H. Burritt, *The Geography of the Heavens*, page 163. As was the case with the two previously mentioned signs, this one also was regarded by many who were acquainted with Bible prophecy as a fulfillment of Jesus’ prediction in [Matthew 24:29](#)

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and John's prophecy in [Revelation 6:13](#). The many accounts of the shower of meteorites refer to the manner of their falling. Many observers remarked that they all seemed to come from a central area in the heavens and spread out in all directions. Some saw this as a fulfillment of John's prediction, "even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." Henry Dana Ward, prominent New York Episcopalian minister, wrote a letter to the New York Journal of Commerce, which appeared November 14. He said in part: "Here is the exactness of the prophet. The falling stars did not come, as if from several trees shaken, but from one: those which appeared in the east fell toward the East; those which appeared in the north fell toward the North; those which appeared in the west fell toward the West, and those which appeared in the south (for I went out of my residence into the Park,) fell toward the South; and they fell, not as the ripe fruit falls. Far from it. But they flew, they WERE CAST, like the unripe fruit, which at first refuses to leave the branch; and, when it does break its hold, flies swiftly, strait off, descending; and in the multitude falling some cross the track of others, as they are thrown with more or less force." (As Ward's letter appeared in the Journal, it was unsigned, but later statements make identification clear. See Signs of the Times, Oct. 11, 1843.) Two weeks later, the Journal of Commerce of November 27, published six columns in small type quoting excerpts from letters and other newspapers, telling of observations and reactions to the falling of the stars. Elijah H. Burritt, in describing the event, says that to some it suggested "the awful grandeur of the image employed in the Apocalypse, upon the opening of the sixth seal, when 'the stars' of heaven fall." The Geography of the Heavens, page 163.

Advent Preaching

The signs in the heavens and the great earthquake had given their testimony that the time of preparation for the second advent had come. But an even clearer sign of the approaching advent was the rise of a host of preachers and Bible expositors in all parts of the earth, who, as the result of individual study, began to teach the nearness of the advent.

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” [Matthew 24:14](#). The real prelude to the second advent is the preaching of the everlasting gospel “to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” [Revelation 14:6](#). The signs themselves could not prepare the way for Christ’s coming. At best, they could do no more than impress men with the coming of some momentous event, and awaken inquiry as to what that might be. They could assure the student of the word of God that the long-awaited event was at hand. But during the time of the revelation of the various signs, when many minds would be most susceptible to their spiritual meaning, unusual emphasis was given to advent preaching. Interest in the prophecies was nothing new. L. E. Froom, in his four volumes, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, shows the perpetual fascination the prophecies have had for earnest students of the Scriptures. But when we enter our present period of study, we find something out of the ordinary—an increasing number of writers and preachers were emphasizing prophecy, and a desire for a deeper understanding of some predictions was rising in many hearts. We can show only a sampling of what took place on a large scale.

Manuel de Lacunza ²

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Manuel de Lacunza, (1731-1801) born in Santiago, Chile, received a good education and was admitted on probation to the Jesuit order in 1747, at the age of sixteen. In 1766 he took the four vows of the Jesuits; but in the autumn of 1767, with all other members of the Jesuit order, he was expelled from Chile, by decree of Charles III of Spain in an action involving all Spanish dominions. Lacunza went first to Spain, and then to central Italy, where he remained until the time of his death. In 1772 he retired from the world and devoted himself to a profound scientific study of the Scriptures.

As a result of his research he concluded that the key to the Bible was a correct understanding of the two comings of Christ. He separated the intermingled parts of the prophecies, and stressed that the first coming of Christ was at His incarnation, and the second would

²Summaries of the work of Lacunza, Wolff, Irving, and Gaussen are based largely on the research of L. E. Froom in *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vols. 3 and 4.

be at the beginning of the millennium. He set down his discoveries in a manuscript which he called *The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty*. Because of his fear that the book might be prohibited by the Sacred Congregation of the Index, Lacunza did not have it published, but brought it out in manuscript form, in Spanish, using the pseudonym Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra; he styled himself a Christian Hebrew. His fears were well founded, for after his death the book was published, and in due time an entry condemning it appeared in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*.

[177] In manuscript form the book reached Spain and South America. The response was immediate, and additional handwritten copies were made to increase its circulation. It was said to have been circulated “from Havana to Cape Horn.” It was translated into Italian and Latin, and discussion of its contents stirred many in Europe and South America. In 1812 the first edition was printed in Spain. Later editions were issued in England, France, Germany, Ireland, and Mexico. The book was printed in Latin, Spanish, Italian, English, French, and German. Though Lacunza dealt with a number of the outline prophecies, and he pointed out that antichrist was not an individual to appear sometime in the future, but a body which “dissolves” the faith of the church, his “main argument concerns the establishment of his fundamental thesis—Christ’s premillennial advent and subsequent glorious reign on earth.”

It is impossible to estimate the influence of such a work as Lacunza’s. Thousands of copies were circulated, and discussion and controversy were created. Inside the Roman Catholic Church, and among Protestants, the book became an important factor in calling attention to the Bible prophecies of the second advent and how they were rapidly reaching their fulfillment. It showed that men could have a clear concept of the fulfilling predictions now that the time had actually arrived.

Edward Irving

One of those most influenced by Lacunza’s book was Edward Irving (1792-1834). In 1825, Irving, in the city of London, preached his first sermon on the second advent. During the following year he read the 1812 Spanish edition of *The Coming of the Messiah in*

Glory and Majesty, and he was much affected by it. He went so far as to make a two-volume English translation.

Edward Irving was born in Scotland. He was endowed with a brilliant mind, and he received a good education. He was religiously inclined, and while young he became a well known preacher. Soon after his arrival in London in 1822, the little Hatton Garden Chapel, of which he was pastor, was filled to overflowing with some of the leading members of London society. Even with admission by ticket only, the seats were occupied for hours in advance of the preaching service. By 1827 a new church had been built in Regent Square, and every Sunday it was filled with eager listeners who drank in Irving's lengthy expositions of prophecy.

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In a tour of Scotland, Irving preached the nearness of the advent, and he drew such crowds that the largest churches would not accommodate them. Outdoor audiences are reported to have reached from 10,000 to 15,000 persons. Later accusations of heresy marred the close of Irving's ministry, but these were not directly related to his advent preaching. "He was one of the pre-eminent Christians of his time, with a spirit of humility, consecration, and spiritual perception which most of his contemporaries neither possessed nor were capable of assessing." His preaching brought the prophecies of the imminence of the advent to the attention of tens of thousands of persons, and contributed largely to the widespread advent awakening.

Joseph Wolff

About the time that Edward Irving went to London, Joseph Wolff (1795-1862), a Jewish Christian, later to be known as "missionary to the world," was launching his eventful career. Wolff was born in Bavaria, but soon he was taken to Prussia. His father, a rabbi, began a strict program of Hebrew training for his son when the boy was four. He was taught that Christians were idolatrous worshipers of wooden crosses, and that Jews generally were anticipating the soon coming of the Messiah (His first advent, of course, since the Jews did not accept Jesus). The youth began to wonder about Christ. When he was eight, he was favorably impressed with Christianity through contacts with Speiss, the village barber-surgeon, who also

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supplied the Wolff family with milk. Joseph was sent to watch the milking and check that nothing forbidden was added to the milk. He discussed with Speiss the subject of the Messiah. Through the reading of [Isaiah 53](#), Wolff was fully persuaded that Jesus was the promised Messiah. In his early years the lad received a thorough education, with particular emphasis on the study of languages. At the age of seventeen he was baptized a Roman Catholic. His studies continued, with further emphasis on language study; and by the time he was twenty he was lecturing on Hebrew at the University of Landshut. Later conflicts with Catholic leaders over theology drove him from Catholicism, and at the age of twenty-three he began special training under the sponsorship of the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity Amongst the Jews. In 1821 he went to Palestine to begin missionary work.

Between 1821 and 1826, Wolff worked in Palestine, Egypt, the Sinaitic Peninsula, Mesopotamia, Persia, Crimea, Georgia, and the Ottoman Empire. From 1826 to 1830, he traveled through England, Scotland, Ireland, Holland, Germany, the Mediterranean, Malta, the Greek Islands, Egypt, Jerusalem, and Cyprus. Between 1831 and 1834 his itinerary covered Turkey, Persia, Turkestan, Bokhara, Balkh, Afghanistan, Cashmere, Hindustan, and the Red Sea area. The years 1835-1838 were spent in Gibraltar, Malta, Egypt, Mount Sinai, Jiddah, Masowah, Kamazien, Tigre, Abyssinia, India, Saint Helena, and finally the United States and England. In the United States he preached in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington. In December, 1837, Wolff preached before a joint session of the Congress of the United States, and he also addressed the legislatures of New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Joseph Wolff's preaching was constantly centered on the second advent. Here are a few sentences from one of his sermons:

“Let this be our sincere prayer. ‘Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.’ ... What a beautiful song we shall hear, from a whole ransomed creation, when He shall come! ... THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH. He cometh! He cometh! ‘He cometh to judge the earth; with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity.’”

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As a result of his study of the prophecies, Wolff came to the conclusion that Jesus Christ would return in 1847, and that His

coming would mark the beginning of the millennium. He believed that Christ would reign at Jerusalem. As one of the most widely traveled individuals of his time, Wolff preached the advent message to tens of thousands of listeners, and at the same time he distributed tracts and Bibles in the language of the people to whom he spoke. At times he fittingly signed his name, “Joseph Wolff, missionary to all the nations.” Attesting to the quality of Wolff’s preaching, John Quincy Adams, former President of the United States, proposed a motion to the effect that Wolff be permitted the use of the hall of the House of Representatives for a lecture, and said that he had never heard “a more profound, closely reasoned, and convincing argument upon the proofs of Christianity,” than in one of Wolff’s lectures to which he had listened.

Despite the widespread influence of his ministry, the voice of Joseph Wolff was only one of the chorus proclaiming the soon advent of the Saviour.

Louis Gaussen

The last of this sample group is a French-Swiss evangelical professor—François Samuel Robert Louis Gaussen. Louis Gaussen’s parents were Protestant refugees at Geneva when he was born in 1790. In 1814 Gaussen graduated from the University of Geneva, and the next year he was licensed to preach. The year following he was ordained to the ministry. For twelve years he served as pastor of the church at Satigny, near Geneva. Because of a clash with a group representing the majority of the Geneva clergy, Gaussen was suspended. As a result, he, with Merle d’Aubigné, the Swiss church historian, and others, formed the Evangelical Society to distribute Bibles and tracts and to foster missionary work. The group founded the Geneva Evangelical Society’s School of Theology, in which Gaussen accepted the professorship of theology in 1834.

The doctrine of the second advent played an important part in Gaussen’s teaching. He gave special study to the book of Daniel, and the prophecies became the center of his teaching. Over a period of twenty-five years he held a position as a leading representative of orthodox Protestantism, and he exercised a wide influence through his preaching, teaching, and writing. He became one of the most

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prominent of the heralds of the return of Christ. Opposition led him to adopt the device of preparing lessons on the book of Daniel and teaching them to children. His actual purpose was to reach the parents. The plan succeeded and older persons filled the lecture hall to capacity. Gaussen constantly emphasized that [Daniel 2](#) constitutes the “key to the world’s history,” and from that prophecy he branched out into others of Daniel and the Revelation.

Louis Gaussen’s influence was widespread. The length of his career, his excellent scholarship, his clear-cut interpretations of prophecy, and his unique methods, attracted much attention, and turned the thinking of many persons to the second advent.

Into a period of less than eighty years were compressed a most important group of events predicted in the Bible to be signs that the second advent was near. The brief biographical sketches of four men reveal how fitting were the times for the coming of the signs and the preaching of the advent. Yet how difficult it was, because of circumstances, to keep men’s minds long fixed on even such impressive tokens!

SUMMARY

1. Beyond the first advent of Christ, the focus of all prophecy is upon the second advent.

2. A composite prophetic picture is essential to gaining a full view of events preceding the advent.

3. At the appointed time, three major signs in the natural world—the Lisbon earthquake, the dark day, and the falling of the stars—gave impetus to the advent preaching.

[182] 4. The three great signs were recognized by many for what they actually were—tokens of the approaching end.

5. A combination of unusual occurrences in the natural world and the preaching of the soon-coming advent produced a religious awakening that stirred hundreds of thousands of men and women in many countries.

6. All these things took place in a brief period of time so that their relationship was noted and their impressiveness thus enhanced.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Read the following Bible chapters and note the event toward which each one points. Select a verse out of each chapter or group of chapters which indicates the point of focus in the chapter. Make a list of these verses and the thought of each. [Daniel 2](#); [Daniel 7](#); [Daniel 11](#); [12](#); [Matthew 24](#); [Mark 13](#); [Luke 21](#); [2 Thessalonians 1](#); [2](#); [2 Peter 3](#); [Revelation 2](#); [3](#); [Revelation 6](#); [Revelation 8](#); [9](#); [11:15-19](#); [Revelation 12](#); [13](#); [14](#).

2. Describe in detail the actual occurrences in connection with the Lisbon earthquake, the dark day, and the falling of the stars.

3. Name and briefly describe the work of several preachers and expositors, in addition to those considered in this chapter, who had a part in the advent awakening in various parts of the world.

4. How did so many men, as the result of independent study, begin to make discoveries concerning the second advent at about the same time? Can this be attributed largely to the signs in nature attracting their attention, or are there other factors to be considered?

5. Could such an awakening as that of the early nineteenth century be sufficient to fulfill the promise, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come"?

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Chapter 11—The Rise Of The Advent Movement

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While the advent awakening was in progress in Europe and on other continents, a parallel awakening was taking place in the United States. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw widespread interest in Bible prophecy, which brought a large production of books, pamphlets, and periodical articles. Much preaching was done on the subject, and particular attention was given to the prophetic time periods—the 1260 days and the 2300 days, and the millennium. Other phases of study included the Ottoman Empire and the papacy. Men like Timothy Dwight, president of Yale College; Lyman Beecher, later president of Lane Theological Seminary; and Elias Boudinot, first president of the Continental Congress, expounded the prophecies in sermons and written form. Preachers, teachers, lawyers, college presidents, and others proclaimed and circulated their views. While the majority did not have the imminent return of Christ in mind, there were many who did.

As has been previously pointed out, spiritual conditions immediately following the American Revolution were anything but salutary. Bacon's summary is to the point: "The closing years of the eighteenth century show the lowest low-water mark of the lowest ebb tide of spiritual life in the history of the American church. The demoralization of army life, the fury of political factions, the catch-penny materialist morality of Franklin, the philosophic deism of men like Jefferson, and the popular ribaldry of Tom Paine, had wrought, together with other untoward influences, to bring about a condition of things which to the eye of little faith seemed almost desperate." Leonard Woolsey Bacon, *A History of American Christianity*, The American Church History Series, vol. 13, p. 230.

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But out of this apparently hopeless situation came a period of revival that reached such proportions that it has come to be commonly called the Great Revival. The result of this movement brought increased emphasis on Bible study and on the broad distribution of the Scriptures. This meant the creation of new organizations to foster the

circulation of the Bible in foreign lands and to sponsor missionary activity. The British and Foreign Bible Society was formed in 1804 and the American Bible Society was launched in 1816, as well as the American Home Missionary Society. In 1824 scattered Sunday-school units merged into the American Sunday School Union. In 1810 the Congregationalists formed the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Other denominations joined in the general missionary movement.

William Miller

Of the men preaching the second advent during the early nineteenth century, the one who ultimately came into greatest prominence was William Miller. Miller was born at Pittsfield, Massachusetts, February 15, 1782; but when he was a small child the family moved to Low Hampton, New York. This became Miller's permanent home, except for a thirteen-year residence at Poultney, Vermont. The Miller household was a religious one. William, the oldest of sixteen children, was strictly trained by his mother, who was the daughter of a Baptist minister. Two of her brothers became Baptist ministers. Facilities for education were limited, but Miller's passion for books and his persistence in reading at night by the light of the fireplace or pine knot, enabled him to be classified as well educated. Access to libraries of friendly well-to-do neighbors broadened his education.

[186] In his early twenties Miller made the acquaintance of a number of deists. He enjoyed his discussions with them, and eventually joined them in their thinking—partly because of the inconsistencies he saw in the lives of professing Christians, and partly because of the conflicting opinions of the ministers to whom he asked questions about the Bible. His change of viewpoint regarding the Bible and the church did not alter the general trend of his life. He was honest, truthful, and clean, and he enjoyed the respect of his fellow townsmen. He served acceptably as constable, justice of the peace, and sheriff. The war of 1812 called for Miller's services, and he spent two years as a captain in the infantry. He came out of the war disillusioned about his deistic beliefs. Though he did not join

the church, Miller became a regular attendant at the Low Hampton Baptist Church, of which his uncle was the minister.

On occasions, when it was known that the minister was to be away from the church, Miller did not attend the service. He excused himself on the basis that the sermon was so poorly read by the substitute that he got nothing out of it. He hinted that if he could do the reading at such times he would attend. The church officers extended him an invitation to do so. Some time later, during his reading of a sermon on [Isaiah 53](#), Miller was overcome with emotion and was forced to sit down. As a result of deep conviction, he accepted Christ as his Saviour, and found the satisfaction he had long been seeking.

For two years, from 1816-18, Miller's attention was given to Bible study. He set aside commentaries and, as far as possible, all preconceived ideas, and launched into his investigation of Bible teachings, using only his Bible and Cruden's Concordance. The longer his study continued, the deeper became his confidence in the Scriptures; but the further he found himself from some of the popular theological teachings of the time. Miller's own statement of what he calls "The Result Arrived At," published in a pamphlet, should be given careful scrutiny:

"While thus studying the Scriptures, I became satisfied, if the prophecies which have been fulfilled in the past are any criterion [187] by which to judge of the manner of the fulfillment of those which are future, that the popular views of the spiritual reign of Christ, a temporal millennium before the end of the world, and the Jews' return, are not sustained by the word of God; for, I found that all the Scriptures on which those favorite theories are based, are as clearly expressed as are those that were literally fulfilled at the first advent, or at any other period in the past. I found it plainly taught in the Scriptures that Jesus Christ will again descend to this earth, coming in the clouds of heaven, in all the glory of his Father: that, at his coming the kingdom and dominion under the whole heaven will be given to Him and the saints of the Most High, who will possess it forever, even forever and ever: that, as the old world perished by the deluge, so the earth that now is, is reserved unto fire, to be melted with fervent heat at Christ's coming, after which, according to the promise, it is to become the new earth wherein

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the righteous will forever dwell: that, at his coming, the bodies of all the righteous dead will be raised, and all the righteous living be changed from a corruptible to an incorruptible, from a mortal to an immortal state; that they will all be caught up together to meet the Lord in air, and will reign with him forever in the regenerated earth: that, the controversy [of] Zion will then be finished, her children be delivered from bondage, and from the power of the tempter, and the saints be all presented to God blameless, without spot or wrinkle in love; that, the bodies of the wicked will then all be destroyed, and their spirits be reserved in prison until their resurrection and damnation; and that when the earth is thus regenerated, the righteous raised, and the wicked destroyed, the kingdom of God will have come, when his will will be done on earth as it is done in heaven; that the meek will inherit it, and the kingdom become the saints'. I found that the only millennium taught in the word of God is the thousand years which are to intervene between the first resurrection and that of the rest of the dead, as inculcated in the twentieth of Revelation; and that it must necessarily follow the personal coming of Christ and the regeneration of the earth: that, till Christ's coming, and the end of the world, the righteous and wicked are to continue together on the earth, and that the horn of the Papacy is to war against the saints until his appearing and kingdom, when it will be destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming; so that there can be no conversion of the world before the advent; and that as the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, is located by Peter after the conflagration, and is declared by him to be the same for which we look, according to the promise of [Isaiah 65:17](#), and is the same that John saw in vision after the passing away of the former heavens and earth; it must necessarily follow that the various portions of Scripture that refer to the millennial state must have their fulfillment after the resurrection of all the saints that sleep in Jesus. I also found that the promises respecting Israel's restoration are applied by the apostle to all who are Christ's,—the putting on of Christ constituting them Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." William Miller, *Apology and Defence*, pages 7-9. (This is a pamphlet of thirty-six pages, written in 1845.)

In the next two sections of his pamphlet, Miller presents the basis for the conclusion that he was living at the end of the fulfillment of

such outline prophecies as [Daniel 2](#). He asserted that all prophetic time periods are calculated on the year-day principle. The following section tells of his conclusion that the 2300 days of [Daniel 8:14](#) begin with the seventy-week period of [Daniel 9:24](#), and that they would terminate “about A.D. 1843.” “I was thus brought, in 1818, at the close of my two years’ study of the Scriptures, to the solemn conclusion, that in about twenty-five years from that time [about 1843] all the affairs of our present state would be wound up.” *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 12.

To Miller the matter seemed clear and the conclusions sound, but they were so different from those generally held that he felt it was his duty to restudy the whole matter. He was unaware that some excellent scholars in Europe and in America had come to virtually the same conclusions on many points. In order to be certain of his positions, Miller spent the next four years, 1818-1822, in assiduous study, again giving his attention to the Bible without the aid of other books except his concordance. The search confirmed the essentials of his earlier convictions and enlarged his grasp of the prophecies, which he recognized to be only a part of the whole gospel message. He prepared a list of twenty points in which he declared his faith. The list was wider than the statement in his *Apology and Defence* quoted above, but on similar points the conclusions were unchanged.

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During the next nine years Miller quietly, in private and in letters, told others of his expectation of the second advent. At times he wrote for one or another of the papers. Few persons seemed interested, and this Miller had difficulty to understand. As the years passed, there came to him the increasing conviction that the nearness of the end required him to help warn the world. This, of course, would require public presentation of his findings, and that he felt he could not do. The inner struggle between the sense of duty and the sense of inadequacy seems to have reached a climax about the middle of August, 1831.

On Saturday morning of August 13, Miller spent a little time in his study after breakfast. As he rose from his desk to go about

³The twenty articles may be read in Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*, pages 77-80, or LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vol. 4, pp. 466, 467. Miller’s rules of prophetic interpretation will be found in Bliss, *op. cit.*, pp. 70, 71.

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some task, the conviction filled his mind with greater urgency than ever before: "Go, tell it to the world." It was as though God had spoken audibly. The impression was so vivid that he sat down again and said, "I can't go, Lord." The question seemed to come, "Why not?" There were all sorts of reasons. He was too old. He was not a preacher. He had no training. He was slow of speech. But the arguments, singly or combined, could do nothing to still the voice of conviction and conscience. His distress became so marked that he then and there promised the Lord that if He would definitely open the way, William Miller would respond and perform his duty. "What do you mean by opening the way?" the voice seemed to ask. "Why," he replied, "if I should have an invitation to speak publicly in any place, I will go and tell them what I have found." With the making of the bargain, relief came to him. He was certain that no invitation would be forthcoming.

But at the moment Miller's burden seemed rolled away, Irving Guilford was on his way from nearby Dresden to Low Hampton with an invitation for his Uncle William to come and tell the members of the Dresden Baptist Church his views on the second coming. Their pastor was to be away. Miller's sister Sylvia, and her husband Silas Guilford, knew of his beliefs, and proposed that Miller be invited to come Sunday and tell of his convictions. When the lad had delivered his message, the farmer-Bible-student was thunderstruck. Then he was angry with himself for the covenant he had made only a half hour before. "I rebelled at once against the Lord, and determined not to go." Without a word he left the house and went to the maple grove to pray.

The longer he prayed the deeper became his conviction. The only answer he received to his plea for release from his promise was, "Go, and tell it to the world." "Will you make a covenant with God and break it so soon?" his conscience wanted to know. Then the decision was made, the only kind of decision a man of Miller's character could make: "Lord, I will go." The next morning the neighbors flocked to the Guilford home for the Sunday service to hear William Miller's first sermon. When he had finished, the listeners insisted that he continue his studies through the week.

When Miller returned home the following Monday, a letter awaited him with an invitation to speak at Poultney, a few miles

away. Sermons by the hundreds followed in quick succession in Baptist, Methodist, Congregational, and other churches throughout New England, in eastern Canada, and a little later as far west as Ohio and south to Maryland. The Millerite movement, as it was later known, was well under way. In 1834 he began to devote his whole time to preaching. In nine years he preached four thousand sermons in about five hundred towns and cities.

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Beginning in 1831, William Miller worked for seven years without any associates to counsel with him or to share the burdens of his task. But in 1838, Josiah Litch, a Methodist minister, accepted the message Miller was preaching and took his place beside him. As a preacher, author, and editor, Litch creatively contributed to the spread of Miller's prophetic interpretations. He maintained his connection with the Methodist Church until 1841, when he felt that it was best that he should sever this tie and devote himself entirely to the second-advent cause. He served as editor or associate editor of various Millerite publications, traveled widely while lecturing on the prophecies, and accompanied Miller on numerous preaching missions. Litch is probably best remembered now for his exposition of the seven trumpets of [Revelation 8; 9; 11](#), and his confident prediction that the downfall of the Ottoman Empire would occur in August, 1840.

Litch was instrumental in bringing Charles Fitch to Miller's teaching. This man was the former pastor of the Marlboro Street Congregational Church in Boston, and the Free Presbyterian Church of Newark, in Newark, New Jersey. After a considerable tour of preaching in a number of states, Fitch returned, in 1841, to Haverhill, Massachusetts, where he began to restudy the subject of the second advent, which he had been inclined to accept a few years before, but from which he had turned away. Josiah Litch, knowing of the earlier experience, called at Fitch's home to urge him to study and accept the advent teachings. After a severe struggle in his own mind, Fitch made his decision and took his place with Miller and Litch. He soon became one of the most beloved and successful preachers of the advent movement. Fitch was the designer of the well-known 1843 prophetic chart which was so widely used by the advent preachers and which was the progenitor of the numerous prophetic charts originated since that time.

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Other than Miller, the man who likely contributed most to the success of the Millerite movement was Joshua V. Himes. Pastor of the Second Christian Church of Boston when the advent message came to him in 1839, Himes soon threw all of his many talents and energies into the task of propagating the advent message. Himes was a powerful preacher, and a man of deep spirituality and perfect integrity. His personality was attractive and he had a gift for popular, appealing presentation of his message. His ability in the pulpit was outshone only by his unusual gifts as an editor and an organizer. Soon some of the best publishing facilities in the country were enlisted for the publication of the numerous papers, tracts, books, pamphlets, songbooks, charts, broadsides, and handbills issued under his direction. When an evangelistic series was conducted in New York City, Himes started a daily newspaper, the *Midnight Cry*, to publicize the advent teachings. For a time ten thousand copies a day were sold or given away on the streets.

It was Joshua Himes who was responsible for drawing Miller out of the small towns and villages into the large cities, and his promotional ability provided more openings for sermons than could be filled. Tens of thousands of persons attended the camp meetings Himes organized and managed, and more thousands were added as the movement spread beyond his personal supervision. “In approximately 130 camp meetings held in 1843 and 1844 between 500,000 and 1,000,000 were estimated to have attended—and the total population of the States was only 17,000,000.” *Ibid.*, p. 554.

[193] Of the many who might be included, one must not be passed by—Joseph Bates, a retired sea captain. Bates heard a lecture on the second coming of Christ about the same time that Joshua Himes was becoming interested in William Miller’s work. His response was wholehearted. Bates preached, attended many of the camp meetings, and was a member of numerous committees studying and planning for the extension of the movement. Moderately well-to-do at the beginning of his connection with the advent movement, Bates soon invested all he had in the enterprise. He was a stalwart leader, firm in his convictions, wise in his leadership, and tireless in his search for truth. His influence was widely felt and deeply appreciated.

A Question of Time

General and local conferences of believers in the second advent were held with increasing frequency as the tempo of the movement speeded up. Christ was going to return about the year 1843, and the time was near. Urged to define his year “1843,” in the *Signs of the Times* of January 25, 1843, Miller declared: “I am fully convinced that some time between March 21st, 1843, and March 21st, 1844, according to the Jewish mode of computation of time, Christ will come.” The months of 1843 and early 1844 rolled by, with increased expectancy on the part of the believers in the advent. The proceedings were watched by many unbelieving observers, and skepticism, prejudice, or mockery grew.

It had never been Miller’s intention to form a new church. He, and those associated with him, thought to benefit all churches by bringing new light on Bible prophecy, and leading to revival in preparation for the advent. At first they had been heartily received by pastors of churches of many denominations, but emphasis on the 1843 date and the premillennial advent began to cause the rejection of the message by many who earlier had listened eagerly. Doors once open began to close to Millerite preachers. By the summer of 1843, it was clear that a separation was taking place. Resolutions were made, bans on adventist teachings were issued, members were disfellowshipped, ministers were relieved of their credentials and discharged. The consequence was natural—adventist preachers began to call for the people who were loyal to the advent teachings to separate from their churches and form adventist congregations. Miller did not take part in the call for separation, and he felt that some of his brethren went too far; but the invitation, “Come out of her, My people,” issued slowly at first, soon spread. [194]

Men did not stop studying even though the advent believers in general had great confidence in Miller’s conclusions. As early as the summer of 1843 some of Miller’s associates began to recognize that the rabbinical reckoning of the beginning and ending of the Jewish year which was being followed by Miller was different from the true Jewish year. The Jewish year as commonly calculated was governed by the spring equinox, and it was from this that Miller concluded that the particular Jewish year coming twenty-three hundred years

after the decree of Artaxerxes to restore and build Jerusalem (457 B.C.) extended from March 21, 1843, to March 21, 1844. Actually, according to true Jewish reckoning, that year ended about the middle of April.

Another fact began to take shape in their thinking. They had accepted 457 B.C., the seventh year of Artaxerxes, as the beginning of the twenty-three hundred years. Miller's calculations were on the basis of the twenty-three hundred years reaching from the beginning of 457 B.C., to the spring of 1844. However, the decree had not gone into effect at the beginning of the year, but in the autumn. Thus, if the twenty-three hundred years were to be full years, they would not end in the spring of 1844, but in the autumn of the year. Then the students became impressed with the thought that the Day of Atonement in the ancient sanctuary service occurred on the tenth day of the seventh month of the Jewish religious year. That, too, would throw the antitypical day of atonement into the autumn of 1844. The whole picture of the time elements in the relation of the typical to the antitypical day of atonement began to form more clearly. ⁴ Therefore, some of the careful students of the prophecies were neither surprised nor dismayed when the spring of 1844 passed without the return of Christ.

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“Beginning first with an article written February 16, 1843, and continuing progressively throughout 1844, Samuel S. Snow emphasized the autumnal Jewish seventh month, Tishri, as the true ending of the prophetic 2300-year span, with the beginning dated from the autumn of 457 B.C.—*Ibid.*, p. 799. Snow slowly gained some support in his position, but there was no general acceptance of it until after his presentation to the group attending the Exeter, New Hampshire, camp meeting which began August 12, 1844. Clearly and logically Snow presented his evidences that Christ would return in the autumn of that year. The following day he repeated the presentation in more detail, and it became clear to those who listened that the 2300 years would end, and the antitypical day of atonement come on October 22, 1844. This, they believed, would be the day of the return of Christ in power and great glory. It was now near the

⁴Because of the technical nature of the calculations involved, details cannot be included here. A full explanation will be found in Froom, *op. cit.*, pp. 784-809.

end of August; there were only a few weeks left to complete the task of giving the warning.

Anticipation and Disappointment

Shortly after this meeting, the result of the new understanding of the time, Joseph Bates said: “When that meeting closed, the granite hills of New Hampshire rang with the mighty cry, *Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him!* As the stages and railroad cars rolled away through the different States, cities, and villages of New England, the rumbling of the cry was still distinctly heard, Behold the Bridegroom cometh! Christ is coming on the tenth day of the seventh month! Time is short, get ready! get ready!—*General excitement and looking with awful and unparalleled interest to a definite point.* What a striking and perfect fulfillment. Who does not still remember how this message flew as it were upon the wings of the wind—men and women moving on all the cardinal points of the compass, going with all the speed of locomotives, in steamboats, and rail cars, freighted with bundles of books and papers, wherever they went distributing them almost as profusely as the flying leaves of autumn.” Joseph Bates, *Second Advent Way Marks and High Heaps*, page 31. This, they felt, was the “midnight cry” referred to in the parable of the ten virgins: “While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.” [Matthew 25:5, 6](#).

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Property was sold and the money poured into the advent cause. Bills were paid, wrongs were made right, crops were neglected as unneeded, good-bys were said. Then the presses stopped rolling, and the advent company, and the world, waited in expectation for the dawn of October 22. The long hours of the day passed, and each hour increased the expectancy of the waiting thousands. But the day ended with darkness; then midnight came. There came also the moment of which the angel had spoken: “Take it and eat; it will be bitter to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth. ‘And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it,’” the prophet tells; “it was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter.” [Revelation 10:9, 10](#), R.S.V.

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Hiram Edson's feelings, as set forth in a manuscript fragment of his life experience, seem to have been typical: "Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted, and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I had never experienced before. It seemed that the loss of all earthly friends could have been no comparison. We wept, and wept till the day dawn. I mused in my own heart, saying, My advent experience has been the richest and brightest of all my Christian experience. If this had proved a failure, what was the rest of my Christian experience worth? Has the Bible proved a failure? Is there no God, no heaven, no golden home city, no paradise? Is all this but a cunningly devised fable? Is there no reality to our fondest hope and expectation of these things? And thus we had something to grieve and weep over, if all our fond hopes were lost. And as I said, we wept till the day dawn."

By far the majority of those who had espoused the advent cause turned from it almost immediately after the disappointment of October 22, 1844. Many persons felt that the whole movement had been based on faulty interpretation of the Scriptures, and that there was no point in continued allegiance to it. On the other hand, there were those who, after the disappointment, still believed that although some mistake had been made, the basic understanding of the prophecies was correct, and in due time Christ would return. From among the latter stemmed three groups: (1) those who became extremists and repeatedly set times for the return of the Saviour, and who, after a few years ceased to exist in any organized form; (2) those who continued in the advent hope, but differed little from other Protestants, and became First Day Adventists or Advent Christians; (3) those who ultimately became Seventh-day Adventists, whose membership today is approximately one million. What was it that made the difference between this latter group and the two others? It was the acceptance of additional light that the Lord sent soon after the disappointment of October 22.

Three distinctive teachings, added to the message of the second advent, set the group apart from all others. God began leading them into an understanding of these truths soon after the disappointment. On October 23, Hiram Edson, a Millerite, gained a correct understanding of the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. Edson describes the incident:

“After breakfast I said to one of my brethren, ‘Let us go and see, and encourage some of our brethren.’ We started, and while passing through a large field I was stopped about midway of the field. Heaven seemed open to my view, and I saw distinctly and clearly that instead of our High Priest coming out of the Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth on the tenth day of the seventh month, at the end of the 2300 days, He for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary; and that He had a work to perform in the most holy before coming to this earth.” Quoted by Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry*, page 458.

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The ultimate conclusion of the believers was that they had been correct in their calculations of the time of the end of the 2300 years, but mistaken as to the event to take place at the end of the period. With the correct view of the ministry of Christ, they could see the reason for their disappointment, and yet not abandon their former positions on other prophecies and doctrines. They realized that their difficulties had arisen not because of any failure on the part of God to keep His promise, but because of their incomplete understanding of the operation of the antitypical service in the heavenly sanctuary.

Within a few weeks a second distinctive feature closely related to our major theme, was injected into the thinking of the advent believers. On a December day in 1844, a little group of five women were kneeling in prayer in the Haines home in South Portland, Maine, when one of the group, Ellen Gould Harmon, underwent an experience destined to have a profound effect upon the advent believers. Later she described what happened in these words:

“While we were praying, the power of God came upon me as I had never felt it before.

“I seemed to be surrounded with light, and to be rising higher and higher from the earth. I turned to look for the advent people in the world, but could not find them, when a voice said to me, ‘Look again, and look a little higher.’ At this I raised my eyes, and saw a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the advent people were traveling to the city which was at the farther end of the path. They had a bright light set up behind them at the beginning of the path, which an angel told me was the ‘midnight cry.’ This light shone all along the path, and gave light for their feet, so that they might not stumble.

[199] “If they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city, they were safe. But soon some grew weary, and said the city was a great way off, and they expected to have entered it before. Then Jesus would encourage them by raising His glorious right arm, and from His arm came a light which waved over the advent band, and they shouted ‘Alleluia!’ Others rashly denied the light behind them, and said that it was not God that had led them out so far. The light behind them went out, leaving their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and lost sight of the mark and of Jesus, and fell off the path down into the dark and wicked world below.” [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 64, 65.](#)

The revelation continued with a description of the second advent of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the righteous dead, the translation of the righteous living, and some of the things to be seen by the redeemed when they will enter the New Jerusalem. Soon the revelation was told to the advent believers in Portland. Knowing the character of Ellen Harmon, and the circumstances under which the vision was given, as well as the nature of the communication itself, the believers were persuaded that the vision was a message from God to strengthen and encourage them. The revelation did not explain the reason for the disappointment—an understanding of that would be gained when the light that had come to Hiram Edson was published and circulated—but it did assure them that God had been with them in their disappointment. Their confidence was confirmed that if they continued to walk in the light as they had done during the past months, the Lord would open the way before them and they would be guided to the City of God.

[200] A second vision was given Ellen Harmon about a week after the first, in which she was given instruction relating to the delivery of the messages. Soon she began to travel as opportunity was afforded, to meet with believers, and to tell of her visions. Though there was opposition to her work, her influence began immediately to draw together, unify, and strengthen a number of the scattered elements. As time passed, more and more of the advent believers accepted Ellen Harmon’s revelations as from God, and accepted her as the Lord’s messenger.

The third distinctive doctrine that bound this little body of adventists together, and which more than ever set them apart from those

about them, was the seventh-day Sabbath. At about the time of the disappointment a few advent believers had accepted the Sabbath at Washington, New Hampshire. Early in 1845, Joseph Bates read an article by T. M. Preble, of Nashua, New Hampshire, published in *The Hope of Israel*, which led him to an acceptance of the claims of the fourth commandment. In turn, Bates taught the Sabbath truth to others, and wrote tracts explaining its significance and urging its observance. In August, 1846, Bates published a tract, "The Seventh-day Sabbath a Perpetual Sign," a copy of which came into the hands of James White and Ellen Harmon White at about the time of their marriage that same month. They, too, began to observe and teach the fourth commandment. The Sabbath teaching spread quickly among the scattered adventists who had already accepted the sanctuary light given through Edson and the revelations to Ellen White.

In ways unrecognized by themselves, the believers in the second advent who accepted these three doctrines were laying the foundation for the building of a solid structure of Bible teachings which would enable them to withstand the attacks of enemies who would attempt to destroy, by mocking or attack, the message they would ultimately carry to all the world. In our present study we shall turn our attention to only one of the three—that of the revelations given to Ellen White.

SUMMARY

1. The European advent awakening had its parallel in America.
2. William Miller became the leading exponent of the second-advent teaching in America.
3. Miller and his associates widely publicized the advent doctrine, and they believed Christ would return in 1843 or 1844. [201]
4. After the passing of the time period set by Miller, the attention of the advent believers was turned to October 22, 1844, as the date of the return of Christ.
5. As a result of their misunderstanding of the event that would take place at the close of the 2300-day prophetic period, the advent believers were disappointed on October 22.

6. Soon after the disappointment, additional light began to come to them, and they realized that God had been with them through the disappointing experience, and would continue to lead them.

7. The revelations given to Ellen G. Harmon were accepted by a group of adventists as light from heaven.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Do you think there is any significance in the fact that the leading advent preacher in America was a self-educated, unordained, farmer-preacher rather than a leading Bible scholar?

2. Was Miller's method of Bible study valid?

3. If God was guiding to an understanding of the second-advent doctrine, why do you suppose He permitted the misunderstanding that resulted in the 1844 disappointment?

4. What factors contributed to the break-up of the large body of advent believers soon after the disappointment? Do their reasons appear to you sufficient justification for abandoning their former positions?

5. What reasons can you see for the early introduction to the advent group of additional light on the sanctuary, the revelations to Ellen Harmon, and the seventh-day Sabbath?

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[203] **Chapter 12—Ellen G. White And Her Work, Part I**

Most human beings live and move in an undistinguished channel. One's pattern of birth, youth, marriage, maturity, and death, interspersed with measles, minor triumphs, and heartaches, varies only in personal details from that of thousands of others in similar situations. In such cases the circle of influence may not stretch far beyond the home, immediate neighbors, limited social activities, and fellow workmen. But there are other lives that rise far above the ordinary and take on significance and invite retelling and analysis. The life of Ellen Gould Harmon White fits into this classification.

Childhood and Youth—1827-44

At the time of the disappointment of October 22, 1844, Ellen Harmon was almost seventeen. Born November 26, 1827, to Robert and Eunice Harmon at their farm home a few miles from Gorham, Maine, Ellen came from an ancestry of hardy New England pioneers. She was one of twin girls in a family of eight children. Robert Harmon gave up farming when the twins were about seven years old, and the family moved to Portland, Maine, where the father took up his trade as a hatter.

[204] When she was nine, Ellen was severely injured by a stone thrown by a schoolmate. The accident nearly took her life, and its effects were felt for many years. She was so physically weakened that it was impossible for her to continue her schooling. Eager for an education, she made several unsuccessful attempts to further it. However, she received training in household duties, and in her own home continued to develop mentally in spite of ill health.

At the age of twelve, she was baptized by immersion, at her own insistence, and received into membership in the Methodist Church. Her conversion took place while she was attending a Methodist camp meeting. Her spiritual experience seems to have been an unusual one for a child of her age—her convictions were clear and

her decisions firm. She told the following incidents in connection with her conversion and baptism: "One of the mothers in Israel came to me and said, 'Dear child, have you found Jesus?' I was about to answer, 'Yes,' when she exclaimed, 'Indeed you have; His peace is with you, I see it in your face!'"

"Again and again I said to myself: 'Can this be religion? Am I not mistaken?' It seemed too much for me to claim, too exalted a privilege. Though too timid to confess it openly, I felt that the Saviour had blessed me and pardoned my sins." [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 24.](#)

"Young as I was, I could see but one mode of baptism authorized by the Scriptures, and that was immersion. Some of my Methodist sisters tried in vain to convince me that sprinkling was Bible baptism. The Methodist minister consented to immerse the candidates if they conscientiously preferred that method, although he intimated that sprinkling would be equally acceptable with God." [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 25.](#)

In March, 1840, and again in June, 1842, Ellen Harmon, with other members of the family and friends, listened to the preaching of William Miller at the Casco Street church in Portland, Maine. They were convinced that his reasoning on the fulfillment of the prophecies was correct. Ellen's reaction to Miller's preaching is made clear in these sentences: "Mr. Miller's manner of preaching was not flowery or oratorical, but he dealt in plain and startling facts, that roused his hearers from their careless indifference. He supported his statements and theories by Scripture proof as he progressed. A convincing power attended his words, that seemed to stamp them as the language of truth." [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 27.](#)

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The acceptance of Miller's teachings by the Harmon family led to their being disfellowshipped from the Chestnut Street Methodist Church in 1843. This was the experience of hundreds of others who believed in the soon return of Christ.

The disappointment of October 22 affected the Harmon family as it did thousands of others. Earnest work had been done to prepare their lives for the coming of the Saviour. "Every moment seemed to me of the utmost importance. I felt that we were doing work for eternity, and that the careless and uninterested were in the greatest peril. My faith was unclouded, and I appropriated to myself the

precious promises of Jesus.”—[Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 60](#). It was this thorough preparation that held some of the disappointed ones through that difficult period. “It was a bitter disappointment that fell upon the little flock whose faith had been so strong and whose hope had been so high. But we were surprised that we felt so free in the Lord, and were so strongly sustained by His strength and grace.... We were disappointed, but not disheartened.” [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 61](#).

Call and Early Ministry—1844-48

[206] On an unspecified day in December, 1844, Ellen Harmon received what she and others of the advent group recognized as a revelation from God. It showed them that if they continued to walk in the light that had been guiding them into an understanding of the advent message, they would be led ultimately to the City of God. (This vision should be read in [Early Writings, 13-20](#), or [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 64-68](#).) In her second vision, about a week later, she saw something of the trials that she would experience, and she was instructed to tell others of what had been made known to her. Ellen was young, ill, retiring, and unused to associating with many people. She felt that she could not accept the commission, and she pleaded with God to remove the burden from her. However, the sense of responsibility did not leave, but there sounded in her ears repeatedly the command, “Make known to others what I have revealed to you.” [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 69](#). Finally the prayers of friends, united with her own, led her to the decision that there was nothing she could do but follow God’s bidding.

Ellen Harmon’s first testimonies were borne in the State of Maine, at the towns of Portland, Poland, and Orrington, to small groups of believers. Incidentally, it was at Orrington that she first met James White. Soon she visited Exeter, Maine, where she told what had been shown her regarding some fanatical persons present at the meeting. When she returned to her home she sensed God’s approval of the work she had done.

As the months passed, the circle of Ellen Harmon’s travels widened to include nearby states. Much of her time and many of her testimonies were devoted to helping solve the problems that arose

among the scattered groups who were bewildered by the disappointment. The groups had not yet been drawn together in a unit. There was no system of beliefs to serve as a guide to test the doctrines. False teachings, fanaticism, and the misrepresentation of spiritual experience were all too common among the groups. Not many were involved in the errors, but those few were a constant source of danger and irritation to unbelievers and members of other churches. The fact that Ellen Harmon's revelations were pertinent to the problems at hand, and frequently succeeded in helping find solutions to those problems, impressed the minds of the advent believers. As confidence was established in the fact that God was leading through the revelations, a drawing together of the sincere and faithful believers resulted.

On August 30, 1846, Ellen Harmon was united in marriage to James White, a young adventist preacher who had been active in the Millerite movement. Many years later, James White made this comment about their marriage: "And from that hour to the present she has been my crown of rejoicing." James White and Ellen G. White, [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White](#), 126. The newlyweds were poor in this world's goods, but rich in faith, and they were filled with an impassioned longing to help speed the return of Christ. Ellen White remarked concerning her husband: "Elder White had enjoyed a deep experience in the advent movement, and his labors in proclaiming the truth had been blessed of God. Our hearts were united in the great work, and together we traveled and labored for the salvation of souls." Ellen G. White, [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White](#), 97. In their usual program James White preached a doctrinal sermon and his wife followed with "an exhortation of considerable length, melting my way into the feelings of the congregation. Thus my husband sowed and I watered the seed of truth, and God did give the increase." [Testimonies for the Church 1:75](#).

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Not long after their marriage, the Whites began to observe and to teach the seventh-day Sabbath. Early in 1846, Ellen Harmon's attention had been called to the fourth commandment by Joseph Bates, whom she met while on a visit to New Bedford, Massachusetts. At first she did not sense the importance of the commandment, and felt that Bates was putting too much emphasis on it. A later study of Bates's tract, "The Seventh-day Sabbath a Perpetual Sign," led

the couple to accept the Sabbath. The position they had taken was confirmed in a vision given Ellen White on Sabbath, April 2, 1847, in which she saw the tables of stone containing the Ten Commandments, with a halo of light surrounding the fourth. In a letter to J. N. Loughborough, in 1874, Ellen White recalled: “I believed the truth upon the Sabbath question before I had seen anything in vision in reference to the Sabbath. It was months after I had commenced keeping the Sabbath before I was shown its importance and its place in the third angel’s message.”—Ellen G. White [Letter 2, 1874](#). (The record of the vision will be found in [Early Writings, 32-35](#).)

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The first of four sons was born to James and Ellen White a year after their marriage, and a little more than a month later they were offered rooms in the Stockbridge Howland home at Topsham, Maine, where they set up housekeeping with borrowed furniture. Times were hard. James White worked at hauling stone on the railroad for fifty cents a day, or chopped cordwood at twenty-five cents a cord. “We were resolved to suffer rather than get in debt. I allowed myself and child one pint of milk each day. One morning before my husband went to his work, he left me nine cents to buy milk for three mornings. It was a study with me whether to buy the milk for myself and babe or get an apron for him. I gave up the milk, and purchased the cloth for an apron to cover the bare arms of my child.” [Testimonies for the Church 1:83](#). On many occasions money was miraculously provided for the barest essentials and to pay expenses of travel to the many places they were urged to visit where they could meet with groups of believers. They were coming to occupy a central place among the various advent groups scattered through New England. ⁵

Discovering Bible Truth

The years 1845-48 were a period of intensive study on the part of those who had passed through the disappointment and who still maintained their confidence in the second advent. They were determined to discover additional Bible truth. They met to study and pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who, they believed, would

⁵The record of this period would be incomplete without mention of the visions of William Foy and Hazen Foss. For a brief account, see Appendix C, pages 485-489.

lead them into all truth. This study reached a climax in 1848, when a number of conferences were held and the Bible truths began to be clarified and correlated. Five meetings were of particular value in the unifying process. Two were held in Rocky Hill, Connecticut, and others at Volney, New York, Port Gibson, New York, and Topsham, Maine. It is important that we note what they did in these meetings and the part that Ellen White had in them.

“Many of our people do not realize how firmly the foundation [209] of our faith has been laid. My husband, Elder Joseph Bates, Father Pierce, Elder Edson, and others who were keen, noble, and true, were among those who, after the passing of the time in 1844, searched for the truth as for hidden treasure. I met with them, and we studied and prayed earnestly. Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the word. Again and again these brethren came together to study the Bible, in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power. When they came to the point in their study where they said, ‘We can do nothing more,’ the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to how we were to labor and teach effectively. Thus light was given that helped us to understand the scriptures in regard to Christ, His mission, and His priesthood. A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God, was made plain to me, and I gave to others the instruction that the Lord had given me.

“During this whole time I could not understand the reasoning of the brethren. My mind was locked, as it were, and I could not comprehend the meaning of the scriptures we were studying. This was one of the greatest sorrows of my life. I was in this condition of mind until all the principal points of our faith were made clear to our minds, in harmony with the word of God. The brethren knew that when not in vision, I could not understand these matters, and they accepted as light direct from heaven the revelations given.” Ellen G. White, *Special Testimony Series B.*, No. 2, pp. 56, 57. Reprinted in Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White, *Messenger to the Remnant*, pages 38, 39.

[210] The understandings of the basic doctrines arrived at during the conferences of 1848 are essentially the same as ours today. A solid foundation was built on the Scriptures, and the Bible students were guided toward correct interpretations through the revelations given Ellen White. This young woman had an important part in building the structure of Bible doctrines adopted by the early adventists and strengthened through the years by Seventh-day Adventists.

Ministry in a Growing Movement—1849-63

In November, 1848, during a meeting at Dorchester, Massachusetts, Ellen White was given a vision in which there was revealed to her the duty of the brethren to begin to publish the light that had come to them. “After coming out of vision, I said to my husband: ‘I have a message for you. You must begin to print a little paper and send it out to the people. Let it be small at first; but as the people read, they will send you means with which to print, and it will be a success from the first. From this small beginning it was shown to me to be like streams of light that went clear round the world.’” [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 125.](#)

In the summer of 1849, the conviction came to James White that the time had arrived to follow the instruction given in the vision. One July day he brought to the Belden home, in Rocky Hill, Connecticut, a thousand copies of the first issue of *The Present Truth*, which had been printed on credit by Charles Pelton, at Middletown, eight miles away. The Whites had been staying with the Beldens, and several times during the preparation of the paper, James had walked to Middletown and back to read proofs and check the progress of the work. When it came time to take the papers from the printing office, he borrowed the Belden buggy to bring them home. July, August, and September saw a total of four numbers of the little paper sent out. Money was sent in by readers to defray the expense of publication.

[211] Later that autumn, publication was suspended while the Whites attended meetings. When James White undertook publica-
[212] tion again, he found that the response was not so hearty as it had been when the paper first came out. Even Joseph Bates discouraged him from continuing the work, so White decided to give up the

project. In a letter written January 10, 1850, he told how his plans were changed. “Last night [January 9, 1850] ... Ellen had the following view in relation to *The Present Truth*: ‘I saw the paper, and that it was needed. That souls were hungry for the truth that must be written in the paper. I saw that if the paper stopped for want of means, and those hungry sheep died for want of the paper, it would not be James’ fault, but it would be the fault of those to whom God had lent His money.... I saw that God did not want James to stop yet; but he must *write, write, write, write*, and speed the message and let it go. I saw that it would go where God’s servants cannot go.’” James White Letter, January 10, 1850, Record Book 1, pp. 51, 52.

The paper was continued, and, in addition, another paper, *The Advent Review*, was produced during the summer of 1850. These were succeeded in November, 1850, by an enlarged journal called *The Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, whose publication has continued for more than a century. In the visions and instructions given to Ellen White through the years we find the inspiration that has built a world-belting system of publishing houses, turning out Seventh-day Adventist books, tracts, and periodicals in about two hundred languages.

Another important event took place in 1849 in the White home. At just about the time the first issue of *The Present Truth* was being sent out, the couple’s second son was born. “In June, 1849, the way was opened for us to make our home for a time at Rocky Hill, Connecticut. Here, on the 28th of July, our second child, James Edson, was born.” [Testimonies for the Church 1:87](#). The Whites were normal parents in their love and care for their children. It was a heartbreaking experience for them to have to leave the little ones behind in order to meet the numerous appointments with the groups of believers. When James Edson was about seven months old, James White wrote to the Hastings, who were among their closest friends, “Ellen is well. She would write if she could, but has not time. She has some writing of her visions to do, and bub is teething, and is troublesome.” James White Letter, January 10, 1850, Record Book 1, p. 53. Ellen herself wrote, some time later, “Babe is cutting teeth and it takes nearly all of my time to take care of him just now.” Ellen G. White [Letter 18, 1850](#). On one occasion, after an extended absence from home, she noted an incident which gives an insight

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into her feelings. “My little one is with me; he knew me when I got home. I had been gone from him two months. He first looked at me, then flung his little arms around my neck.” Ellen G. White [Letter 8, 1850](#).

During these early years messages were sent by Ellen White to the still unorganized advent believers in the form of broadsides, individual letters, and articles in *The Present Truth*. No book of messages had yet been published. The first book, a small one of sixty-four pages, was issued in 1851 under the title, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*. The “views” referred to the visions that had been given to her. This book now forms the first part of *Early Writings*. Four years later, the first of a long series of pamphlets, entitled *Testimony for the Church*, came from the press. In due time these were gathered, republished, and eventually reached their present form in the nine volumes of the *Testimonies for the Church*.

[214] James and Ellen White moved frequently from place to place. During the first years they went out from Gorham, Portland, and Topsham, in Maine. Then three months were spent at Rocky Hill, Connecticut, and six at Oswego, New York. From there they moved to Auburn, New York, for a short stay, and on to Paris, Maine, and Saratoga Springs, New York, and finally to Rochester, New York, where they carried on their publishing venture for three years. In 1855, they moved to Battle Creek, Michigan, where the publishing office remained for forty-eight years. Always their moves were in the interest of the developing work, not because of personal preferences or benefits. Ellen White’s description of some of their activities while living at Rochester seems to be typical of the whole period:

“From time to time we went out to attend Conferences in different parts of the field. My husband preached, sold books, and labored to extend the circulation of the paper. We traveled by private conveyance, and stopped at noon to feed our horse by the roadside, and to eat our lunch. Then with paper and pencil, on the cover of our dinner box or the top of his hat, my husband wrote articles for the Review and Instructor. The Lord greatly blessed our labors, and the truth affected many hearts.” [Testimonies for the Church 1:91](#).

The move to Battle Creek was a landmark in the development of the advent movement. For the first time permanent headquarters

were established. A building was erected for the publishing house, and counsel and financial support were pledged. Believers in the town helped the Whites get land and build a house, and Battle Creek was home for the couple for the next seventeen years. Thus the publishing work, started in fulfillment of the commission given through the vision, became established at the center of the growing work. Later the publishing project was incorporated and became the denomination's first legal body on May 3, 1861.

Since the center of the work was now in Michigan, it was possible for the Whites to give more attention to the work in the Middle West. Their preaching tours took them to Illinois, Iowa, and Ohio. It was during a trip through Ohio in 1858 that the vision regarding the great controversy between Christ and Satan was given. The little book written as a result marked the beginning of what was to develop into the five volumes of the *Conflict of the Ages Series*.

Developing Organization

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Linked closely with the growth of the publishing work during this period was an increasing sense of need for some type of organization through which all phases of the movement could be directed. Because the leaders devoted the major part of their time to the preaching of the message, they gave little thought to the need for organization. From 1844-49 it had been practically impossible for the advent believers to reach anyone outside their circle with the message. The disappointment was too fresh in the minds of men and women everywhere. Then, too, the believers had not at first understood the responsibility they had for those around them. After 1849 doors began to open before them, and there were increasing opportunities to carry the message. However, no particular preparation had been made to take advantage of these opening opportunities. There was no organization or plan for the propagation of the message.

Another factor complicated the situation. Many of the Millerite preachers believed that no new organization should be formed, for they feared that any new body would immediately become a part of Babylon, and the call was to come out of Babylon. It seems that the believers generally subscribed to this belief. One of the barriers to

the formation of an organization was the old conviction that lingered in many minds.

[216] On the other hand, as the number of adherents to the advent beliefs increased, the number of reasons for having an organization multiplied. If they were to meet as groups, meeting places would have to be provided, and who would hold title to the property? Would this be left in the hands of an individual? Who would determine the candidates that should be accepted as members of the church? Who would define doctrinal positions? Would each individual and group follow his own inclinations and introduce any variations he chose? Who would appoint and check the qualifications of workers, and who would provide some means of financial support for them? If it were necessary to discipline some member or worker, who would be responsible for that? How should the publishing work be organized? Who would be in charge of preaching the message in new fields? All these questions and more faced the leaders, and they looked to God for guidance. The practical needs of the cause demanded that some steps be taken to establish a system of church order.

A vision given Ellen White in December, 1850, brought the need into focus: "I saw how great and holy God was. Said the angel, 'Walk carefully before Him, for He is high and lifted up, and the train of His glory fills the temple.' I saw that everything in heaven was in perfect order. Said the angel, 'Look ye, Christ is the head, move in order, move in order. Have a meaning to everything.' Said the angel, 'Behold ye and know how perfect, how beautiful, the order in heaven; follow it.'" Ellen G. White [Manuscript 11, 1850](#).

One of the first definite steps in that direction was taken at a general meeting held in Washington, New Hampshire, beginning October 31, 1851. Problems had arisen with some who were holding strange views of prophetic interpretation and were creating contention among the believers. Note the instruction that inspired the move in the direction of establishing church order. James White tells the story:

"The burden of the meeting was church order, pointing out the errors of ---- and ---- and the importance of church action as to the course of some brethren. Ellen had a vision. Saw that the frown of God was on us as a people because the accursed thing was in the camp, that is, errors among us, and that the church must act;

and the only way to do Brethren ---- and ---- good was to withdraw fellowship from them in their present position. All acted on the light given. All received the vision, and even to an individual, all raised the hand to withdraw fellowship from them.” James White Letter, November 11, 1851, Record Book 1, pp. 162, 163. See A. L. White, *op. cit.*, p. 45. Reporting the meeting in the [The Review and Herald, November 25, 1851](#), White told of the choosing of a committee of seven to care for the needs of the poor, in harmony with the example of [Acts 6](#). [217]

On November 7, meetings began at Johnson, Vermont. The same *Review* gives this report: “Gospel order, and perfect union among the brethren, especially those who preach the word, were also dwelt upon, and all seemed to feel the importance of following our perfect guide, the Bible, on these subjects, as well as all others.” Questions and doubts continued to arise in some minds as to the advisability of organization, and it was more than a decade before it was possible to bring about a general union of those who had accepted the doctrines of the second advent and the seventh-day Sabbath.

When a supplement to Ellen White’s first book appeared early in 1854, there was included an article titled “Gospel Order,” which was destined to bear considerable weight in many minds as to the need for church organization. “The Lord has shown that gospel order has been too much feared and neglected. Formality should be shunned; but in so doing, order should not be neglected. There is order in heaven. There was order in the church when Christ was upon the earth; and after His departure order was strictly observed among His apostles. And now in these last days, while God is bringing His children into the unity of the faith, there is more real need of order than ever before; for, as God unites His children, Satan and his evil angels are very busy to prevent this unity and to destroy it.” Ellen G. White, Supplement to *Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, page 15. Now found in [Early Writings, 97](#). Following this general call for gospel order, the article deals with problems of unqualified workers going into the field, the responsibility of the church, the example of the early Christian church, the type of men needed for the ministry, and the need for going into new fields. Several years passed before an actual organization was developed, but instruction given through Ellen White had focused attention on [218]

the need for, and God's attitude toward, organization.

By the spring of 1863, churches in several states responded to the counsel and banded together to form state conferences. They elected officers to lead out in the work in each conference. Then the Michigan conference issued an invitation to the several state conferences to send delegates to a general conference at Battle Creek. The time agreed upon was May 20-23, 1863. At this session the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was formed, the name having been accepted in a Battle Creek meeting in September, 1860. The long struggle to bring order out of chaos was producing results. God had indicated that order should be established and maintained, but He had not revealed exactly how it should be achieved or what form it should take. That had been left for earnest men, praying for wisdom, to work out. Seldom has the Lord prescribed details of specific patterns to be followed. Principles have been given, which, if followed, lead to practical and workable results.

Ellen White's testimonies were not devoted entirely to guiding the development of the church and its work. Frequently there were reproofs and rebukes to be given and measures of correction suggested. Her first testimony for the church was of the nature of rebuke for the advent body as a whole, and for the ministers in particular. (See [Testimonies for the Church 1:113](#) ff.) From the very beginning of her work, messages of similar character were a vital part of her communications.

The Claims of Ellen G. White

We must pause at this point in our survey of the life and work of Ellen White to investigate briefly her understanding of the work that had been given her to do. This topic will be dealt with at considerably greater length in later chapters, but in order to gain a proper perspective we need to understand what she claimed for herself and her work.

[219] In describing her first vision, Mrs. White had said: "As God has shown me the travels of the Advent people to the Holy City, ... it may be my duty to give you a short sketch of what God has revealed to me." [Early Writings, 13, 14](#). Repeatedly through her writings there appear such expressions as "I saw," "The Lord revealed to

me,” “The Lord showed me,” and “I was shown,” indicating that she claimed to receive supernatural revelations from God, which she believed it was her duty to pass on to individuals, groups, churches, or to the church as a whole. She related a large number of visions and dreams that came to her, and told of specific instruction sent by God for the guidance of the advent people.

In the introduction to one of Ellen White’s most widely circulated books, she describes the source of her information. “Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the scenes of the long-continued conflict between good and evil have been opened to the writer of these pages. From time to time I have been permitted to behold the working, in different ages, of the great controversy between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin, the first transgressor of God’s holy law.... As the Spirit of God has opened to my mind the great truths of His word, and the scenes of the past and the future, I have been bidden to make known to others that which has thus been revealed,—to trace the history of the controversy in past ages, and especially so to present it as to shed a light on the fast-approaching struggle of the future.” Ellen G. White, [The Great Controversy](#), x, xi. In view of the reception of these many revelations and messages, what did she claim was her position?

“I have had no claims to make, only that I am instructed that *I am the Lord’s messenger*; that He called me in my youth to be His messenger, to receive His word, and to give a clear and decided message in the name of the Lord Jesus.

“Early in my youth I was asked several times, Are you a prophet? I have ever responded, I am the Lord’s messenger. “I know that many have called me a prophet, but I have made no claim to this title. My Saviour declared me to be His messenger. ‘Your work,’ He instructed me, ‘is to bear My word. Strange things will arise, and in your youth I set you apart to bear the message to the erring ones, to carry the word before unbelievers, and with pen and voice to reprove from the Word actions that are not right. Exhort from the Word. I will make My Word open to you. It shall not be as a strange language. In the true eloquence of simplicity, with voice and pen, the messages that I give shall be heard from one who has never learned in the schools. My Spirit and My power shall be with you.’ ...

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“Why have I not claimed to be a prophet?—Because in these days many who boldly claim that they are prophets are a reproach to the cause of Christ; and because my work includes much more than the word ‘prophet’ signifies....

“To claim to be a prophetess is something that I have never done. If others call me by that name, I have no controversy with them. But my work has covered so many lines that I cannot call myself other than a messenger, sent to bear a message from the Lord to His people, and to take up work in any line that He points out.” [The Review and Herald, July 26, 1906.](#)

To anyone even slightly acquainted with Ellen White’s works, there can be no question that, while she did not lay claim to the name of “prophet,” she most certainly believed that the Lord worked through her in the same manner as He did in the ancient prophets. There were in her time, even as there are today, those who claimed to be prophets, but who brought reproach on the calling. As early as the spring of 1845, the main body of adventist believers took action at the Albany Conference warning against those claiming “special illumination.” *Advent Herald*, May 14, 1845. This body did not include the group who eventually became Seventh-day Adventists, and it seems that Ellen Harmon was one of those against whom the group was warned.

[221] Then, too, in many minds the work of a prophet was limited to that of foretelling the future. As the term is used in the Bible, it is broad enough to cover any kind of message or action on the part of the one who stands as the messenger of God to the people. But popular concepts had, and have, robbed the word of much of what it was intended to connote. In calling Ellen White His messenger, the Lord was endeavoring to convey the same thought that had originally been in the word “prophet.” As has happened so frequently, changing conditions and circumstances have led God to use the approach best suited to the minds of the men with whom He was dealing. If the term “prophet” was misunderstood or in disrepute, He would use another word with similar meaning, which could be more easily grasped and was not discredited.

Ellen White did not consider herself the leader of the church. In fact, she never occupied any official position. Her work was that of receiving messages from the Lord, and then, at the proper time and

in a suitable manner, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, she would pass them on to those for whom they were intended. This function she performed for more than seventy years. Her claim should be kept in mind as further consideration is given to her life and work in connection with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As in the record given in this chapter, it will be seen that her influence was vital in every major step forward in the development of the church and the performance of its mission.

SUMMARY

1. Ellen Harmon was born November 26, 1827, near Gorham, Maine. An early childhood injury and ill health prevented her attendance at school after she was nine years old.

2. In her youth she showed spiritual inclinations, and she was baptized and joined the Methodist Church at the age of twelve.

3. During the period of her call and early ministry—1844-48—God gave Ellen Harmon White revelations that guided the disappointed adventists in their search for truth. [222]

4. Her union in marriage with James White resulted in progressive teamwork in the advent cause. They worked toward unity and organization in the 1849-63 period of the growing advent movement.

5. Regular publishing of the message was begun in 1849 with the appearance of *The Present Truth*.

6. A general organization of the Sabbathkeeping adventist believers was brought about in May, 1863.

7. Ellen White's claim for her experience was that she had been chosen as the Lord's messenger. She did not adopt the name of "prophet," but her work was comparable with that of prophets in former ages.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Do you find anything in the record of the early life of Ellen White that suggests possible reasons for her choice to be God's messenger? Explain.

2. Through your reading find additional illustrations that reveal the interrelation between the life and work of Mrs. White and the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

3. At times the question is raised: If Ellen White and her associates were carrying God's message, why should God allow them to pass through such times of poverty, hardship, and trial? How would you answer the question?

4. How do you account for the willingness of so many mature men of strong character and convictions to accept reproof and counsel from a young woman, as did the pioneer adventists?

[223] 5. Make a careful study of the significance of the title Ellen White claimed God had given her—"I am the Lord's messenger." How broadly can this be applied and understood?

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Developing Organization

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Christian, L. H., *The Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts*, pp. 112-125.

Loughborough, J. N., *Rise and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists*, pp. 216, 217, 223-234.

Spalding, A. W., *Captains of the Host*, pp. 265-283.

Spicer, W. A., *The Spirit of Prophecy in the Advent Movement*, pp. 65-71.

White, Ellen G., *Christian Experience and Teachings*, pp. 192-205.

-----, [Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 24-32](#). (Same as in *Christian Experience and Teachings*.)

[226] **Chapter 13—Ellen G. White And Her Work, Part II**

With the formation of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the advent believers had not reached the top of the ladder of progress—they had taken only the first steps. Nineteen years had passed since the disappointment, years filled with trial and hardship. The years to follow would be difficult, but the problems would be faced unitedly. The need for counsel from the Lord would, if anything, be increased; but the counsel would now be coming to the members of a body, and to the church as a whole. The fears that the work of the movement might be hindered for lack of general leadership were calmed, and energies could be devoted more fully to the task at hand. In this new phase of the growth of the church, the life and work of Ellen White is intertwined.

Ministry in the New Church—1863-85

About two weeks after the organization of the General Conference, a revelation came to Ellen White that was to have farreaching influence in the lives and activities of all Seventh-day Adventists. It is the one frequently called “the health-reform vision.” It appears that the Lord waited until the task of organization had been completed before introducing the broader light on health. “It was at the house of Brother A. Hilliard, at Otsego, Michigan, June 6, 1863, that the great subject of Health Reform was opened before me in vision.” [The Review and Herald, October 8, 1867.](#)

[227] Two workers, Elders R. J. Lawrence and M. E. Cornell, were conducting a series of evangelistic meetings in a tent at Otsego, about thirty miles from Battle Creek. On this occasion, a group of believers from Battle Creek drove to Otsego to spend the weekend and attend the meetings. In the group were James and Ellen White. At the time, James White was in poor health, for overwork and strain were taking their toll. No doubt the release from pressure after the

formation of the General Conference organization less than two weeks before contributed to his feeling of weariness and depression.

On Friday evening, the visitors joined the Hilliards in family worship service. What happened can perhaps be pictured best in the words of Mrs. Martha Amadon, who was present.

“Sister White was asked to lead in prayer at family worship. She did so in a most wonderful manner. Elder White was kneeling a short distance from her. While praying, she moved over to him, and laying her hand on his shoulder continued praying for him until she was taken off in vision. She was in vision about forty-five minutes. It was at this time she was given instruction upon the health question which soon after became such a matter of interest to our people. Those present at the time this vision was given will never forget the heavenly influence that filled the room. The cloud passed from the mind of Elder White, and he was full of praise to God.” Mrs. Martha D. Amadon, Ellen G. White Publications Document File, No. 105.

The first comprehensive presentation of what had been revealed in this vision regarding health was published the next year in a section of *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4, entitled “Health.” For some years preceding the time of the health-reform vision there had been those among the Sabbathkeeping Adventists who recommended reforms in diet and the giving up of various harmful stimulants, such as tea, coffee, and tobacco, as well as alcoholic drinks. In 1848 Ellen White was given a vision in which tea, coffee, and tobacco were condemned. The response to the instruction was slow at first, but it steadily increased. The believers in general did not yet realize the connection there was between the care of health and the development of character. The 1863 health-reform vision re-emphasized some of these earlier reform attempts, introduced additional areas where change was needed, and made a definite tie between the physical condition and the spiritual experience. The relationship is stated by Mrs. White in this paragraph:

“All are required to do what they can to preserve healthy bodies, and sound minds. If they will gratify a gross appetite, and by so doing blunt their sensibilities, and becloud their perceptive faculties so that they cannot appreciate the exalted character of God, or delight in the study of His word, they may be assured that God will not accept their unworthy offering any sooner than that of Cain. God requires

them to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. After man has done all in his power to ensure health, by the denying of appetite and gross passions, that he may possess a healthy mind, and a sanctified imagination, that he may render to God an offering in righteousness, then he is saved alone by a miracle of God's mercy, as was the ark upon the stormy billows. Noah had done all that God required of him in making the ark secure, then God performed that which man could not do, and preserved the ark by His miraculous power."—Ellen G. White, [Spiritual Gifts 4a:148, 149](#). The section on "Health" includes pages 120-151.

[229] In passing, we should call attention to the last two sentences of the above quotation. It was made plain in this first general presentation of the health message, that although there was a definite relationship between healthful living and the preparation for the advent of Christ, salvation would not come through health reform any more than through conformity to any other of God's instruction. Salvation is the result of a miracle performed by God in the human life. This was the position taken by Ellen White. Men are to be obedient to God, not for the purpose of obtaining salvation; but in order to honor the One who has saved them and outlined for them the best way to live while waiting for His return.

The instruction given in this first health vision was amplified in later revelations, and the record found in *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4, was expanded until we have such volumes as *The Ministry of Healing*, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, *Counsels on Health*, *Medical Ministry*, and *Temperance*. The instruction also resulted in the founding of a world-wide system of health institutions for the purpose of giving physical and spiritual help to the sick, and instructing them in the principles of healthful living.

The immediate inspiration for the opening of a health institution came as a result of another vision on health reform, given at Rochester, New York, December 25, 1865. In her record of what had been shown her, Mrs. White said, "I was shown that we should provide a home for the afflicted and those who wish to learn how to take care of their bodies that they may prevent sickness." [Testimonies for the Church 1:489](#).

On September 5, 1866, the Western Health Reform Institute opened at Battle Creek, with “two doctors, two bath attendants, one nurse (untrained), three or four helpers, one patient, any amount of inconveniences, and a great deal of faith in the future of the Institution and the principles on which it was founded.” *Medical Missionary*, January, 1894. Not only had this parent institution come into existence as a result of the visions, but warning was given by the same means, that there were dangers involved in wandering from the revealed pattern. “I saw that in an institution established among us *the greatest danger would be of its managers’ departing from the spirit of the present truth and from that simplicity which should ever characterize the disciples of Christ.*” [Testimonies for the Church 1:560](#). Such warnings came frequently to leaders in all phases of church work. They were and are important parts of the whole picture of God’s leading in the remnant church.

James White’s Illness

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The instruction concerning the establishment of a health institution by Seventh-day Adventists came at a time of crisis in the White home. It was becoming obvious that there was no health institution where care was given the patients in harmony with the plan of healthful living the Lord had outlined. In May, 1865, James White had been elected president of the General Conference, over his vigorous protests. The physical and mental trials of the preceding years had taken a severe toll on his physical strength. He felt that he should not under any circumstances accept the responsibility, but his brethren persisted in their conviction that he was the one best qualified to lead the church. To lighten his load, he gave up the editorship of the *Review and Herald*, and Uriah Smith was appointed in his place. He continued working beyond his strength until the break came on August 16, 1865. On that morning, while he and his wife were visiting a neighbor, James White was stricken with paralysis. The power of God, in response to immediate prayers, brought about a partial recovery; but the physicians gave no hope for his full restoration.

During the next five weeks he was cared for at home, but there was little sign of improvement. He was then taken to a health

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institution, called Our Home on the Hillside, at Dansville, New York. Mrs. White and others were aware that some of the principles of healing and healthful living that were shown her in vision were being practiced at this institution, and they felt that James White might be benefited by Dr. Jackson. For about three months the Whites and J. N. Loughborough remained at Dansville. At the end of that period, it was clear to Ellen White that her husband was unlikely to make further progress there. More and more points of variance between what had been revealed to her and what was practiced at Dansville were appearing. Later she commented: “We did not feel that the three months passed at this institution were in vain. We did not receive all the ideas and sentiments and suggestions advanced, but we did gather many things of value from those who had obtained an experience in health reform. We did not feel that there was any necessity of gathering the chaff with the wheat.” Ellen G. White [Manuscript 1, 1867](#). After this experience and the reception of additional light through Ellen White’s vision of December 25, 1865, the Whites could not feel free to recommend that other Seventh-day Adventists should visit such institutions for medical care. “They have to carry along with them at all times the gospel sieve and sift everything they hear, that they may choose the good and refuse the bad.” [Testimonies for the Church 1:490](#).

The insistence of the Dansville physicians that James White should have complete physical and mental rest led him to shrink from putting forth the slightest effort. The more inactive he became, the deeper his despondency grew. His wife had the conviction that the only thing that could restore him physically and mentally was some exercise of his physical and mental powers, no matter how small that might be at first. In December she took him from Dansville to Rochester, New York, where they remained for three weeks, while special seasons of prayer for his recovery were held. It was during one of these times of prayer that the vision of December 25 was given. Soon afterward James and Ellen White returned to Battle Creek. Within a short time they began to lay plans to dispose of their home in Battle Creek and move north to Greenville, Michigan. A small house was built on a plot of land in the country, and about the first of May, 1867, they moved there. This was home to James and Ellen White until the late summer of 1869.

During the years at Greenville, Ellen White planned and worked toward the goal of bringing her husband back to full health. It was not an easy task, and it required resourcefulness and a bit of scheming to get the sick preacher to engage in some of the activities his wife was sure would help bring renewed health. Their son William C. White told this incident:

“Soon it was haying time. The grass was cut by Brother Maynard’s mowing machine. When ready to haul in, Father thought to ask that it be hauled in by Brother Maynard’s hired man who had done the mowing. To prevent this, Mother had urgently requested Brother Maynard to say that his own work was pressing and that it would not be convenient to send his man to haul in the hay. I was sent to Neighbor Whitefield’s with a similar message. These kind neighbors very reluctantly consented to this request, when told what Mother’s reasons were for making it. When Father sent out requests for help with the hay, he was shocked at the answers. Then Mother said: ‘Let us show the neighbors that we can attend to the work ourselves. Willie and I will rake the hay and pitch it on the wagon, if you will load and drive the team.’ To this Father was forced to consent. As we had no barn, the hay must be stacked near the cow shed. At Mother’s suggestion, Father pitched it off the wagon, while she built up the stack. Meanwhile I was raking up another load. [232]

“While we were thus hard at work, some of the townspeople passed in their carriages, and gazed with much curiosity and surprise to see the woman who each week preached to a houseful of people, heroically engaged in treading down hay and building a stack. But she was not in the least embarrassed; she was intent upon the one object of securing her husband’s restoration to health, and was overjoyed to see that her efforts were succeeding.” William C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen White,” MS., in White Publications Document File, No. 626.

During the years at the Greenville home, James and Ellen White made a tour through northern Michigan, New York, and some of the New England states. They also made trips to Battle Creek. It was during one of their visits to Wright, Michigan, that plans were laid for annual camp meetings, now a regular part of the church program. The first one was held in 1868 at Wright.

James White’s health improved steadily until he was once more [233]

able to bear a load in publishing, preaching, and administration. Again we must note a word of warning, typical of the numerous cautions given to individuals and the church. “God had cautioned and warned my husband in regard to the preservation of his strength. I was shown that he had been raised up by the Lord, and that he was living as a miracle of mercy—not for the purpose of again gathering upon him the burdens under which he once fell, but that the people of God might be benefited by his experience in advancing the general interests of the cause, and in connection with the work the Lord has given me, and the burden He has laid upon me to bear.” [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 195.](#)

In the [The Review and Herald, September 22, 1868](#), Joseph Clark wrote: “Brother White has regained his mental and physical powers, though he appears much older than before his sickness; and we were surprised at the amount of labor he performs; not with tottering steps, but with the firmness and elasticity of early life. His preaching and general labors bear the impress of one who has improved his talents, and is still improving.”

Last Years of James White

From 1872 to 1881, home and headquarters for the Whites was largely in California. However, there was no settling down to a peaceful existence. Mrs. White described those years in these words: “During the years that followed the recovery of my husband, the Lord opened before us a vast field of labor. Though I took the stand as a speaker timidly at first, yet as the providence of God opened the way before me, I had confidence to stand before large audiences. Together we attended our camp meetings and other large gatherings, from Maine to Dakota, from Michigan to Texas and California.” [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 195.](#)

[234] In July, 1872, the Whites went to California, and in March of the next year they were back in Battle Creek. They remained there until December, when they returned to California. On numerous occasions they visited in Battle Creek, and they were there at the time of the dedication of Battle Creek College, January 4, 1875. On the day before the dedication, a vision was given Ellen White in which she was shown Seventh-day Adventist publishing houses in

various countries, where at that time the church had no publishing houses or even churches. As a result of the presentation of the vision, a new concept was gained regarding the task of the Adventists in giving God's message to all the world. At this time they had only one overseas worker, J. N. Andrews, who had been sent to Switzerland in the fall of 1874.

Impetus was lent to the colporteur circulation of Seventh-day Adventist literature by a message given Ellen White in a vision in September, 1875. She was told: "Tracts, papers, and books, as the case demands, should be circulated in all the cities and villages in the land. Here is missionary work for all.

"There should be men trained for this branch of the work who will be missionaries, and will circulate publications. They should be men of good address, who will not repulse others or be repulsed. This is a work which would warrant men to give their whole time and energies as the occasion demands.'" [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 217.](#)

Usually James and Ellen White traveled and labored together, but there were times when they worked separately for short periods. One of these occasions was in the spring of 1876. James White was in Battle Creek and his wife in California. One day in April he received a letter from Mrs. White, with this dryly humorous introduction:

"Dear Husband:

"We received your few words last night on a postal card:

"Battle Creek, April 11. No letters from you for two days. James White.

"This lengthy letter was written by yourself. Thank you for we [235] know you are living.

"No letter from James White previous to this since April 6.... I have been anxiously waiting for something to answer."

The letter of several pages closed with this proposition: "I will write every morning; will you do the same?" Ellen G. White Un-copied [Letter 5, 1876.](#)

The joint labors of James and Ellen White continued for thirty-five years, until James reached the age of sixty. "Side by side we had labored in the cause of Christ for thirty-five years; and we hoped that we might stand together to witness the triumphant close. But

such was not the will of God. The chosen protector of my youth, the companion of my life, the sharer of my labors and afflictions, was taken from my side, and I was left to finish my work and to fight the battle alone.” [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 247](#). Ellen White was ill in the sanitarium at Battle Creek at the time of her husband’s death. She was taken to his room to visit him and was aware of the seriousness of his illness. She remained with him until the end came on Sabbath, August 6, 1881. Mrs. White’s feeble strength then gave way and it was with difficulty that her life was preserved.

“Though I had not risen from my sickbed after my husband’s death, I was borne to the Tabernacle on the following Sabbath to attend his funeral. At the close of the sermon I felt it a duty to testify to the value of the Christian’s hope in the hour of sorrow and bereavement. As I arose, strength was given me, and I spoke about ten minutes, exalting the mercy and love of God in the presence of that crowded assembly. At the close of the services I followed my husband to Oak Hill Cemetery, where he was laid to rest until the morning of the resurrection.

[236] “My physical strength had been prostrated by the blow, yet the power of divine grace sustained me in my great bereavement. When I saw my husband breathe his last, I felt that Jesus was more precious to me than He ever had been in any previous hour of my life. When I stood by my first-born, and closed his eyes in death, I could say, ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’ And I felt then that I had a comforter in Jesus. And when my latest born was torn from my arms, and I could no longer see its little head upon the pillow by my side, then I could say, ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’ ⁶ And when he upon whose large affections I had leaned, with whom I had labored for thirty-five years, was taken away, I could lay my hands upon his eyes, and say, ‘I commit my treasure to Thee until the morning of the resurrection.’

“At times I felt that I could not have my husband die. But these words seemed to be impressed on my mind: ‘Be still, and know that I am God.’ [Psalm 46:10](#). I keenly feel my loss, but dare not

⁶Note: Henry White died at Topsham, Maine, on December 8, 1863, at the age of sixteen. Herbert was born September 20, 1860, and died December 14 of that same year. This left the two middle boys, Edson and William.

give myself up to useless grief. This would not bring back the dead. And I am not so selfish as to wish, if I could, to bring him from his peaceful slumber to engage again in the battles of life. Like a tired warrior, he has lain down to sleep. I will look with pleasure upon his resting place. The best way in which I and my children can honor the memory of him who has fallen, is to take the work where he left it, and in the strength of Jesus carry it forward to completion.” [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 252, 253.](#)

Few things give such insight into the nature of a person’s Christian experience as his relationship to death—not only his own death, but the death of those dear to him. Ellen White’s description of her own feelings and attitudes at the time of her husband’s death is deeply significant and is worthy of careful study because of what it reveals concerning her relationship to her Saviour.

A year after James White’s death, Mrs. White was settled at Healdsburg, California, for Healdsburg College had been opened in April, 1882. This was her home until her departure for Europe in the summer of 1885. At Healdsburg she wrote in detail of closing events of earth’s history, as found in the last chapters of *The Great Controversy*. She also directed the republication of *Testimonies for the Church*, as we have them in volumes 1-4. [237]

Brief attention should be given to the educational work which was fostered by Mrs. White’s testimonies during this period. Reference has been made to the dedication of Battle Creek College, and the founding of Healdsburg College. Although Ellen White’s major works on education were the product of a later period in her experience, her first extensive message on this subject was written in January, 1872. An article, “Proper Education,” appeared as *Testimony for the Church*, No. 22. See [Testimonies for the Church 3:131-160](#), and *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pages 15-46. It contains many of the fundamental principles later amplified in more detailed writings: the distinction between training children and educating youth; the provision for individual differences; the need for instruction suited to the maturity of the student; the need to teach youth to think; the relation of education and health; the practical training essential for both boys and girls. Though feeble beginnings had already been made, this article, and the many that followed it, motivated the denomination to establish educational

institutions to give the youth a “proper education” superior to any to be found elsewhere.

Years in Europe—1885-87

A request from the European Missionary Council to the General Conference to arrange for Mrs. White to spend some time visiting the European mission, resulted in her sailing from Boston in August, 1885. Her first stop was in London; however, she soon went to Basel, Switzerland, the headquarters of our European work. This served as her headquarters during the next two years, while she visited various European countries and preached and counseled with Adventist leaders.

[238] The European Missionary Council, meeting for two weeks soon after Mrs. White’s arrival in Europe, gave her an opportunity to become acquainted with the progress of the work as it was reported by representatives from Scandinavia, Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, and Switzerland. Methods of distributing Seventh-day Adventist literature came in for a large share of discussion. Some of the leaders had come to the conclusion that literature sales by colporteurs were destined to failure; but Mrs. White repeatedly assured the discouraged colporteurs that “it had been shown her that books could be sold in Europe in such a way as to give support to the workers, and bring to the publishing house sufficient returns to enable it to produce more books.” [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 285](#). Her words encouraged the book salesmen to try again. Training schools for colporteurs were held in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, and the sales for 1886 in that territory rose to nearly \$9,000, compared to a little more than \$1,000 in 1885.

Three times during her European stay Ellen G. White visited the Waldensian valleys of northern Italy, for Seventh-day Adventist work in Italy had its beginnings in these valleys. On her first visit, in 1885, she spent most of her time with the members at Torre Pellice, and spoke to them ten times. She recounted many incidents in the lives of the Waldensians and their missionaries that had been revealed to her in vision. After visiting these spots she was able to write more vividly of the incidents that had taken place there centuries before.

At the urgent request of the Adventist leaders, she made three visits to Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. The task was difficult, but she encouraged the workers to increase their consecration, and she made suggestions as to how the work might be built up more effectively.

On this trip to Europe, Mrs. White was accompanied by her son William and his wife. W. C. White's experience in the publishing work was helpful to those making a beginning in new lands. Their united labors did much to give permanence and stability to the cause of God during its difficult beginnings in Europe. Mrs. White's travels and talks are recounted in *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of Seventh-day Adventists* and in reports to the *Review and Herald*. Like her other sermons and her instruction given in writing, these messages contain counsel, encouragement, and reproof. They were readily accepted by leaders and believers to whom she spoke. Her visit helped to bring greater unity among the workers of various nationalities. A strengthened work, an encouraged leadership, and a closer fellowship resulted from Ellen White's two years of association with the Seventh-day Adventists in Europe.

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A Steadying Hand—1887-91

The four years following her return from Europe were for Ellen White years involving much travel and labor in the conferences and individual churches. After her absence from the United States she received many requests for her services at meetings. In addition to her field work, a good deal of writing was done during this period. The enlarged edition of *The Great Controversy* appeared in 1888, and *Testimonies*, volume 5, in 1889, followed by *Patriarchs and Prophets* in 1890. Although *Steps to Christ* did not come from the press until 1892, work on the manuscript was completed in the summer of the previous year.

Among the outstanding events of this period was the General Conference session at Minneapolis, beginning October 17, 1888. At this session a crisis was reached in the spiritual development of the denomination. The problem centered in the right understanding and proper emphasis of the doctrine of righteousness by faith. Although it appeared that the controversy circled about a few men and their

theological views, actually it was a matter of basic understanding of the Bible. Attention needed to be focused on Jesus, “His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family.” [240] *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 92. In many of the logical, closely reasoned Biblical presentations, much of the love and warmth and appeal of the righteousness of Christ had been lacking. For nearly two years before the Minneapolis meeting Mrs. White had called for a revival and a change of emphasis in preaching. Her messages before, during, and after the session, form a sound basis for understanding, living, and teaching the message of righteousness by faith. Despite the changing opinions and faulty positions of men, the denomination has not been left without a clear-cut picture of what its beliefs and practices should be.

Two chapters in *Steps to Christ* express the heart of Ellen White’s views on righteousness by faith. They are the chapters entitled “Faith and Acceptance” and “The Test of Discipleship.” The contrast between an outward rightness and an inward righteousness is simply depicted in the latter chapter.

“It is true that there may be an outward correctness of deportment without the renewing power of Christ. The love of influence and the desire for the esteem of others may produce a well-ordered life. Self-respect may lead us to avoid the appearance of evil. A selfish heart may perform generous actions. By what means, then, shall we determine whose side we are on?

“Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ’s, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All that we have and are is consecrated to Him. We long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things.” [Steps to Christ, 62.](#)

In the months following the Minneapolis session, Ellen White held meetings with the churches in the vicinity of Battle Creek, in New England, and in California. Everywhere she appealed to her listeners to accept Christ as a personal Saviour, and not to present one’s own righteousness to God. Almost weekly, sermons of this character, preached in the churches by Ellen White, were published [241] in the *Review and Herald*. The confusion that had existed at Minneapolis called for firm, straightforward preaching on the part of

the one whose views on righteousness by faith had, as had Paul's, received the confirmation of revelation as well as of diligent Bible study. Mrs. White's visits, sermons, and articles helped to stabilize the believers during a time of unrest.

In July, 1890, Ellen White went to Petoskey, Michigan, near the northern tip of the Michigan peninsula to rest from her public labors and do some writing. In a letter to her son she recounted: "I have been feeling much better in health since coming here. I receive treatment every day. I have not ventured on any excursion or to attend any meetings lest I should get a backset. I let all the rest go while I remain alone half a day. Yesterday was alone all day from eight o'clock a.m. until six p.m. I am not at all lonely. I love to be quiet and write and think and pray. I want so much to obtain strength that I can labor." Ellen G. White Uncopied [Letter 32, 1890](#).

In August she wrote, "I feel sometimes as though it was a terrible neglect of duty to be here while camp meetings are being held. But I again consider it is the first rest I have had in my life. I speak, however, twice each week, write from twelve to twenty-five pages nearly every day. Then, when my head gets tired, I go out in the berry patch. Marian and I scour round and get berries enough for table use." Ellen G. White Uncopied [Letter 37, 1890](#). Few preachers would consider two sermons a week and twelve to twenty-five pages of writing a day much of a vacation and rest, but this was a real change from Ellen White's regular program of traveling, speaking, and writing. September found her back in Battle Creek, and most of the remaining months of the year were spent on a speaking tour through New England and the Eastern states. For the most part, this had been a period of intensive field work and voluminous writing for the messenger of God. She helped the churches become firmly grounded, guided them through a time of crisis, and helped them prepare for the future.

Years in Australia—1891-1900

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At the General Conference of 1891, Elder S. N. Haskell made repeated appeals for workers to be sent to the distant lands he had recently visited. He particularly urged the establishment of a training school in Australia, and he believed that teachers should be appointed

to launch such a project. He also asked that Ellen White and her son William C. White spend time in the Australian field, giving help and guidance to the developing work. The Mission Board accepted Elder Haskell's suggestion and asked Mrs. White and her son to leave for Australia that autumn. The mother and son were willing to go, and they arrived there in December. Nine years were spent pioneering and developing the work, especially the educational and medical phases of it.

During her first year in Australia, Ellen White spent most of her time in bed, suffering from inflammatory rheumatism and neuritis. Despite her illness and pain, she had a special armrest prepared so that she could be propped up in bed to continue her writing. During these months she wrote letters, testimonies, and many chapters of *The Desire of Ages*. In responding to the call of the General Conference to go to Australia she had received no indication from the Lord as to what her course should be. She followed her usual practice of accepting the suggestions and requests of the conference leaders as to where she should labor, when she had no divine instruction to the contrary. In the midst of illness she wrote concerning the struggle in her own mind.

"When I first found myself in a state of helplessness I deeply regretted having crossed the broad waters. Why was I not in America? Why at such expense was I in this country? Time and again I could have buried my face in the bed quilts and had a good cry. But I did not long indulge in the luxury of tears.

[243] "I said to myself, 'Ellen G. White, what do you mean? Have you not come to Australia because you felt that it was your duty to go where the conference judged it best for you to go? Has this not been your practice?'

"I said, 'Yes.'

"Then why do you feel almost forsaken and discouraged? Is not this the enemy's work?"

"I said, 'I believe it is.'

"I dried my tears as quickly as possible and said, 'It is enough. I will not look on the dark side any more. Live or die, I commit the keeping of my soul to Him who died for me.'

"I then believed that the Lord would do all things well, and during this eight months of helplessness, I have not had any despondency or

doubt. I now look at this matter as a part of the Lord's great plan, for the good of His people here in this country, and for those in America, and for my good. I cannot explain why or how, but I believe it. And I am happy in my affliction. I can trust my heavenly Father. I will not doubt His love. I have an ever watchful guardian day and night, and I will praise the Lord; for His praise is upon my lips because it comes from a heart full of gratitude." Ellen G. White [Letter 18a, 1892](#). Also found in A. L. White, Ellen G. White, *Messenger to the Remnant*, page 102.

Mrs. White's years in Australia are probably best remembered for three major contributions: (1) the completion of *The Desire of Ages*; (2) the establishment of the Avondale school, and the extensive writings on all phases of the subject of education; and (3) the giving of instruction for the development of a more efficient conference organization.

The work on *The Desire of Ages* was not completed quickly. When she was able to leave her bed, Mrs. White gave much of her time to speaking appointments and to council sessions in Australia and New Zealand. It was not until 1898 that the book finally came from the publishers.

Hundreds of pages of counsel were written in connection with the establishment of the Avondale school. Principles stated earlier were expanded so that they applied in detail to the new institution and others that would follow. It was here that the pattern for the Seventh-day Adventist educational system was formulated and illustrated. The basic plan and principles are adaptable to any situation in the world. The school at Avondale prospered as the plan was followed. More will be said in a later chapter regarding the relation of this plan to other systems of education which have in the past incorporated many of its principles.

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The counsel on the organization of the church which Mrs. White gave during this period became the basis for the reorganization program mentioned by F. M. Wilcox, at the election of A. G. Daniells to the presidency of the General Conference.

"Although Brother Daniells was comparatively little known to the church in America because of his long absence in Australia, his brethren intuitively turned to him for leadership. And they were not disappointed. In the Australasian field he had perfected, under the

counsel of the spirit of prophecy, a form of reorganization which was to prove in large measure the model of the church organization in all countries. God had been preparing and training him for leadership of the world movement.” F. M. Wilcox, in [The Review and Herald, April 18, 1935](#).

The revelations given Ellen White not only kept pace with the needs of the growing denomination, but they stayed ahead and helped prepare the way to meet problems as they arose. God has repeatedly pointed to His foreknowledge of the future as one of the clearest indications that He is the only true God. “I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done.” [Isaiah 46:9, 10](#).

Closing Years of Active Ministry—1900-09

[246] When she returned to the United States from Australia in late September, 1900, Ellen White was seventy-two years of age. She had been receiving messages from God for His people for about fifty-six years. Her ministry had been of great assistance in the development of a religious movement that would soon spread to all the world. She had spent eleven years in Europe and Australia, and now she was back in her homeland to continue her ministry.

Though Mrs. White had no personal desire to leave Australia, she was repeatedly instructed that there was a work for her to do in America. Soon after her return to the United States, she purchased a home not far from the Saint Helena Sanitarium in Northern California. A little later she wrote: “I see as I never expected to see that the good hand of the Lord is with me. O it has been so wonderfully apparent in providing this beautiful home in this retired place. I was visited by the angel of the Lord on the boat, and instruction was given me, which I do not yet dare to speak. I will sometime give the whole history of my experience on the boat. It is so solemn, so sacred a matter that I do not feel like talking about it; but one thing I do know, of which I may speak, and that is that it was in the order of God that I came to America just at this time. It was against my wishes, for I wanted to remain in Australia. I loved the people and I loved my work. I have not lost my love for Australia, nor my interest in the workers there.” Ellen G. White [Letter 158](#),

1900. She ever recognized that God's hand had been in the purchase of "Elmshaven," which formed a base from which she labored the last fifteen years of her life.

As far as the plans for expansion and efficient operation of the work of Seventh-day Adventists are concerned, the General Conferences of 1863 and 1901 are the most far-reaching that have been held. The former was the beginning of general organization, and the latter marked a reorganization to cope with the problems of rapidly expanding missionary activities in many lands, the distribution of workers, and the methods to enlarge the financial resources. In each of these notable advance steps, Ellen White exerted a strong influence.

The 1901 conference opened on April 2, with the usual preliminary activities: the president's opening remarks, the seating of delegates, the acceptance of new conferences. Elder G. A. Irwin gave his presidential address, and then the chairman declared the conference formally opened. Immediately following his question: "What is your pleasure?" Mrs. White, who had not been present at a General Conference session for ten years, came forward and addressed the group. It was the Lord's plan, she said, that there should be a radical reorganization of the church and its administration. No longer should full authority be left in the hands of a few men at headquarters. Responsibility and authority must be delegated to leaders in each field. Financial policies must be altered so that funds would not be hoarded in one field while there was insufficient money to carry on the work elsewhere. All phases of the work of the denomination—the Foreign Mission Board, the Sabbath School Association, the Religious Liberty Association—must work unitedly rather than operate as separate organizations. Particular stress was placed on the need for spiritual regeneration in the lives of leaders, and the weeding out of workers who had lost their spirit of consecration. [247]

The address was an expansion of the message given the previous day by Mrs. White to a smaller group of workers. When she finished, it was proposed that a large committee give study to the principles set forth and bring recommendations to the conference. Many of the regular items on the General Conference agenda were set aside in order that full attention could be given to the major issue. Out [248]

of the session came a plan by which organizational problems could be solved. The basic program is still in operation in the church organization. Again, a rebuke, a remedy, and a call for leadership to plan wisely for the future had been given by the Lord through His appointed messenger.

Two years later, at the next General Conference, counsel and leadership were given concerning the transfer of the General Conference headquarters and the publishing house from Battle Creek. Recent fires had raised the question of rebuilding in the same place. Ellen White bore her testimony. "In reply to the question that has been asked in regard to settling somewhere else, I answer, Yes. Let the General Conference offices and the publishing work be moved from Battle Creek. I know not where the place will be, whether on the Atlantic Coast or elsewhere. But this I will say, Never lay a stone or a brick in Battle Creek to rebuild the Review Office there. God has a better place for it." [The General Conference Bulletin, 1903, 85](#). Continued guidance from God's messenger resulted in the selection of Washington, D.C., as the denominational headquarters.

[249] This period was also one of growth in medical missionary lines. Sanitariums and then a medical school came into being in Southern California as the result of testimonies and counsel from Ellen White. The story of the beginnings of the Loma Linda College of Evangelists (ultimately to be known as the College of Medical Evangelists) is a thrilling recital of the providences of God, too lengthy to be told here, but which should be read in connection with this chapter. (See references at end of chapter.)

In addition to the hundreds of letters written during these years, these seven books came from the press: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7 (1902), *Manual for Canvassers* (1902), *Education* (1903), *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8 (1904), *The Ministry of Healing* (1905), and *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9 (1909).

When the General Conference of 1909 convened, Ellen White had reached the age of eighty-one and was in feeble health. Nevertheless, from the time she left her home in California for the conference in Washington, D.C., until she returned home, she spoke seventy-two times in twenty-seven places from California to Maine, and from Alabama to Wisconsin. In her letters she wrote increasingly of eye trouble, weakness, heart trouble, and the need of special

strength to carry on her duties. She recognized that her years were numbered, and she wanted to do the final work on the material she had written for publication. Around her were gathered an unusually large group of helpers to assist in readying articles and books for publication. At an age when most men and women have long since given up productive activities, Ellen White was hurrying to complete the task that had been entrusted to her.

Last Years—1909-15

In a manuscript prepared to be read at the General Conference of 1913, which Ellen White was unable to attend because of her frail health, she reviewed her activities of the preceding four years. [250]
“Following the General Conference of 1909, I spent several weeks [251]
attending camp meetings and other general gatherings, and visiting [252]
various institutions, in New England, the Central States, and the Middle West.

“Upon returning to my home in California, I took up anew the work of preparing matter for the press. During the past four years I have written comparatively few letters. What strength I have had has been given mostly to the completion of important bookwork.

“Occasionally I have attended meetings, and have visited institutions in California, but the greater portion of the time since the last General Conference has been spent in manuscript work at my country home, ‘Elmshaven,’ near Saint Helena.

“I am thankful that the Lord is sparing my life to work a little longer on my books. O, that I had strength to do all that I see ought to be done! I pray that He may impart to me wisdom, that the truths our people so much need may be presented clearly and acceptably. I am encouraged to believe that God will enable me to do this.”
[The General Conference Bulletin, 1913, 164.](#) Found also in [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 426, 427.](#)

Strength was given Ellen White to finish her writings on the life of Paul and the early church, *The Acts of the Apostles* (1911). Also completed were *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students Regarding Christian Education* (1913), and *Gospel Workers* (1915). The last of the products of this period was *Prophets and Kings* (1916), published soon after the author’s death.

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Mrs. White remained active until the time of the accident that hastened her death. She was entering her study on Sabbath, February 13, 1915, when she fell and fractured her hip. She was eighty-seven years old, and there was little that could be done except to make her days as comfortable as possible. Her attitude of quiet confidence in God was the same during the last weeks of illness as that which had characterized her courageous life. Only a few weeks before her death, she said:

“I am very weak. I am sure that this is my last sickness. I am not worried at the thought of dying. I feel comforted all the time, that the Lord is near me. I am not anxious. The preciousness of the Saviour has been so plain to me. He has been a friend. He has kept me in sickness and in health.

“I do not worry about the work I have done. I have done the best I could. I do not think that I shall be lingering long. I do not expect much suffering. I am thankful that we have the comforts of life in time of sickness. Do not worry. I go only a little before the others.” [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 444, 445.](#)

“For several days prior to her death, she had been unconscious much of the time, and toward the end she seemed to have lost the faculty of speech and that of hearing. The last words she spoke to her son were, ‘I know in whom I have believed.’” [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 449.](#) Death came on July 16, 1915.

A funeral service was held at “Elmshaven” on Sunday, July 18. On July 19, a service was held at Richmond, California, in connection with the Northern California camp meeting, where a thousand friends paid their respects to the messenger of God. On July 24 a service was held at the Battle Creek Tabernacle, after which Mrs. White was buried beside her husband in the Oak Hill Cemetery, Battle Creek. A ministry of seventy years had ended, and Seventh-day Adventists everywhere, as well as a host of non-Adventist friends, mourned the passing of one whose whole life had been devoted to the advent cause, and whose ministry had been so fruitful in its upbuilding.

SUMMARY

1. With the organization of the new church, impetus was given to the spread of the advent message.

2. Soon after the church organization was effected, special instruction came to Ellen White regarding healthful living.

3. James White's serious illness materially affected the work of the Whites during part of this period of ministry in the new church. [254]

4. Ellen White spent two years (1885-87) counseling with workers and strengthening the Adventist churches in the European countries.

5. From 1887 to 1891 was a period of stabilization. Much time was spent by Mrs. White in field work and important writing.

6. A nine-year period was spent in Australia (1891-1900), where Mrs. White helped to plan and build up the work of the church. She also developed plans for an educational system, and she gave counsel on improving the denominational organization.

7. Ellen White's later years were active and productive. These were years of much letter writing, wide counseling with leaders, and considerable book production.

8. An accident in her home hastened Ellen White's death, which came on July 16, 1915.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Review the major areas in which Ellen White contributed to the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its work.

2. Can you think of any phase of the church's growth and activity to which she has not made some contribution? Are there teachings and methods which are completely independent of her influence, as far as you can discover?

3. Recall the study of the gift of prophecy in Bible times, as presented in the earlier chapters of this book. Find as many parallels as you can between the experience of Bible prophets and that of Ellen White. Can you discover major differences?

4. As you have read about the life experience of Ellen White, which of her characteristics stand out in your mind? Does she appeal to you as having been genuinely alive, warm, and understanding? [255]

5. What appear to you to be the most revealing incidents you have read in the life of Ellen White?

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Chapter 14—Testing The Experience Of Ellen G. White

Sometimes it is a simple task to test the experience of one who professes to be a prophet of God. There are instances where the life of the individual is so out of harmony with Bible standards and doctrines that it is easy to decide that he is a false prophet. However, the purposes of Satan are not well served by false prophets who are brazen in their evil ways. The arch deceiver would seek to have them appear as genuine as possible. Therefore, the prophet must be placed under careful scrutiny in order to detect inconsistencies and errors. This is particularly true in the days preceding the second advent, for Christ issued a solemn warning concerning the matter. “For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” [Matthew 24:24](#).

Ellen White directed attention to her own experience, as well as to others, when she stressed the increasing need for carefulness in determining who should be accepted as a true prophet. “There will be those who will claim to have visions. When God gives you clear evidence that the vision is from Him, you may accept it, but do not accept it on any other evidence; for people are going to be led more and more astray in foreign countries and in America.” Ellen G. White, in [The Review and Herald, May 25, 1905](#).

The evidence God gives that a prophet’s revelations are from Him is not some supernatural indication exhibited to each one who meets the prophet. The Bible has stated the procedure by which prophets are to be tested, so we should look for evidence that the professed spokesman for God meets the Scripture tests. Each individual should apply the tests to determine to his own satisfaction that the professed prophet is false or genuine.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold: (1) to suggest ways in which the Bible tests may be applied to the life and work of Ellen White, and (2) to give some examples of their application. This

cannot be covered in one chapter; therefore, additional evidence in each classification will be found as the study progresses. This chapter actually becomes the introduction of a project that will carry through the remainder of the present study. At the close of this chapter a suggestion is made as to the simple procedure by which evidence may be accumulated to form the basis for sound conclusions. If the project is started at the beginning of this phase of the study, much will be gained.

Applying the Tests

Test 1. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." [Isaiah 8:20](#).

We have abundant material to enable us to apply this major test to the teachings of Ellen White. Forty-five volumes from her pen are currently available. These books cover virtually every phase of Christian living and Bible instruction. She has included tens of thousands of quotations of Bible verses in detailed expositions, as well as for illustration and clarification. Because the writings were spread over a ministry of seventy years, we have the opportunity to check the consistency and accuracy of the Scriptural passages used and the delineation of Bible teachings set forth. On the other hand, the vast number of books she has written poses a problem to the average reader. It is possible, however, to get a cross section of their teachings by beginning with certain representative books. Our present application of the test will involve sampling from a number of the books to illustrate a method of approach.

Two factors must be considered in comparing the teachings of the Ellen White writings with the Bible. First, we must survey their general teaching regarding great Bible themes and doctrines. Then we must study the uses made of individual passages commenting on texts of Scripture and the application of these texts. The first point is of primary importance, for unless we catch the tenor of the writings as a whole, it is difficult, if not impossible, to grasp the import of any part of them. [260]

Since it is not possible for us to investigate the relationship of Ellen White to all major Bible themes in our present introductory

study, it will be most satisfactory to select two Bible truths prominent in the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists, and see what Mrs. White teaches on these subjects. Is she in full harmony with the Bible truths? We will take the two doctrines represented by the name Seventh-day Adventist—the Sabbath, and the second advent of Jesus Christ. These are doctrines that most theologians either ignore or teach in a way contrary to the Bible presentation. They provide an excellent basis for testing. There is no necessity to review in detail the Bible teaching on these subjects, as we can trace the high points of the Scripture presentation well known to every Seventh-day Adventist.

[261] *“The seventh day is the Sabbath.”* The Sabbath was introduced at the close of creation week as a memorial of God’s wondrous works. On that day God rested; then He blessed the Sabbath and set it apart for a holy purpose. [Genesis 2:2, 3](#). The law of which it is a part was in effect from Adam to Moses, though its details are not separately listed in the early Bible record. [Romans 5:13, 14](#). After Israel left Egypt, God again made plain the obligation of the Sabbath to His people, for He spoke the complete law on Mount Sinai. [Exodus 19; 20](#). In the centuries that followed, the Sabbath was kept before Israel through the ministry of the prophets and priests. It was because of their violation of the Sabbath that Israel and then Judah went into captivity. [Jeremiah 17:27](#). After the Babylonian Captivity, Sabbath reform was prominent among the needed changes as the people were established again in their homeland. [Nehemiah 9:14; 10:31; 13:15-22](#).

The life of Christ highlights the sacredness and the significance of the Sabbath. The coming of apostasy and turning away from the Sabbath and other truths is a part of the prophetic picture. [Daniel 7:25; Revelation 13](#). Special emphasis is placed on the commandments of God and the restoration of the Sabbath in the remnant church. [Revelation 14:12](#). It is to be a test to God’s people in the days immediately preceding the second advent of Christ. [Revelation 13:17](#). It will be kept by God’s people in the new earth. [Isaiah 66:23](#).

Throughout the Ellen White books and articles there runs a continuous thread of emphasis on the significance of the Sabbath and the proper manner of its observance. We note a series of quotations

gathered from several of her works, paralleling the high points of the Bible story summarized above.

“The great Jehovah had laid the foundations of the earth; He had dressed the whole world in the garb of beauty, and had filled it with things useful to man; He had created all the wonders of the land and of the sea. In six days the great work of creation had been accomplished. And God ‘rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.’ ...

“After resting upon the seventh day, God sanctified it, or set it apart, as a day of rest for man. Following the example of the Creator, man was to rest upon this sacred day, that as he should look upon the heavens and the earth, he might reflect upon God’s great work of creation; and that as he should behold the evidences of God’s wisdom and goodness, his heart might be filled with love and reverence for his Maker.

“In Eden, God set up the memorial of His work of creation, in placing His blessing upon the seventh day.” [Patriarchs and Prophets, 47, 48.](#)

“The Sabbath institution, which originated in Eden, is as old as the world itself. It was observed by all the patriarchs, from creation down.” [Patriarchs and Prophets, 336.](#)

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“In consequence of continual transgression, the moral law was repeated in awful grandeur from Sinai.” Ellen G. White, in [The Signs of the Times, April 15, 1875.](#)

“The Sabbath was embodied in the law given from Sinai; but it was not then first made known as a day of rest. The people of Israel had a knowledge of it before they came to Sinai.” [The Desire of Ages, 283.](#)

“On one occasion, by command of the Lord, the prophet took his position at one of the principal entrances to the city, and there urged the importance of keeping holy the Sabbath day. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were in danger of losing sight of the sanctity of the Sabbath, and they were solemnly warned against following their secular pursuits on that day.” [Prophets and Kings, 411.](#)

“Nehemiah fearlessly rebuked them for their neglect of duty. ‘What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day?’ he sternly demanded. ‘Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring

more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath.’ He then gave command that ‘when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath,’ they should be shut, and not opened again till the Sabbath was past.” [Prophets and Kings, 671](#).

“The rabbis virtually represented God as giving laws which it was impossible for men to Obey. They led the people to look upon God as a tyrant, and to think that the observance of the Sabbath, as He required it, made men hardhearted and cruel. It was the work of Christ to clear away these misconceptions. Although the rabbis followed Him with merciless hostility, He did not even appear to conform to their requirements, but went straight forward, keeping the Sabbath according to the law of God.” [The Desire of Ages, 284](#).

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“The papacy has attempted to change the law of God. The second commandment, forbidding image worship, has been dropped from the law, and the fourth commandment has been so changed as to authorize the observance of the first instead of the seventh day as the Sabbath.” [The Great Controversy, 446](#).

“Since the Reformation, there have been some in every generation to maintain its [the Sabbath’s] observance. Though often in the midst of reproach and persecution, a constant testimony has been borne to the perpetuity of the law of God and the sacred obligation of the creation Sabbath.

“These truths, as presented in [Revelation 14](#) in connection with ‘the everlasting gospel,’ will distinguish the church of Christ at the time of His appearing.” [The Great Controversy, 453](#).

“The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted.” [The Great Controversy, 605](#).

“God teaches that we should assemble in His house to cultivate the attributes of perfect love. This will fit the dwellers of earth for the mansions that Christ has gone to prepare for all who love Him. There they will assemble in the sanctuary from Sabbath to Sabbath, from one new moon to another, to unite in loftiest strains of song, in praise and thanksgiving to Him who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.” [Testimonies for the Church 6:368](#).

A more complete list of quotations would include not only additional selections on each phase of the subject, but also increased detail. Every vital facet of the Sabbath question is presented simply and clearly—its significance, its perpetuity, and how it should be

observed. The Sabbath means much to Seventh-day Adventists, and they have given the subject exhaustive Biblical study. It would not be difficult to detect a note of difference between the results of this Biblical research and the writings of other individuals. Those who have devoted such careful attention to the Bible teaching have also studied systematically what Ellen White has written on the topic. As individuals and as a church body, Adventists have concluded that Ellen White's teachings regarding the Sabbath are strictly Scriptural. But since each individual is responsible for his own decisions, each should make a thorough study of the writings so that his decision may be an intelligent one.

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"I will come again." The doctrine of the second advent of Christ runs through the entire Bible. We have clear indication that at least as far back as the times of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, there was an understanding of the fact that Christ would one day return to judge the world. In the light of later predictions, even the symbolic prophecy of [Genesis 3:15](#) points to the return of the Saviour to bring the destruction of sin. Because of a lack of spiritual insight, the time came when those who should have understood, were confused concerning the predictions of the first and second advents. However, since the first advent and the prophetic messages of the New Testament there has been no cause for confusion.

The Bible teaches that the return of Christ will be literal, physical, and visible. [Acts 1:11](#). Christ will appear in the clouds of heaven, accompanied by all the angels. [Luke 21:27](#); [Matthew 16:27](#); [Luke 9:26](#). The glory of His appearance will affect the righteous and the wicked differently. The wicked will try to hide from Him, and call for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them. [Revelation 6:15-17](#). His voice will call the righteous dead from their graves, and with the living righteous they will be changed by His glory and caught up together to meet the Saviour in the air. [1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17](#). Then Christ, the angels, and the redeemed, will return to heaven where they will remain for a thousand years while the earth is desolate, the wicked are dead, and Satan is bound. [Revelation 20](#). At the close of the thousand years, Christ will return to this earth, followed by the New Jerusalem. [Revelation 21:2](#). He will resurrect the wicked and destroy them and their leader, Satan. [Revelation](#)

20:5, 9. Then the earth will be purified with fire and re-created to be the home of the redeemed. [2 Peter 3:10-13](#).

[265] A glance at the topic “Second Advent” in the *Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*, reveals scores of references on this topic. An acquaintance with the writings themselves makes it clear that these pages contain only a fraction of the total number of references to some phase of the second coming and its meaning. What does Ellen White teach about the return of Christ in glory? Here, briefly, is her teaching:

“The promise of Christ’s second coming was ever to be kept fresh in the minds of His disciples. The same Jesus whom they had seen ascending into heaven, would come again, to take to Himself those who here below give themselves to His service. The same voice that had said to them, ‘Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end,’ would bid them welcome to His presence in the heavenly kingdom.... He will come in His own glory, and in the glory of His Father, and all the angelic host will escort Him on His way.

“Thus will be fulfilled Christ’s promise to His disciples, ‘I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.’ Those who have loved Him and waited for Him, He will crown with glory and honor and immortality. The righteous dead will come forth from their graves, and those who are alive will be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air.” [The Acts of the Apostles, 33, 34](#).

“Says the prophet of Patmos: ‘Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him.’” [The Great Controversy, 301](#).

“Nought now is heard but the voice of prayer and the sound of weeping and lamentation. The cry bursts forth from lips so lately scoffing: ‘The great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?’ The wicked pray to be buried beneath the rocks of the mountains rather than meet the face of Him whom they have despised and rejected.” [The Great Controversy, 642](#).

[266] “The earth mightily shook as the voice of the Son of God called forth the sleeping saints. They responded to the call and came forth clothed with glorious immortality, crying, ‘Victory, victory, over death and the grave! O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?’” [Early Writings, 287](#).

“On each side of the cloudy chariot were wings, and beneath it were living wheels; and as the chariot rolled upward, the wheels

cried, ‘Holy,’ and the wings, as they moved, cried, ‘Holy,’ and the retinue of holy angels around the cloud cried, ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty!’ And the saints in the cloud cried, ‘Glory! Alleluia!’ And the chariot rolled upward to the Holy City. Before entering the city, the saints were arranged in a perfect square, with Jesus in the midst. He stood head and shoulders above the saints and above the angels. His majestic form and lovely countenance could be seen by all in the square.” [Early Writings, 287, 288.](#)

“The whole earth appears like a desolate wilderness. The ruins of cities and villages destroyed by the earthquake, uprooted trees, ragged rocks thrown out by the sea or torn out of the earth itself, are scattered over its surface, while vast caverns mark the spot where the mountains have been rent from their foundations.” [The Great Controversy, 657.](#)

“At the close of the thousand years, Christ again returns to the earth. He is accompanied by the host of the redeemed and attended by a retinue of angels. As He descends in terrific majesty He bids the wicked dead arise to receive their doom. They come forth, a mighty host, numberless as the sands of the sea.” [The Great Controversy, 662.](#)

“Fire comes down from God out of heaven. The earth is broken up. The weapons concealed in its depths are drawn forth. Devouring flames burst from every yawning chasm. The very rocks are on fire. The day has come that shall burn as an oven. The elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein are burned up.” [The Great Controversy, 672.](#)

“The beautiful new earth, with all its glory, was the eternal inheritance of the saints. The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, was then given to the saints of the Most High, who were to possess it forever, even for ever and ever.” [Early Writings, 295.](#)

[267]

A broader study of the presentation of the second advent in the Ellen White books will bring together the thoughts of hundreds of passages and references to form the complete picture—a Biblical picture, vividly portrayed for the benefit of the remnant church. Preparation for the second coming of Christ is the keynote of the message of Seventh-day Adventists. The Bible doctrine of the advent is studied intensively. Over many years the teachings of Ellen White

regarding the advent have been reviewed and compared with the Bible presentation, and Adventists have concluded that her writings are in full harmony with the Bible.

Continuing the test. In one sense, the criterion “to the law and to the testimony” is the most important single test of a professed messenger of God. Since prophets are human beings they can make mistakes in the conduct of their personal lives and affairs, but their teachings, when carefully and prayerfully compared with the Bible, must show a complete harmony. In dealing with the writings of Ellen White, we have made only a beginning, both in number of subjects investigated and in the coverage given. Extensive studies may be made as to her views on God, the plan of salvation, the nature of man, standards of the Christian life, the church, and every other Bible doctrine on which she has written. Only as the individual reads widely and compares carefully, will he be qualified to decide whether he believes that Ellen White meets this first Bible standard. Ellen White emphasized this need in a sentence in her book *Education*. “The mind that depends upon the judgment of others is certain, sooner or later, to be misled.” Page 231.

Test 2. “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” [Matthew 7:20](#).

[268] More than a century has passed since the ministry of Ellen White began. Decades have elapsed since her death. Therefore, there has been abundant opportunity to study the fruit of her life and ministry. What has it been?

Her personal life. A few days after the death of Ellen White the following article appeared in the local newspaper of the California town, Saint Helena, near which she had lived for fifteen years:

“By the death of Mrs. Ellen G. White, a noted religious leader has been called to her reward.

“Mrs. White was probably one of the best-known women in the world. She had traveled extensively, had lectured to large audiences in many countries, and her writings had been published in various languages carrying to people of nearly all tongues the message she felt called upon by God to deliver.

“The life of Mrs. White is an example worthy of emulation by all. Though of limited education, for the greater part of her long life in poor health, she never faltered, but for seventy-two years carried

and preached the message of Jesus Christ, as understood by her, to the furthestmost corners of the earth. She was a humble, devout disciple of Christ and ever went about doing good. Her writings have been published in books, papers and periodicals and from her prolific pen has come writings on many religious topics. She was revered by all the members of the Seventh Day Adventist church and honored and respected by all who appreciate noble womanhood consecrated to unselfish labor for the uplifting and betterment of mankind. Her death marks the calling of another noted leader of religious thought and one whose almost ninety years were full to overflowing with good deeds, kind words and earnest prayers for all mankind.

“This good Samaritan will surely be greatly missed. Her reward will be commensurate with the great good she has done.” Saint Helena, California, *Star*, July 23, 1915.

An article in the Detroit *News-Tribune* commented: “Mrs. White was a remarkable woman in many ways. She was deeply religious, and none who knew her intimately had any doubt as to her sincerity.” [269] July 25, 1915.

Brief statements by two men within the church who knew Mrs. White well will suffice to reveal the attitude of members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church all over the world.

“Now she is at rest. Her voice is silent; her pen is laid aside. But the mighty influence of that active, positive, forceful life will continue. That life was linked with the eternal; it was wrought in God.” Arthur G. Daniells, in [The Review and Herald, July 29, 1915](#).

“Her Christian life was marked by deep personal piety; she had great faith in prayer, and was zealous in her spiritual devotions. Her charities were liberal beyond her means; she was ever impoverishing herself by her gifts to the cause she loved and by her care for the poor and needy.

“She believed in the divine inspiration of the Bible. Of this word she was a constant student all her life; to her it was the voice of God.... She exalted Christ as the sinner’s only hope. She loved this Saviour, and did what she could to bring others to a knowledge of Him.” I. H. Evans, in [The Review and Herald, July 29, 1915](#).

Those who knew her well had only good to speak of Mrs. White’s personal life and Christian experience. Even her most severe critic,

a former co-worker, attended her funeral, and, while viewing her body, said, "A noble Christian woman gone." Comment of D. M. Canright. See Arthur W. Spalding, *Captains of the Host*, page 581.

[270] *Influence of her life and messages.* Writing in 1866 of the influence of Ellen White's testimonies, Uriah Smith, the editor of the *Review and Herald*, testified in an editorial: "Their fruit is such as to show that the source from which they spring, is the opposite of evil. They tend to the purest morality. They discountenance every vice, and exhort to the practice of every virtue. They point out the perils through which we are to pass to the kingdom. They reveal the devices of Satan. They warn us against his snares. They have nipped in the bud, scheme after scheme of fanaticism which the enemy has tried to foist into our midst. They have exposed hidden iniquity, brought to light concealed wrongs, and laid bare the evil motives of the false hearted. They have warded off dangers from the cause of truth upon every hand. They have aroused and rearoused us to greater consecration to God, more zealous efforts for holiness of heart, and greater diligence in the cause and service of our Master.

"They lead us to Christ.... They lead us to the Bible.... They have brought comfort and consolation to many hearts. They have strengthened the weak, encouraged the feeble, raised up the despondent. They have brought order out of confusion, made crooked places straight, and thrown light on what was dark and obscure." [The Review and Herald, June 12, 1866.](#)

The fruits of the work of Ellen White are observable in the development of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. Though the instruction may have been imperfectly followed, still, these messages are so closely entwined with the growth of the church and its continued expansion that it is not too much to say that without them the Seventh-day Adventist Church would not exist as it is today. Already, in the survey of the life of Ellen White, we have noted some of the influences she exerted, first on the unorganized bands of advent believers and later on the church body. Her influence may be classified under these eight headings: (1) assisting in developing doctrines, (2) saving members from fanaticism and false teachings, (3) developing organization, (4) guiding when problems arose, (5) guiding the plans for the future, (6) revealing future events, (7) encouraging and aiding Bible study, (8) guiding in Christian living.

A detailed study involving these topics will produce a wealth of evidence of good fruit. “By their fruits ye shall know them.”

Test 3. “When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.” [271]
[Jeremiah 28:9.](#)

In the same way that the major portion of the Bible is devoted to matters other than prediction, so the writings of Ellen White contain a relatively small number of prophecies, other than those that pertain to the events connected with the second coming of Christ. However, her predictions should be scrutinized with the same care we give to those found in the Bible. Three examples will suffice to introduce this test.

The tempest is coming. “The youth should seek God more earnestly. The tempest is coming, and we must get ready for its fury, by having repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord will arise to shake terribly the earth. We shall see troubles on all sides. Thousands of ships will be hurled into the depths of the sea. Navies will go down, and human lives will be sacrificed by millions. Fires will break out unexpectedly, and no human effort will be able to quench them. The palaces of earth will be swept away in the fury of the flames. Disasters by rail will become more and more frequent; confusion, collision, and death without a moment’s warning will occur on the great lines of travel.” Ellen G. White, in [The Signs of the Times, April 21, 1890](#). Quoted in *Messages to Young People*, pages 89, 90.

It would not require divine foresight to make a statement like that today. We see all around us the very things predicted, and most people, it appears, are persuaded that the situation will not improve. But it did require more than human foresight to make such a declaration in 1890. Those who have read the newspapers and news magazines through the years need no list of statistics to prove to them that the prediction is still in the process of fulfillment. We know that the United States, Great Britain, their allies, and the neutral nations lost 4,770 ships, totaling more than 21,000,000 tons of shipping during World War II. These figures take no account of [272]
the loss of German, Italian, and Japanese merchant shipping and navies sunk. As for lives sacrificed by millions, we need only to check casualty figures for two world wars. Combined losses of lives

of military personnel in World War I were more than 8,500,000; and military and civilian losses totaled more than 22,000,000 in World War II. Fire losses in the United States alone have increased from \$188,705,150 in 1909, to \$815,134,000 in 1952. No comment need be added regarding disasters, confusion, and collision on the highways, railroads, and airlines,—they are tragic daily occurrences. It would hardly be possible for any prediction to be more literally and specifically fulfilled.

Mysterious rapping. “August 24, 1850, I saw that the ‘mysterious rapping,’ ⁷ was the power of Satan; some of it was directly from him, and some indirectly, through his agents, but it all proceeded from Satan. It was his work that he accomplished in different ways; yet many in the churches and the world were so enveloped in gross darkness that they thought and held forth that it was the power of God....

“I saw that soon it would be considered blasphemy to speak against the rapping, and that it would spread more and more, that Satan’s power would increase and some of his devoted followers would have power to work miracles and even to bring down fire from heaven in the sight of men. I was shown that by the rapping and mesmerism these modern magicians would yet account for all the miracles wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ, and that many would believe that all the mighty works of the Son of God when on earth were accomplished by this same power.” [Early Writings, 59.](#)

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The small beginnings of modern spiritism gave little evidence of the great growth and influence that lay ahead, but God had foretold its expansion and deception so that God’s people need not be misled. Without going into a lengthy presentation of the beliefs of modern spiritism, we can note the words of an official publication that show how accurate Mrs. White’s predictions were concerning its growth and erroneous teachings. The year 1948 was recognized by spiritists as the one-hundredth anniversary of the rise of modern spiritism. In honor of the occasion the leading spiritist association in the United States—The National Spiritualist Association of United States of America—published the *Centennial Book of Modern Spiritualism*

⁷The rappings began at the Fox home in Hydesville, N.Y., March 31, 1848. This is regarded by spiritists as the beginning of modern spiritism.

in America. The following quotations have been taken from that source. Note the parallels with the *Early Writings* statement.

“Spiritualism now encircles the world, embracing millions of sincere adherents from every walk of life.” *Centennial Book of Modern Spiritualism in America*, page 5.

“Neither priest nor press should uncharitably speak of, or touch this holy word Spiritualism, only with clean hands and pure hearts.” [Early Writings, 34.](#)

“Spiritualists are the only religionists who have used the promised gifts of the Christ, by which gifts they heal the sick, and demonstrate a future conscious and progressive existence.” [Early Writings, 34.](#)

“It gives you more knowledge of the Christian Bible than all the Commentaries combined. The Bible is a book of Spiritualism.” [Early Writings, 44.](#)

“A medium foretold the birth of Jesus, whose brief life on earth was filled with the performance of many so-called miracles which in reality were spiritual phenomena.” [Early Writings, 68.](#)

“Born in humility and obscurity, persecuted and maligned in its infancy and youth, doubted, ridiculed and derided on every hand, it has steadily grown until it has many million adherents. It has crept silently into the pages of popular books, magazines, newspapers, as well as stage and screen, throughout the world, until unconsciously the public mind has been educated and molded into conformity therewith.” [Early Writings, 69.](#)

To the present time we have seen only a partial fulfillment of the prediction concerning spiritism; indeed, much more remains to be accomplished. But all that we know of modern spiritism fits the picture drawn by Ellen White as she described it in her vision of 1850. The number of persons belonging to spiritist churches in no way indicates the number of spiritists in the world. Its inroads may be seen in numerous church bodies of all denominations where belief in the natural immortality of the soul is held as a cardinal doctrine.

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Time-setting error. A prediction of a different nature that gave help to the advent believers and established their confidence, was given in 1845, soon after Ellen Harmon’s public ministry began.

Among those who had passed through the advent disappointment in 1844 were many who had a firm conviction that Christ would return a year later. We have not been given an explanation of the basis for their expectation; but in May, 1847, James White wrote: “It is well known that many were expecting the Lord to come at the 7th month, 1845. That Christ would then come we firmly believed.” James White, [A Word to the Little Flock](#), 22.

A short time before the 1845 date, a message came from Ellen Harmon which spared those who accepted it from another acute disappointment. James White wrote further: “A few days before the time passed, I was at Fairhaven, and Dart-mouth, Massachusetts, with a message on this point of time. At this time, Ellen was with the band at Carver, Massachusetts, where she saw in vision, that we should be disappointed, and that the saints must pass through the ‘time of Jacob’s trouble,’ which was future. Her view of Jacob’s trouble was entirely new to us, as well as herself.” The results of the experience have not been preserved for us in detail, but those who believed her message to be from God avoided the disappointment.

[275] The examples of fulfilled prophecies that have been cited are set forth in order to show the kind of statements that should be watched for as the individual makes a broad application of the Bible test. As the years pass, there will be additional evidences of the genuineness of the prophetic declarations. Much of what has been foretold has to do with events still in the future. As we watch the prophecies reach their fulfillment our confidence will be increased. “And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.” [John 14:29](#).

Of course, the Bible principles governing conditional prophecy would apply in the case of a modern prophet as well as to prophets of Bible times. This matter will be considered further in a later chapter, but it would be helpful to review the texts and examples on the subject presented in [chapter 6](#).

Test 4. “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.” [1 John 4:2](#).

Of all the Bible tests, this is perhaps the easiest one to apply to the writings of Ellen White. She has written voluminously on the life and ministry of Jesus, as well as on His pre-existence, His heavenly ministry, and His return. The books *The Desire of Ages*, *Thoughts*

From the Mount of Blessing, Steps to Christ, and Christ's Object Lessons, as well as hundreds of pages in her other volumes, are devoted to a portrayal of the character and ministry of the Saviour. The high points of the story are told in these short statements.

"From the days of eternity the Lord Jesus Christ was one with the Father." [The Desire of Ages, 19.](#)

"In it [the Bible] we may learn what our redemption has cost Him who from the beginning was equal with the Father, and who sacrificed His life that a people might stand before Him redeemed from everything earthly, renewed in the image of God." [Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 13, 14.](#)

"The Son of God had wrought the Father's will in the creation of all the hosts of heaven; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due. Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants." [Patriarchs and Prophets, 36.](#) [276]

"God, the Owner of the world, was His Father." [Fundamentals of Christian Education, 401.](#)

"What a contrast between this unbelief and the sweet, childlike faith of Mary, the maiden of Nazareth, whose answer to the angel's wonderful announcement was, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word'!" [The Desire of Ages, 98.](#)

"But the Sinless One has taken our place." [The Ministry of Healing, 71.](#)

"Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His." [The Desire of Ages, 25.](#)

"By His word and His works He declared Himself the Author of the resurrection. He who Himself was soon to die upon the cross stood with the keys of death, a conqueror of the grave, and asserted His right and power to give eternal life." [The Desire of Ages, 530.](#)

"We should be comforted by the thought that we have a great intercessor in the heavens, presenting our petitions before God." [Testimonies for the Church 4:530.](#)

"The doctrine of the second advent is the very keynote of the Sacred Scriptures." [The Great Controversy, 299.](#)

“The blessed hope of the second appearing of Christ, with its solemn realities, needs to be often presented to the people.” [Testimonies for the Church 6:406](#).

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Additional evidences. In discussing the application of the tests of a prophet to the Bible prophets we mentioned several additional evidences of genuineness which are not specifically enumerated in the Bible, but which appear repeatedly in the Bible record. Since a number of these added evidences form a vital part of some of the remaining chapters of this book, they will not be introduced as a group at this point. It would be well to review the types of added evidence, so that they may be kept in mind as the investigation is pursued.

No one Bible evidence is sufficient to identify conclusively a prophet as being genuine, though failure to meet any one of the tests is sufficient to disqualify him. On the basis of the application of the tests to the experience of Ellen White, as introduced here, but on a much more extensive scale, Seventh-day Adventists have concluded that her claim to divine inspiration was genuine.

SUMMARY

1. Four major Bible tests make it possible to identify a true prophet:

“To the law and to the testimony.”

“By their fruits.”

“When the word of the prophet shall come to pass.”

“Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.”

2. When Bible tests are applied to the life and work of Ellen White, they give clear evidence that her messages were inspired by God.

3. Additional study and observation will bring to light more evidences that Ellen White was God’s messenger.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. In testing a professed prophet today, how far should one go in seeking to apply the tests for himself, and how much can he depend on the testimony of others to help him make his decision?

2. How would you apply the tests if next Sabbath someone professing to be a prophet should present himself to your church group? Deal with each test separately. [278]

3. What factors would cause you to look on a professed prophet most favorably? Most skeptically?

4. Can you find additional evidences that strengthen your conviction that Ellen White was God's messenger?

5. *A Project.* Early in this chapter it was stated that this material was planned as an introduction to the remainder of the present book, as well as a guide for further study. Each person should bring together for himself all the evidence he can find, so that he will have sufficient material on which to make a clear-cut decision. The plan of the project is simple. Several pages of a loose-leaf notebook should be set aside for the project. Four sheets should contain the texts stating the major Bible tests, one to a sheet. More sheets may be used for other forms of evidence. As you read further in this book and others, make an entry on one of these pages whenever you learn of an incident that has a bearing on these prophetic tests. Additional pages may be inserted as they are needed, for in some instances there will be a large number of items to be recorded. If you keep a careful record, you will find that on every test you will have an abundance of evidence.

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“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.” [Hebrews 1:1, 2](#). The words “at sundry times and in divers manners” form a common expression meaning “at many times and in many ways.” As God has adapted His approach to the needs of each individual, attempting to draw all to Himself, so He has varied His methods of dealing with prophets. He has been guided by the characteristics of the prophet, the needs of the people, and the demands of the circumstances. Not all messages were given to prophets in the same way, and they were delivered to the people by a variety of means. A study of Ellen White’s experience in receiving and delivering messages reveals the same variations in methods as does a survey of the work of the Bible prophets.

Receiving Visions

How the visions seemed to Ellen White. Describing her experience at the time of her first vision, Mrs. White said, “While we were praying, the power of God came upon me as I had never felt it before. I seemed to be surrounded with light, and to be rising higher and higher from the earth. I turned to look for the advent people in the world, but could not find them, when a voice said to me: ‘Look again, and look a little higher.’” [Testimonies for the Church 1:58](#).

She continued the description of the things she saw in the vision, telling of the path before the advent people, the coming of Christ, heaven, and the new earth. “Then,” she said, “an angel bore me gently down to this dark world. Sometimes I think I can stay here no longer; all things of earth look so dreary. I feel very lonely here, for I have seen a better land. Oh, that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest!”

“After I came out of vision, everything looked changed; a gloom was spread over all that I beheld. Oh, how dark this world looked to

me. I wept when I found myself here, and felt homesick. I had seen a better world, and it had spoiled this for me.”—[Early Writings, 20](#).

During the time of the vision, the messenger was totally unconscious of her earthly surroundings, and it seemed to her that she was transported bodily to the place revealed in vision, as had been the case with Ezekiel and Paul. [Ezekiel 8:3](#); [2 Corinthians 12:2-4](#). She seemed to be actually viewing or taking part in the activities shown. All her senses seemed to be employed as in the ordinary activities of life, but none were being used in the ordinary way. The fact that she was shut away from her immediate surroundings during the time of the vision made all that she saw the more vivid and impressive. The statement in the Introduction to *The Great Controversy* enables us to glimpse what took place in the revelation:

“Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the scenes of the long-continued conflict between good and evil have been opened to the writer of these pages. From time to time I have been permitted to behold the working, in different ages, of the great controversy between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin....

[282] “As the Spirit of God has opened to my mind the great truths of His word, and the scenes of the past and the future, I have been bidden to make known to others that which has thus been revealed,—to trace the history of the controversy in past ages, and especially so to present it as to shed a light on the fast-approaching struggle of the future.” Pages x, xi.

This was an intensely vivid experience for the prophet; so real, in fact, that it was painful for her to have to return to a consciousness of earthly things after having been given a view of heaven. It was, however, purely an enlightenment of the mind, and not an actual experience. Therefore, the prophet could be shown things past and future as well as present.

The observation of others. James White observed his wife in vision more frequently than did anyone else. Many of her visions came when she was in public meetings. His description of her condition coincides with that given by others.

“1. She is utterly unconscious of everything transpiring around her, as has been proved by the most rigid tests, but views herself as removed from this world, and in the presence of heavenly beings.

“2. She does not breathe. During the entire period of her continuance in vision, which has at different times ranged from fifteen minutes to three hours, there is no breath, as has been repeatedly proved by pressing upon the chest, and by closing the mouth and nostrils.

“3. Immediately on entering vision, her muscles become rigid, and joints fixed, so far as any external force can influence them. At the same time her movements and gestures, which are frequent, are free and graceful, and cannot be hindered nor controlled by the strongest person.

“4. On coming out of vision, whether in the daytime or a well-lighted room at night, all is total darkness. Her power to distinguish even the most brilliant objects, held within a few inches of the eyes, returns but gradually, sometimes not being fully established for three hours. This has continued for the past twenty years; yet her eyesight is not in the least impaired, few persons having better than she now possesses.” James White, *Life Incidents in Connection With the Great Advent Movement*, page 272. Numerous additional descriptions are available of her condition in vision. J. N. Loughborough brought several of these together in his book *The Great Second Advent Movement*, pages 204-210. ⁸ Without giving space to repeat the accounts, we shall summarize their testimony.

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1. Frequently, just prior to a vision, there was a deep sense of the presence of God, both by Ellen White and by others in the room.

2. Often, as the vision began, Ellen White spoke, “Glory,” or “Glory to God,” at times repeated.

3. There was a loss of physical strength.

4. Then followed supernatural strength.

5. There was no breathing, although her heartbeat was normal and her color was natural. There was no discernible disturbance in the circulatory system.

6. At times there would be brief statements or exclamations telling something of the scene being presented. On a few occasions longer statements were made.

⁸These have been reprinted in A. L. White, Ellen G. White, *Messenger to the Remnant*, pages 22-24.

7. Her eyes were open and she appeared to be watching something in the distance.

8. Her position was not always the same; she might be seated, reclining, or walking around the room.

9. She was unconscious of surroundings or of the presence of other individuals.

10. Observers became aware that a vision was ended when a deep breath was taken. This was followed in a minute or two by another; regular breathing was then resumed.

11. For a time after she was in vision all seemed dark to her.

12. Normal sight, and natural strength and abilities were restored within a short time. There was no drain upon the physical system as the result of the visions. On some occasions, healing from illness took place.

[284] These characteristics marked many of the visions, but all were not given in this manner. On numerous occasions visions were given during periods when Ellen White was praying or writing. At such times she seemed cut off from her immediate surroundings, but the other indications that she was in vision were not present. Such presentations were brief, and frequently had to do with current situations and problems for which immediate guidance was needed. A typical incident was described by W. C. White as it took place at the Minnesota camp meeting in 1870:

“Father and mother were carrying a heavy burden in behalf of the ministry who had been working in that state. On Sunday morning they undertook to conduct a revival service. Father spoke for a few minutes, but with little freedom. Then after mother had spoken briefly, they asked the congregation to kneel in prayer. Father offered a labored, sorrowful prayer, then mother began to implore for light and freedom. After she had prayed for about two minutes she stopped. There was silence long enough to count to forty or fifty, about half a minute.

“I was kneeling with the congregation, and I turned to see what was the occasion for the silence. Just then she burst forth in prayer. Her voice was melodious, and triumphant, and the remainder of her prayer greatly moved the people present.

“During the period of silence, a revelation was given her regarding conditions in the Minnesota Conference, also conditions

regarding the work in Battle Creek, also regarding other matters of general interest in the cause. Following the camp meeting, father and mother found retirement at the home of one of our brethren. Mother wrote diligently for about two weeks, in recording what had been shown to her during the half-minute of pause in her prayer.” A. L. White, Ellen G. White, *Messenger to the Remnant*, page 8.

Commenting on a later incident, Mrs. White said, “While engaged in earnest prayer, I was lost to everything around me; the room was filled with light, and I was bearing a message to an assembly that seemed to be the General Conference. I was moved by the Spirit of God to make a most earnest appeal; for I was impressed that great danger was before us at the heart of the work.” *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 461. [285]

These revelations came to the messenger while she was in vision, and they were of the same nature as those in which the characteristic physical manifestations were present. They serve as examples of the “divers manners” in which God has spoken to His prophets.

Types of revelations in the visions. The sentences already quoted from the introduction to *The Great Controversy* set forth one kind of view given in the visions—the panoramic view in which events of history and the future passed rapidly before the eyes of the prophet. But conditions existing in homes, institutions, and conferences were also revealed in detail. At times it seemed to Ellen White that she was being led from one place to another in an institution, where she observed the words and actions of the workers. She described one such visit in these words:

“An angel of God seemed to conduct me from room to room in the different departments. The conversation I was made to hear in the rooms of the helpers was not of a character to elevate and strengthen mind or morals. The frivolous talk, the foolish jesting, the meaningless laugh, fell painfully upon the ear....

“I was conducted to a few rooms from which came the voice of prayer. How welcome was the sound! A bright light shone upon the face of my guide as his hand traced every word of the petition.” [Counsels on Health, 412](#). It will be of interest and value to read the complete description on pages 412, 413.

In the summer of 1893, during her ministry in the Australasian field, Mrs. White spent some time in New Zealand. Delayed on one

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of her trips by a storm which made the roads impassable, she spent a few days in a home where only one daughter of the family was a Seventh-day Adventist. During the first night of her stay—before she had met all the members of the family—she arose at four o'clock to write out some things that had been revealed to her in the night.

“The angel of God said, ‘Follow me.’ I seemed to be in a room in a rude building, and there were several young men playing cards. They seemed to be very intent upon the amusement in which they were engaged and were so engrossed that they did not seem to notice that anyone had entered the room. There were young girls present observing the players, and words were spoken not of the most refined order. There was a spirit and influence that were sensibly felt in that room that was not of a character calculated to purify and uplift the mind and ennoble the character....

“I inquired, ‘Who are these and whom does this scene represent?’

“The word was spoken, ‘Wait.’

“I had another representation. There was the imbibing of the liquid poison, and the words and actions under its influence were anything but favorable for serious thoughts, clear perception in business lines, pure morals and the uplifting of the participants....

“I asked again, ‘Who are these?’

“The answer came, ‘A portion of the family where you are visiting.’” Ellen G. White [Letter 1, 1893](#).

In order to ensure the laying of wise plans, the Lord at times gave insight into His will for the future. “I have been thinking of how, after we began sanitarium work in Battle Creek, sanitarium buildings all ready for occupation were shown to me in vision. The Lord instructed me as to the way in which the work in these buildings should be conducted in order for it to exert a saving influence on the patients.

“All this seemed very real to me, but when I awoke, I found that the work was yet to be done, that there were no buildings erected.” Ellen G. White [Letter 135, 1903](#).

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On other occasions the Lord pointed out to Ellen White what would be the results of following either of two plans or policies. Indicating the end from the beginning as He did, God gave opportunity for a wise course of action to be selected. Such an instance is recorded in [Testimonies for the Church 9:28, 29](#), where two lighted

maps were brought to view to illustrate the results of varying courses of action.

Again, parablelike representations, somewhat similar to many found in the Bible, were given to her. A striking example of this is found in [Gospel Workers, 136-139](#), where in a dream she saw a berry-gathering expedition. This was used to illustrate the way some persons go about their soul-winning work.

The different approaches introduced into the Ellen White writings give the instruction an interest and variety that constantly reminds one of the teachings of the Bible. The same general lines of instruction are frequently repeated for the benefit of different individuals or groups, but it is varied to suit the particular needs of those addressed. This results ultimately in a body of teachings that is most enlightening to all readers. Whatever the type of revelation or the circumstances under which it was given, it was from the same source, and the fact that it was a divine message was clear to the messenger. This is true of the light sent in dreams at night, sometimes referred to as night visions, as well as of visions given during the waking hours. No clear distinction is made between the two in either the Bible or Ellen White's writings.

W. C. White once inquired: "Mother, you often speak of matters being revealed to you in the night season. You speak of dreams in which light comes to you. We all have dreams. How do you know that God is speaking to you in the dreams of which you so frequently speak?"

Her reply was: "Because the same angel messenger stands by my side instructing me in the visions of the night, as stands beside me instructing me in the visions of the day." A. L. White, *Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant*, page 7.

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The import of the message is in no wise affected by the manner in which it came to the messenger. In her writings no distinctions or classifications are made. All that was given as instruction is placed on the same plane of validity and importance.

Passing On the Messages

Within a week after she had received her first vision, Ellen Harmon received another vision in which her duty was set forth. "In a

second vision, which soon followed the first, I was shown the trials through which I must pass, and that it was my duty to go and relate to others what God had revealed to me.... The teaching of this vision troubled me exceedingly, for it pointed out my duty to go out among the people and present the truth.” [Testimonies for the Church 1:62](#). For several days she prayed that the burden might be removed from her, for she questioned her ability to give the message fittingly. “But the light of duty did not change, and the words of the angel sounded continually in my ears: ‘Make known to others what I have revealed to you.’” *Ibid.*

A little later, the word came to Ellen Harmon, “Write out the instructions I give you for the people.” She described her reaction and response in these words: “I answered, ‘I cannot write, Lord.’ Because of the accident which had nearly cost me my life, I had been feeble in health and unable to write, for my hand trembled so that I was forced after many efforts to give up the attempt to write. But one night the angel of the Lord came to my bedside and said to me, ‘You must write out the things that I give you.’ I said, ‘I cannot write.’ Again the command was given, ‘Write out the things I give you.’ I thought I would try, and taking up a lapboard from the table, I began to write, and found that I could trace the words easily. The Lord had wrought a miracle upon me.”—Ellen G. White, in [The General Conference Bulletin, May 27, 1909](#), p. 225.

[289] In the years that followed, Ellen White bore a large number of testimonies of counsel given orally to individuals and groups. An incident during one of the “Sabbath conferences” in 1848 is typical. There were differences of opinion about the truths being studied. “The light of heaven then rested upon me, and I was soon lost to earthly things. My accompanying angel presented before me some of the errors of those present, and also the truth in contrast with their errors. These discordant views, which they claimed were in harmony with the Scriptures, were only according to their opinion of Bible teachings; and I was bidden to tell them that they should yield their errors, and unite upon the truths of the third angel’s message.

“Our meeting closed triumphantly. Truth gained the victory. Our brethren renounced their errors and united upon the third angel’s message, and God greatly blessed them and added many to their numbers.” [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White](#), 111.

In sermons and personal counsels, these oral testimonies continued to be given throughout Ellen White's ministry. Some were written out and read to those concerned, others were recorded in writing after they were given in person. Of still others, no written record was made.

The major work of Ellen White in the giving of testimonies was accomplished through writing them in the form of letters, and writing them for publication. Many of the testimonies contained in letters were later published. These written messages make up the more than 4,500 periodical articles from her pen, and the forty-five volumes of her writings currently available. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, she wrote some one hundred thousand manuscript pages in longhand. The duty of keeping up with the writing of large numbers of letters and other manuscripts often taxed the messenger's strength to the utmost. In the early morning hours, and late at night, in private and in public, she persisted in her task. "Write, write, write, I feel that I must, and not delay." Ellen G. White [Letter 11, 1884](#).

Ellen White carried a deep sense of responsibility that the letters she wrote should bear testimony to individuals in the most appealing way possible to accomplish their intended work. It was the purpose of the testimony to guide those persons addressed in the right way, to help them make wise decisions, or perhaps show them that they must repent and turn to God. Ordinarily the message was sent immediately, but sometimes she was told by the angel that the word should be set aside until she received further instructions. On other occasions the message was not sent directly to the one addressed, but was entrusted to another to be read to the one for whom it was intended. Thus there was opportunity for discussion, counsel, and prayer, that would help bring a better understanding and more ready acceptance. In explanation of her reason for following this practice, she said:

"Sometimes when I receive a testimony for someone who is in danger, who is being deceived by the enemy, I am instructed that I am not to place it in his hands, but to give it to someone else to read to him, because, being deceived by the insinuations of Satan, he would read the testimony in the light of his own desires, and to

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him its meaning would be perverted.” Ellen G. White [Manuscript 71, 1903](#).

[291] The work was not done mechanically. It called for every energy to be devoted to it, every sympathy to be exercised. It required the greatest of tact and the most careful planning. In 1903, Mrs. White wrote: “I have been afraid that I should not have the strength to write to you thus plainly, for to do it takes hold of every fiber of my being. It is indeed as if I were writing to my own son.... My brother, I am drawn out to write to you the words that I spoke last night when in the night visions I was talking with you.” Ellen G. White [Letter 180, 1903](#). What was true of the letters was also true of the articles and books. Painstaking attention was given to them that they might appropriately present Bible truths and that the instruction applying Bible principles might be outlined clearly. It is apparent to the reader that these works are productions of the heart and not merely from the pen of the messenger.

In speaking, as well as in writing, words of instruction, there was the ever-present guidance of the Holy Spirit. This guidance did not extend to the exact words chosen, except in rare instances. “Although I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, yet the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own, unless they be those spoken to me by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation.” Ellen G. White, in [The Review and Herald, October 8, 1867](#). “When I am speaking to the people I say much that I have not premeditated. The Spirit of the Lord frequently comes upon me. I seem to be carried out of, and away from, myself; the life and character of different persons are clearly presented before my mind. I see their errors and dangers, and feel compelled to speak of what is thus brought before me.” [Testimonies for the Church 5:678](#).

This sense of sacred compulsion is emphasized further in this explanation penned in 1890. “Before I stand on my feet, I have no thought of speaking as plainly as I do. But the Spirit of God rests upon me with power, and I cannot but speak the words given me. I dare not withhold one word of the testimony.... I speak the words given me by a power higher than human power, and I cannot, if I would, recall one sentence.

“In the night season the Lord gives me instruction, in symbols, and then explains their meaning. He gives me the word, and I dare not refuse to give it to the people. The love of Christ, and, I venture to add, the love of souls, constrains me, and I cannot hold my peace.” Ellen G. White [Manuscript 22, 1890](#).

The weight of responsibility for a fitting presentation of the messages was never lifted. “Now I must leave this subject so imperfectly presented, that I fear you will misinterpret that which I feel so anxious to make plain. O that God would quicken the understanding, for I am but a poor writer, and cannot with pen or voice express the great and deep mysteries of God. O pray for yourselves, pray for me.” Ellen G. White [Letter 67, 1894](#).

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All the factors mentioned have combined to aid in bringing out a body of Christian literature that is practical, enlightening, sympathetic, and appealing; literature that has played a major role in strengthening Seventh-day Adventists as individual Christians, and in building up the church as a whole.

SUMMARY

1. To the prophet, the coming of a vision was a real experience—as real as though it were physical. Actually, it was an enlightenment of the mind.

2. There were distinctive physical conditions that prevailed during many of Ellen White’s visions, similar to those described in the Bible.

3. All the visions were not of the same general type. Some were panoramic views of past, present, and future. Others dealt with details, parablelike representations, and contrasts.

4. Messages were passed on in a variety of ways,—through sermons, interviews, letters, articles, personal statements.

5. The writing of the messages was not done mechanically, but it involved the co-operation of the Holy Spirit with the experience and thought of the prophet.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Prepare to discuss the advantages of the variety of methods God used in presenting His messages to the prophets.

2. What has been gained by varying the methods of delivering the communications to the people?

[293] 3. Can you think of reasons why God permitted the experience and thinking of the prophet to enter into the writing or speaking of His message, rather than dictating it word for word?

4. As far as possible, compare the physical condition of Ellen White in vision with what is told of the condition of Bible prophets. How far are they alike? Are there differences?

5. Find several Bible experiences that parallel those of Ellen White as far as receiving and delivering communications from God is concerned.

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Chapter 16—The Ellen G. White Books

Ellen White is best known through her books, which currently number forty-five volumes. As early as 1914, George Wharton James, who was personally acquainted with Mrs. White, made this comment: "This remarkable woman, ... though almost entirely self-educated, has written and published more books and in more languages, which circulate to a greater extent than the written works of any woman of history." *California—Romantic and Beautiful*, pages 319, 320. Tens of thousands of lives throughout the world have been affected directly or indirectly by the messages of these volumes. Many who have known nothing of the life and character of the author have purchased or borrowed one or more of the books and have read and been blessed for the reading. Other thousands who know of the life and work of Ellen White buy more and more of the books so that they may have ready access to all the counsel.

A knowledge of the background of the writing of the books is essential to our understanding of the full import of the messages they contain. The circumstances, situations, and inspiration out of which the volumes emerged shed light on their meaning and significance. The more nearly one can enter into the life experience of the writer the more fully he will grasp the train of thought presented, and be able to translate it into action in his own life. We recognize this principle in our study of the books of the Bible and their authors. Every time we learn something new about Jeremiah, his associates, the circumstances under which he did his work, or the general historical setting of his life, our added knowledge enables us to interpret more accurately the meaning of the words he wrote. It is because of this that modern archaeology has made such vast contributions to our understanding of the message of the Bible.

Details of the background of the writing of the Ellen White books could easily occupy a volume of their own. In a one-chapter treatment only a few of the books can be touched, but additional study and work on the part of the student will produce information

that will contribute not only to his store of historical information, but to his keenness of spiritual perception as well. In this chapter the major emphasis will be placed on the growth of the sets of books known now as the Conflict of the Ages Series, and Testimonies for the Church. With few exceptions these are the Ellen White books that are best known and have had the widest circulation. However, before coming to these, attention should be given to an earlier volume.

“Experience and Views”

Ellen White introduced her first book with this comment: “By the request of dear friends I have consented to give a brief sketch of my experience and views, with the hope that it will cheer and strengthen the humble, trusting children of the Lord.” (See the full-page photographic reproduction of the original title page and of James White’s preface to the work.)

It seems clear from the preface that it was hoped this book would do more than fulfill the request of friends for a printed record of some of the early incidents in the life and work of Mrs. White. There was prejudice against visions in general. Some were permitting the presence of visions among the advent believers to hold them back from accepting other adventist views. Even among those loyal to the advent cause there were some who could not see the need for a manifestation of the prophetic gift. James White admitted that these persons had considerable justification for their skepticism. False visions and fanaticism were prevalent; mesmerism and spiritism were creating disbelief in anything that savored of the supernatural. In view of the unfavorable way the people associated the true visions with false manifestations, James White set forth a brief, but strong, defense of the gift in the last days. He hoped that the appearance of the book would serve as an encouragement to those whose minds were settled on the validity of Mrs. White’s claims, and a persuasion to some who were uncertain or actively opposed.

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Less than seven years before the publication of *Experience and Views*, in December, 1844, Ellen Harmon had received her first vision. While a few of the letters she had written to individuals describing her visions were published by those who had received them, not many were brought to general attention. James White’s *Present*

Truth carried seven articles by her during 1849 and 1850. Of the seven, four told directly of things she had seen in vision, two others contained expressions like “I saw,” and “the Lord has shown me,” along with some admonition and instruction. One spoke of visions that had been published without her consent. Each article contained something about the visions, but the whole story had not been told. It was natural that some of these things, including her first vision, should be brought together with others not previously published. They were placed with a brief biographical sketch in a form that would be readily available for reference by those who wished to use them. Out went the sixty-four-page booklet, concluding with this sentence: “To those who may circulate this little work, I would say, that it is designed for the sincere only, and not for those who would ridicule the things of the Spirit of God.” Significantly, the paragraph just preceding that last sentence gives an insight into Ellen White’s attitude toward the Bible and what she understood to be the relation of her writings to the Book.

“I recommend to you, dear reader, the word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that word we are to be judged. God has, in that word, promised to give visions in the ‘LAST DAYS;’ not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and to correct those who err from Bible truth. Thus God dealt with Peter when He was about to send him to preach to the Gentiles. [Acts 10.](#)” *Experience and Views*, page 64.

Three years later, in 1854, a forty-eight-page supplement was added to *Experience and Views*, and this described several later revelations. The two booklets, as reprinted in 1882, make up the first two sections of *Early Writings*.

Conflict of the Ages Series

The last of the five volumes of the Conflict of the Ages Series to be published, entitled *Prophets and Kings*, came from the press in 1916; but the roots of the series go back beyond the middle of the nineteenth century.

In the spring of 1858 there were at Lovett’s Grove, Ohio, about forty Sabbathkeepers who had recently accepted the advent message as a result of the work of George W. Holt. It was planned that as

a part of a visit to several places in Ohio, Elder and Mrs. White should hold meetings with the new believers on Sabbath, March 13, and Sunday morning, March 14. Services were conducted in the schoolhouse as scheduled, but on Sunday afternoon another was held which had not been included in the original planning. A young man of the community had died, and Elder White was asked to preach the funeral sermon. He preached freely and powerfully.

After he had finished speaking and sat down, Mrs. White felt impressed by the Holy Spirit to speak about the coming of Jesus Christ and the resurrection. She spoke of the Christian hope and the joys of heaven. While she was speaking, the Spirit of God came upon her and she was taken in vision. For two hours, while she was totally unconscious of her earthly surroundings, the vision continued. There flashed before her numerous scenes from the great controversy between Christ and Satan, begun before the creation of this world, and to be finished when Christ returns to earth the third time to destroy sin and sinners. A later general statement including the Lovett's Grove vision and others gives an insight into what was revealed in rounding out the whole of the story. [299]

“Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the scenes of the long-continued conflict between good and evil have been opened to the writer of these pages. From time to time I have been permitted to behold the working, in different ages, of the great controversy between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin, the first transgressor of God's holy law. Satan's enmity against Christ has been manifested against His followers. The same hatred of the principles of God's law, the same policy of deception, by which error is made to appear as truth, by which human laws are substituted for the law of God, and men are led to worship the creature rather than the Creator, may be traced in all the history of the past. Satan's efforts to misrepresent the character of God, to cause men to cherish a false conception of the Creator, and thus to regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love; his endeavors to set aside the divine law, leading the people to think themselves free from its requirements; and his persecution of those who dare to resist his deceptions, have been steadfastly pursued in all ages. They may be traced in the history of

patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, of martyrs and reformers.” [The Great Controversy, Introduction, x](#).

As was suggested earlier, this 1858 vision was not the first revelation of the great controversy given to Mrs. White. In 1860, when telling the story of the vision, she commented:

“In the vision at Lovett’s Grove, most of the matter which I had seen ten years before concerning the great controversy of the ages between Christ and Satan, was repeated, and I was instructed to write it out.”—[Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 162](#).

At the conclusion of the vision, the funeral service was completed, and the people, who had more than filled the little school-house, returned to their homes deeply impressed with what they had seen.

[300] The next day the Whites began their journey home to Battle Creek. At Fremont, Ohio, they boarded the train for Jackson, Michigan. Much of the time on the trip was spent discussing their recent experiences and laying plans for writing and publishing the things that had been revealed regarding the great controversy. They felt that this should be Mrs. White’s first task after reaching home. However, they had hardly sensed the significance of the warning given during the vision.

“I was shown that while I should have to contend with the powers of darkness, for Satan would make strong efforts to hinder me, yet I must put my trust in God, and angels would not leave me in the conflict.” *Ibid.*

Satan’s first attempt to hinder the publication of the vision was not long restrained. In Jackson they stopped for a visit at the home of old friends, the Daniel R. Palmers. Daniel Palmer at this time was a member of the three-man publishing committee of the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*. Mrs. White had been enjoying usual health, and the attack of the enemy took all by surprise except the angels whose companionship had been promised during the conflict. Here is Mrs. White’s description of what happened:

“We had been in the house but a short time, when, as I was conversing with Sister Palmer, my tongue refused to utter what I wished to say, and seemed large and numb. A strange, cold sensation struck my heart, passed over my head, and down my right side. For a time I was insensible, but was aroused by the voice of earnest prayer.

I tried to use my left limbs, but they were perfectly useless. For a short time I did not expect to live. It was my third shock of paralysis; and although within fifty miles of home, I did not expect to see my children again. I called to mind the triumphant season I had enjoyed at Lovett's Grove, and thought it was my last testimony, and felt reconciled to die." [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 162, 163.](#)

Prayer for her recovery was continued. Before long what she described as a "prickling sensation" came to her limbs, and she regained a measure of control of them. Prayer was continued, "the power of Satan was broken," and the following day she was strong enough to return home. Recovery was far from completed, but there seems to have been daily progress. While suffering intensely she began the writing of the great controversy account.

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"At first I could write but one page a day, and then rest three days; but as I progressed, my strength increased. The numbness in my head did not seem to becloud my mind, and before I closed that work [*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1], the effect of the shock had entirely left me." [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 163.](#)

The full significance of the attack was made plain a little time later, along with a promise for the future.

"At the time of the conference at Battle Creek, in June, 1858, I was shown in vision that in the sudden attack at Jackson, Satan intended to take my life, in order to hinder the work I was about to write; but angels of God were sent to my rescue. I also saw, among other things, that I should be blessed with better health than before the attack." *Ibid.*

In the [The Review and Herald, June 24, 1858](#), this notice appeared among the announcements on the last page:

"*The Great Controversy*.—This is the title of a work now in the press, written by Mrs. White. It is a sketch of her views of the great controversy between Christ and His angels, and the devil and his angels, from the fall of Satan until the controversy shall close at the end of the one thousand years of Rev. xx, by the destruction of sin and sinners out of the universe of God. It will contain between two and three hundred pages. Price, neatly bound in muslin, 50 cents."

The issue of the *Review and Herald* for September 9 gave notice that "*Spiritual Gifts*, or *The Great Controversy*, has now been sent to all who have ordered." R. F. Cottrell wrote an introductory article for

the book in which he outlined reasons for believing in the perpetuity of spiritual gifts. The book's 219 pages portrayed only the high points of the controversy story. The more complete story was yet to be written.

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“Spiritual Gifts,” Volume 2

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In order to follow the chronological development of the set of volumes known as *Spiritual Gifts*, volumes 1-4, it is necessary to break into the story of the development of the expanded great controversy account. *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 2, is an autobiographical work bearing the subtitle *My Christian Experience*. This was a book of more than three hundred pages, in contrast with the sixty-four pages of the original *Experience and Views*. The plan for this book antedated that of *The Great Controversy*, but the work was delayed until the great controversy vision could be published. Again a glance at the preface gives insight into the reasons for the expanded life story.

“Having borne my testimony, and scattered several books containing my visions, in the Eastern, Middle, and Western States, and formed many happy acquaintances, I have felt it my duty to give to my friends and to the world a sketch of my Christian experience, visions, and labors in connection with the rise and progress of the third angel’s message....

“As the cry of Mormonism is often raised, especially in the west, at the introduction of the Bible argument of the perpetuity of spiritual gifts, I have felt anxious that my brethren should know what my experience has been, and *where* it has been.

“When at Knoxville, Iowa, March, 1860, we learned that a man had been reporting that he knew me and my husband twenty years ago, when we were leaders among the Mormons at Nauvoo! At that time I was only twelve years old.

“The statements in this work, backed up by the testimonies of those who have been personally acquainted with my experience and labors for the past sixteen years, may help the minds of some. The tongue of slander will not harm unworthy me. It has been with the hope to benefit, in some degree, the cause of truth, that I have

prepared this work. And may God add His blessing, that it may feed and cheer the little flock.” [Spiritual Gifts 2:3, 4](#).

Seldom has the path of a prophet of God been an easy one. [304] Almost always there have been questionings and skepticism. Frequently his motives have been impugned, his experience assailed. Some of this has been the result of prejudice, some of ignorance; and a fair share has resulted from defiance. God’s warning to Jeremiah was one that might well have been given to every prophet: “And they shall fight against thee.” [Jeremiah 1:19](#). But the sentence does not end at that point. It continues, “but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee.” *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 2, gives no impression of having been written as a defense, but merely to set before the advent believers and others the facts so that they would be prepared to make their own decisions on the basis of evidence presented.

“*Spiritual Gifts*,” Volumes 3 and 4

Prefacing *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 3, Mrs. White declared her purpose in presenting to the public “this, my third little volume.” Because the Bible dwells at considerable length on the sins and apostasies of some of the servants of God and treats sparingly of praise of noble deeds and holy lives, infidels have sought to denounce all Bible characters as unworthy. Much insight had been given in vision to Ellen White as to the balanced picture of the lives of these men, and she felt it a duty to present the light. The author also indicated that a further volume was in prospect.

“When I commenced writing, I hoped to bring all into this volume, but am obliged to close the history of the Hebrews, take up the cases of Saul, David, Solomon, and others, and treat upon the subject of Health, in another volume.” [Spiritual Gifts 3:6](#).

Spiritual Gifts, volume 1, passes over the time from the fall of man to the first advent of Christ without comment. Volume 3 begins with the story of creation week, expands the early history of the antediluvian world, and tells of the Flood and events [305] that followed down to the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt, their arrival at Sinai, and their reception of the law. [306]

The first half of volume 4 treats of the building of the sanctuary, experiences of the Israelites while traveling through the wilderness, and the early kings of Israel before the division of the kingdom, and it closes with miscellaneous chapters on health, some personal experiences, and the delusions of teachings regarding progression. Thus volumes 1, 3, and the first half of 4 combined cover the high points from the fall of Satan to the ultimate eradication of sin. Still the account had not been given in detail. Two major steps remained to be taken before the great-controversy story reached the form in which we find it today.

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“The Spirit of Prophecy,” Volumes 1-4

The *Spiritual Gifts* volumes were given a hearty reception by the advent believers. As time passed and the editions ran out, it was demanded that they be made available again. New believers were being added to the ranks regularly, and it was necessary that they be given access to the great-controversy story for the spiritual enlightenment and guidance it would bring them. However, since the publication of these volumes, additional revelations had been given to Mrs. White and other views had been repeated in more detail. She felt that she should not permit the books to be reprinted in their old form when she was now able to present the messages much more fully. She asked for time to rewrite and expand in order to present the subjects more fully. Plans were laid for the production of four volumes of about four hundred pages each to take the place of *Spiritual Gifts*, volumes 1, 3, and 4. It will be recalled that Volume 2 was autobiographical and not a part of the great controversy account.

The Spirit of Prophecy, volume 1, the first volume of this expanded set, came from the press in 1870, and the others spread over the next fourteen years: volume 2 in 1877, 3 in 1878, and 4 in 1884. A brief description of a few of the changes will give an idea of how the expansion was accomplished. The three pages of chapter I of *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 1, called “The Fall of Satan,” were expanded into a seven-page chapter of the same title in the new book. Larger pages added even more to the contents than the number of pages would indicate. Comparable enlargement and considerable rearrangement of materials took place throughout the development of

the story. Lives of additional Old Testament characters were brought in and their stories told at some length. From the fifty-seven pages in *Spiritual Gifts*, the record of the life of the Saviour unfolded to fill more than 670 pages in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volumes 2 and 3. And so characters and details were added and spiritual lessons brought out until the approximately 600 pages of *Spiritual Gifts* devoted to the controversy story became more than 1,750 enlarged pages in *The Spirit of Prophecy*. [308]

The Great Controversy, volume 4 of *The Spirit of Prophecy*, differs markedly from the other three volumes in the series in that it extends beyond the Bible history and deals mostly with events which have taken place since the close of the Bible canon. The first chapter treats the destruction of Jerusalem which occurred before the writing of the New Testament was finished, but which finds no place in the Bible record. It then takes up the persecution of the Christians during the first centuries of the Christian Era, the rise of the papacy, Christians of the Dark Ages, the Reformation, the advent movement, deceptions of the last days, the deliverance of God's people, and the end of the controversy.

“The Great Controversy”

Soon after the publication of *The Great Controversy* in 1884, it was found to be a book suitable for sale to the public as well as to members of the church. Illustrations were provided and a subscription edition was soon ready for distribution. Within four years after its publication, ten editions of the book, totaling about 50,000 copies, were printed and sold.

Mrs. White spent from the autumn of 1885 until late summer of 1887 in Europe, speaking, counseling with leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist work in numerous European countries, and writing. Her visits to many historic places formerly shown her in vision qualified her to write more vividly and fully of some of the things that had been presented to her. Scenes that had come before her two or three times in vision were brought to mind with renewed force when the historic spots were viewed. Plans were considered for the translation of *The Great Controversy* into principal European languages, and in connection with this project she made additions to [309]

the book to present the matter as fully and graphically as possible. This was published in 1888.

Unlike the 1884 subscription edition, which was the standard edition with added illustrations, the 1888 edition was prepared with the idea in mind of circulation to the general public. Consequently a few pages of material appropriate for the church, but not suitable for general circulation, were omitted. An example may be seen in the chapter, “The Snares of Satan,” pages 518-530, in the 1911 edition. Portions of this chapter, delineating the work of Satan through many Protestant ministers, as it appeared in the earliest edition, were omitted from the 1888 edition in order to avoid giving unnecessary offense to those of other religions. Later the omitted portions were reprinted elsewhere for the information of Seventh-day Adventist workers, e.g., [Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 472-475](#), “The Snares of Satan,” where this matter appears with the footnote: “From the fourth volume of *Spirit of Prophecy*, or *The Great Controversy*, 337-340, ch. 27, (1884).”

Scores of thousands of copies of this new edition were sold, and by 1911 the printing plates were so badly worn that it was necessary to set the type for *The Great Controversy* again. Other important steps in the improvement of the book for general circulation were taken. New illustrations were supplied, references for historical quotations were inserted, and in a few instances historical citations were substituted for some in the earlier editions of the book, the authorship of which could not be determined. Not long after she received a copy of the new edition, Mrs. White wrote indicating her pleasure with it.

[310] “The book *Great Controversy* I appreciate above silver or gold, and I greatly desire that it shall come before the people. While writing the manuscript of *Great Controversy*, I was often conscious of the presence of the angels of God. And many times the scenes about which I was writing were presented to me anew in visions of the night, so that they were fresh and vivid in my mind.... I regard this new edition with great satisfaction.” Ellen G. White [Letter 56, 1911](#).

The Great Controversy as it is circulated today is the 1911 edition. It is still available in two types of editions—the illustrated and specially bound editions sold largely by colporteurs to the general

public, and the smaller, unillustrated editions usually purchased by church members. Pagings vary somewhat in the illustrated editions, but the contents are the same in all.

“Patriarchs and Prophets”

After the appearance of the 1888 edition of *The Great Controversy*, Mrs. White turned her attention to a more complete presentation of the beginning of the great conflict between Christ and Satan. As *The Great Controversy* pictures the close of the struggle, *Patriarchs and Prophets* portrays its beginning. From the beginning of sin, before the creation of this world, the account is carried down to the close of the reign of David. This volume came from the press in 1890 as a companion to *The Great Controversy*.

“The Desire of Ages”

In the four volumes of *The Spirit of Prophecy* series, the story of the life of Christ occupies one full volume and more than half of another—more than a third of the total pages of the series; but still Mrs. White felt that she had not written enough. After the completion of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, her attention was again turned to the life of the Saviour. In her correspondence there are repeated references to her desire to expand and complete her work on the life of Christ. It was about this time that she went to Australia for nine years, and there she was able to do the work she had been looking forward to with such anticipation. Much time was spent over a period of half a dozen years, from 1892 to 1898, in writing chapters for the book. While Ellen White always wrote with the utmost care and feeling, it is unlikely that any other of her books provoked such deep thought and consecration, or called forth such earnest prayers for divine wisdom as did this one, that the life of the Redeemer might be fittingly represented. Combined with her intense desire to give only the best kind of representation of the life of Christ, one must think of the physical suffering through which she passed during part of the time of the preparation of this book. Not long after she reached Australia, Mrs. White began to suffer from inflammatory rheumatism, and was in constant pain for eleven

months. During this time she wrote these lines in a letter to Elder O. A. Olsen, the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists:

“This is indeed a period of physical weakness for me, and of almost absolute dependence upon others. So new is this experience to me that I have felt amazed that it should be so. But though almost helpless in body, in heart I feel no sense of age.

[312] “This week I have been enabled to commence writing on the life of Christ. O, how inefficient, how incapable I am of expressing the things which burn in my soul in reference to the mission of Christ. I have hardly dared to enter upon the work. There is so much to it all. And what shall I say, and what shall I leave unsaid? I lie awake nights pleading with the Lord for the Holy Spirit to come upon me, to abide upon me. I present these words, ‘Without Me ye can do nothing.’ Jesus means to be with the worker in every line of the work. And the reason so many fail to have success is that they trust in themselves altogether too much, and they do not feel the positive necessity of abiding in Christ, as they go forth to seek and save that which is lost. Until they have the mind of Christ, and teach the truth as it is in Jesus, they will not accomplish much. I walk with trembling before God. I know not how to speak or trace with pen the large subjects of the atoning sacrifice. I know not how to present subjects in the living power in which they stand before me. I tremble for fear, lest I shall belittle the great plan of salvation by cheap words. I bow my soul in awe and reverence before God, and say, Who is sufficient for these things? How can I talk, how can I write to my brethren so that they will catch the beams of light flashing from heaven? What shall I say?” Ellen G. White [Letter 40, 1892](#).

After her illness, Mrs. White was not free to pursue the writing of the life of Christ as she wished. She was called on to take an active part in the expanding work of Adventists in Australia. Preaching, correspondence, counsel, and assistance in general lines occupied much of her time. But, a little at a time, material was gathered from what she had written in the past, for she had already penned hundreds of pages on the life of Christ. New articles were written and arranged in their logical order with the earlier articles and selections. Then additional chapters and passages were written to fill in the gaps and

make connections. As the work neared completion, it was apparent that there was too much material for one book. The parables were lifted out and published as *Christ's Object Lessons*. The detailed account of the Sermon on the Mount became *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*. A portion also went into *The Ministry of Healing*. *The Desire of Ages*, a detailed account of Christ's life, was published in 1898.

In the story of the life of the Master, as told in these books, is revealed an insight not only into events but into vital Christian experience. In Ellen White's personal acquaintance with Jesus Christ, perhaps even more than the divine revelations that opened to her so many details of the Saviour's life, lies the reason for the heart-appeal of these messages. She wrote to a friend in 1895: "You know that my whole theme, both in the pulpit and in private, by voice and pen, is the life of Christ." [Letter 41, 1895](#). Christ was the theme of her life as well as of her words. Only out of that kind of experience could such a book as *The Desire of Ages* emerge.

"The Acts of the Apostles" and "Prophets and Kings"

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There remained two gaps to be filled in the expanded record of the conflict of the ages—from the beginning of the reign of Solomon to the end of the Old Testament, and from the death of Christ to the end of the apostolic period. The book covering the apostolic age appeared first. As had been the case in the preparation of *The Desire of Ages*, much could be drawn from the hundreds of pages already in print covering many of the events of the period. Then new chapters and other portions were written particularly for the book in preparation. In a letter to one of her sons, Mrs. White brings in both of these final volumes.

"My work on the book, *The Acts of the Apostles*, is completed. In a few weeks you shall have a copy. I have had excellent help in preparing this work for the press. There are other writings that I desire to get before our people, that they may speak when my voice is silent. The book on Old Testament history [*Prophets and Kings*], which we hope to bring out next, will call for earnest effort. I am grateful for the help the Lord is giving me in the labors of faithful,

trained workers, and that these workers are ready to carry forward this work as fast as it is possible.”—Ellen G. White [Letter 88, 1911](#).

[314] By this time Ellen White had reached the age of eighty-three. She knew that little time remained for her to complete the tasks the Lord had assigned her. All haste was being made to complete the Conflict Series before she should have to lay down her pen. Soon after the completion of *The Acts of the Apostles, Prophets and Kings* was undertaken in the same fashion as the earlier books. Work progressed slowly because of many interruptions; but by February, 1915, the task was nearing completion. It was at that time that Mrs. White met with the accident that confined her to her bed and wheel chair until her death. A brief statement from *Life Sketches* tells of the completion of the book.

“At the time of her accident, in February, 1915, all but the last two chapters had been completed; ... and these final chapters had been sufficiently blocked out to admit of completion by the inclusion of additional matter from her manuscript file.” Page 436.

Thus over a period of fifty-seven years the Conflict of the Ages Series grew, until it stands today a monumental and distinctive work of more than thirty-six hundred pages, giving the clearest insight into the Bible history, and carrying the mind from the rebellion in heaven through the history of the world to the day when sin shall end and eternity shall begin. It will not be misusing the words of the author of these books if her stated objective in the writing of the one volume, *The Great Controversy*, is applied to the whole of the series.

“To unfold the scenes of the great controversy between truth and error; to reveal the wiles of Satan, and the means by which he may be successfully resisted; to present a satisfactory solution of the great problem of evil, shedding such a light upon the origin and the final disposition of sin as to make fully manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all His dealings with His creatures; and to show the holy, unchanging nature of His law, is the object of this book. That through its influence souls may be delivered from the power of darkness, and become ‘partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,’ to the praise of Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us, is the earnest prayer of the writer.” [The Great Controversy, Introduction, xii](#).

A careful, earnest reader of all these volumes will be constrained to agree that the objective of the author, under God, was achieved.

“Testimonies for the Church”

Side by side with the Conflict of the Ages Series stands the second major series of books, *Testimonies for the Church*. Different in nature from the largely historical and biographical “Conflict” books, the *Testimonies* are made up of letters, articles, records of visions, sermons, and addresses containing simple, straightforward instruction concerning the everyday affairs of life. While they outline broad principles that all can apply, they also bring the principles down to specific applications. Mrs. White sets forth the purpose of the volumes succinctly in [Testimonies for the Church 2:608](#). There she quotes the words spoken to her in a prophetic dream. “One stood by my side,” she said, and spoke, among other things, these words: “Your success is in your simplicity. As soon as you depart from this, and fashion your testimony to meet the minds of any, your power is gone. Almost everything in this age is glossed and unreal. The world abounds in testimonies given to please and charm for a moment, and to exalt self. Your testimony is of a different character. It is to come down to the minutiae of life, keeping the feeble faith from dying, and pressing home upon believers the necessity of shining as lights in the world.” [315]

Near the end of April, 1855, a conference of advent believers convened at Battle Creek, Michigan. As one item in his report of the meetings, James White wrote in the [The Review and Herald, May 15, 1855](#): “The brethren in Battle Creek and vicinity are generally awake to the wants of the cause, and are anxious to establish the Review Office in that place. They are able and willing to do so, and manifest much anxiety to relieve us of those cares and responsibilities which we have too long borne. The climate, water, prices of rent, fuel, provisions, &c., seem favorable to the location.”

Since April, 1852, the *Review* office had been located at Rochester, New York. For several years interests of the cause had developed slowly and painfully. Commenting on their situation, Ellen White said: “In 1855 the brethren in Michigan opened the way for the publishing work to be removed to Battle Creek. At that time

[316] my husband was owing between two and three thousand dollars; and all he had, besides a small lot of books, was accounts for books, and some of these were doubtful.... Orders for publications were very few and small. My husband's health was very poor. He was troubled with cough and soreness of lungs, and his nervous system was prostrated." [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 157.](#)

There were men at Battle Creek who were eager to promote the advent cause, and at the same time to relieve the Whites of the pressure of the full responsibility for the publishing work. Daniel R. Palmer, Cyrenius Smith, J. P. Kellogg, and Henry Lyon each agreed to furnish \$300 without interest to purchase a lot and erect a publishing office. On the lot a 20 × 30 foot two-story wooden building was built. At about the same time the first Seventh-day Adventist meetinghouse was erected not far away. It was only 18 × 24 feet, but it marked a beginning. Circumstances improved decidedly soon after the removal to Battle Creek. The friendly earnestness of the believers caused the future to appear brighter.

"From the time we moved to Battle Creek, the Lord began to turn our captivity. We found sympathizing friends in Michigan, who were ready to share our burdens and supply our wants. Old, tried friends in central New York and New England, especially in Vermont, sympathized with us in our afflictions, and were ready to assist us in time of distress. At the conference at Battle Creek in November, 1856, God wrought for us. New life was given to the cause, and success attended the labors of our preachers." [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 159.](#)

The last issue of the *Review and Herald* to be printed at Rochester was dated October 30, 1855. None came out in November. Battle Creek, Michigan, December 4, 1855, was the date line for the next issue. In the meantime an important conference had been held. James White reported on the conference in the first *Review* sent out from the new publishing house in Battle Creek.

[317] "Held at the 'House of Prayer,' at Battle Creek, Nov. 16th-19th, was a Meeting of importance, and deep interest. Brn. Hart of Vt., Bates of Mass., Belden of Conn., and Waggoner, lately from Wis., and a goodly number from different parts of this State, were present. Nov. 16th was spent in transacting business expressed in the call for the Conference. Sabbath, 17th, in a most thorough

examination and discussion of the time to commence the Sabbath; 18th, three discourses were given by Brn. Waggoner and Bates; 19th, in prayer, and remarks, and confessions relative to the evident departure of the remnant from the spirit of the message, and the humble, straightforward course taken by those who first embraced it. Strong desires were expressed, and fervent prayers were offered to Heaven, for the return of the Spirit of consecration, sacrifice, and holiness once enjoyed by the remnant. Our long-suffering, and tender Father in heaven smiled upon His waiting children, and manifested His power to their joy. The brethren separated greatly refreshed and encouraged.” [The Review and Herald, December 4, 1855.](#)

During the four-year period, 1851-55, there had appeared in the *Review* only four articles of general exhortation from Mrs. White’s pen. No reference had been made to the visions. This was one of the items to be considered at the Battle Creek conference, for it was obvious to some that the progress of the work had suffered since little attention was being given to revelations from God. As a result of the conference a decided change was made in attitudes toward the visions and their publication in the paper.

“At our late Conference at Battle Creek, in Nov. God wrought for us. The minds of the servants of God were exercised as to the gifts of the Church, and if God’s frown had been brought upon His people because the gifts had been slighted and neglected, there was a pleasing prospect that His smiles would again be upon us, and He would graciously and mercifully revive the gifts again, and they would live in the Church, to encourage the desponding and fainting soul, and to correct and reprove the erring.” Ellen G. White, in [The Review and Herald, January 10, 1856.](#)

Publishing the First Testimony

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Of her experience at a meeting on the day following the close of the conference, Mrs. White wrote: “November 20, 1855, while in prayer, the Spirit of the Lord came suddenly and powerfully upon me, and I was taken off in vision.” [Testimonies for the Church 1:113.](#) The matters seen in the vision were written out and read to the church at Battle Creek. A footnote at the close of the testimony, as

later printed, gives the reasons for the publication of the contents of the vision.

“We, the undersigned, being eyewitnesses when the above vision was given, deem it highly necessary that it should be published, for the benefit of the Church, on account of the important truths and warnings which it contains.

Joseph. Bates

M. E. Cornell

J. H. Waggoner

J. Hart

G. W. Amadon

Uriah Smith

“Note.—The above vision was read before thirty-six members of the Battle Creek Church, on the evening of Nov. 24th, who gave their unanimous vote for its publication. It can be had by addressing E. G. White, Battle Creek, Mich. Those who would encourage the circulation of such matter, can do so by assisting in its publication. S. T. Belden.” *Testimony for the Church*, 1855, page 8.

While it was not known at the time that this was to be the first of many testimonies to be sent to the church and to individuals, and later published, in due time it came to be designated as Testimony Number One. With the eight pages of this testimony were bound eight additional pages of testimony matter, making a sixteen-page pamphlet. Circulation of the pamphlet was small, and it was sent free to believers in many states. One of the notices in the *Review* of Dec. 18, 1855, said:

[319] “I have sent out (postpaid) to brethren in different States about 150 copies of ‘Testimony for the Church.’ It can be had by addressing me at Battle Creek, Mich. I shall be happy to hear from those who may receive it. Those who would encourage the circulation of such matter, can do so by assisting in its publication. E. G. White.”

No one among the men and women receiving those little pamphlets could have envisioned the nine volumes of *Testimonies for the Church* that would eventually achieve such a wide circulation in the church as they enjoy today. When volume 9 was published in 1909, it brought the total to approximately five thousand pages, made up of Testimonies, Nos. 1-37.

In the spring of 1856 another annual conference was held at Battle Creek, and again important matters were revealed to Mrs. White in vision. Again she wrote out what had been shown her, and read it to the group. Once more those to whom it was read felt that it should be printed and distributed for the benefit of others. At the close of this second testimony for the church is this note of explanation by two local church leaders:

“To the Saints Scattered Abroad

“The foregoing testimony was given in the presence of about one hundred brethren and sisters assembled in the House of Prayer, on whose minds it apparently made a deep impression. It has since been read before the church at Battle Creek, who gave their unanimous vote in favor of its publication for the benefit of the Saints scattered abroad.

“Cyrenius Smith,

“J. P. Kellogg.”

Like the first of the testimony series, the second was distributed without charge. Eight more were issued by 1864. All ten were paper-bound pamphlets, and the first four were sent out free. In 1864, when *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 4, was published, a second part was added to include these first ten testimonies. Ellen White wrote, in introducing this section of the book:

“During the last nine years, from 1855 to 1864, I have written ten small pamphlets, entitled, Testimony for the Church, which have been published and circulated among Seventh-day Adventists. The first edition of most of these pamphlets being exhausted, and there being an increasing demand for them, it has been thought best to reprint them, as given in the following pages, omitting local and personal matters, and giving those portions only which are of practical and general interest and importance. Most of Testimony No. 4 may be found in the second volume of *Spiritual Gifts*, hence, it is omitted in this volume. E.G.W.”

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Testimonies Republished in 1871

Although some portions of the original testimonies were omitted from the group included in the *Spiritual Gifts* volume, later editions included the complete testimonies as presented in the early pamphlets. Ten more testimonies were sent out between 1867 and 1871. In 1871 copies of the later testimonies were available, but the earlier ones were again out of print. The desire of new church members to possess complete sets of the testimonies made it necessary to reprint the earlier messages. The first sixteen numbers were printed in their entirety and bound in two books of about five hundred pages each, paged consecutively. James White explained in the preface:

“During the period of sixteen years Mrs. W. has published her Testimonies to the Church in a series of pamphlets, which, at this date, number twenty. But as the editions of the first numbers were small, and have long since been exhausted, we are not able to furnish the series complete to the numerous friends who subsequently embrace the views of Seventh-day Adventists. The call for these Testimonies being large, we republish, and offer them in this form.

“And we are happy to do this, inasmuch as the testimonies, given under the trying, and ever-changing circumstances of the past sixteen years, ever breathing the same high-toned spirit of Scriptural piety, contain in themselves the best evidences of their being what they profess to be.

[322] “There are in them matters of a local and personal character, which do not have a direct bearing upon our time. But as many have desired it, we give them complete.” *Testimonies for the Church*, 1871 ed., vol. 1.

In this preface James White brings out a point of extreme importance, not only in connection with these particular testimonies, but in the consideration of all the Ellen White writings. When the earlier testimonies were first reprinted, certain portions were not included, because they were of such a nature that they did not directly apply to all. It was felt at that time that there was no real need for them to be published again. But, James White emphasizes, if the people want them, there is no reason why they should not be made available again. Every one of them, he says, breathes “the same high-toned

spirit of Scriptural piety.” Furthermore, they “contain in themselves the best evidences of their being what they profess to be.”

The Third Edition

Between 1871 and 1881, testimonies 17 to 30 were published, first as separate pamphlets, and later bound together, but with the pamphlet pagination retained. In 1882 testimony 31 appeared, but once more the publishers found it impossible to supply the demand for complete sets of the testimonies either as pamphlets or bound books. In 1883 it was decided to reprint Nos. 1-30. Before the printing was undertaken, however, there were some decisions of major importance that had to be made. In some of the testimonies, written under unfavorable circumstances, there were grammatical imperfections that had not been corrected before they were printed. Mrs. White and her associates felt that these corrections should be made before the messages were printed again.

Such importance was attached to the question that it was brought to the General Conference session of 1883 for consideration and an expression of the attitude of the leaders of the work. The actions of the session as published in the [The Review and Herald, November 27, 1883](#), contain the following:

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

“*Whereas*, There is a constant and urgent call for the reprinting of these volumes; therefore—

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

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

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

“*Resolved*, That in the republication of these volumes such verbal changes be made as to remove the above-named imperfections, as far as possible, without in any measure changing the thought; and, further—

“34. *Resolved*, That this body appoint a committee of five to take charge of the republication of these volumes according to the above preambles and resolutions.”

[324] This was simply a recognition of the principle already noticed, that neither the Bible writers nor Ellen White received their messages by dictation. Mrs. White was constantly striving to prepare her books to present in a clear and appealing manner the things that had been revealed to her. If the correction of minor grammatical errors would make the books more attractive and if they would better represent the high and holy nature of the thoughts presented, should not those corrections be made when they in no wise altered the sense of the message? Some might be turned away from the message as a whole because some portion of the truth was not presented in the best manner possible.

In 1885 the new edition of the testimonies was ready for distribution. The needed corrections had been approved by Mrs. White, larger pages and clearer type were used, and the thirty testimonies appeared in four volumes—volumes 1-4 of the present nine-volume set of *Testimonies for the Church*. In the “Preface to Third Edition,” this explanatory note was included, indicating two additional types of minor changes that were made:

“In the Testimonies as first printed, blanks or initials were generally used for the names of the persons addressed. For these are now substituted the letters of the alphabet, beginning with A in each number.

“In the earlier visions the words ‘I saw’ were very frequently inserted. As the writer considers this repetition needless, and as they constitute no part of the record of what was seen, they are sometimes omitted. Some grammatical and rhetorical changes also have been made for the sake of strength and clearness. In making these changes great care has been taken to preserve every idea, and in no case have either words or sentences been omitted unless as above indicated, to avoid unnecessary repetition.” [Testimonies for the Church 1:iii, iv](#), 3d ed., 1885.

Volumes of the *Testimonies* continued to be issued Until thirty-seven numbered pamphlets and books had come from the press by 1909. These thirty-seven make up the set of nine volumes bound separately or in four books.

In these books is found the fulfillment of the commission quoted earlier: “Your testimony ... is to come down to the minutiae of life, keeping the feeble faith from dying, and pressing home upon believers the necessity of shining as lights in the world.” [Testimonies for the Church 2:608](#). Through them the church has learned God’s way of applying the great principles of Christian living as outlined and illustrated in the Bible. Here are brought to focus on the twentieth century rays of light lost sight of through ages past. In these books is “a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light.” [Colporteur Ministry, 125](#).

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Not only in the books known as the Testimonies is the light visible, but each of the Ellen White books gives an insight into the Scriptures equaled by the writings of no other author. They never take the place of Bible study by giving all the explanation needed—God did not intend that they should serve as crutches. They do not eliminate the need for the prompting of the mind by the Spirit of God, for it is the Spirit who gives perception through any revelation. Chapter 19 of this book pictures the relation of these writings to the Bible. The diligent student who accepts the Bible as his rule of faith and practice can find Ellen White’s writings of inestimable service in leading him to a better understanding of Scripture. They will also help him apply its teachings to his present problems as he prepares for the second advent of Jesus Christ.

“Testimony Treasures”

Because of the obvious impossibility of publishing all the Ellen White books in the major languages of earth, to say nothing of the minor languages, the General Conference Committee has designated twelve volumes as an Introductory Spirit of Prophecy Library, to be published in the principal languages. Since the nine volumes of the *Testimonies for the Church* make as many pages as were contemplated for the twelve volumes, steps were taken to provide representative and balanced selections in about one third the number

[326] of pages of the complete books. The result is a set of three compact volumes bearing the title *Testimony Treasures*. Precedent for making such selections from the whole was established by Mrs. White herself in 1864 reprinting of the first ten numbers of the Testimonies. Earlier in this chapter she was quoted in part as follows:

“The first edition of most of these pamphlets being exhausted, and there being an increasing demand for them, it has been thought best to reprint them, as given in the following pages, omitting local and personal matters, and giving those portions only which are of practical and general interest and importance.” *Testimonies for the Church*, Nos. 1-10, as republished in *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 4.

This selection of articles covers every important phase of counsel dealt with in the *Testimonies*. For the most part, complete articles have been used, but some portions of long articles have been omitted. All deletions are indicated. Repetition of instruction has been avoided. It is only natural that the author, writing to many individuals and groups over a long period of years, should touch on some of the same topics again and again. For instance, there are three major articles in the Testimonies on the subject of tithing. Of these, the longest was selected, and with it were put paragraphs from other articles to round out the subject fully. Nothing of real significance in the three articles has been omitted. A similar procedure was followed in gathering matter for all the other topics. Either at the beginning, in the case of articles, or at the close, in the case of briefer selections, the original source is indicated so that one may turn to the item as it appears in the full volumes if that is desirable. With the testimony articles have been included a few important articles of a testimony character, dealing with vital topics not represented in the *Testimonies*, but which appear elsewhere in the English editions of the Ellen White books not available in other languages.

[327] It was not planned that the *Testimony Treasures* should take the place of the full series. Primarily, they are intended for translation into other languages since the originals are too large for that purpose. But these three small volumes do serve a useful purpose in English as well. They are better adapted for consecutive reading than are the larger volumes which many use mostly as reference books. The lower cost makes *Testimony Treasures* accessible to many families, especially in other countries where English is read, who might oth-

erwise be unable to purchase the volumes of counsel. It should now be possible for the goal mentioned by Mrs. White to be reached: “The *Testimonies*, should be introduced into every Sabbath keeping family.” [Testimonies for the Church 4:390](#).

SUMMARY

1. A knowledge of the background of the writing of the Ellen White books will form the basis for a better understanding of the books themselves.

2. The first small Ellen White book was *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*.

3. Two major sets of books form the center of the Ellen White writings—the Conflict of the Ages Series, and the *Testimonies for the Church*.

4. The Conflict Series developed through these steps:

Spiritual Gifts, vol. 1.

Spiritual Gifts, vols. 3, 4.

The Spirit of Prophecy, vols. 1-4.

The Conflict of the Ages Series.

5. The *Testimonies for the Church* were written in the form in which we have them now. Many were first published separately in pamphlet form, then bound in books.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Can you see advantages or disadvantages in the way in which the Conflict of the Ages Series was built up? Might they have been more satisfactory if they had been written chapter by chapter to present the full story at the first publication?

2. What relation to the matter of inspiration does the Conflict Series have in the way it was expanded from the first simple presentation? Could each of the successive stages be considered as having been given by inspiration? [328]

3. If the books in the Conflict Series are in full harmony with the Bible story, how do you account for the fact that there are details in these books that are not mentioned in the Bible?

4. Compare the type of instruction in some of the books of the conflict Series with some in the nine volumes of the Testimonies for the Church. What similarities do you note? What differences? Are some of the same subjects covered in both sets of books?

5. Scan the table of contents and a few of the chapters of Testimony Treasures to see the coverage of topics. Note the references at the ends of sections. Then turn to the sources in the Testimonies and see the setting and additional information available there.

The Chart

(See the chart on the end leaves.)

Explanatory note: The chart “Development of Some of the Ellen G. White Books” presents in simple form a picture of the relationship of issuance and content of the various Ellen White books prepared before the death of Mrs. White. The early visions are easily traced from their first printed form in articles and broadsides to the current Early Writings. “An Explanation” of some misunderstood statements in the early published visions is seen to be carried through to Early Writings in amplified form, finding its place in the central section of the book. The views of the great conflict are shown to be first published in 1858 and then traced through to the last section of Early Writings. They are also shown to be set forth in amplified form, first in the four volumes of *Spirit of Prophecy* (1870-84), and finally in the *Conflict of the Ages Series* (1888-1916). The current [329] books represent an amplified rewritten account based upon the basic great-controversy vision of 1858 and many succeeding views which opened the subject much more fully to the author.

The Testimonies for the Church began with a single sixteen-page pamphlet in 1855, which, with twenty-nine other similar but larger pamphlets, was, in 1885, reprinted in our present Testimonies, volumes 1 to 4. Then the series is seen to be enlarged to nine by the addition of five other volumes in succeeding years. The earlier articles were reprinted, and the series grew as additional volumes of counsel were added.

It will be noted that a number of the books have their roots in earlier volumes, particularly in the Testimonies. In some cases chapters or portions of chapters have formed parts of later productions,

as with *Christian Education* (1894) or *Gospel Workers* (1892). At other times the subject matter presented first in the earlier books was rewritten and greatly amplified by Mrs. White in later productions. See *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene* (1890), and *The Ministry of Healing* (1905). Such rewriting and expansion are attributed, first, to ever-widening views as presented to the author; second, to a rapidly expanding denominational work; and third, to a broadening field of distribution, in a number of cases reaching beyond the church to serve the world.

The books issued after Ellen White's death are compilations drawn largely from her earlier out-of-print books, periodical articles, and manuscript files. A complete list of Ellen White books will be found in Appendix B, on pages 482-485.

SELECTED REFERENCES

White Arthur L., Ellen G. White, *Messenger to the Remnant*, pp. 55-67 (Development of Conflict of the Ages Series and *Testimonies for the Church*).

White, Ellen G., [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 161-163](#) (Great controversy vision).

[330] Chapter 17—Making Preparation For Publication

The preparation of manuscript matter for publication is painstaking work. Seldom, if ever, does the product of the most careful writer appear in print in exactly the same form in which the original draft was written. After the thoughts are first expressed, the manuscript passes through various stages of rewriting; of transposition of phrases, clauses, or sentences; of rephrasing; of clarification of expressions; of revised punctuation; of addition or deletion of words. What is required in the preparation of the writings of a secular author was required in a degree in the preparation of Ellen White's writings for the press.

God's call of art individual to the prophetic office does not eradicate all of that person's shortcomings. It does not endow him with a full knowledge of historical facts, or make him a faultless grammarian and speller, or give him the ability to express himself so flawlessly that no improvement could be made in the method of expression. Though the call will inspire the man to make full use of his capabilities, it will not alter his social or educational background.

[331] Letters in Ellen White's handwriting, like the one illustrated on page 211, written when she was twenty years of age, reveal that her well-chosen words gave the same forcefulness and clarity of expression to these early communications that characterized her writings later in life. A careful scrutiny reveals some errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar, but the style is distinctive. Mrs. White's meager classroom education was a source of continual regret to her, and led her to turn to others better qualified than herself to help with the technical details of readying copy to be sent to the printer, and in later years to do the same for letters and other communications. For some years, Elder James White was the one who gave help along this line.

"While my husband lived, he acted as a helper and counselor in the sending out of the messages that were given to me. We traveled extensively. Sometimes light would be given to me in the night

season, sometimes in the daytime before large congregations. The instruction I received in vision was faithfully written out by me, as I had time and strength for the work. Afterward we examined the matter together, my husband correcting grammatical errors, and eliminating needless repetition. Then it was carefully copied for the persons addressed, or for the printer.” Ellen G. White, “The Writing and Sending Out of the *Testimonies to the Church*,” page 4.

Even during James White’s lifetime it was necessary for additional help to be enlisted. Elder White traveled widely and carried weighty responsibility. He could not give all the needed assistance. After his death even more aid was essential to carry on the ever-broadening work of preparing the writings for publication.

“As the work grew, others assisted me in the preparation of matter for publication. After my husband’s death, faithful helpers joined me, who labored untiringly in the work of copying the testimonies, and preparing articles for publication.” *Ibid.*

Although Mrs. White employed other persons to assist in the preparation of copy for books and articles, the writings were in no part the product of the pens of these assistants. Some have misunderstood the work of Mrs. White’s secretaries and literary assistants. The next sentence in the quotation above regarding her helpers reads: “But the reports that are circulated, that any of my helpers are permitted to add matter or change the meaning of the messages I write out, are not true.” What, then, was the work of these assistants? This question must be considered in its context—the broader picture of how the messages were written out and made ready for circulation.

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Mrs. White has described the way in which light and instruction were often given to her in vision. “As inquiries are frequently made as to my state in vision, and after I come out, I would say that when the Lord sees fit to give a vision, I am taken into the presence of Jesus and angels, and am entirely lost to earthly things. I can see no farther than the angel directs me. My attention is often directed to scenes transpiring upon earth.

“At times I am carried far ahead into the future and shown what is to take place. Then again I am shown things as they have occurred in the past. After I come out of vision I do not at once remember all that I have seen, and the matter is not so clear before me until I

write, then the scene rises before me as was presented in vision, and I can write with freedom.” [Spiritual Gifts 2:292](#).

Seldom did Ellen White simply chronicle words that had been revealed to her. There seem to have been five different ways in which she was given a basis for what she wrote in her articles, letters, pamphlets, and books.

1. At times the written material was a direct account of a single vision. Expressions like this are found frequently: “August 24, 1850, I saw.” [Early Writings, 59](#).

2. Sometimes there is a composite account of many visions. Speaking of the record in *The Great Controversy*, Mrs. White said, “From time to time I have been permitted to behold.” [The Great Controversy, Introduction, x](#).

3. On other occasions counsel was given based on a specific vision, not being a record of the vision itself. “In the night of March 2, 1907, many things were revealed to me regarding the value of our publications.”—[Testimonies for the Church 9:65](#).

[333] 4. Again there was counsel delivered that was based on light given in many visions. “In other cases, where individuals have claimed to have messages for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, of a similar character, the word has been given me, ‘Believe them not.’” Ellen G. White [Letter 16, 1893](#).

5. Further, light was sometimes given which could be given to various individuals as the need arose. “God has given me a testimony of reproof for parents who treat their children as you do your little one.” Ellen G. White [Letter 1, 1877](#).

At times Ellen White did record specifically revealed words, but generally she described events as they passed rapidly before her, showing scenes of the past and present, and sometimes the future. Frequently words of instruction were spoken in connection with these views. At times she was taken in vision into homes, committee meetings, churches, councils, and conferences. In some of these instances, not only were the actions and words of individuals and groups revealed to her, but also the motives behind the words and actions.

When she wrote out what had been shown her, Ellen White endeavored to describe in the best manner of which she was capable the things she had seen and heard. Though at times she quoted

exactly what she had heard, the writing was not mechanical, nor were the specific words of the complete record dictated. For the most part, the words used were her own, as was true in the case of the Bible writers. God made use of the messenger's background, education, and experience in bringing to His people the revelation He wanted them to have.

It must not be concluded, however, that any prophet was left entirely free to do as he pleased with the message that had come to him. The writing or speaking was under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In an early letter, Ellen White told how some individuals had found fault with messages she had given them. They expressed the opinion that part of what was contained in the messages was from the Lord and part was from her own thinking as a result of things that had been told her. She asked in the letter, "Has God placed His work in such a careless manner, that man could fashion it to suit his own inclinations, receive that which was agreeable to him, and reject a portion?" Then she went on to explain: "If God reproves His people through an individual He does not leave the one corrected to guess at matters and the message to become corrupted in reaching the person it is designed to correct. God gives the message and then takes especial care that it is not corrupted." Ellen G. White [Uncopied Letter 8, 1860](#). By the Spirit the writer was impelled to make the best use of all his powers of insight and description, and was carefully guarded that he might not misrepresent the message with which he had been entrusted. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." [2 Peter 1:21](#). "Although I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, yet the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own, unless they be those spoken to me by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation." [The Review and Herald, October 8, 1867](#).

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Speaking of the Bible writers and their varying descriptions of the same incidents, Mrs. White comments: "One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of the subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase; and each, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents what is

most forcibly impressed upon his own mind—a different aspect of the truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all.” [The Great Controversy, Introduction, vi.](#)

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Since the messages were not divinely dictated, there was freedom on the part of the writer to choose words within the limits of the ideas to be expressed. Ordinarily more than one word may be used to represent an idea adequately. In some cases there may be a score of ways of expressing the same idea—more than one of them of equivalent accuracy and value. This being true, there is no apparent reason why the inspired writer should not study to improve his mode of expression and make some modification in his original writing. The work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of these voices for God was a continued work. In the case of Mrs. White she endeavored constantly to improve her presentation of truth. In her first writings, as found in *Early Writings*, we observe a simple yet forceful vocabulary and sentence structure. In her later books we find a broader vocabulary and more complex sentence structure, for she constantly endeavored to improve the presentation of the inspired message.

Preparation of Articles and Books During Ellen White’s Lifetime

In describing the preparation of an Ellen White book, no one procedure can be presented as a uniform plan that she followed through the seventy years of her ministry. Her first book, *Experience and Views*, published in 1851, was largely a collection of visions which had been previously published in broadsides and periodical articles. The books that followed during the next three decades were written chapter by chapter in their natural development of subject matter. Those published during the last half of Ellen White’s ministry were comprised of matter currently written and materials drawn from the reservoir of her writings—periodical articles, early books, pamphlets, manuscripts, and letters. To all these Mrs. White added pertinent passages enriching and rounding out the presentation for the forthcoming book. Thus in her later life she made much use of her earlier writings.

Ellen White said little about the preparation of her writings for publication before the death of her husband. She mentioned, as

we have already noted, that he frequently assisted her, and that, in later years, because of the press of duties, others also were called upon for help. After the death of James White, however, helpers were regularly employed to aid in gathering from all her writings pertinent material to form articles for the papers and chapters for books. The work of these helpers was most valuable to Mrs. White, and its nature should be carefully investigated so that it might be fully understood. W. C. White, Ellen White's son and assistant, described a part of the work of the assistants as follows:

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“Mother writes very rapidly. She does much of her writing early in the morning. She often writes upon many subjects in one letter or manuscript, just as subject after subject is flashed upon her mind. These manuscripts she passes to one who is expert in reading her writing, to copy off on the typewriter, and then it is given back to Mother, and she examines it, making such corrections, changes, and additions as she sees fit. Then it is copied again, and sent out according to Mother's direction. Sometimes a long personal letter will contain matter which she wishes to use in a more general letter to be sent to a group of workers. Sometimes it contains material for an article for one of our periodicals, or a chapter in a book.” “The Integrity of the Testimonies to the Church,” Nov. 25, 1905. Ellen G. White Publications Office Document File 107d.

The manuscripts that came from the pen of Ellen White varied considerably in editorial perfection. When she wrote at a moderate speed, and not under undue pressure because of traveling, preaching, or other responsibilities, her work revealed good grammar, careful sentence structure, and comparative freedom from errors in spelling and punctuation. Haste in writing multiplied the minor errors, but it did not materially affect the flow of the language or the development of ideas. Repetitions crept in and at times thoughts were introduced which contained gems of truth, but which were not entirely relevant to the subject at hand. Again, there were instances when the transposition of a passage would add strength or lead to a more logical presentation. Under instruction from Mrs. White, her literary assistants were to make such changes as would, within the framework of her thoughts and words, render the passages grammatically and rhetorically correct. Nothing was added, and no thoughts were changed.

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After the suggested changes and copying were completed, the manuscript was returned to Ellen White for her additions, corrections, and approval. She reread carefully the whole of the matter, made her insertions, deletions, and revisions, and then turned it back to the copyist for the final draft to be made. The finished copy was then returned to her for reading, approval, and signature.

In a letter to Elder G. A. Irwin she told of her preferred method of working to perfect her manuscripts. The letter spoke of her need for workers on her staff, and it illustrates her method of editorial work. A typewritten copy of Mrs. White's handwritten letter was returned to her for corrections.

The resulting sentences read: "I ought to have someone to whom I can read every article before sending it to the mail. This always helps the writer: for the writer, after reading the matter before one who is interested, often discerns more clearly what is wanted, and the slight changes that should be made." Ellen G. White [Letter 76, 1897](#).

Thus Mrs. White was intelligently responsible for the whole manuscript. She was certain that nothing done by her assistants had in any way altered the ideas she was trying to convey. It was the Lord's message given through His messenger just as truly as though every sentence had been written in its final form at the time it was first drafted.

[338] "Her copyists have been conscientious people and were faithful in following her instructions, that no change of thought and no additional thought should be brought into the work by them. And that there might not be any error through their misunderstanding of the manuscript or any change of thought through their grammatical corrections, she has faithfully examined the manuscripts again, and when the presentation was satisfactory to her, she gave it her approval, and not until then was it sent out as copy for the printer, or as letter or manuscript to men, or groups of men for their instruction." W. C. White Letter in Ellen G. White Office Document File 52a.

The Work and the Helpers

The larger part of the work of Ellen White's assistants was not that of correcting errors in grammar and spelling. It lay rather in

the field of gathering from her writings passages that would make suitable articles for the periodicals and chapters for books. Had Ellen White undertaken to perform this task herself, it would have meant that her time available for new writing would have been reduced so materially that it would not have been possible for her to discharge her responsibility in that line.

On October 23, 1907, Mrs. White addressed a letter to Elder F. M. Wilcox in response to an inquiry he had made of her. A portion of her letter read as follows:

“About a year after the death of my husband, I was very feeble, and it was feared that I might live but a short time. At the Healdsburg camp meeting, I was taken into the tent where there was a large gathering of our people. I asked to be raised up from the lounge on which I was lying, and assisted to the speaker’s platform, that I might say a few words of farewell to the people. As I tried to speak, the power of God came upon me, and thrilled me through and through. Many in the congregation observed that I was weak, and that my face and hands seemed bloodless; but as I began speaking they saw the color coming into my lips and face, and knew that a miracle was being wrought in my behalf. I stood before the people healed, and spoke with freedom.

“After this experience, light was given me that the Lord had raised me up to bear testimony for Him in many countries, and that He would give me grace and strength for the work. It was also shown me that my son, W. C. White, should be my helper and counselor, and that the Lord would place on him the spirit of wisdom and of a sound mind. I was shown that the Lord would guide him, and that he would not be led away, because he would recognize the leadings and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

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“The assurance was given me: ‘You are not alone in the work the Lord has chosen you to do. You will be taught of God how to bring the truth in its simplicity before the people. The God of truth will sustain you, and convincing proof will be given that He is leading you. God will give you of His Holy Spirit, and His grace and wisdom and keeping power will be with you....

“The Lord will be your Instructor. You will meet with deceptive influences; they will come in many forms, in pantheism and other forms of infidelity; but follow where I shall guide you, and you will

be safe. I will put My Spirit upon your son, and will strengthen him to do his work. He has the grace of humility. The Lord has selected him to act an important part in His work. For this purpose was he born.

“This word was given me in 1882, and since that time I have been assured that the grace of wisdom was given to him. More recently, in a time of perplexity, the Lord said: ‘I have given you My servant, W. C. White, and I will give him judgment to be your helper. I will give him skill and understanding to manage wisely.’

“The Lord has given me other faithful helpers in my work. Many of my discourses have been reported, and have been put before the people in printed form. Through nearly the whole of my long experience I have endeavored, day by day, to write out that which was revealed to me in visions of the night. Many messages of counsel and reproof and encouragement have been sent out to individuals, and much of the instruction that I have received for the church has been published in periodicals and books, and circulated in many lands.

“As the work has grown, the number of my helpers has increased.

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“Sister Marian Davis was a great help in copying my testimonies, and in preparing for publication the manuscripts which I placed in her hand. I appreciated her help very much. She now sleeps in Jesus.

“For eleven years Miss Maggie Hare was among my workers. She was a faithful and true helper. She returned to New Zealand. [She again connected with the work in 1911.]

“Recently Miss Minnie Hawkins, of Hobart, Tasmania, who was one of my copyists in Australia, has joined my staff of workers.

“During the General Conference of 1901, Brother C. C. Crisler was impressed by the Spirit of God that I needed him in my work, and he offered his services. I gladly accepted his help. He is a faithful, efficient, and conscientious worker.

“Dores Robinson has assisted in copying my testimonies, and he has been diligently preparing ‘Life Incidents’ for publication.

“Helen Graham is a good stenographer, and helps Sister Sara McEnterfer and W. C. White in their work of correspondence.

“Sister Sarah Peck was my bookkeeper and helper for a number of years. She has left us to engage in schoolwork at College View. We now have as bookkeeper, Brother Paul C. Mason.

“Sister McEnterfer is my traveling companion, nurse, and helper in many ways.

“Sister Mary Steward and her mother are with us now; and Mary, who for many years has served as proofreader in the offices at Battle Creek and Nashville, has united with my workers.

“The work is constantly moving forward. We are making earnest efforts to place my writings before the people. We hope that several new books will go to press shortly. If I am incapacitated for labor, my faithful workers are prepared to carry forward the work.

“Abundant light has been given to our people in these last days. Whether or not my life is spared, my writings will constantly speak, [341] and their work will go forward as long as time shall last. My writings are kept on file in the office, and even though I should not live, these words that have been given to me by the Lord will still have life and will speak to the people.” “The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies to the Church,” pages 10-14.

In an address given in 1913 to the General Conference session, W. C. White described the work of Mrs. White’s assistants—that of gathering from her writings suitable material for book chapters. Because of the importance of a clear understanding of this point, we quote it here:

“Our workers are now gathering together material for a new edition of *Gospel Workers*. We are also gathering into chapters what mother has written on Old Testament history. Probably nine tenths of this work is already done, and we hope that the book may be published before Christmas. Some of this matter was about ready, we thought, to place in the printer’s hands, when mother, upon going over some of the chapters, expressed herself as not fully satisfied. She thought there were other things she had written that we had not yet found, and she desired that these be searched out, if possible, and included. So we have laid the manuscript away in our fireproof vault, and after this Conference probably four different persons will spend six or eight weeks in reading through the thousands of pages of manuscript in the file to see if we can find the additional matter that she thinks is in existence.

“It would be comparatively easy to hasten along the preparation of these manuscripts for publication in book form, if we were to write in a little here and there where she has written only a portion

of the story on certain topics and has left a portion incomplete. I say, if her secretaries were authorized by God to do that work, and could write in the connections, the book could be prepared for the printer much faster. But this cannot be done; we can deal only with the matter which we have in hand.

[342] “For this reason, when you get the book on Old Testament history, you will find that there are some stories partly told, and not fully completed. You will find that there are many things you hoped to read about, that are not mentioned. Mother has written quite fully on Solomon, something on the divided monarchy, a little about Elijah and Elisha, quite fully about Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah; and we are gathering this and other matter and grouping it into chapters.

“You may say, What do you mean by this ‘gathering’? Did not Sister White sit down and write out quite fully and connectedly that which she had to say about the controversy, about Jeroboam and Rehoboam, about Jeremiah and Isaiah and other Old Testament characters?—No; not on all the principal characters. Her life has been a busy one. She has been kept constantly at the front, speaking to the people, meeting emergencies. Some of the most precious things she has written about Old Testament and New Testament characters were written first in letters to individuals. Some of the most precious paragraphs in *Desire of Ages*, passages describing Christ’s controversies with the Pharisees and the Herodians, were written under circumstances like these:—

“At Ashfield, New South Wales, Elder Corliss and some faithful helpers had been presenting the truth until there was a group of about thirty people keeping the Sabbath, ready to be baptized and organized into a church. The Campbellites could not bear to see that done. A bitter opponent came and challenged our brethren personally and through the papers. This was ignored as long as it could be. Finally, our friends, those in the truth, demanded that there be a discussion. So a discussion was arranged for.

[343] “In the night season this matter was laid before mother. She had never seen the Campbellite champion; but the man was shown to her—his spirit, his methods, his tactics. He had nothing to lose in that community; and it was presented to mother that his plan would be to endeavor to irritate Elder Corliss, and get him to say things

that would discredit him before the people who were embracing the truth.

“During the progress of that discussion, mother wrote to Elder Corliss, stating that it had been presented to her that his opponent in the discussion would work on certain lines, and that he must take such a course as to disappoint the enemy. As she wrote these cautions, her memory would be revived as to what had been presented to her about the work of Christ, and how the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Herodians had followed Him with accusations and questions, endeavoring to discredit Him before the people.

“When we came to make up the chapters for *Desire of Ages*, we found in those letters the most vivid description of those experiences, that she had written anywhere. And we found other most precious passages that had been written first in letters to members of the General Conference Committee, and to conference presidents, regarding situations which were illustrated by the experiences of these Old and New Testament characters.

“Being written in this way, it takes much time to search through the writings and find these passages, and bring them together into manuscripts. After these are gathered, and grouped into chapter form, the manuscript is always submitted to mother. She reads it over carefully. Up to the present time every chapter of every book, and all the articles for our periodicals—unless they happen to be reprints—have passed through her hands, and have been read over by her. Sometimes she interlines; sometimes she adds much matter; sometimes she says, ‘Cannot you find more on this subject?’ And then, when more has been found, and added, the manuscript is recopied, and handed back to her again for examination. And when she finally signs it and returns it to us we are permitted to send it out.” W. C. White, [The General Conference Bulletin, June 1, 1913](#).

In a letter to Elder G. A. Irwin, president of the General Conference, Mrs. White wrote, in 1900, of the work of Marian Davis:

“She is my bookmaker.... She does her work in this way. She takes my articles which are published in the papers, and pastes them in blank books. She also has a copy of all the letters I write. In preparing a chapter for a book, Marian remembers that I have written something on that special point, which may make the matter more

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forcible. She begins to search for this, and if when she finds it, she sees that it will make the chapter more clear, she adds it.

“The books are not Marian’s productions, but my own, gathered from all my writings. Marian has a large field from which to draw, and her ability to arrange the matter is of great value to me. It saves my poring over a mass of matter, which I have no time to do.” [Letter 61a, 1900](#).

In chapter 16, “The Ellen G. White Books,” reference was made to the preparation of material on the life of Christ. Records in the Ellen G. White Publications Office contain valuable information regarding the work on the manuscripts that ultimately became *The Desire of Ages*, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, and *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*. They shed light on the work of the assistants.

Ellen White was away from home at times while work was progressing on her writings on the life of Christ. During such times her helpers regularly sought her counsel by correspondence. Some of these letters, written with the thought that they would be read only by Mrs. White, show us the kind of work that could be done by the helpers and how they were limited by what the messenger provided. In this instance the letters were penned by Marian Davis. The letters reveal that:

1. Major responsibility for the gathering and arrangement of copy rested on Miss Davis. Plans for this were laid in counsel with Ellen White.

2. Marian Davis was entirely dependent on Mrs. White to supply material for her work. When there was nothing available to complete a chapter or an incident, her work was at a standstill. Extracts from the letters are enlightening:

[345] August 2, 1893. “Now about the book. I am so glad you are writing on the two journeys to Galilee. I was so afraid you would not bring that out. Shall hope to receive something from you before long.”

October 18, 1893. “O, when I see how we seem to be in the circles of a whirlpool, that is sweeping Us faster and faster toward the great consummation, I do long to see this book go out, to reveal Christ to the people as He is, in His beauty.... I shall be so glad when we can talk over the work. So many points come up, that I want to

ask about.... I will send you a few more chapters soon.... I am real anxious to get some chapters finished and some gaps filled.”

November 25, 1895. “We sent the letter for Sydney workers to Brother----. It was so good. I must keep all the general for my scrapbooks. Of late I have been using the matter gleaned from late letters, testimonies, etc. Have found some of the most precious things, some in those letters to Elder Corliss. They have been to me like a storehouse of treasures. There’s something in these personal testimonies that are written under deep feeling, that comes close to the heart. It seems to me the things gathered in this way give a power and significance to the book that nothing else does.”

An instance of the finding of a gem and its insertion in one of the chapters prepared for *Christ’s Object Lessons* is mentioned in another letter:

March 10, 1898. “The article I send, ‘No Reward but of Grace,’ the parable of the laborers, is the last of the matter that was prepared for the book.... The last paragraphs seem to me very precious.... A few sentences you will recognize as from a letter lately written, ‘The golden gate is not opened to the proud in spirit, but the everlasting portals will open wide to the trembling touch of a little child.’⁹

“You left me a manuscript on the Unjust Steward, and I have been collecting material to complete this, and have found some precious things to add to the closing chapters of the life of Christ. Of course I cannot complete the chapters (the last two) until I receive what you write on the ministry of healing.... When the Unjust Steward is done, I shall have finished all I can do on the parable book, until I hear from you.”

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Even after a portion of the manuscript for the book on the life of Christ had gone to the publishers, the Pacific Press Publishing Association, Miss Davis found in new manuscripts material she wished to add to some of the chapters. She sent this to California, hoping that it would not arrive too late to be included in the book.

March 1, 1898. “I have been gathering out the precious things from those new manuscripts on the early life of Jesus. Sent a number of new pages to California by the Vancouver mail, and shall send

⁹This thought may be found in *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 404. It was written by Ellen White in a letter to Mrs. Wessels of Africa, dated February 21, 1898.

more for later chapters by the next mail. Two of these articles on Christ's missionary work I let Brother James have to read in church. Last Sabbath he read the one which speaks of the Saviour's denying Himself of food to give to the poor. These things are unspeakably precious. I hope it is not too late to get them into the book. It has been a feast to work on this matter." The manuscript referred to is MS. 22, 1898, and the portion mentioned is found in [The Desire of Ages, 86, 87](#).

[349] The use of literary assistants greatly facilitated the work of Ellen White, but the messages are fully the work of the messenger. Her characteristic style is unmistakable to one well acquainted with the writings. Despite the change of helpers through the years, the books consistently display the individuality of the author. Always there appears the firm grasp of Bible thought and language, the facility of expression, the colorful phrase, the persistent but winsome appeal. The early letters which had no benefit of the reading and suggestions of others are of the same character as those of later years. When the phases of inspiration mentioned in this chapter are understood, the work of the literary assistants is seen to occupy a natural and necessary place in the production of the Ellen White books, articles, and letters. The preparation of books and articles for publication since the death of Mrs. White will be presented in chapter 18.

SUMMARY

1. God's call of an individual to the prophetic office does not remedy all of that person's shortcomings. His background and education remain unaltered. God makes the best possible use of what there is to work with.

2. Ellen White's early writings reveal the same strength and clarity as do the later ones, but she used other persons to help her with the mechanics of spelling, punctuation, and grammar in preparing manuscripts for publication.

3. Those who assisted her in no way altered the thought of her expression, and made only minor changes necessary for mechanical accuracy.

4. All matter on which her literary assistants had done any work was returned to Mrs. White for her reading and approval.

5. Mrs. White explained fully the work of her assistants, including that of her son, W. C. White.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Could not God have so guided the messenger that every expression would have been perfect? How would this have accorded with the Lord's chosen way of dealing with prophets, and with all human beings?

2. Does the fact that Ellen White used literary assistants create any more problems than the fact that some of the Bible writers used amanuenses?

3. Read Ellen White's comments on the inspiration of the Bible writers, in F. M. Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus*, pages 11-18. How does this description coincide with what she has said of her own expression of the messages God gave her? [350]

SELECTED REFERENCES

Nichol, F. D., *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, pp. 468-486, 648-650, 656-663. Washington, D.C., Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1951.

White, Arthur L., *Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant*, pp. 59-61, 79-81.

Chapter 18—Custody Of The Ellen G. White Writings

During the years since the death of Ellen White in 1915, twenty-four books, compiled from her writings, have been published in harmony with the provision she made for the custody and circulation of her works. Mrs. White recognized during her later years that it would not be possible for her to see to the publication of all the portions of her writings that should be brought before the church. She knew that if she did not plan carefully, there was a possibility that those into whose hands the writings should come would not know what their responsibility was, or how they should handle the materials. There was danger that some things might be lost sight of if no one was assigned the care of the product of her pen.

Consequently, in her will, dated February 9, 1912, Mrs. White gave specific instruction as to the disposition that should be made of her books, manuscripts, and other property. Note the provisions for the care and use of her writings, as they were stated in the will. Only those portions of the will pertaining to the subject at hand are quoted.

“I hereby give, devise, and bequeath to William C. White, Clarence C. Crisler, Charles H. Jones, Arthur G. Daniells, and Frank M. Wilcox” [then appears a list of the items of her property] “all of my right, title, and interest in the copyrights and book plates in all languages, of the following publications” [here follows a list of her current books]; “also, my general manuscript file and all indexes pertaining thereto; also my office furniture and office library.

“Together with all and singular, the tenements, hereditaments, and appurtenances thereunto belonging, or in anywise appertaining in trust nevertheless for the uses and purposes hereinafter contained.

“TO HAVE AND TO HOLD, the said real and personal property unto said trustees, and their successors, upon the trust to enter into and upon and take possession of the said real estate and said personal property.

“Administering, preserving, and protecting the said real property and of handling said personal property, and publishing and selling said books and manuscripts and conducting the business thereof.”

Certain financial provisions are made, then follows further instruction concerning the work of the trustees.

“Then my said trustees shall use the overplus for the improvement of the books and manuscripts held in trust by them, and herein provided; for the securing and printing of new translations thereof; for the printing of compilations from my manuscripts.”—Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White, *Messenger to the Remnant*, page 73.

Thus the trustees were assigned three primary responsibilities: (1) to care for and promote the circulation of the Ellen White books in the English language; (2) to provide for their translation and circulation in foreign languages; (3) to publish compilations from the materials in articles and in the manuscript files.

Placed under their charge for the purposes indicated were approximately 45,000 typewritten manuscript pages of Ellen White writings, about 1,000 handwritten letters and manuscripts, files of periodicals containing about 4,500 articles by Mrs. White, and rights to her books in English and foreign languages. These materials, along with many thousands of pages of correspondence and manuscripts pertaining to the development of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, were cared for, until 1937, in the office building at Mrs. White’s home, “Elmshaven,” near Saint Helena, California. At that time the work was transferred to offices provided in the headquarters building of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Washington, D.C. For more than twenty years from the time of the death of Ellen White, the work of the trustees was carried on under the business name of “The Ellen G. White Estate,” but since the move to Washington the name has been changed to “The Ellen G. White Publications.”

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The original group of trustees remained intact for about eighteen years. Then, one by one the men died, and were replaced according to the plan provided in the will that had brought them into being as a Board of Trustees. “If a vacancy shall occur for any reason among said trustees, or their successors, a majority of the surviving or remaining trustees are hereby empowered and directed to fill such vacancy by the appointment of some fit person.” *Ibid.*, p. 74.

Because of the growing needs for the services of the office of the White Publications with the expansion of the advent movement into all the world, the Board of Trustees was enlarged, in 1950, to seven members. The group works closely with the officers of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in giving study to the needs of the field and in providing instruction from the writings to meet those needs. All royalties from Ellen White books go into the General Conference treasury, and the General Conference appropriates funds for the work of the trustees.

Not only did Mrs. White give instruction in her will regarding the printing of compilations from her writings by the trustees, but on different occasions she had suggested something of the type of matter that might be included. “The articles that from week to week are printed in our papers are soon forgotten.... These articles are to be gathered together, reprinted in book form, and placed before believers and unbelievers.” Ellen G. White [Letter 73, 1903](#).

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In addition to the thousands of articles from which selections might be made for reprinting, many hundreds of personal testimonies, addressed to workers and leaders in the denomination, contained counsel, gave encouragement, and pointed out dangers. It was shown to Ellen White that the same messages would be of help to later workers and to many of the members of the churches. In a vision “One of authority stood up and said, ‘Everything that has been given to ministers, to men in responsible positions, to teachers, to managers, to the different conferences is to be repeated and repeated.... We must work earnestly to bring this instruction before the people.’”—Ellen G. White [Manuscript 101, 1905](#). For these reasons, the trustees have felt that in order to discharge their responsibility properly, they must publish all the instruction that is pertinent in view of today’s circumstances and needs. The value of the writings will continue to the end. Ellen White had written these words on October 23, 1907: “Abundant light has been given to our people in these last days. Whether or not my life is spared, my writings will constantly speak, and their work will go forward as long as time shall last. My writings are kept on file in the office, and even though I should not live, these words that have been given to me by the Lord will still have life and will speak to the people.”

Ellen G. White, “The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies,” pages 13, 14.

Through the years of her ministry, Mrs. White published many of the testimonies that she sent to individuals. She gave her reason for doing so in language which is repeated in different words in several places: “Since the warning and instruction given in testimony for individual cases applied with equal force to many others who had not been specially pointed out in this manner, it seemed to be my duty to publish the personal testimonies for the benefit of the church.... ‘Perhaps there is no more direct and forcible way of presenting what the Lord has shown me.’” [Testimonies for the Church 5:658, 659](#). “I am endeavoring by the help of God to write letters that will be a help, not merely to those to whom they are addressed, but to many others who need them.” Ellen G. White [Letter 79, 1905](#).

There was much of general value in some of the diaries, journals, and other manuscripts. “The many diaries and manuscript books which have been kept, containing the instruction which the Lord has given me, will lighten my labors in the work of preparing new books.” Ellen G. White [Manuscript 59, 1912](#). “I have much written in the diary I have kept in all my journeys that should come before the people if essential, even if I did not write another line. I want that which is deemed worthy to appear, for the Lord has given me much light that I want the people to have; for there is instruction that the Lord has given me for His people. It is light that they should have, line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.” Ellen G. White [Letter 117, 1910](#). [355]

Preparation of a New Book ¹⁰

“The great God has reared His mighty structures in the granite rocks, in the towering mountains, in clefts, in the gulches, in the gorges, and in the castle rocks, and in the caves of the earth. And with these surroundings—the work of God’s power—how thankless the heart who needs images of man to worship. The heathen who worship nature, the works of the divine hand, are idolators. But does not their worship strike the senses as more sensible than the worship [356] [357]

¹⁰The description of the preparation of the book *Evangelism* is drawn largely from an article by Arthur L. White in Ellen G. White, *Messenger to the Remnant*, pages 95, 96.

of images bearing the mold and impress of finite man? Everything about us teaches us from day to day lessons of our Father's love and of His power, of His laws to govern nature, and that lie at the foundation of all government in heaven and in earth. These rich tokens of God's matchless power, if they will not call the mind to the Creator of heaven and earth, if they will not awaken gratitude in these dull and thankless hearts, will images and shrines of dead men do this? We look upon nature. We see the fields clothed with carpets of living green. We see the variety of His works. In this house God has builded for man, every part of this house, diverse it may be from another, but we trace in unmistakable tokens the handiwork of the great Architect. There is beauty in the valleys, awful grandeur in the solemn masses of cleft rocks, majesty in the towering mountains that look as if they touched the heavens. There is the lofty tree with its delicately formed leaves, the spires of grass, the opening bud and blooming flowers, the forest trees, and everything points the mind to the great and living God." [Insert, Page 357]

The procedure followed in the office of the Ellen G. White Publications in the preparation of such compilations from the writings of Mrs. White as *Evangelism*, *Temperance*, *The Adventist Home*, and *Child Guidance*, has been planned so that readers will receive an accurate and unbiased view of the Ellen White teachings on the subjects covered. In order to set forth the instruction fairly in a compilation, care must be exercised to see that all phases of the subject are presented in a balanced way, and that the arrangement of material and its emphasis is balanced and harmonious with the whole body of the instruction. For these reasons the usual method of preparing a new book cannot be followed: It is not possible to prepare an outline and then search out materials to fit that outline. Although this method would be more economical of both time and money, there would be involved a risk of overlooking some portion of vital instruction that had not been included in the outline. On the other hand, there would be danger of over emphasizing some point of minor importance. Using the book *Evangelism* as an illustration, we shall trace the several steps followed in the preparation of an Ellen White compilation.

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1. *Authorization and planning.* The secretary and associate secretaries of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference, as

well as other workers, sensed the need for a single volume that would present the full Ellen White instruction concerning evangelism. In 1944 the Association suggested to the Board of Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications that such a book be prepared.

The Board of Trustees, after carefully studying the question and making some investigation of available materials, authorized the compilation of a volume of the counsels to evangelists and instruction concerning evangelism. They set up two committees to execute the work. The first was a fostering committee of five, headed by a General Conference vice-president and including representatives from the Board of Trustees and the Ministerial Association, and an evangelist of long experience. It was the duty of this committee to plan for the compilation and to give general guidance to its preparation.

The second committee was a working team of two, comprising the secretary of the Ellen G. White Publications, Arthur L. White, and Miss Louise Kleuser of the Ministerial Association. The task of gathering and arranging the materials was assigned to this team.

2. *Gathering the counsels.* With this assignment, the working team, under the guidance of the fostering committee, undertook their work. They did not begin with an outline of what they thought should go into the book, but worked so as to allow the materials themselves to determine the outline and the emphasis. They set about to assemble all the Ellen G. White writings that might have a bearing on the subject of evangelism. Every source was drawn from—the current books; early, out-of-print books and pamphlets; periodical articles; and the manuscript files. The *Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White* guided to statements in the current books. The card indexes in the White Publications vault led to other sources. All the materials that might have a bearing on the subject were copied, regardless of repetition, each statement on a separate sheet for convenience in handling.

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Finally, several thousand pages were gathered. As the statements were being brought together, the working team found a general outline becoming apparent—an outline determined by the materials themselves and by the Ellen White emphasis. The next step was to set down the general features of this outline. There were twenty general divisions, or sections. As the sorting continued, it was

possible to form a more detailed outline for each section. Next, the statements that fell naturally into each general section were grouped according to the topics that would make up that section.

After this classification had been completed, each of the twenty groups of quotations was carefully studied. The most pointed and comprehensive statements, regardless of their source, were selected and arranged in their logical order. Brief paragraph headings were then chosen. Each member of the working team did the initial work on certain sections, and this was thoroughly reviewed by the other member. The body of the material, in this preliminary arrangement, was copied, and a copy furnished to each member of the fostering committee.

The members of the larger committee read the manuscript and made suggestions as to arrangement, headings, the inclusion of items that might have been overlooked, and the deletion of repetitious statements.

[360] With the recommendations of the fostering committee in hand, the working team went through the entire manuscript again, giving closer attention to repetitions. This problem is intensified by the fact that no change can be made in the wording, and that the same general approach to an important point is often made with a slightly different treatment and wording. As far as possible, repetitious sentences were deleted, but sufficient of the quotation was given to preserve its proper setting.

3. *Approval for publication.* This painstaking work called for handling some sections as many as six or eight times. When the working team had completed its revision of the manuscript in the light of the criticisms of the fostering committee, the revised manuscript was mimeographed and submitted to the Board of Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications, who were responsible for the preparation of the proposed book. Copies were given to the officers of the General Conference for their concurrence in the release of unpublished materials. Because the volume was being considered as a Ministerial Reading Course book, it was also submitted to a reading committee appointed by the Ministerial Association Advisory Council. In the interest of economy of time, the manuscript was submitted to these groups simultaneously.

Careful note was made of all the suggestions made by this reading group, but very little change was called for. Action was taken approving the manuscript.

A foreword was written, explaining the preparation of the volume, but no recognition was given to those responsible for the detailed work of its compilation. Policies governing this work place the full responsibility in the hands of the Board of Trustees, and no individual receives personal credit for the part he may have had in assembling the contents of a posthumous Ellen G. White book.

The manuscript, now in its final approved form, was passed to the publishers. The usual procedure in the handling of a book manuscript calls for its acceptance by a book committee, but in the case of an Ellen White book, this step is omitted, and the material goes directly from the trustees to the publishing house copy editors. The Board of Trustees carries the full responsibility ordinarily assumed by a book committee.

Copy editors studied punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and so forth, within limits carefully defined by the Board. From the copy room the manuscript went to the type room, then to the press and bindery; and from there the new book, *Evangelism*, went to the field,—in every sense a genuine Ellen White book. [361]

The methods followed in compiling one of her books today do not differ greatly from those in the preparation of such books as *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 9, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, and *Prophets and Kings*. When Ellen White was living, she consulted with leading workers as to the best manner in which to bring certain lines of instruction before the people. She enlisted the assistance of her office staff in gathering matter she had written through the years. She gave study to the selection of statements for publication, and joined in their preparation for the press. The principal difference in the preparation of a book today lies in the fact that she cannot now give study to the matter selected and cannot improve the text or write in connections uniting several excerpts in one blended statement. None of these can be done now that her pen has been laid aside.

Since Mrs. White's death the books that have appeared have been drawn largely from her periodical articles, to a lesser degree from manuscripts and early pamphlets, and to some extent from

her current books. Some compilations representing special lines of instruction contain statements that are already published in current books. While it is planned that as far as possible the republication of available counsel should be avoided, making a compilation that gives complete coverage of the subject treated has advantages that outweigh the objection to a small amount of repetition. No one knows what the demands of the future may be, but it appears to the Trustees that in the Ellen White books now in circulation the full range of instruction and counsel vital to the welfare of the church is available.

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SUMMARY

1. Ellen White provided in her will that custody of her writings should be taken by a board of trustees, whom she named.

2. The trustees were assigned three primary responsibilities:

To care for and promote the circulation of the Ellen White books in English.

To provide for their translation and circulation into foreign languages.

To publish compilations from materials in articles and in the manuscript files.

3. Books and other compilations issued since Ellen White's death have been prepared as nearly as possible in the way such works were prepared during her lifetime.

4. Preparation of such materials for publication today differs from Ellen White's own preparation in that no changes can be made in the text, no connecting thoughts can be added to join several excerpts. The trustees can deal only with the material at hand.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What problems might have arisen if Ellen White had not made provision for a board of trustees to care for her writings?

2. Ellen White published many testimonies addressed originally to individuals. Are there parallels to this practice to be found in the Bible?

3. Can you find in the Bible material similar to that found in Ellen White's diaries, letters, and manuscripts? Consult one or two of the late compilations for some of these items.

4. Select a topic of interest to you, and gather material on the subject from the Ellen White books in the manner described for the making of a compilation. Can you see how the passages almost [363] classify themselves and how clearly an outline is discernible when you gather enough quotations? Can you see how essential it is to get a complete cross section of the instruction before forming opinions as to what is taught?

SELECTED REFERENCES

Nichol, F. D., *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, pp. 674-678 (Mrs. White's will).

White, Arthur L., Ellen G. White, *Messenger to the Remnant*, pp. 68-87, 92-94.

[364] Chapter 19—The Ellen G. White Writings And The Bible

“And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night.” [Genesis 1:16](#). We sometimes see the moon during the day, but only faintly; it does not rule the day. In the daytime it only calls attention to the brightness of the sun. As God has given two lights in the heavens to rule the day and the night, He has placed two lights in the spiritual world of these last days. The two are pointed out in these words: “The Lord has sent His people much instruction, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. Little heed is given to the Bible, and *the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light*. Oh, how much good would be accomplished if the books containing this light were read with a determination to carry out the principles they contain!” Ellen G. White, in [The Review and Herald, January 20, 1903](#), quoted in *Colporteur Ministry*, page 125. (Italics added.) Here Ellen White refers to her writings as the “lesser light” intended by God to lead men and women to the “greater light” of the Bible. To use the two lights rightly we must understand their relation to each others—the place of each and its use.

The Bible is explicit in indicating its place as the standard of truth and the basic guide of life. No other message or writings can ever take the place of the word of God. It is the standard by which all who claim to have truth are to be tested. [Isaiah 8:20](#). It endures forever, [1 Peter 1:25](#). It is truth. [John 17:17](#). It points the way to salvation. [John 5:39](#), last part. It is the agent in sanctification or Christian growth. [John 17:17](#). It is the weapon of the Christian—the sword of the Holy Spirit. [Ephesians 6:17](#).

Throughout her writings, Ellen White fully recognizes and emphasizes this primacy of the Scriptures. Two brief, comprehensive sentences from the introduction to *The Great Controversy* state her view succinctly: “The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of

character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience.” Page vii.

The Place of the Ellen White Writings

The manifestation of the gift of prophecy is accorded a prominent position among the marks of identification of the remnant church. It is one of the two major indications of the identity of the remnant. “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” [Revelation 12:17](#). The attitude of the remnant church toward the commandments is indicative of its attitude toward the entire Bible, and the gift of prophecy is intended to aid in gaining a right understanding of the Bible and in developing right relationships to it. “God has seen fit in this manner to bring the minds of His people to His word, to give them a clearer understanding of it.” [Testimonies for the Church 5:663](#). The Bible and the spirit of prophecy writings serve different purposes, but they serve as a unit to convey God’s will to His people. “God is leading out a people and establishing them upon the one great platform of faith, the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus.” [Testimonies for the Church 3:447](#).

“As the end draws near and the work of giving the last warning to the world extends, it becomes more important for those who accept present truth to have a clear understanding of the nature and influence of the *Testimonies*, which God in His providence has linked with the work of the third angel’s message from its very rise.” [Testimonies for the Church 5:654](#). Full benefit from the study of these writings will come only to those who know why they have been given to the church and what God intends to accomplish through them.

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Relation of Writings to the Bible

One of the clearest portrayals of the relationship existing between the Bible and these special messages to the Seventh-day Adventist Church is found in [Testimonies for the Church 5:664, 665](#). “I took the precious Bible and surrounded it with the several *Testimonies for the Church*, given for the people of God. Here, said I, the cases

of nearly all are met. The sins they are to shun are pointed out. The counsel that they desire can be found here, given for other cases situated similarly to themselves. God has been pleased to give you line upon line and precept upon precept. But there are not many of you that really know what is contained in the *Testimonies*. You are not familiar with the Scriptures. If you had made God's word your study, with a desire to reach the Bible standard and attain to Christian perfection, you would not have needed the *Testimonies*. It is because you have neglected to acquaint yourselves with God's inspired Book that He has sought to reach you by simple, direct testimonies, calling your attention to the words of inspiration which you had neglected to obey, and urging you to fashion your lives in accordance with its pure and elevated teachings."

Ellen White recognized that her writings were to be tested by the Bible. "The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested." [The Great Controversy, vii](#).

[367] Sometimes the question is raised, "If we give sufficient attention to the Bible, have we any need for the Ellen White writings?" The query can be answered best by noticing more of the reasons for the giving of the messages to Ellen White. The following are drawn from among those mentioned in the section "The Nature and Influence of the 'Testimonies,'" in [Testimonies for the Church 5:654-691](#).

1. *To exalt the Bible*. "The *Testimonies* are not to belittle the word of God, but to exalt it." Page 665.

Throughout these writings the Bible is always held in the same high esteem, and every attempt is made to cause minds to give the Book first place in the thinking. At the close of the first Ellen White book, *Experience and Views*, page 64, is this note of urging: "I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that Word we are to be judged." The same note rings through all the books, articles, and letters. In commenting on Mrs. White's attitude toward the Bible, W. A. Spicer told of this incident:

"This lifting up of Holy Scripture as supreme was the keynote sounded through this gift of the spirit of prophecy to the very end. At the General Conference held in Washington, D.C., in 1909, with

representatives attending from all continents and the islands of the sea, Mrs. White in her old age met with the world representatives of the movement for the last time. At the close of the days of conference, she came to the platform to bid farewell to the workers with whom she had been associated so many years. She felt the conviction that it was doubtless the last time she would meet with the general body in conference. Even so it proved to be. After a few words of parting greeting, Mrs. White turned to the pulpit, and lifted from it the Bible lying there. Opening the book, she held it forth on hands that trembled with age, and said to the audience: “Brethren and sisters, I commend unto you this Book.”

“Laying the Book of books upon the pulpit, she turned from the pavilion. Her last personal message to the world delegates sounded the keynote of all her life and testimony.” W. A. Spicer, *Certainties of the Advent Movement*, page 202. [368]

Writing of the place of the Bible in the system of Christian education, Ellen White asked: “What book can compare with the Bible?” Then she answered her own question: “An understanding of its teachings is essential for every child and youth, and for those of mature age; for it is the word of God, given to guide the human family to heaven. In the world today there are gods many and doctrines many. Without an understanding of the Scriptures it is impossible for the youth to understand what is truth, or to discern between the sacred and the common.

“The word of God should stand as the highest educating book in our world, and should be treated with reverential awe. It should be placed in the hands of the children and youth as the great lesson book, that they may know Him whom to know aright is life eternal....

“What more important knowledge can be gained than that which outlines the fall of man, and the consequences of that sin which opened the floodgates of woe upon the world; which tells of Christ’s first advent? The incarnation of Christ, His divinity, His atonement, His wonderful life in heaven as our advocate, the office of the Holy Spirit,—all these vital themes of Christianity are revealed from Genesis to Revelation. Each is a golden link in the perfect chain of truth. Why, then, should not the Scriptures be exalted in every school in our land?” [Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students](#), 427.

2. *To attract minds to the Bible.* “The *Testimonies* are not to belittle the word of God, but to exalt it and attract minds to it.” [Testimonies for the Church 5:665](#).

[369] In these writings Bible truths are presented so simply and so beautifully that the closer one studies them the more he is drawn to a study of the Bible. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* lists at the close of each chapter of comment the references in the Ellen White writings that deal with some portion of the Bible chapter. There are approximately fifty thousand such references in the seven volumes of the commentary. All the Ellen White books are so filled with Bible quotations and Bible language that the mind is directed continually to the source of the ideas involved.

3. *To call attention to truths neglected.* “It is because you have neglected to acquaint yourselves with God’s inspired Book that He has sought to reach you by simple, direct testimonies, calling your attention to the words of inspiration which you had neglected to obey, and urging you to fashion your lives in accordance with its pure and elevated teachings.” *Ibid.*

4. *To impress truths already revealed.* “The written testimonies are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed.” *Ibid.*

It is not enough simply to call attention to neglected truths, but frequent repetition is necessary to fix the truth in the mind. Whenever you refer to the *Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*, you will notice how often the messages deal with familiar truths in an attempt to keep them constantly before the people.

5. *To awaken minds.* Through the *Testimonies* God has brought great truths “before the people, to awaken and impress the mind with them, that all may be left without excuse.”—*Ibid.*

[370] Without help some minds are not able to grasp great spiritual truths. These minds need awakening. Some have not been fully awakened to the importance of beginning the Sabbath on time until they have read: “We should jealously guard the edges of the Sabbath. Remember that every moment is consecrated, holy time.” [Testimonies for the Church 6:356](#). Others have not seen the need for guarding well the health until they have read a statement like this: “It is just as much sin to violate the laws of our being as to break one of the Ten Commandments, for we cannot do either

without breaking God's law. We cannot love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength while we are loving our appetites, our tastes, a great deal better than we love the Lord." [Testimonies for the Church 2:70](#). Still others have not realized their true importance to God until they have read: "The Saviour would have passed through the agony of Calvary that one might be saved in His kingdom." [The Desire of Ages, 483](#).

6. *To simplify truths*. "Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the *Testimonies* simplified the great truths already given." [Testimonies for the Church 5:665](#).

Simplification of the statement of great truths or phases of spiritual experience is a most practical and helpful contribution of the Ellen White writings.

"Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend." [Steps to Christ, 97](#).

"Faith is trusting God,—believing that He loves us, and knows best what is for our good." [Education, 253](#).

Sanctification is "daily dying to self and daily conformity to the will of God." [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 237](#).

7. *To bring out principles and help apply them*. "I was then directed to bring out general principles, in speaking and in writing." [Testimonies for the Church 2:687](#); also [Testimonies for the Church 5:660](#).

The stating of basic principles is more important than instructing in the details as to how one should act under certain circumstances. A principle is a fundamental, unchangeable truth, or a settled rule of action. It applies at all times and in every situation. Detailed instruction may vary to meet circumstances in different parts of the world or according to the changing situations that come with the passing years; but principles, rightly understood and applied, are of enduring value.

8. *To instruct in details*. "Your testimony ... is to come down [371] to the minutiae of life, keeping the feeble faith from dying, and pressing home upon believers the necessity of shining as lights in the world." [Testimonies for the Church 2:608](#); also [Testimonies for the Church 5:667](#).

As helpful as are general principles, it is necessary that much detailed instruction be given so that all members of the church can

see examples of how the principles may be applied. Such instruction is especially helpful as guidance to new believers, and as a reminder to those who have long been Christians. Two Ellen White books published in recent years contain much detailed counsel—*The Adventist Home*, and *Child Guidance*. Such items are covered as the wise choice of a life companion, where and how to establish a home, suggestions regarding furnishings, the place and responsibilities of father and mother in the home, how to rear the children, family financial affairs, and relaxation and recreation.

The question is sometimes asked, “Are the Ellen White writings regarded by Seventh-day Adventists as being above, equal to, or below the Bible in importance?” Actually, no one of these classifications places the two in their right relationship. They cannot be compared in that fashion. The Bible and the Ellen White writings were given for two closely related purposes. Each stands alone in its appointed sphere. Reference to the preceding eight points and the summary chart will indicate that the Bible stands alone as the rule of faith and practice for Christians. Summarizing the objectives of the Ellen White writings we see that they are intended to serve three basic purposes: (1) to direct attention to the Bible, (2) to aid in understanding the Bible, and (3) to help in applying Bible principles in our lives. The moment we recognize the correct place of each set of writings, we remove any possibility of confusion that would result from attempting to make comparisons.

[372] Knowing our need, God has given us particular guidance that will make our Bible study more helpful to us in our Christian growth. In our day when the great deceiver is working zealously, no Christian can afford to neglect or set aside any help that God has offered him. Our whole spiritual life will be enriched, and our preparation to meet the deceptions of the future will be more sure if we take advantage of all the instruction God has placed at our disposal. Failure to do so will jeopardize our whole experience.

Is Anything Added?

What is the meaning of such expressions as “Additional truth is not brought out,” and “The written testimonies are not to give new light”? Are there not descriptions given and details enumerated in the

Ellen White books that are not mentioned in the Bible? Certainly, or there would be little purpose in the giving of these messages. Are these not “additional truth” and “new light”? Not at all. The writings introduce no new topic, no new revelation, no new doctrine. They simply give additional details and round out subjects already a part of the Scripture record. The whole realm of spiritual truth is encompassed by the Bible. There is no need for more to be added. But further details, incidents, and applications made in these modern writings lead to keener perception and deeper understanding of the truth already revealed. “The Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light.”

SUMMARY

1. It is essential for every Seventh-day Adventist to understand the relationship that exists between the Bible and the Ellen White writings.
2. The Bible is the standard of truth and the guide to Christian living.
3. The commandments of God and the spirit of prophecy constitute prominent marks of identification of the remnant church.
4. The Ellen White writings claim to fulfill at least the following functions:
 1. To exalt the Bible.
 2. To attract minds to the Bible.
 3. To call attention to truths neglected.
 4. To impress truths already revealed.
 5. To awaken minds.
 6. To simplify truths.
 7. To bring out principles and help apply them.
 8. To instruct in details.
5. In these last-day writings nothing new is introduced; but Bible truth is applied to daily life, and details of experiences not fully described in the Bible are given.

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FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Gather from several Ellen White books a number of statements showing her attitude toward the Bible. Do you find any that in any way tend to belittle the Book or lessen your respect for its position as the rule of faith and practice?
2. In the *Index* to Mrs. White's writings, refer to the passages listed under *Testimonies* and related topics. Note what she says about her own works. Is there any indication that she felt her writings would replace, or be a substitute for, any portion of the Scriptures?
3. Make a clear-cut statement, in a single sentence if possible, of your understanding of the place the Ellen White writings should occupy in the church today.
4. In what ways do "the commandments of God, and ... the testimony of Jesus" constitute "*the one great platform of faith*" on which "God is leading out a people and establishing them"? (See section "The Place of the Ellen White Writings.")
5. In addition to the eight already listed, find other relationships between the *Testimonies* and the Bible.
6. Discover illustrations for each of the eight purposes of the *Testimonies* stated in this chapter.
7. Is it your impression that Ellen White's writings have achieved what they claim to be their purpose in relation to the Bible?
8. Find statements by Ellen White pointing out that men need to study her writings along with the Bible.
9. Select several passages where details not mentioned in the Bible are included by Ellen White. Analyze the kind of material that has been added. While it is enlightening, is it new light that adds to the basic truth taught in the Bible? After you have noted these details, can you see some things in the actual Bible record that you had not noticed before?

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White, Ellen G., [The Great Controversy, Author's Introduction, V-XIII](#).

-----, [Testimonies for the Church 5:657-667](#).

Wilcox, F. M., *The Testimony of Jesus*, pp. 67-73.

Chapter 20—The Place Of The Prophetic Gift

In Chapter 3, “The Prophets and Their Function,” description was given of some of the ways God used prophets in Bible times. It was pointed out that theirs was a broad work and that they filled an important place in the history of God’s people. They spoke for God, revealed His purposes, strengthened and guided rulers, encouraged the people to faithfulness, protested against evils, directed a variety of activities, taught, and served as consultants and counselors regarding every phase of individual and national life. A survey of the prophetic ministry of Ellen White makes clear that God used her to fulfill a function in the remnant church similar to that of the Bible prophets in ancient times.

The situation in the world and in the church just before the second advent of Christ was anticipated by God, and He has made provision to meet all the needs of His people. The world must hear the everlasting gospel. The church must give that gospel message, and at the same time make preparation for the test that will come when most of the world rejects the gospel invitation and turns against the church. Both of these tasks must be performed at the most difficult time in all history—a time when man’s weaknesses and tendencies toward sin are greatest, a time when the sin and degradation of the world outstrip that of any previous period, a time when Satan will be permitted to work his most subtle deceptions and offer his most powerful inducements to sin. To meet the situation, the Lord provided a special messenger to give guidance in harmony with the principles of His word. Notice some of the parallels between the function of the Bible prophets and that of Ellen White in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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1. *Speaks for God.* “In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by the *Testimonies* of His Spirit. There was never a time when God instructed His people more earnestly than He instructs them now concerning His will and the course that He would have them

pursue.” [Testimonies for the Church 4:147, 148](#); also [Testimonies for the Church 5:661](#). Repeatedly Mrs. White emphasized that the messages she brought were not her own, but were God’s instruction for His people. Her only authority was that she was speaking for God and not for herself. “I have no special wisdom in myself; I am only an instrument in the Lord’s hands to do the work He has set for me to do. The instructions that I have given by pen or voice have been an expression of the light that God has given me.” [Testimonies for the Church 5:691](#).

2. *Reveals God’s purposes.* Near the end of her stay in Australia, Ellen White talked to those present at the Australasian Union Conference session on the subject of the Avondale School and its work. In her talk she gave emphasis to God’s purpose for the school and the missionary character of the work to be done there. “God designs that this place shall be a center, an object lesson. Our school is not to pattern after any school that has been established in America, or after any school that has been established in this country. We are looking to the Sun of Righteousness, trying to catch every beam of light that we can....

“From this center we are to send forth missionaries. Here they are to be educated and trained, and sent to the islands of the sea and other countries. The Lord wants us to be preparing for missionary work....

“There is a great and grand work to be done. Some who are here may feel that they must go to China or other places to proclaim the message. These should first place themselves in the position of learners, and thus be tested and tried.” Ellen G. White, in [\(Australasian\) Union Conference Record, July 28, 1899](#), pp. 8, 9.

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3. *Strengthens and guides leaders.* During a period of crisis over certain theological problems, Mrs. White wrote many letters to the denomination’s leaders giving detailed instruction as to how they should deal with the problems, To strengthen them to act in harmony with the counsel given, she declared: “After taking your position firmly, wisely, cautiously, make not one concession on any point concerning which God has plainly spoken. Be as calm as a summer evening; but as fixed as the everlasting hills. By conceding, you would be selling our whole cause into the hands of the enemy.”

Ellen G. White [Letter 216, 1903](#). Printed in A. G. Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, page 338.

A. G. Daniells, then president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, wrote about one of this series of letters in particular, and made this comment: “Your message came on just the right day—a day earlier would have been too soon. I read it to the council yesterday, and it produced a most profound impression.... These messages you are sending are so clear, so pointed, so applicable, that everyone can see that God has revealed the situation clearly to your mind. Great confidence is being established in the hearts of our workers in the Spirit of prophecy.”—Letter from A. G. Daniells to Ellen G. White, Oct. 20, 1903, in files of Ellen G. White Publications Office.

[378] 4. *Encourages people to faithfulness*. “The importance of the little things is often underrated because they are small; but they supply much of the actual discipline of life. There are really no nonessentials in the Christian’s life. Our character building will be full of peril while we underrate the importance of the little things.... Only by faithfulness in the little things can the soul be trained to act with fidelity under larger responsibilities.” [Christ’s Object Lessons, 356](#).

“Glorious will be the reward bestowed when the faithful workers gather about the throne of God and of the Lamb.... They will stand before the throne, accepted in the Beloved. All their sins have been blotted out, all their transgressions borne away. Now they can look upon the undimmed glory of the throne of God. They have been partakers with Christ in His sufferings, they have been workers together with Him in the plan of redemption, and they are partakers with Him in the joy of seeing souls saved in the kingdom of God, there to praise God through all eternity.

“My brother, my sister, I urge you to prepare for the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven.” [Testimonies for the Church 9:285](#).

Encouraging the church members to be faithful in personal matters, in the work of God, and in spiritual experience, is a prominent part of the Ellen White writings. The prophet’s divinely given foreknowledge of serious times ahead causes the writings to ring with an urgency rarely heard elsewhere among men.

5. *Protests against evils.* It is not difficult to see the fulfillment of Christ's prediction that wheat and tares would grow together in the church until the time of the harvest. But God has never allowed evil to continue without raising vigorous protests through His appointed servants. Ellen White was used repeatedly in this way.

"In His providence the Lord has seen fit to teach and warn His people in various ways. By direct command, by the sacred writings, and by the spirit of prophecy has He made known unto them His will. My work has been to speak plainly of the faults and errors of God's people. Because the sins of certain individuals have been brought to light, it is no evidence that they are worse in the sight of the Lord than many whose failings are unrecorded. But I have been shown that it is not mine to choose my work, but humbly to obey the will of God. The errors and wrongdoings in the lives of professed Christians are recorded for the instruction of those who are liable to fall into the same temptations. The experience of one serves as a beacon light to warn others off the rocks of danger." [Testimonies for the Church 4:12, 13.](#)

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6. *Directs activities.* On the night of February 18, 1902, the main building of the Battle Creek Sanitarium burned. On December 30 of the same year the main building of the Review and Herald Publishing Association was destroyed by fire. The two fires within one year led to a study of the advisability of removing the publishing house and the denominational headquarters to some other place. The problem was carefully considered at the 1903 General Conference session. During the session Mrs. White commented:

"In reply to the question that has been asked in regard to settling somewhere else, I answer, Yes. Let the General Conference offices and the publishing work be moved from Battle Creek. I know not where the place will be, whether on the Atlantic coast or elsewhere; but this I will say: Never lay a stone or a brick in Battle Creek to rebuild the Review Office there. God has a better place for it." [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 389.](#)

In response to later inquiries the word was given: "Decided efforts should be made in Washington, D.C." [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 390.](#)

Still later, the message was given: "I am sure that the advantages of Washington, D.C., should be closely investigated." [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 392.](#)

Finally, definite guidance was given: "From the light given me, I know that, for the present, the headquarters of the Review and Herald should be near Washington." [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 394.](#)

God gave guidance for the development of every major phase of the activities of Seventh-day Adventists through the agency of this messenger to the remnant church.

[380] 7. *Teaches.* Most prominent of all the functions of the messenger was that of teaching the principles of the kingdom of heaven. As has been seen previously, new principles were not added, but simple down-to-earth applications of the principles of life came daily from the pen and the lips of the prophet. The books and articles are filled with practical instruction, particularly adapted to the needs of the church near the end of time.

As in the case of the Bible prophets, there was no matter too large or too small to warrant the attention of the messenger. Ellen White served where she was needed, and the counsels sent through her were suited to the situation and circumstances. It seems to have been the Lord's plan that the influence of the prophet should be felt everywhere in the expanding church, so that it might serve as a leavening agent and a unifying factor. Thus the whole movement would be bound together by the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Prove All Things

There is little possibility of making even a casual study of the history and present situation of Seventh-day Adventists without taking into consideration the place and influence of Ellen White. It would be like trying to study the Exodus of Israel from Egypt without noting the work of Moses. A glance at any part of the record of the life of Ellen White after her childhood will indicate something of her relationship to the advent people. The two are bound together in such a fashion as to render them inseparable.

Can there be any accurate evaluation of the contribution made by Ellen White to the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist movement? There are certain intangibles that make evaluation difficult. Who can

estimate the ultimate effects of influence? Who can know the extent of the responses to instruction given? Who can test the holding power of confidence? Yet, an observing eye cannot fail to note the numerous contributions that lead to the conclusion that if it had not been for the life and work of this messenger of the Lord the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church would have been vastly different. [381]

“Prove all things,” Paul suggests; “hold fast that which is good.” [1 Thessalonians 5:21](#). It seems that Paul’s attention was turned to the gift of prophecy when he gave this counsel, for the preceding verse reads, “Despise not prophesyings.” In spiritual things it is extremely important that we discard anything that is useless or erroneous, and that we discover and hold to all that is truth. Jesus tested the traditions of the Jews and found them worthless. Luther found that the system of salvation by works under which he had been living was an erroneous system. Suppose he had retained it. Joseph Bates heard that the seventh day was the Sabbath. He tested the claim by the Bible and found it true. Suppose he had rejected the Sabbath in favor of the day he had been keeping. It is not difficult to conjecture what some of the results might have been had these men not proved these teachings and held fast the good.

Much has been said in previous chapters about some of the contributions of Ellen White to the growth of the church, but no general summary has been made. Has it been worth while to have this manifestation of the gift of prophecy in the church? What has it meant to the church as a whole and to the individual members? Some points that have been covered in earlier parts of the book will be reviewed briefly in this general summary.

The presence of the manifestation of the gift of prophecy has meant:

1. *Assistance in developing doctrines.* The relation of Ellen White to the early development of the system of teachings held by Seventh-day Adventists was presented in chapter 12. These doctrines were not given to the church through revelations to Mrs. White, but the influence of the visions provided guidance so that right conclusions might be reached and substantiated. All theological problems are not settled by the writings, but sufficient help has been given so that no mistake need be made in any vital matter. The [382]

variations that exist in the doctrines of other denominations have not crept into Seventh-day Adventist teachings because this special guidance has indicated the validity of the Bible positions. Without this unifying factor, there would, no doubt, be many different views regarding the second advent of Christ, the nature of man, and other topics.

2. *Saving from false teachings and fanaticism.* In the early days of the advent movement, before clear doctrinal positions had been worked out, there was serious danger from the introduction of false teachings among the advent believers. Numerous ways in which erroneous teachings were corrected are noted in the early history of the movement. In some cases errors crept into the thinking of substantial Adventists, but they were willing to correct their views when their errors were indicated. In other instances the errors led to fanaticism and increased the difficulty of dealing with the problems. A striking example from the early days may be found in A. W. Spalding's *Captains of the Host*, pages 128-130, where he tells the story of the encounter with the fanatics Sargent and Robbins. For details of the account Spalding combines the records of J. N. Loughborough and James White.

Attempts to introduce false teachings did not cease with the passing of the years. A. G. Daniells, in *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, pages 330-341, records how God used the gift of prophecy to prevent the injection of subtle pantheistic teachings into Seventh-day Adventist doctrines. How the problem of the rise of a false prophetess was met is told in the experience of Anna Phillips, found in Appendix A at the close of this book. See pages 469-471. This persistent guarding of the truth has been as important as its original discovery. The teachings of the church must neither be warped by error nor marred by fanaticism.

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3. *Developing organization.* The major steps in the growth of denominational organization were traced in chapter 12. The general plan in operation today is that which came about as the result of the 1903 General Conference and the suggestions made by Ellen White. It is an organization ideally suited to maintaining close contact with all parts of the world field and fostering united action in all areas.

4. *Guidance in current problems.* In November, 1890, Ellen White was given a vision while she was stopping for a few days at

Salamanca, New York. Several times she tried to tell what she had seen, but she was unable to do so. Why? Because some of the things she had seen had not yet taken place; she was unaware of this, and she must wait until the problem arose before she presented what had been revealed to her. When the need was present and the problem had to be faced, God prompted her to recall the vision and recount it. The story is told in detail in Appendix A. See pages 471-480.

5. *Guidance in plans for the future.* Working from day to day with no long-range plan is unfavorable to the prosperity of any enterprise. Knowing the end from the beginning, God is able to give direction through His prophets that will result in well-laid plans for His church. “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.” [Amos 3:7](#).

Wise plans were laid for the growth of the educational work at the Australian college at Avondale. Professor C. W. Irwin, who took charge of the school soon after Ellen White returned to the United States from Australia, wrote this after he had been the head of the school for eight years:

“As time has gone on, and we have had an opportunity to watch the work develop, we can say most assuredly from our experience, that God led in the selection of this place. Everything that has been said about the location of the school in this place has been fulfilled.

“The brethren in counsel with Sister White had made such broad and liberal plans for the school that through my eight years’ connection with it I have never yet needed to change a single plan they had laid down. God guided in the establishment of the work there; and all we have endeavored to do during these eight years, has simply been to develop more fully the plans already made. I believe the working out of this has proved that God’s instruction was true.” [\(Australasian\) Union Conference Record, August 27, 1928.](#)

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6. *Revelation of future events.* The major prophecies of the Bible carry us down to the end of the controversy between Christ and Satan. As the result of revelation, Ellen White was able to supply a number of details not mentioned in the Bible concerning these final events. Some of these details are set forth in the closing chapters of *The Great Controversy*.

This more complete picture of the days ahead has given the church an added safeguard against the deceptions of Satan. The

deceptions will increase in number and subtlety as we approach the end, and they will reach a climax in the appearance of Satan in person, as he proclaims himself to be the Christ. For all who are not thoroughly prepared for these delusions, they will be overpowering. The more we know of the ways the deceiver will work, the better we will be prepared to avoid his traps.

[385] 7. *Encouragement and aid to Bible study.* As the Christian knows of a certainty what lies ahead, he better realizes his need for Bible study and a closer walk with God. “In order to endure the trial before them, they must understand the will of God as revealed in His word.... None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict.” [The Great Controversy, 593](#). “Whatever may be man’s intellectual advancement, let him not for a moment think that there is no need of thorough and continuous searching of the Scriptures for greater light. As a people we are called individually to be students of prophecy. We must watch with earnestness that we may discern any ray of light which God shall present to us. We are to catch the first gleamings of truth; and through prayerful study clearer light may be obtained, which can be brought before others.” [Testimonies for the Church 5:708](#).

Not only do the Ellen White books constantly remind one of the need for Bible study, but they serve as a guide to the clear understanding of the word of God.

8. *Guidance in Christian living.* It is God’s plan to reveal to the world His character, His love, and His grace through the lives of His followers. In this way He will give a full and final display of the effectiveness of the plan of salvation. Practical applications of the principles of Christian living, as presented in the Bible, form a large share of the Ellen White writings. Not only are the principles emphasized, but, in most instances, detailed instruction is given as to ways in which they may be carried out in everyday living. Even the titles of many of the books reveal the aim of careful guidance: *Steps to Christ, Messages to Young People, The Adventist Home, Child Guidance, Fundamentals of Christian Education, Counsels on Diet and Foods, Counsels on Stewardship*. These are not theoretical messages, but words to real men and women who need help in meeting personal problems and in building Christian character. Appendix A

contains the account of one man's reaction to the practical Christian counsel in these books. See pages 480-482.

A Guide, Not an Innovator

It is not necessarily the function of a messenger of the Lord to open up new channels of theological thought, or to create new pathways for the Christian life. The messenger is to guide the people of God in safe pathways. This may involve the new application of an abiding principle, or the re-emphasis of a way that is already recognized and practiced. That was true of Bible prophets, as is evidenced by the frequent repetition of certain prophecies and the repeated messages calling the people to walk in "the old paths." [Jeremiah 6:16](#). It is also true of the work of Ellen White. She did not claim to be the first to introduce every application of the great principles of Bible truth and Christian living that is made prominent in her teachings for special application to Seventh-day Adventists. We have already noticed the kind of guidance that was given in the study that resulted in the system of doctrines held by the church today. Mention has been made also of the rise of Seventh-day Adventist medical and educational work. See pages 229, 230, 243, 245. [386]

Three years after Ellen White's vision of 1863, which called the attention of Seventh-day Adventists to health reform, and eight months after she received instruction calling for Adventists to start a medical institution, J. H. Waggoner made this statement on health-reform principles: "We do not profess to be pioneers in the general principles of the health reform. The facts on which this movement is based have been elaborated, in a great measure, by reformers, physicians, and writers on physiology and hygiene, and so may be found scattered through the land. But we do claim that by the method of God's choice it has been more clearly and powerfully unfolded, and is thereby producing an effect which we could not have looked for from any other means.

"As mere physiological and hygienic truths, they might be studied by some at their leisure, and by others laid aside as of little consequence; but when placed on a level with the great truths of the third angel's message by the sanction and authority of God's

[387] Spirit, and so declared to be the means whereby a weak people may be made strong to overcome, and our diseased bodies cleansed and fitted for translation, then it comes to us as an essential part of *present truth*, to be received with the blessing of God, or rejected at our peril.” [The Review and Herald, August 7, 1866](#).

Many of the principles of healthful living pointed out by Ellen G. White for the benefit of Seventh-day Adventists were already being taught in a limited way by others, but had made no real impact on the advent believers or the world generally. Certainly they had not been stressed as a part of a person’s spiritual experience. But mingled with the teaching of truth by others, there were also errors and extremes that needed to be avoided. These were pointed out by Ellen White. Although there was an overlapping of some of her teachings with what was held by others, she was not dependent upon them for light on healthful living. If she had been, she would have adopted their errors as well as their truths. In an article in the [The Review and Herald, October 8, 1867](#), Mrs. White wrote of some who said to her, “You speak very nearly the opinions taught in the *Laws of Life*, and other publications, by Drs. Trall, Jackson, and others. Have you read that paper and those works? My reply was that I had not, neither should I read them till I had fully written out my views, lest it should be said that I had received my light upon the subject of health from physicians, and not from the Lord.” Much that came to Ellen White by revelation was far in advance of the medical knowledge and practice of her day. Some of her statements have received the confirmation of medical research only within recent years, and others are just now beginning to be understood.

Two important characteristics of the health writings of Mrs. White are: (1) They have stood the test of time in reference to medical and dietetic matters, through a period of radical changes in beliefs and practice in the medical profession as a whole; (2) they point out healthful living as a religious duty and a source of spiritual, as well as physical, blessing.

[388] What is true in reference to health teachings is also true with the principles of Christian education enunciated by Ellen White. Many of her writings dealt with principles and approaches that were already in use to some extent. But again we must note that these had made no outstanding impact upon Seventh-day Adventists, that

the good was blended with the worthless, and that there was little or no stress upon right education as a Christian duty. In her writings, Mrs. White was not dependent on what she observed or heard as a basis for what she outlined as God's plan of education. Everything she wrote did not lead the advent people along new paths, but the message did direct the church to safe paths.

Has It Been Worth While?

As we glance again at the list of contributions, we find we have noted only one or two examples in connection with each. Paul says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Has the gift made sufficient contribution to the advent cause that we may say unqualifiedly that it is good, and something to which we should hold fast?

After Mrs. White's death in 1915, the editor of the New York *Independent*, a leading religious journal of that day, wrote of her life and contributions to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. First he spoke of some of the teachings of the denomination, in these words: "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." The author then told of the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist work in many lands, of the schools, publishing houses, and sanitariums. The figures, of course, are now out of date. Then he continued: "And in all this Ellen G. White has been the inspiration and guide. Here is a noble record, and she deserves great honor." *The Independent*, Aug. 23, 1915.

A series of resolutions adopted by the 1954 session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is introduced in part by these words: "We recognize that in the early days of the remnant church there was given to it the gift of the spirit of prophecy, and through this gift by voice and pen during the life of Ellen G. White and through her writings since her death, we have been counseled, guided, and led to higher planes of spiritual experience, to higher

[389]

standards, and to a clear concept of coming events.” Farther in the introduction these words appear: “We recognize the value of the spirit of prophecy messages to the church throughout the world and that the principles enunciated by the servant of the Lord ... are of equal value to the church in all lands in fostering Bible standards, encouraging the spirit of devotion and sacrifice, and guarding and unifying the church.” “Recommendations and Resolutions Adopted at the Forty-Seventh Session of the General Conference,” May 24 to June 5, 1954.

To anyone well acquainted with the history and present operation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the place occupied by the work and writings of Ellen White is clear. The General Conference in session has repeatedly given voice to the conviction that by this means God has given the church the special guidance it has needed. This manifestation of the gift of prophecy may be “proved” by the application of any practical type of test, and will be found to be one of the good things Paul referred to—one to which the church should “hold fast.”

Lines of Instruction

[390] Persons frequently express amazement at the variety of subjects on which Ellen White has written. Even more striking perhaps is the fact that in none of these writings does she speak as a novice—each carries a note of authority. But when we recall why God gave instruction through this messenger, it is not strange that they should be so comprehensive. They are intended to help us know how to apply Bible principle to every phase of life. Certainly the object has been achieved.

No one of the books can be placed in a single classification and be said to deal with only one type of instruction. But for the sake of viewing their varied nature, it may be useful to list some of them in several general classifications.

General books on many subjects: *Testimonies for the Church*, Volumes 1-9.

Books on the Christian life: *Steps to Christ*, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, *The Sanctified Life*, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, *My Life Today*, *Sons and Daughters of God*.

Books on Christian education: *Education, Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, Fundamentals of Christian Education*.

Books on the home and family: *The Adventist Home, Child Guidance, Messages to Young People*.

Books covering the Bible story and prophecy: *Patriarchs and Prophets, Prophets and Kings, The Desire of Ages, The Acts of the Apostles, The Great Controversy*.

Books that are aids to better service: *Testimonies to Ministers, Gospel Workers, Christian Service, Evangelism, Counsels on Stewardship, Colporteur Ministry, Counsels on Sabbath School Work, Welfare Ministry, Medical Ministry*.

Books on healthful living: *The Ministry of Healing, Counsels on Diet and Foods, Counsels on Health, Temperance*.

This is not a complete list of the Ellen White books, but it will give some idea as to the comprehensiveness of the coverage of the writings. A complete list of out-of-print books, as well as those currently available, will be found on pages 482-485. No principle has been overlooked, no facet of the Christian life has been ignored. It is the breadth of the instruction that makes it of such practical value today. As was true in the case of the Bible prophets, God gave through Ellen White exactly what would be needed and would be of greatest service.

The pattern of the function of the prophets, as it may be gleaned [391] from all parts of the Bible, has been followed in providing for the remnant church a messenger whose services and messages would meet its needs.

SUMMARY

1. Ellen White has been used by God to fulfill a function similar to that of the ancient prophets.

2. The messenger to the remnant church spoke for God, revealed His purposes, strengthened and guided leaders, encouraged the church to faithfulness, protested against evils, directed church activities, and taught the principles of truth.

3. An application of Paul's instruction to "prove all things" points out several major contributions that have been made to the church by the work of Ellen White.

1. Assisting in developing doctrines.
2. Saving from false teachings and fanaticism
3. Developing organization.
4. Guiding in current problems.
5. Guiding in plans for the future.
6. Revealing of future events.
7. Encouraging and aiding Bible study.
8. Guiding in Christian living.

4. The broad lines of instruction given through Ellen White touch every phase of the life and responsibility of the Christian. Her books are varied in character, and comprehensive in coverage.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. In the light of the relationships existing between the Bible and the Ellen White writings, discuss the significance of the statements: Ellen White “speaks for God,” “reveals God’s purposes,” “strengthens and guides leaders,” etc. How is each of these related to what has been given in the Bible?

[392] 2. Can any distinction be made between the importance of following specific Bible counsel and following counsel given in the Ellen White writings? Use texts and quotations to support your answer.

3. What is your own reaction as to the value of the contributions made by the ministry of Ellen White to the Seventh-day Adventist Church? Have they been of sufficient worth to cause you to feel we should continue to give attention to the instruction?

4. Find additional examples that might be placed under the heading of the contributions listed in this chapter.

5. Are there other types of contributions that you think of which have not been listed?

6. Are there subjects presented in the Bible on which no comment has been made in the Ellen White writings? Are there topics introduced which are not treated in some way in the Bible?

SELECTED REFERENCES

Christian, L. H., *The Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts*, pp. 126-141 (“Much more than a prophet”).

Spalding, A. W., *Captains of the Host*, pp. 372-374 (A worker saved).

Prove All Things

Daniells, A. G., *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, pp. 322-369 (Southern Publishing Association crisis; pantheism crisis).

Spicer, W. A., *Certainties of the Advent Movement*, pp. 201-231, 251-263 (Influence of the gift of prophecy).

White, Ellen G., [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 312-318](#) (Story of *American Sentinel*).

Was every word spoken by a prophet, after he received his prophetic call, inspired by God? No intensive study of the Bible is required to produce an emphatic No to this question. There is no indication that a man called to the prophetic office could henceforth speak only the words given him by the Lord, or that other men could take it for granted that everything said and done by the prophet was done so under divine inspiration. Abraham deceived, Moses lost his patience and spoke hasty words, David instructed Joab how to have Uriah killed, Nathan agreed with David's plans to build a house for the Lord and then had to reverse his statement. All these men were prophets, but the possession of the prophetic gift did not mean moment-by-moment direction of all their words and acts.

If *all* they said was not inspired, how much was given by divine direction? Nowhere in the Bible is there a clear statement on the subject. A study of Ellen White and a comparison of her work with some Bible prophets shed light on the problem. In dealing with Mrs. White we have the advantage of a larger number of her writings and many more comments bearing on the topic at hand than we have in studying the work and writings of any Bible prophet. The same questions are frequently asked regarding her words and writings as are raised relative to the Bible writers. How much of it was from the Lord, and how much was the result of her own thinking?

On August 30, 1906, there appeared in the *Review and Herald* this statement from the pen of Mrs. White, addressed to a Seventh-day Adventist who had written her concerning the inspiration of the *Testimonies*. "In your letter," she wrote, "you speak of your early training to have implicit faith in the *Testimonies*, and say, 'I was led to conclude and most firmly believe that *every* word that you ever spoke in public or private, that every letter you wrote under *any* and *all* circumstances, was as inspired as the ten commandments.' [Italics hers.]

“My brother, you have studied my writings diligently, and you have never found that I have made any such claims. Neither will you find that the pioneers in our cause have made such claims.” She then referred to her statement concerning the inspiration of the Bible writers in her introduction to *The Great Controversy*.

How Much Was Inspired?

About three years later, in [Manuscript 107, 1909](#), Mrs. White gave some details that guide us in reaching sound conclusions. To understand the significance of her statements it is essential that the story behind them be told briefly. A worker in Southern California was justifying his loss of confidence in the inspiration of the *Testimonies* as a whole on the basis of what he claimed was an inconsistency in one of Mrs. White’s letters. According to this man’s account, Ellen White had written a letter in which she made the statement that the Paradise Valley Sanitarium contained forty rooms. He said that actually there were only thirty-eight rooms, and therefore his confidence in the *Testimonies* was impaired. Apparently it was his belief that if a statement made at any time by one who claimed inspiration proved inaccurate in any detail, the claim to inspiration was false.

In writing about the incident Mrs. White commented: “The information given concerning the number of rooms in the Paradise Valley Sanitarium was given, not as a revelation from the Lord, but simply as a human opinion. There has never been revealed to me the exact number of rooms in any of our sanitariums; and the knowledge I have obtained of such things I have gained by inquiring of those who were supposed to know.” Farther on in the same document she adds this general statement: “There are times when common things must be stated, common thoughts must occupy the mind, common letters must be written and information given that has passed from one to another of the workers. Such words, such information, are not given under the special inspiration of the Spirit of God. Questions are asked at times that are not upon religious subjects at all, and these questions must be answered. We converse about houses and lands, trades to be made, and locations for our institutions, their advantages and disadvantages.”

A sentence included among the comments on the number of rooms in the sanitarium gives a further key to understanding the matter of how to determine what is inspired and what is not. "In my words when speaking upon these common subjects, there is nothing to lead minds to believe that I receive my knowledge in a vision from the Lord and am stating as such." It seems clear from this statement that Mrs. White intended to convey the idea that when she dealt with common subjects, or answered questions "not upon religious subjects," there would be nothing in what was spoken or written that would suggest it had been given by inspiration. The opposite idea is implied: That which was written or spoken under divine direction would bear its own credentials, either in the spiritual nature of the matter dealt with, or by some such indication as "I was shown." Any treatment of "religious subjects" would be based on illumination that had been given in the visions. She made no claim that everything she wrote in every letter she penned was given under inspiration, nor did she imply that what she said in ordinary conversation was necessarily directed by God. Frequently she talked of everyday events of common interest, and she freely expressed her personal views.

[396] There have been differences of opinion as to how much of what Mrs. White said and wrote was inspired. Some have maintained that the books, and the books alone, should be accepted as given by inspiration, that the periodical articles are no different from those written by others, and that many of her communications to individuals were merely letters and not inspired. Some profess to accept anything prefixed with "I saw" or its equivalent, and reject any thought that is not so labeled.

What did Mrs. White claim for her writings and words? If we believe she was the messenger of the Lord, and if we accept anything she said as given by God, certainly we must accept her description of what was inspired. She could not be true to her divine calling and still send out her own ideas as messages from the Lord. F. M. Wilcox, for many years editor of the *Review and Herald*, commented: "We must believe that what she gave, by either voice or pen, in printed page or through the medium of correspondence, *as the messages of God*, was true to this representation. We must accept her statement as true relative to this, or else reject altogether her call

to the prophetic office.” *The Testimony of Jesus*, page 64. Here are Ellen White’s statements regarding the inspiration of various kinds of communications.

Books. “Sister White is not the originator of these books. They contain the instruction that during her lifework God has been giving her. They contain the precious, comforting light that God has graciously given His servant to be given to the world.” [Colporteur Ministry](#), 125.

“The volumes of *Spirit of Prophecy* [forerunners of the Conflict of the Ages Series], and also the *Testimonies*, should be introduced into every Sabbathkeeping family, and the brethren should know their value and be urged to read them.... Many are going directly contrary to the light which God has given to His people, because they do not read the books which contain the light and knowledge in cautions, reproofs, and warnings.” [Testimonies for the Church 4:390, 391](#).

The obvious intent of these sentences is to confirm that the material in her books was given Ellen White by the Lord. Particular attention should be given, however, to one type of account mentioned in the preface to *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2. Speaking of the biographical portion of this volume, Mrs. White wrote: “In preparing the following pages, I have labored under great disadvantages, as I have had to depend in many instances, on memory, having kept no journal till within a few years. In several instances I have sent the manuscripts to friends who were present when the circumstances related occurred, for their examination before they were put in print. I have taken great care, and have spent much time, in endeavoring to state the simple facts as correctly as possible.

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“I have, however, been much assisted in arriving at dates by the many letters which I wrote to Bro. S. Howland and family, of Topsham, Maine. As they for the period of five years had the care of my Henry, I felt it my duty to write to them often, and give them my experience, my joys, trials, and victories. In many instances I have copied from these letters.”

In the first 400 copies of this book there appeared an appendix containing this solicitation: “A special request is made that if any find incorrect statements in this book they will immediately inform me.

The edition will be completed about the first of October; therefore send before that time.”

No claim is made by Ellen White for inspiration of the purely biographical account in *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, or other volumes; but it can be clearly seen that this has no bearing on the spiritual messages that came from her pen. Speaking of the way some persons were treating the messages in her books,—claiming the ability to distinguish some portions that had been given by the Lord and some that were Mrs. White’s own thinking,—the messenger wrote this rebuke:

[398] “And now, brethren, I entreat you not to interpose between me and the people, and turn away the light which God would have come to them. Do not by your criticisms take out all the force, all the point and power, from the *Testimonies*. Do not feel that you can dissect them to suit your own ideas, claiming that God has given you ability to discern what is light from heaven and what is the expression of mere human wisdom. If the *Testimonies* speak not according to the word of God, reject them. Christ and Belial cannot be united. For Christ’s sake do not confuse the minds of the people with human sophistry and skepticism, and make of none effect the work that the Lord would do. Do not, by your lack of spiritual discernment, make of this agency of God a rock of offense whereby many shall be caused to stumble and fall, ‘and be snared, and be taken.’” [Testimonies for the Church 5:691](#).

Trying to make distinctions, except with everyday experiences and biographical accounts, is dangerous. It involves setting up one’s own judgment as a criterion in place of the clear declaration of the messenger whom he claims to believe to be inspired. If the word of the messenger cannot be accepted, then none of the messages should be accepted as being of God.

Articles. “I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision—the precious rays of light shining from the throne.” [Testimonies for the Church 5:67](#).

Mrs. White’s articles in various denominational periodicals totaled about 4,500. No distinction can be made between them and the books. In fact, a large number of book chapters appeared originally as periodical articles. The chapter on “The Preparation of

the Books” has outlined how the articles were drawn upon for use in her books. There is no warrant for discounting the importance of instruction simply because it appears in an article rather than in a book.

Letters. In the minds of many persons the inspiration, or lack of inspiration, in the letters of Ellen White constitutes more of a problem than is posed by either the books or the articles.

We have already noticed her declaration that: “There are ... common letters [that] must be written....” Beside this must be placed another quotation. “Weak and trembling, I arose at three o’clock in the morning to write to you. God was speaking through clay. You might say that this communication was only a letter. Yes, it was a letter, but prompted by the Spirit of God, to bring before your minds things that had been shown me. In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me.” *Ibid.*

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How is it possible to distinguish between the “common” and that which has been revealed? Again we must return to the principle that what was passed on *as a message from God* or dealt with spiritual matters, was given by inspiration. “I have no special wisdom in myself; I am only an instrument in the Lord’s hands to do the work He has set for me to do. *The instructions that I have given by pen or voice* have been an expression of the light that God has given me.” [Testimonies for the Church 5:691](#). (Italics supplied.)

Instruction contained in letters to individuals or groups was sometimes included later in articles for periodicals and in books circulated to the whole church and intended for instruction to all. For example, on October 11, 1895, Ellen White, who was in Australia, addressed a letter to S. N. Haskell in Africa. It was a letter of encouragement to a man facing many difficulties and combating discouragement. Less than a year later, on June 9, 1896, the letter appeared as an Ellen White article in the *Review and Herald*. The introduction to the letter was omitted, as was any reference to the name of Elder Haskell, but the article is made up largely of the letter. Since Mrs. White wrote no articles for the periodicals expressing merely her own opinions, but only what God had revealed to her, then the contents of the original letter, so far as it constituted instruction or professed to be a message from God, was given by inspiration.

[400] Usually the Ellen White letters opened with some salutation or personal references that had no need to be inspired. These, however, were purely incidental, and not a vital part of the message itself. An example or two will show how easily accounts of common or everyday happenings may be distinguished from instruction.

“Oct. 10, 1910

“My Dear Brother,----

“Last night, in plain sight from my bedroom window, the forest was ablaze. Men were at work all night fighting the fire, which was not checked till near morning. Today we are having a nice rain, the first this season. We are very thankful for this rain.

“We are now to seek God most earnestly. I have been instructed by the Lord that calamities of every description will come upon the world. The end of all things is at hand, and the very things that have been presented to me will take place. Satan is powerful in carrying out his plans. Some are awakening to a realization of what will be in the future.” Ellen G. White [Letter 98, 1910](#).

“Sept. 30, 1910

[401] “My Dear Brother,----

“I have just read again what you wrote regarding your experience at the Battle Creek camp meeting. I am very thankful for this report from you. I am impressed that just such meetings should be held in prominent places like Battle Creek. I have often been assured that as a result, a favorable impression will be made upon the minds of many not of our faith....

“In the night season instruction has been given me that many have become confused by the experience of some who have departed from the faith and have given the trumpet an uncertain sound. For the benefit of those who have thus become confused, the message is now to go forth with great power. The evidences of the truth are to be repeated, that the people may see that we are standing in assurance, giving the trumpet a certain sound.

[402] “The words were spoken to me: ‘Tell My people that time is
[403] short. Every effort is now to be made to exalt the truth.’” Ellen G. White [Letter 88, 1910](#).

Many of the letters, however, begin in exactly the same fashion as do periodical articles and chapters in the volumes of the *Testimonies*

for the Church. With no personal references, they launched into the message to be given.

“Aug. 11, 1910

“Dear Brother,----

“For several months I have been instructed of the Lord that a decided change must be made from this time onward in the carrying forward of our work.

“Message after message has come to me from the Lord concerning the dangers surrounding you and----.” Ellen G. White [Letter 70, 1910](#).

“June 15, 1910

“Dear Brethren:-----

“I have a message for you. Those who serve the cause of God need to be men of prayer, men who will heed the instruction that the Lord is giving regarding the prosecution of His work....Later in the same letter these words appear.] ‘I am charged with a message to you both that you need to humble your hearts before God.... I am to tell you that neither of you is prepared to discern with clear eyesight that which is needed now.’” Ellen G. White [Letter 58, 1910](#).

“April 27, 1910

“Dear Brother:-----

“I wish to express to you some thoughts that should be kept before the sanitarium workers. That which will make them a power for good is the knowledge that the great Medical Missionary has chosen them for this work, that He is their chief instructor, and that it is ever their duty to recognize Him as their Teacher....

“During the night of April 26, many things were opened before me. I was shown that now in a special sense we as a people are to be guided by divine instruction.” Ellen G. White [Letter 61, 1910](#). [404]

Though brief, these excerpts from letters fairly represent the situation encountered in dealing with the letters, and show that it is not a difficult one. That which is intended as a message from the Lord is clearly distinguishable from any incidental biographical or personal references. Additional examples may be seen in the *Testimonies for the Church*. Note the headings to many of the articles which indicate that they were originally sent as letters. Mrs. White herself marked these for inclusion in the books as she was impressed

by the Lord to do so, or saw that the counsel sent to one would be helpful to another.

Interviews. At times statements were circulated purporting to have been made by Ellen White in interviews with individuals and written out by the persons who heard them. In connection with statements of this type it is helpful to remember the principle enunciated as follows: “He [a leading minister] has with him a little notebook in which he has noted down perplexing questions which he brings before me, and *if I have any light upon these points, I write it out* for the benefit of our people, not only in America, but in this country [Australia].” Ellen G. White [Letter 96, 1899](#).

[405] If Mrs. White had light on the subject regarding which the minister inquired, she would not refuse to answer his questions, but she did more than that. A question of importance had its answer written out for the benefit of all. Her written comments, not the notes of the one hearing the answer, should be accepted as an accurate record of the counsel. If the matter was not of sufficient moment for her to write about it, none should snatch up reports of others as to what was said, since she distinctly stated that when she had light for the people she would write it out. Wise instruction is given in [Testimonies for the Church 5:696](#). “And now to all who have a desire for truth I would say: Do not give credence to unauthenticated reports as to what Sister White has done or said or written. If you desire to know what the Lord has revealed through her, read her published works. Are there any points of interest concerning which she has not written, do not eagerly catch up and report rumors as to what she has said.”

Ellen White’s situation was a difficult one on many occasions when she was asked for counsel. Unless she had received definite instruction from the Lord, she hesitated to express an opinion lest it be taken as based on a revelation. She stated her difficulty in these words: “I find myself frequently placed where I dare give neither assent nor dissent to propositions that are submitted to me; for there is danger that any words I may speak shall be reported as something that the Lord has given me. It is not always safe for me to express my own judgment; for sometimes when someone wishes to carry out his own purpose, he will regard any favorable word I may speak as special light from the Lord.” Ellen G. White [Letter 162, 1907](#).

The same care was exercised in answering questions in writing. A worker had written asking that Ellen White make some suggestions concerning his future work. Here is a part of her reply. "I am not at liberty to write to our brethren concerning your future work.... I have received no instruction regarding the place you should locate.... I dare not even take the responsibility of advising you in this matter.... If the Lord gives me definite instruction concerning you, I will give it to you; but I cannot take upon myself responsibilities that the Lord does not give me to bear." Ellen G. White [Letter 96, 1909](#).

Unpublished letters and manuscripts. There is no indication that the messages that remained unpublished came to the prophet in a manner different from those that were published. In fact, there is every indication to the contrary. Not all the inspired matter was published at once; some of it was never published. "Some portions of that which I write are sent out immediately to meet the present necessities of the work. Other portions are held until the development of circumstances makes it evident to me that the time has come for their use." Ellen G. White, "Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies," page 6.

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"I have given some personal communications in several numbers of my testimonies, and in some cases persons have been offended because I did not publish all such communications. On account of their number this would be hardly possible, and it would be improper from the fact that some of them relate to sins which need not, and should not, be made public." [Testimonies for the Church 1:631](#).

It was the nature of the material, not the time or manner of its reception, that determined whether or not it should be published. Time, circumstances, and appropriateness were factors in considering and reaching such decisions.

In answer to the question, "How much was inspired?" the whole matter seems to hinge not on whether the messages were first written or spoken, whether they were published or allowed to remain in manuscript form, whether they appeared as books, periodicals, or personal letters; but whether they dealt with spiritual matters and were intended as instruction from the Lord to the individuals or groups addressed. As to whether or not they were intended for instruction is obvious from the study of the individual documents.

The Ellen White writings constitute a reservoir of material, available for use as the circumstances may indicate. From an enlightened mind, she spoke and wrote. She consistently refrained from mingling her personal ideas with instruction and light she was giving in her letters, articles, and books.

How Much Applies Today?

[407] Once we have recognized that the messages which were intended for instruction, whether written or spoken, published in papers, pamphlets, or books, were to be accepted as the message of God to the individuals or groups addressed, we are faced with a further question. How much of the instruction given through Ellen White to the church and its members during the period of her lifetime is applicable to the church and its members today?

Much of what Mrs. White wrote had specific application to the time that it was written, or soon afterward. Do these specifically addressed testimonies bear any relationship to us, or are they to be disregarded as being out of date and of interest only from a historical point of view? Should these writings bear as much weight with us as they were intended to bear with those to whom they were originally sent? How far may we go in critically sorting through these pages and saying, "This applies to us, and that is no longer of any force. That is old-fashioned and out of date, but this is good counsel for today"?

Again we must rely on the statements of the messenger herself if we would learn how wide an application should be made of the things she has written. "Through His Holy Spirit the voice of God has come to us continually in warning and instruction, to confirm the faith of the believers in the spirit of prophecy. Repeatedly the word has come, Write the things that I have given you to confirm the faith of My people in the position they have taken. Time and trial have not made void the instruction given, but through years of suffering and self-sacrifice have established the truth of the testimony given. The instruction that was given in the early days of the message is to be held as safe instruction to follow in these, its closing days. Those who are indifferent to this light and instruction must not expect to escape the snares which we have been plainly told will cause the

rejecters of light to stumble, and fall, and be snared, and be taken. If we study carefully the second chapter of Hebrews, we shall learn how important it is that we hold steadfastly to every principle of truth that has been given.” [The Review and Herald, July 18, 1907.](#)

“I have been shown that the principles that were given us in the early days of the message are as important and should be regarded just as conscientiously today as they were then.” [Testimonies for the Church 9:158](#) (1909). [408]

“Whether or not my life is spared, my writings will constantly speak, and their work will go forward as long as time shall last.” Ellen G. White, “Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies,” pages 13, 14 (1907).

These combined statements indicate that Ellen White expected her writings to be accepted as applicable to God’s people to the end of time. This is true of instruction sent to individuals as well as the general counsel to larger groups or to the church as a whole. Particular attention should be given to the group of writings commonly known as *Testimonies*, especially those originally sent to individuals. Was this instruction intended to have a wider application than to the persons addressed? Can it be taken as relevant fifty or seventy-five years after it was written?

The purpose of publishing personal testimonies is made clear in this sentence: “The object of publishing the testimonies is that those who are not singled out personally, yet who are as much in fault as those who are reproved, may be warned through the reproofs given to others.” [Testimonies for the Church 2:687.](#)

The broad nature of the instruction means that applications may be made to many others than the ones addressed in any communication. “Since the warning and instruction given in testimony for individual cases applied with equal force to many others who had not been specially pointed out in this manner, it seemed to be my duty to publish the personal testimonies for the benefit of the church. In *Testimony* 15, speaking of the necessity for doing this, I said: ‘I know of no better way to present my views [visions] of general dangers and errors, and the duty of all who love God and keep His commandments, than by giving these testimonies. Perhaps there is no more direct and forcible way of presenting what the Lord has shown me.’”—[Testimonies for the Church 5:658, 659.](#) [409]

“In rebuking the wrongs of one, He designs to correct many. But if they fail to take the reproof to themselves, and flatter themselves that God passes over their errors because He does not especially single them out, they deceive their own souls and will be shut up in darkness and be left to their own ways to follow the imagination of their own hearts.” “He makes plain the wrongs of some that others may thus be warned, and fear, and shun those errors. By self-examination they may find that they are doing the same things which God condemns in others.”—[Testimonies for the Church 2:112, 113](#).

Although all the instruction given to the church through Ellen White does not apply to every individual in exactly the same way, there is in all of it the same kind of universal guidance that one finds in the Bible. Every portion may be read with profit today. Not every phase of Bible instruction is pertinent in our present situation. For example, detailed instruction was given for the presentation of sacrifices at the tabernacle and temple, but the sacrificial system ended when the Lamb of God was offered. We do not bring lambs, goats, and bullocks to the altar today, but every Seventh-day Adventist recognizes the spiritual value of a study of the ancient system of offerings. Paul puts it this way: “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” [1 Corinthians 10:11](#). “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” [Romans 15:4](#).

A careful consideration of all the factors involved leads to the conclusion that on the same basis that Paul stated, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,” all the instruction given through Ellen White is profitable for the remnant church today.

[410] [Chapter 23](#) deals with the matter of what use should be made of the instruction and how it is to be understood and applied.

SUMMARY

1. The call to the prophetic office did not mean that from the time of the call God controlled every thought and word of the prophet.

2. In Ellen White's case the indication is that what was written or spoken under inspiration bears its own credentials, whether in the spiritual nature of what was spoken or written, or by some such indication as "I was shown."

3. Mrs. White makes no distinction regarding inspiration between what was published in books or articles, or what was written in letters, except in cases of purely biographical matters or other everyday incidents.

4. In the letters it is not difficult to distinguish what is given as instruction from personal references.

5. In cases of interviews, if Ellen White had light on the subjects discussed she wrote it out for the benefit of all.

6. Regarding inspiration, Ellen White made no difference between items left unpublished and those published.

7. As "all Scripture" is profitable for our study today, so all the Ellen White writings are of value for our study.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Would it have been a good thing if God had completely controlled the lives of His prophets so they could not say or do anything out of accord with their high calling? How would that have corresponded with God's way of working with men in general?

2. Discuss the responsibility of a prophet in view of the fact that some persons might be inclined to regard anything he should say as being a message from the Lord.

3. Refer to the Ellen White book [The Adventist Home](#), 34. [411] There you will find a group of references for material included in the chapter. There are selections from books,—the *Testimonies*, the Conflict Series, and others,—a letter and a manuscript previously unpublished, and some periodical articles. Compare the type of material found in each selection. Can you make any distinctions between them? See references at the close of other chapters.

SELECTED REFERENCES

Our Firm Foundation, vol. 1, pp. 252-273.

White, Arthur L., Ellen G. White, *Messenger to the Remnant*, pp. 86, 87.

Wilcox, F. M., *The Testimony of Jesus*, pp. 74-89, 131-135.

“For a good work we stone Thee not; but for blasphemy.” [John 10:33](#).

“Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father.” [John 5:18](#).

“Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.” [Matthew 15:2](#).

“And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye Him?” [John 10:20](#).

“How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?” [John 7:15](#).

Who is this that is being accused of blasphemy, of lawbreaking, of turning people from the ways of the fathers, of devil possession involving insanity, and of a lack of education that caused men to wonder how He could say anything worth while? Anyone acquainted with the story of Jesus recognizes immediately that it was He who was the object of these criticisms. Even a perfect life, an unmarred ministry, could not escape the critic’s thrust.

Moses faced, among other things, the charge of exalting himself and assuming unwarranted authority. [Numbers 16:3](#). Jeremiah was accused of being a false prophet who was prompted by a friend to give a message according to the friend’s ideas. [Jeremiah 43:2, 3](#). Paul was indicted as being mentally unbalanced, turning the world “upside down,” and destroying the business of the Ephesian craftsmen. [Acts 26:24; 17:6; 19:26, 27](#).

Whether there is change or stagnation, strong leadership or weakness, clear or muddled thinking, adverse criticism appears to be the lot of those who occupy places of responsibility. At the same time, one who occupies no commanding position, but who still affects the thinking of a large number of persons, is almost always the object of hostile criticism.

Ellen White was and is subject to such criticism. In this chapter we shall give attention to some of the criticisms that have been brought against her work and her writings. In dealing with this case, it is not difficult for the most part to find parallel accusations made against the prophets of the Bible. There seem to have been few new criticisms invented with the passage of the centuries.

Criticisms of Ellen White fall largely into a few classifications. It is not necessary to know all the facts about each criticism that might be placed in any classification, for this information is readily obtainable when needed. If we become acquainted with a method of approach to the various *types* of problems, we will accomplish more than we would by trying to keep in mind all the details involved. Following are some of the charges.

Nervous Disorder ¹¹

Prominent among the charges of Ellen White's critics are variations on the theme that her visions resulted from some type of nervous disorder stemming from the injury she suffered as a girl. Hysteria, epilepsy, and schizophrenia are most frequently mentioned. The stories built around these charges have seemed plausible enough to cause a number of persons, who have not taken occasion to investigate the manner of the giving of visions and the life and work of Mrs. White for themselves, to accept and propagate them. In this connection there are two facts to be kept in mind: (1) No scientific evidence is given to support the charges, and (2) the whole ministry of Mrs. White and the body of her writings belie the charges.

1. *No scientific evidence.* When we say that no scientific evidence is given to support the charges, we mean that an investigation of the so-called evidence quickly reveals that it is unsound. Generally the evidence consists of the testimony of one or another, or all, of three physicians who claimed to know much about Ellen White's

¹¹Most of the material regarding the charges against Mrs. White is drawn from F. D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, where all the major charges against Mrs. White are dealt with in considerable detail. See pp. 62 ff. It is not the purpose in this chapter to duplicate what has been done in the Nichol book concerning any one of these problems. In each case the details should be studied from that work. In the present chapter we are dealing only with methods of approach and introducing instances solely for illustration, not for the purpose of fully refuting the charges.

physical condition and her visions. Added to these are statements drawn from medical books, which seem to describe some of the physical phenomena accompanying Ellen White's visions.

The three physicians usually quoted are Drs. W. J. Fairfield, William Russell, and J. H. Kellogg. A study of the facts in the case as they are presented in detail by F. D. Nichol indicates that in none of these instances is acceptable scientific evidence given. It is shown that Dr. Fairfield had no opportunity to examine Mrs. White during a vision; in fact, he does not claim to have done so. He established a medical institution rivaling the Battle Creek Sanitarium, became critical of others connected with that institution, and tried to cause trouble for them. There is no evidence that Dr. Russell ever saw Mrs. White in vision, or that she was a patient of his at any time, and he makes no such claim. No real evidence is presented. In fact, in 1871 Russell repented of his attitude toward James and Ellen White, and he wrote them a letter of confession which was published in the [The Review and Herald, April 25, 1871](#). However, this is unmentioned by critics today.

Dr. Kellogg's case differs from that of the other men. For many years he was closely associated with Mrs. White and had abundant opportunity to know of her general physical condition as well as her condition when in vision. But what was Dr. Kellogg's attitude during the years he was associated with Mrs.

White? Through these years he repeatedly expressed his conviction that her visions were from God. These expressions appear in published works as well as in letters. See Appendix D, pages 490-493. It was not until Mrs. White spoke against some of his views and policies that he turned against her, expressed doubts as to the origin of her messages, and refused to accept them. Whatever the factors involved in his reasons for rejection, they were strictly nonmedical.

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Weaknesses similar to those appearing in the testimony of the three physicians are seen also in the testimony presented from medical books. The statements quoted may be authentic and authoritative ones, but they are applied to Ellen White, not by a qualified physician, but by a critic. There is nothing scientific in an unqualified person's reading in medical books the symptoms of diseases concern-

ing which the most skilled diagnosticians sometimes differ widely, and from such reading attempting to diagnose a case.

2. The types of disorders of which some critics feel symptoms appeared in Ellen White's experience are types that affect the whole personality and experience. They are disorders for which medical help has been found only in comparatively recent years. Therefore, if Mrs. White was afflicted with any of these diseases, she would have to be regarded as an untreated case, subject to the progressive ravages of the disease. But the most careful study of her life and writings fails to give the slightest hint of such effects, The comment of the editor of the *New York Independent*, in 1915, previously quoted,—“She lived the life and did the work of a worthy prophetess,”—gives a clue to the regard in which Mrs. White was held. Another writer of a biographical sketch showed his attitude in these words: “Mrs. White is a woman of singularly well-balanced mental organization. Benevolence, spirituality, conscientiousness, and ideality are the predominating traits. Her personal qualities are such as to win for her the warmest friendship of all with whom she comes in contact, and to inspire them with the utmost confidence in her sincerity.... Notwithstanding her many years of public labor, she has retained all the simplicity and honesty which characterized her early life.” *American Biographical History of Eminent and Self-Made Men*, Michigan volume, page 108 (1878).

The best way to deal with problems regarding Ellen White's physical and mental condition is to become well acquainted with the story of her life and the product of her pen. Her writings reveal clarity of thinking, consistency of treatment, unity of thought, depth of insight, and unique aptness of expression that are signs of a well-organized mind and a consistent Christian outlook.

False Teachings

Application of the test “to the law and to the testimony,” some critics say, shows that Ellen White taught some things that are not in the Bible, or were contrary to Bible teachings. In view of earlier statements regarding details found in her writings but not in the Bible, no further comment on that point is needed here. What about the matter of teachings supposedly contrary to the Bible?

In chapter 14 reference was made to the method of applying this test to the writings in order to prove them by the Bible. To deal adequately with this type of criticism two things are necessary: (1) a thorough knowledge of what the Bible teaches on the subject, and (2) a complete cross section of what Ellen White has said on the subject in her various works. The major problems in this area are caused by the fact that she differs from some traditional points of view on Bible teachings which have been held by many individuals, and by the fact that brief portions of passages are sometimes taken out of their setting and made to stand alone. Every doctrine taught by Ellen White will stand the closest scrutiny and comparison with the Scriptures.

Suppression. It is at times charged that Ellen White taught points of view which she later discovered to be incorrect. Then, it is claimed, she changed her teaching, and withdrew from circulation or suppressed the writings containing the error. As examples, certain early works are quoted, which, when they were reprinted, lack some sentences or sections contained in the earlier publication. Or it is urged that certain books were discontinued and others issued in their place to hide the false teachings of the former. Again, what are the facts? Space here permits but a brief summary of the facts presented in detail in *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, pp. 267 ff. [417]

It is true that in later publications some portions of earlier ones were omitted. It is also true that some books were replaced by new ones that did not contain every sentence and expression found in the old books. Does this prove that some teachings were suppressed? Not at all. Charges of deletion and suppression are largely made with reference to three items: (1) a tract, "A Word to the Little Flock," (2) an article in the *Present Truth* of August, 1849, and (3) the book *Sketches From the Life of Paul*. Reasons for the omissions at the time of republication are given by F. D. Nichol in his discussion of this topic. But because of the desire of some persons to have copies of these early documents in their original form, both of the first two items have been reproduced in facsimile form and are easily accessible. Whatever the reasons for the original deletions, they had

nothing to do with the suppression of teachings, for the church has no question about circulating them today.¹²

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The third item, *Sketches From the Life of Paul*, is said to have been withdrawn from circulation because of a threatened lawsuit over alleged plagiarism. Actually, there was no threatened lawsuit, and no critic has ever presented evidence of such action, although the name of a publisher is sometimes mentioned in this connection. A letter from the publisher said to have been involved shows that there was no threatened suit and no grounds for one. *Ibid.*, p. 456. The edition of *Sketches* was completely sold out, and no copies were recalled. No more were printed, for Ellen White intended to write more fully on the subject of the ministry of the apostles. Work on the new volume was delayed for a number of years because of other responsibilities and bookwork, but in 1911 the new book, *The Acts of the Apostles*, was published.

The early teaching most frequently said to have been suppressed by the removal of portions of early publications is that of the “shut door.” Did the first writings teach something different from the later revelations? Again the facts clear away the confusion.

After the disappointment of October 22, 1844, their understanding of the events that had taken place led those who soon became Sabbatarian Adventists to be classified as the “Sabbath and shut-door” brethren, in contrast with the First-day Adventists who were called the “open-door” Adventists. The reason was this: The Adventist group approaching October 22, 1844, believed that the Lord would appear and probation would close for all men. For a time after the disappointment, those who did not repudiate their belief in the advent message still believed that probation had closed and there was no longer mercy for sinners.

However, with the passage of time, they began to recognize that this position was not founded on the Bible, and that there was still a work to be done for sinners. They continued to use the term “shut door,” but it came to have a different meaning to them. It took on

¹²F. D. Nichol’s account contains a detailed study of all the deletions. See Ellen G. White and Her Critics, pp. 619 ff. “A Word to the Little Flock” is available in pamphlet form from the Review and Herald Publishing Association, and is reproduced in an appendix to the Nichol book. The Present Truth article will be found in the volume of Facsimiles of the Two Earliest S.D.A. Periodicals.

this significance: Christ had now entered on the second phase of His ministry as High Priest—ministry in the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary; therefore, He had shut the door to the holy place and opened the door to the most holy. The announcement of this change in phases of ministry was, they felt, the responsibility God [419] had given them. What was Ellen G. White's relation to these teachings regarding the "shut door"? She explains, in a letter addressed to J. N. Loughborough, a portion of which is quoted here.

"With my brethren and sisters, after the time passed in forty-four I did believe no more sinners would be converted. But I never had a vision that no more sinners would be converted. And am clear and free to state no one has ever heard me say or has read from my pen statements which will justify them in the charges they have made against me upon this point.

"It was on my first journey east to relate my visions that the precious light in regard to the heavenly sanctuary was opened before me and I was shown the open and shut door. We believed that the Lord was soon to come in the clouds of heaven. I was shown that there was a great work to be done in the world for those who had not had the light and rejected it. Our brethren could not understand this with our faith in the immediate appearing of Christ. Some accused me of saying my Lord delayeth His coming, especially the fanatical ones. I saw that in '44 God had opened a door and no man could shut it, and shut a door and no man could open it. Those who rejected the light which was brought to the world by the message of the second angel went into darkness, and how great was that darkness." Ellen G. White [Letter 2, 1874](#). The letter in facsimile form appears in F. M. Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus*, pages 106, 107.

In *The Great Controversy* Mrs. White, since 1884, has unhesitatingly and frankly kept before the world the shut-door experience of our early believers and the reasons for the position they took. See [The Great Controversy, 428-432](#). It is largely the failure on the part of the critics to recognize the change in the significance of the term "shut door" as employed by our pioneers that creates the problem in this case. They make no distinction between Ellen White's early personal belief and what was soon revealed to her, on the basis of which she changed her point of view. F. D. Nichol presents several [420] exhibits revealing that Mrs. White's earliest writings contain clear

indications of her belief that there was still opportunity for men to accept the Lord.—F. D. Nichol, *op. cit.*, pages 239 ff. See also F. M. Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus*, pages 90 ff. In the face of facts, the “shut-door” charge collapses.

Plagiarism

The charge of plagiarism, or literary theft, is made against Ellen White in connection with two books—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, and *The Great Controversy*. It is seldom that any other work or passage is cited, although it is insinuated by critics that large portions of all her writings were the product of the minds and pens of others. Is the insinuation justified? This much is certain: If there were works other than the two specified that would help the critic to build up his case, he would not hesitate or fail to use them. Consequently the problem of the accusation of plagiarism may be regarded as limited to these books.

Did Ellen White borrow from the writings of others in the preparation of these books? Yes, she did. Did this borrowing constitute plagiarism? We think not. Actually, there are two phases to the matter of plagiarism—the moral and the legal. Morally, the major question is: Was there an attempt on the part of the author to deceive her readers into thinking that the material she had borrowed was completely her own? Take *Sketches From the Life of Paul*, for example.

The first notice of the publication of *Sketches* to appear in the *Review and Herald* was in the issue of October 9, 1883. In the advertisement the publishers called particular attention to the book from which critics say Ellen White copied large portions—Conybeare and Howson’s *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*. The publishers of the *Review and Herald* said: “While the well-known work of

[421] Conybeare and Howson completely outstrips all its predecessors as a full and reliable history of the life and epistles of Paul, even that excellent book comes altogether short of taking the place of this humble volume.” To all intents and purposes they were inviting comparison of the two books. But what about Mrs. White? Was she as free as her publishers to direct attention to the Conybeare and Howson book, or did she try to prevent people from reading it so

that they might not discover that she had used some material from it?

Only a few months before the *Review and Herald* notice of the publication of Mrs. White's *Sketches*, there was widespread promotion of the Conybeare and Howson book as a premium with subscriptions to the *Review and Herald* and the *Signs of the Times*. Mrs. White did her part in helping the promotion of the book by writing a statement that was included in the [The Signs of the Times, February 22, 1883](#). "*The Life of St. Paul* by Conybeare and Howson, I regard as a book of great merit, and one of rare usefulness to the earnest student of the New Testament." Certainly none can say justifiably that Mrs. White tried to hide the fact that she had used some material from the other book on the life of Paul. There was no attempt on her part to deceive her readers.

What about the legal phase of the matter? Did she use so much that the value of the older book was diminished or that she appropriated the labor of its authors to their injury? F. D. Nichol's thorough investigation of the extent and nature of the matter used reveals that both of these questions must be answered negatively. What was used was not excessive in amount and was background material related only indirectly to the development of the spiritual theme found in *Sketches From the Life of Paul*.

What has been said of *Sketches* could also be said of *The Great Controversy*. The books from which historical material was quoted or paraphrased were books that were in many Seventh-day Adventists' libraries, some of them books Mrs.

White had highly recommended to be read by the members of the church. Again there was no attempt to deceive. And legally, neither the amount of material nor the use made of it justifies any question. Morally or legally there is no problem of plagiarism. See *Ellen G. White and her Critics* for a fuller discussion and full documentation. [422]

Unfulfilled Prophecies

Critics charge that numerous predictions made by Ellen G. White have failed of being fulfilled. Is this so? The prediction most commonly brought up is one made in 1856, currently published in [Testimonies for the Church 1:131, 132](#): "I was shown the company

present at the Conference. Said the angel: ‘Some food for worms, some subjects of the seven last plagues, some will be alive and remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Jesus.’” All present at the conference are dead, says the critic, therefore Ellen White is a false prophet. We freely admit that during the century that has passed since that conference those who were in attendance have died. But we do not admit that the critic’s conclusion based on this fact is a necessary conclusion. On the contrary, a consideration of all the facts involved shows the conclusion to be wholly unwarranted.

As a basis for considering this problem, it would be profitable to review the matter of conditional prophecy as presented in chapter 6. We noted there that all of God’s promises of blessing or threatenings of punishment are made upon condition, whether or not the condition is specifically stated. God’s ultimate purposes, of course, cannot be altered by any decision of man, but the coming of blessing or punishment in fulfillment of prediction is dependent upon whether man’s relationship with God remains the same or changes. That was true with Jonah; it was true with the children of Israel throughout their history.

[423] The fact of the second advent of Christ cannot be altered by anything that man can do. Christ will return the second time to gather the righteous and destroy the wicked, then again to create a new earth as a home for His people. All the combined hosts of men and evil angels cannot alter that fact. But there is a place where men come into the picture. Peter tells us that it is possible for men to hasten the day of Christ’s return. “Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God!” [2 Peter 3:11, 12](#), R.S.V. If it is possible for men to hasten the Lord’s return, obviously it is possible for them to delay it by their failure to complete the work entrusted to them to be done in their own lives and for others.

What is the bearing of all this on the question of the conference of 1856? Simply this: The obvious intent of the words spoken by the angel and heard by Mrs. White in vision was to convey the idea that Christ was to return during the lifetime of some who were present at the conference. Now, as far as we know, all those persons are dead. Does that mean that Christ is not going to return? Not at

all. But it raises the question as to whether some change has come about that has made it necessary for the Lord to delay His return, even as the destruction of Nineveh was delayed beyond the days of the prophet Jonah. During the years following this prediction, while there was still abundant opportunity for it to be fulfilled to the letter, Ellen White gave a number of indications that conditions among God's people were such that they were even then delaying the second advent.

"To become impatient now would be to lose all our earnest, persevering watching heretofore. The long night of gloom is trying; but the morning is deferred in mercy, because if the Master should come, so many would be found unready. God's unwillingness to have His people perish has been the reason for so long delay." [Testimonies for the Church 2:194](#) (1868).

"If all who had labored unitedly in the work in 1844, had received the third angel's message and proclaimed it in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts. A flood of light would have been shed upon the world. Years ago the inhabitants of the earth would have been warned, the closing work completed, and Christ would have come for the redemption of His people." [The Great Controversy, 291](#) (1886), or page 458 of current trade edition. [424]

"Had the purpose of God been carried out by His people in giving to the world the message of mercy, Christ would, ere this, have come to the earth, and the saints would have received their welcome into the city of God." [Testimonies for the Church 6:450](#) (1900).

"We may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years, as did the children of Israel; but for Christ's sake, His people should not add sin to sin by charging God with the consequence of their own wrong course of action." [Evangelism, 696](#) (1901).

These are only a few of the statements that run in this vein. The prediction of 1856 has not been fulfilled, but the reasons are clearly given. We cannot regard predictions given through Ellen White in an entirely different light from that in which we look at Bible predictions. Both must be viewed from the same point.

In dealing with any prediction, either in the Bible or in these messages for the last days, we must be careful to learn all the facts

possible involved in its fulfillment or its nonfulfillment. This is not a matter to be dealt with on the basis of what appears on the surface, but one for careful consideration before any conclusion is reached. The Nichol book (pp. 102 ff., 112 ff.) touches on a number of predictions that critics claim are unfulfilled. Attention should be given to them so that one is at least aware of the criticism and knows where to turn for help in finding an answer.

[425]

The Life of the Prophet

Of only One is it written that He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” [Hebrews 4:15](#). The rest of us are characterized by the words of Paul: “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” [Romans 3:23](#). The classification fits each individual whether prophet or not. The fact that we see today that there was sin in the lives of some of the Bible prophets after they had been called to the prophetic office in no wise invalidates the instruction God gave through them. God knew the kind of men He was dealing with and did the best He could with the material He had to work with. Today, what we remember about these men is not the sin that was in their life, but the truth of the gospel that God chose to reveal through them. Prophets needed the working of that gospel in their own hearts as did the people to whom they preached and wrote.

Critics have tried to build a case against accepting the teachings of Ellen White by attempting to show that her life was not always in full harmony with her teachings. Most certainly we would not try to establish that after revelation from God began to come to this messenger she never made another mistake and always acted in complete accord with every detail of the instruction she passed on to the church. This would be placing her in a class apart from and above ancient prophets. On the other hand, the critic is unjustified in holding Ellen White to a standard to which neither he nor anyone else holds Bible prophets. What has been said is not for the purpose of preparing the way to say that the critics have been right in some of their charges against Mrs. White’s personal experience, but that that is something to be expected. The facts are that it is relatively easy to show that in the matters usually selected by the critics to build their case against Mrs. White’s character, her course of action

was not contrary to the principles she taught. Perhaps meeting three charges will be sufficient to show the tenor of the criticisms and make it plain that the facts dispel the charges. [426]

Health reform. A frequently heard charge is that Ellen White did not live according to the health-reform principles she taught. One point that is emphasized is that she used flesh as food after giving instruction that the flesh diet should be abandoned. It is not necessary to review here what has been said on the subject of flesh diet; we are dealing only with Ellen White's relation to the counsel. A good summary of the instruction will be found in [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 373 ff.](#) Mrs. White's experience as a health reformer appears as an appendix to the book. See pages 481-494.

In 1864 Ellen White wrote: "Since the Lord presented before me, in June, 1863, the subject of meat eating in relation to health, I have left the use of meat.... I have lived for nearly one year without meat." [Spiritual Gifts 4a:153](#). But, says the critic, it is known that Mrs. White ate meat after that time. He is right, but he is not producing evidence of something that had been hidden by Mrs. White. The eating of flesh was not her practice, but in 1890 she stated clearly: "When I could not obtain the food I needed, I have sometimes eaten a little meat; but I am becoming more and more afraid of it." [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 394](#). In 1895 she wrote: "Since the camp meeting at Brighton (January, 1894) I have absolutely banished meat from my table. It is an understanding that whether I am at home or abroad, nothing of this kind is to be used in my family, or come upon my table." [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 488](#).

But, the critic continues, we are informed, by those who knew, that she used flesh after that time. In a section in *Testimonies*, volume 9, dealing directly with this subject, Ellen White, in 1909, commented on this: "It is reported by some that I have not followed the principles of health reform as I have advocated them with my pen; but I can say that I have been a faithful health reformer. Those who have been members of my family know that this is true." Page 159. In this instance one must make a choice—between the word of the critic and the word of the one who has borne such a multitude of messages of truth. Some have gone so far as to say that during the last days of Mrs. White's life she called for and ate meat. While she makes no comment that late, the testimony of one who cared for her [427]

during her last illness will be of interest. Speaking of the time she spent as Ellen White's nurse during the last months of her life, Mrs. Carrie Hungerford wrote: "In regard to her changing her ideas about health reform, she never did. Why should she, when the Lord had shown her about it? She never ate meat or fish, nor were they in her house. Even butter was not served on her table while I was there.

"I was sent on duty by the [Saint Helena] Sanitarium the a.m. following Sister White's accident, Feb., 1915, and was with her until she breathed her last, July 16. Friday night as the sun was setting, she passed to her rest." Letter to Alonzo J. Wearner, Jan. 11, 1953.

The facts do not support the critics' charges.

Debt. A charge that has been freely circulated is one to the effect that, although Mrs. White taught that the members of the church should shun debt as they would leprosy, she died heavily in debt and that the church had to meet these obligations. It is true that in her writings Ellen White frequently warned against debt. She spoke against personal and institutional debts arising from failure to manage so that income would meet expenses. It is also true that she died owing a considerable sum of money. Then did her practice differ widely from her teaching? The facts concerning why and how her debts were incurred and how they were liquidated present a picture very different from the critics' representations.

[428] Mrs. White always lived economically. No indebtedness was incurred to supply her needs. But demands upon her for the work of the Lord were heavy, both for donations to worthy enterprises and for the publishing of her books. At times she found it necessary to borrow money to meet these demands. She did so knowing that there was an assured income from her book royalties to meet the resulting obligations. As she neared the end of her life there were a number of projects that she wished to see completed before her death. To accomplish these ends in the furtherance of the Lord's work she mortgaged the assured future income from her books.

In harmony with the provisions of her will (February, 1912), all obligations standing at the time of her death have been cleared from the income she designated for that purpose. No loss was sustained by any private individual or by the denomination. Since the obligations have been met, all royalties on the Ellen White books are paid into the treasury of the General Conference of Seventh-

day Adventists. When the facts are known there is no occasion for criticism. Additional information will be found in F. D. Nichol, *op. cit.*, p. 523.

Owning property. Did Ellen White hold large and valuable properties at the same time that she counseled the members of the church to dispose of all they had and give to the Lord? There are critics who maintain that this was the case.

Perhaps we should note first that we have no record of Ellen White's telling Seventh-day Adventists that the time had come for all to sell all their property, and give the money to the church. She did counsel against adding lands to lands, and property to property, for the sake of the accumulation of wealth. But she also taught that it was good for people to own their own homes, and lay a little money aside to care for themselves in case of emergency. See [The Adventist Home, 372, 373, 395 ff.](#) She indicated that the disposition of property was an individual matter, and that if the earnest Christian placed his property in the hands of the Lord, it would be made plain to him when he should sell it. See [Testimonies for the Church 5:734.](#)

What about her own property holdings? At the time usually pointed out by the critics, Ellen White owned about two hundred acres of land. Of this seemingly large area, held for a few years by Mrs. White, one hundred and twenty acres were a wooded hillside, purchased for \$550 so that the wood might be cut for fuel for herself and her workers. Some timber was sold to neighbors, and needy persons were given employment cutting wood. One hundred and twenty acres may sound like a good deal of land, but its value, \$4.58 an acre, was small, except for the purpose for which it had been purchased. After the timber had been cut from the hillside, the land was traded for some lots in the town of Saint Helena, a few miles from Mrs. White's Elmshaven home. Some of the lots were donated for the purpose of building a church school in Saint Helena. It also forms the site of our church there. The remaining land was not extensive and its valuation was not high. Possession of a home on a moderate-sized plot of farm and grazing land is not out of harmony with the principles set out in Mrs. White's writings. See Nichol, *op. cit.*, pp. 520 ff.

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Conclusion

What sort of conclusion should we draw from this brief review of a few of the charges made against Ellen White and her work?

Perhaps we are not as yet ready to draw final conclusions other than that it is never safe to accept any charge of a critic without making much careful investigation and gathering as many facts as possible about the case in hand. It has been demonstrated repeatedly that the life and work of Ellen White do not suffer as a result of honest investigation. The more the whole experience is studied, the more firmly one becomes convinced that here are messages sent from God through a messenger whose earnest endeavor was to live a life matched to the messages.

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SUMMARY

1. Criticism has been the common lot of prophets and leaders. Even Christ did not escape it.

2. The way to meet critics successfully is to have the facts regarding the things they criticize.

3. A considerable number of charges against Mrs. White can be placed under these headings: (1) Her visions were the result of some nervous disorder; (2) she taught things out of harmony with the Bible; (3) she was guilty of plagiarism; (4) she made predictions that were unfulfilled; (5) her life was not in accord with her teachings.

4. Each charge may be shown to be unfounded. The facts clarify the issue and show the fallacies in the reasoning of the critics.

5. A thorough acquaintance with the life, work, and writings of Ellen White is the surest safeguard against being deceived by the charges of critics.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Are there valid reasons for studying some of the criticisms brought against Bible writers and Ellen White? Would it be better to ignore the critics entirely and deal only with the instruction given?

2. Summarize what you consider to be the best evidences that Ellen White was mentally well balanced.

3. List what you regard as the ten most important Bible truths. Do Ellen White's writings teach the same concerning these doctrines as you have found in the Bible?

4. Select some minor points, at random, from the Bible. Does what you find in Mrs. White's writings agree or disagree with the Bible on these points?

5. Leaf through some of the chapters of *The Great Controversy*, [431] especially those about the Reformation period. When you find footnotes indicating quotations from historians, read the quotations and note the type of material used. Is it doctrinal, or historical? Is it used to establish important truths, or as background? Does this make any difference in our attitude toward the use of such quotations?

6. Mrs. White claims inspiration for her writings. Does the fact that she quoted others mean that she believed them to be inspired also? See [The Great Controversy, Introduction, xi, xii](#).

7. If critics could prove beyond a shadow of doubt that Ellen White's life was in some way or another out of harmony with her teachings, would that invalidate the teachings?

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Nichol, F. D., *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*.

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Wilcox, F. M., *The Testimony of Jesus*, pp. 67-119.

[432] **Chapter 23—Ellen G. White Writings—Their Study
And Use**

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the messages given to the church through Ellen White are divinely inspired. Once we accept these messages as instruction from God, we are faced with the question of how to get the greatest benefit from them.

Some of the books on our bookshelves are timeless in their appeal and value; others are of import only briefly. Those of permanent significance deal with intrinsic truths and fundamental principles. Some were written centuries ago, but men still turn to them as though they had been recently penned, because they treat on themes, questions, and problems that face every generation of men.

Of all books, the Bible reveals most of this characteristic of timelessness. This is understandable because of the manner in which it was prepared. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, chosen men recorded, and frequently interpreted, the meanings of events illustrating God's dealings with men. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." [1 Corinthians 10:11](#). "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." [Romans 15:4](#). God directed these men in the selection of those incidents of enduring worth because they illustrated principles. In addition to the record of historical events, the Bible contains direct counsel, admonition, instruction, reproof, and prophecy of coming events, which is designated as "the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." [1 Peter 1:23](#).

[433] The whole Book bears the impress of its omniscient Author.

Knowing the end from the beginning as He does, God could see, in the days of Cain and Abel, of Noah, of ancient Israel, of the life of the Saviour, and of the early Christian church, the lessons that would be needed by His people in all generations. For the instruction of His children He made abundant provision. Though

the record tells of some practices no longer followed, such as the offering of lambs, goats, and bullocks in the sacrificial system, the fact that a narrative or instruction is preserved in the Bible record is evidence that it contains lessons of practical worth for us who live in the last days. That is why Paul wrote to Timothy, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” [2 Timothy 3:16](#). Valuable lessons may be learned from every part of the Book. Nothing is outdated, nothing to be set aside.

Our recognition of the inspiration of Ellen White’s writings places them in a special relationship to the Bible. In chapter nineteen of this book, attention has been given to the nature of this relationship. The important detail to be noticed for our present purpose is that these writings are intended to be as enduring in the nature of their instruction as the Bible. “Whether or not my life is spared,” Ellen White wrote, “my writings will constantly speak, and their work will go forward as long as time shall last.” “The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies,” pages 13, 14. Linked as they are with the Bible and the Bible’s teachings, these inspired volumes retain their significance as the years pass. Since they introduce nothing new in principle, but simplify and apply the truths of the Bible, they are perpetually current in their usefulness.

A Method of Approach

The careful student in any area of knowledge follows a planned approach to build up his store of information, and to set up his guides for interpreting the facts in hand. As an undergraduate college student, a prospective history teacher enrolls first for a number of generalized courses—a survey of European history, a survey of American history, perhaps a survey of church history. As he progresses, he is guided into a concentration on, say, European history. If he continues with graduate study in the same area, he may specialize in English history, the Renaissance, the Reformation, or any one of many such fields. However, in order to gain and maintain a proper perspective, he must include the study of related fields, since nothing isolated is fully understandable.

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What is true of the study of history fits also the matter of Bible study. Correct interpretations depend upon the understanding of the relationships between all parts of the Bible. One can grasp the full significance of the Sabbath only if he sees it as a memorial of creation and a sign of sanctification. When separated from these truths, the Sabbath loses most of its reason for existence. The nature of man and his condition in death must be understood in the light of the creation. Along with this must be placed the Bible teaching that man has immortality only in Christ. Use of a few texts on the subject of death and destruction, isolated from all that would contribute to a well-rounded study, has led most of the Christian world to wrong conclusions.

[435] For one to be certain that he has a comprehension of the important lines of Bible teaching, he must know the Book as a whole. A grasp of the various subjects depends on reading the Bible through repeatedly so that the student is aware of the material in any part of the Scriptures that has a bearing on any individual topical study, and he also keeps the connections continually in mind. This is the way to rightly “divide,” or handle, the word of truth. It does not mean that verse or topical study should be avoided until the Bible has been read many times. It does mean, however, that everyone who studies the Bible should be constantly broadening his background of understanding by wide reading at the same time that he is pursuing detailed studies.

When one turns to the study of the writings of Ellen White, the normal approach will yield the best results. Again a broad background, based on wide reading, will contribute to a clear understanding of every separate subject that may be considered. Again it should be noted that one need not exclude all topical study, waiting until much reading has been done; but consecutive reading will enrich individual studies and help to ensure a full understanding and correct representation.

Any extensive study program, such as should be pursued by every Seventh-day Adventist, must give attention both to consecutive reading and the investigation of individual topics of special interest. Each fosters the other. Attention will first be given to suggestions for a broad reading program, and then to topical studies.

Consecutive Reading

Individual preferences will determine to a large extent the nature of one's reading program, but some suggestions help guide or inspire a person to make plans of his own. If a simple plan like the following is put into practice, it will not be long before the reader will gain a comprehensive view of the teachings of the Ellen White books. These volumes, forming a basic spirit of prophecy library, are grouped in such a way that by reading three or four pages a day a person can complete a group in one year. In each instance a brief annotation is given indicating in a general way the contents of the volume and a reason for its inclusion in this suggestive reading list.

Group 1

Steps to Christ—Our first responsibility is to know the Son of God, whom to know is life eternal. The way to Christ is not hard to find, but is often misunderstood.

The Story of Redemption—We need to understand the conflict [436] between Christ and Satan, and God's provision for our salvation.

The Ministry of Healing—Body and mind are closely related in the development of Christian character. Let us learn how the relationship can be mutually beneficial.

Group 2

The Desire of Ages—The Christian life means "Christ in you, the hope of glory." We turn to this priceless story of His earthly life, His crucifixion, and His ascension to heaven to serve as our High Priest.

The Adventist Home—For the formation of the kind of home God can approve, we need inspired counsel. Here it is given simply and practically.

Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White—Knowing something of the inspirational life of the messenger helps in an understanding of the messages and their influence.

Group 3

Testimony Treasures (3 volumes)—This specific instruction concerning everyday life and activities will help a person meet many difficult situations.

Group 4

The Great Controversy—Few books can do as much to prepare a Christian for the difficult times of trouble ahead. The portrayal of the triumphant ending of this drama of the ages will strengthen a person's determination to be victorious.

Christ's Object Lessons—The practical applications of the teachings of Jesus will help a person live a full Christian life.

Education—The whole of life is part of the process of education. We need to learn how to make the most of our opportunities today in order to prepare for the school of the hereafter.

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Adding to the Basic Books

To round out the Bible story the remaining volumes of the Conflict of the Ages Series—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Prophets and Kings*, and *The Acts of the Apostles*—should be added. A complete set of the nine volumes of the *Testimonies for the Church* will present the full range of counsel given to the church over a period of nearly fifty-five years. It will guide and strengthen the Christian's everyday living and activity, and aid in developing character. Beyond these volumes there are about twenty-five additional titles from which to select areas of particular interest. See pages 482-485.

Students making preparation for their lifework will want to include those books that touch especially the type of work in which they plan to engage. Ministerial students should give attention to *Gospel Workers*, *Testimonies to Ministers*, and *Evangelism*. Prospective physicians and nurses should study *The Ministry of Healing*, *Medical Ministry*, and *Counsels on Health*. Future teachers should concentrate on *Education*, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, and *Child Guidance*. But no one of these books is intended to be used by only one group

of believers or workers. Every volume contains instruction of inestimable value to every individual.

In this suggested reading program it is intended that the reader shall build a solid foundation. Nothing can help him to do this better than a broad knowledge of what is taught in the books. The greater his general knowledge, the more valid will be his conclusions when he makes topical studies such as are introduced in a later chapter.

An Approach to Topical Studies

Study of the Ellen White books will yield much spiritual enlightenment if a few simple rules are followed in the reading program. There are three principles to be followed in topical studies which will aid in gaining a balanced view of what the writings teach. [438]

1. The general teaching of all the applicable counsels should be studied before conclusions are drawn.

2. The time, place, and circumstances of the giving of certain messages should be considered.

3. One should try to discover the principle involved in any specific counsel, and its applications.

Each of the three principles will be dealt with separately so that its operation may be illustrated.

Principle 1. The general teaching of all the applicable counsels should be studied before conclusions are drawn. Each relevant statement in each book should be considered in its context, and then it should make its contribution to the understanding of the whole subject.

Isolated statements, or statements taken out of their context, cannot be depended on as a basis for correct understanding. Extreme caution must be exercised lest partial statements, either alone or fitted together, be used to support ideas they were never intended to convey.

“Why will not men see and live the truth? Many study the Scriptures for the purpose of proving their own ideas to be correct. They change the meaning of God’s word to suit their own opinions. And thus they do also with the testimonies that He sends. They quote half a sentence, leaving out the other half, which, if quoted, would show their reasoning to be false. God has a controversy

with those who wrest the Scriptures, making them conform to their preconceived ideas.” Ellen G. White [Manuscript 22, 1890](#).

[439] It is not difficult to find individual sentences or paragraphs in either the Bible, or the Ellen White writings, which may be used to support one’s own ideas rather than to set forth the thought of the author. Take, for instance, the words of [Revelation 14:11](#), “And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.” Does not our understanding of the teaching of the whole Bible on the meaning of “forever,” cause us to reach a different conclusion regarding the teaching of this verse than if we considered the verse by itself and compared it with no others? Mrs. White recognized this possibility of misuse on the part of both friends and foes of her work.

“Those who are not walking in the light of the message, may gather up statements from my writings that happen to please them, and that agree with their human judgment, and, by separating these statements from their connection, and placing them beside human reasonings, make it appear that my writings uphold that which they condemn.” Ellen G. White [Letter 208, 1906](#).

Generally speaking, the difficulties do not arise out of willful misrepresentation. A person may be impressed by a rather striking statement which does or does not harmonize with his former thinking on the subject. If the newly discovered passage appears to confirm earlier conclusions, it is a simple matter to add it to one’s exhibits to prove his point. If a recently acquired idea seems to be contrary to earlier opinions, one who has confidence in Ellen White as the messenger of the Lord may incline toward accepting what appears to be a correction of his thinking without giving the whole subject careful consideration.

Pride of personal opinion constitutes a further problem. Sometimes men reach conclusions on the basis of scanty evidence, and then they search for support for their conclusions. Scraps of evidence are assembled—parts of sentences, passages taken out of their context, phrases or sentences gathered Out and fitted together. The result appears to some minds to prove the case, but it is not a fair representation of the sentiment of the writings because *all* of the evidence has not been marshaled and studied. It is neither fair nor honest to use anything other than a complete picture of the instruction given. It is only fair for a person to gather from all sources

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instruction pertaining to the same subject, put it all together, and draw conclusions on the basis of the total revelation.

Suppose, for the sake of a starting point, that we imagine we are dealing with a man who believes in instantaneous sanctification that when one accepts Christ, he is instantly made perfect and needs no spiritual growth beyond that point (a view that is not held by Seventh-day Adventists). If we should read him a sentence frequently quoted by Seventh-day Adventists, “Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime,” and if he would accept that sentence alone as a guide, he would have to reverse his former ideas. It is likely that he would conclude that it requires a lifetime before a person is regarded by God as sanctified. But would his changed thinking necessarily represent the whole truth in the matter? Perhaps so, and perhaps not, for this sentence tells only a part of the story. We must bring him enough information to permit him to make his decision from a cross section of many similar and related passages in her writings. Below are some of the thoughts that should be considered. Study these quotations carefully and prayerfully and see what conclusions you draw from them. They are not intended to be the complete picture of sanctification, but they lead to some conclusions regarding the time element involved. Even though only a few of the available statements are included here, they fairly represent the whole number.

1. “Every Christian may enjoy the blessing of sanctification.” [The Sanctified Life, 61.](#)

2. “There should be hundreds where there is now one among us, so closely allied to God, their lives in such close conformity to His will, that they would be bright and shining lights, sanctified wholly, in soul, body, and spirit.” [The Sanctified Life, 30, 31.](#)

3. “To those who keep holy the Sabbath day it is the sign of sanctification. True sanctification is harmony with God, oneness with Him in character. It is received through obedience to those principles that are the transcript of His character.” [Testimonies for the Church 6:350.](#)

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4. “An instructive lesson may be drawn from the striking contrast between the character of John and that of Judas. John was a living illustration of sanctification. On the other hand, Judas possessed a form of godliness, while his character was more satanic than divine.

He professed to be a disciple of Christ, but in words and in works denied Him.

“Judas had the same precious opportunities as had John to study and to imitate the Pattern. He listened to the lessons of Christ, and his character might have been transformed by divine grace. But while John was earnestly warring against his own faults, and seeking to assimilate to Christ, Judas was violating his conscience, yielding to temptation, and fastening upon himself habits of dishonesty that would transform him into the image of Satan.

“These two disciples represent the Christian world. All profess to be Christ’s followers; but while one class walk in humility and meekness, learning of Jesus, the other show that they are not doers of the word, but hearers only. One class are sanctified through the truth; the other know nothing of the transforming power of divine grace. The former are daily dying to self, and are overcoming sin. The latter are indulging their own lusts, and becoming the servants of Satan.” [The Sanctified Life, 44.](#)

5. “John desired to become like Jesus, and under the transforming influence of the love of Christ, he became meek and lowly of heart. Self was hid in Jesus. He was closely united to the living Vine, and thus became a partaker of the divine nature. Such will ever be the result of communion with Christ. This is true sanctification.” [The Sanctified Life, 41.](#)

[442] 6. “John enjoyed the blessing of true sanctification. But mark, the apostle does not claim to be sinless; he is seeking perfection by walking in the light of God’s countenance.” [The Sanctified Life, 48.](#)

7. “The followers of Christ are to become like Him—by the grace of God to form characters in harmony with the principles of His holy law. This is Bible sanctification.” [The Great Controversy, 469.](#)

8. “Let a living faith run like threads of gold through the performance of even the smallest duties. Then all the daily work will promote Christian growth. There will be a continual looking unto Jesus. Love for Him will give vital force to everything that is undertaken. Thus through the right use of our talents, we may link ourselves by a golden chain to the higher world. This is true sanctification; for sanctification consists in the cheerful performance of

daily duties in perfect obedience to the will of God.” [Christ’s Object Lessons, 360.](#)

9. (Speaking of the three Hebrews who went into the fiery furnace) “These three Hebrews possessed genuine sanctification.” [The Sanctified Life, 29.](#)

10. “The life of Daniel is an inspired illustration of what constitutes a sanctified character. It presents a lesson for all, and especially for the young.” [The Sanctified Life, 18.](#)

11. “Bible sanctification does not consist in strong emotion. Here is where many are led into error. They make feelings their criterion. When they feel elated or happy, they claim that they are sanctified. Happy feelings or the absence of joy is no evidence that a person is or is not sanctified. There is no such thing as instantaneous sanctification. True sanctification is a daily work, continuing as long as life shall last.” [The Sanctified Life, 9.](#)

12. “It is truth received in the heart, and practically carried out in the life.... Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, or a day. It is a continual growth in grace.” [Testimonies for the Church 1:339, 340.](#)

13. “Sanctification is a daily work. Let none deceive themselves with the belief that God will pardon and bless them while they are trampling upon one of His requirements.” [The Sanctified Life, 66.](#)

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14. “Sanctification is a progressive work; it is not attained to in an hour or a day, and then maintained without any special effort on our part.” [Testimonies for the Church 2:472.](#)

15. “Sanctification is a progressive work. The successive steps are set before us in the words of Peter [2 Peter 1:5-8 quoted].” [Messages to Young People, 116.](#)

16. “On one occasion I spoke in reference to genuine sanctification, which is nothing less than a daily dying to self and daily conformity to the will of God.” [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 237.](#)

On the basis of these quotations the following conclusions seem to be warranted:

1. Sanctification may be a present experience and not simply a hope for the future.

2. There have been persons who have enjoyed the blessing of sanctification while they were seeking for the perfection of character.

3. Sanctification is closely related to the everyday duties and responsibilities faced by every individual.

4. Sanctification in preparation for the coming of Christ is a daily experience of self-denial and conformity to the will of God. The ultimate is never reached, but new growth must be achieved every day in order to maintain and expand the experience.

5. A young person, as well as one who is older, may be sanctified, since it is not necessary to wait until the end of life to enjoy sanctification.

[444] Other inferences may be drawn from the quotations, but these are sufficient to demonstrate that a very different concept may be gained from the study of a group of passages than from a single statement. There are times when one sentence may actually tell the whole story, but there is no way of knowing that until all the related passages have been considered. This is basic if our study is to bring to us an interpretation of the writings by the writings themselves. Suggestions for systematic study of the Ellen White books are made in the last section of this chapter and in chapter 24.

Principle 2. The time, place, and circumstances of the giving of certain messages should be considered. While general principles always hold, some messages have a specific application, and their instruction cannot be applied in general cases. “Regarding the testimonies, nothing is ignored; nothing is cast aside; but time and place must be considered.” “The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies,” page 25.

Take a Biblical example. In [Jeremiah 16:2, 3](#) the prophet was forbidden to take a wife and have a family. Does that mean that none of God’s people are to marry? No. In fact, under inspiration, Jeremiah later wrote a letter to the captives in Babylon saying, “Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters.” [Jeremiah 29:6](#). Jeremiah was God’s prophet, and God intended to use the prophet as an object lesson to His people. He gave instruction that fit Jeremiah’s situation; but it was not something that would fit every other person on every occasion. No basic principle regarding marriage was involved.

Notice another item of specific instruction. In [Numbers 15:38](#) God told Israel to put fringes on their garments and a ribbon of blue. Does that mean that every Christian today must wear a blue

ribbon on each garment? See how time and place are considered and application is made to today's circumstances.

“The children of Israel, after they were brought out of Egypt, were commanded to have a simple ribbon of blue in the border of their garments, to distinguish them from the nations around them, and to signify that they were God’s peculiar people. *The people of God are not now required to have a special mark placed upon their garments.* But in the New Testament we are often referred to ancient Israel for examples. *If God gave such definite directions to His ancient people in regard to their dress, will not the dress of His people in this age come under His notice? Should there not be in their dress a distinction from that of the world?* Should not the people of God, who are His peculiar treasure, seek even in their dress to glorify God? And should they not be examples in point of dress, and by their simple style rebuke the pride, vanity, and extravagance of worldly, pleasure-loving professors? God requires this of His people. Pride is rebuked in His word.” Ellen G. White, in *The Health Reformer*, February, 1872. (Italics supplied.) [445]

Illustrations could be multiplied to show that even though some detailed counsel may not fit every individual, or every age, there is something contained in all the instruction that is helpful to every person and every age. We must search to find the applications that fit us personally. How this may be done will be considered in the next section.

Principle 3. One should try to discover the principle involved in any specific counsel. By so doing, one may be sure that he will be able to make application to his own life and circumstances of all the instruction God has given.

“I was then directed to *bring out general principles*, in speaking and in writing, and at the same time *specify the dangers*, errors, and sins of some individuals, *that all might be warned*, reproved, and counseled.” [Testimonies for the Church 2:687](#); also [Testimonies for the Church 5:660](#). (Italics supplied.)

Specific applications of principles are made so that the manner of applying them may be illustrated. It is intended that all Should be warned through the instruction given to a few.

“The word of God abounds in general principles for the formation of correct habits of living, and the testimonies, general and

[446] personal, have been calculated to call their attention more especially to these principles.” [Testimonies for the Church 4:323](#); also [Testimonies for the Church 5:663, 664](#).

The illustration regarding the blue ribbons, in section 2, is an excellent example of the present-day application of a principle that was applied in a specific way in ancient times. Here is the way it works:

A. In ancient times, when the mode of dress was similar among many nations, God specified that a special mark—a blue ribbon—be used to designate His people.

B. Today, by their modesty, simplicity, and lack of pride, vanity, and extravagance in dress, God’s people are to glorify Him and distinguish themselves from the world.

The fact that certain details in the instruction do not apply today exactly as they did when the instruction was given, in no way invalidates the value of the instruction. The record simply shows how the principles were applied under certain circumstances. It is left with us to appropriate them to our own situation. When our attention is focused on principles and we find how to employ them in our lives, we are broadening rather than narrowing the effectiveness of the original teaching. To understand why specific counsel was given, and to be able to apply those principles generally, is of more value than to know the detailed instruction itself. The detailed instruction may be generally applicable or it may not, as illustrated by [Numbers 15:38](#), but the principles are always applicable to every individual, time, and circumstance.

[447] In [Testimonies for the Church 8:50-53](#), is recorded a portion of a letter addressed to the Battle Creek church in 1894. It was a letter of warning and reproof sent by Ellen White from Australia. One section of the letter deals with bicycles. Reproof was being sent because some of the members of the church had purchased bicycles. On the surface it seems rather strange that such a matter should be considered important enough for a prophet to deal with, and doubly odd when we notice that the things mentioned had been specifically revealed in vision. What was wrong with owning a bicycle? Does it mean that Seventh-day Adventists should never own bicycles? If not, why not?

The background is this: In 1894 the modern version of the bicycle was beginning to be manufactured, and there was a considerable fad to get the bicycles, not for the purpose of economical transportation, but simply to be in style, to parade about town, or to engage in bicycle races. Frank Tripp, in an article called, “When All the World Went Wheeling,” written in 1951, describes the bicycle craze of the nineties in these words:

“Toward the end of the last century the American people were swept with a consuming passion which left them with little time or money for anything else.... What was this big new distraction? For an answer the merchants had only to look out the window and watch their erstwhile customers go whizzing by. America had discovered the bicycle, and everybody was making the most of the new freedom it brought.... The bicycle began as a rich man’s toy. Society and celebrity went a wheel....

“The best early bicycle cost \$150, an investment comparable to the cost of an automobile today. Those were the days when \$100 a month was an excellent wage, when a good suit cost \$15 and meals were a quarter. Every member of the family wanted a ‘wheel,’ and entire family savings often were used up in supplying the demand.”

In the light of this brief history, Ellen White’s statements have real significance. “There seemed to be a bicycle craze. Money was spent to gratify an enthusiasm.... A bewitching influence seemed to be passing as a wave over our people there ... to invest their time and money in gratifying supposed wants.... The example will be followed, and while hundreds are starving for bread, while famine and pestilence are seen and felt, ... shall those who profess to love and serve God act as did the people in the days of Noah, following the imagination of their hearts?” [Testimonies for the Church 8:51](#).

“There were some who were striving for the mastery, each trying to excel the other in the swift running of their bicycles. There was a spirit of strife and contention among them as to which should be the greatest. The spirit was similar to that manifested in the baseball games on the college ground.” [Testimonies for the Church 8:52](#).

Does it seem strange that under these circumstances God would have something to say through His messenger?

This brings to view a principle instead of merely the problem of riding or not riding bicycles. Bicycles were not the real issue. Had

some of the church members found it helpful to purchase bicycles because they were needed in their work, and had there been no waste of money, no spirit of contention and no strife, it is unlikely that the Lord would have found occasion to comment on this matter. Because bicycles create no comparable problem now, are we to set aside the warnings given and say, “That simply doesn’t apply to us any more”?

Every message from God contains basic instruction of value in every generation. What are the principles involved in this matter? It is pointed out that there was a needless spending of money for selfish gratification. Is that any more right now than it was sixty years ago? It is an unchanging principle that it is wrong to spend money needlessly and for the selfish gratification of one’s own desires. There was also a spirit of strife and contention. Are these characteristics any more proper now than they were then? Is it not always true that God’s children should do nothing that will foster a spirit of strife and contention?

These are practical principles that fit into everyday life; they touch our homes, our means of transportation, our recreation, our association, our business life. We cannot get away from them wherever we go. Far from setting the specific instruction aside, when we discover the principles involved, we broaden the scope and sharpen the point of the counsel to make it fit everybody all the time.

[449]

Similarly the principle may be discovered in any portion of the writings, and applications may be made in every circumstance of life. By a careful discovery and application of principles, the significance of the instruction is made permanent so that no person may say, “This is old-fashioned, it no longer applies to me or to the church today.” None of the testimonies are to be set aside as being out-of-date. All will have lessons to teach us until the coming of the Lord. Set no instruction aside because its specific application does not fit your life. Discover the basic principle, and it will not be difficult to discover an application to be made. “The counsel that they desire can be found here, given for other cases situated similarly to themselves.” [Testimonies for the Church 2:605](#); also [Testimonies for the Church 5:665](#).

SUMMARY

1. Books vary in the permanence of their value. The most enduringly useful ones deal with intrinsic truths, fundamental principles, and basic processes of thought.

2. Of all books the Bible is most permanently applicable.

3. Because of their inspired exposition of Bible truths and the application of Bible principles, the Ellen White books possess enduring qualities similar to those of the Bible.

4. A systematic approach to investigation in any field is essential to sound conclusions.

5. General background knowledge is necessary for an understanding of details.

6. Three principles of study must be followed in order to come to sound conclusions:

1. The general teaching of all the applicable counsels should be studied before conclusions are drawn.

2. The time, place, and circumstances of the giving of certain messages should be considered. 3. One should try to discover the principle involved in any specific counsel.

[450]

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Find several instances where using a single Bible verse or portion of a verse taken out of its setting would appear to make the Bible teach something other than it actually does.

2. Find verses or brief passages which in themselves seem to incorporate the whole theme of a Bible doctrine.

3. How do you know that the selections you found for Problem 1 do not harmonize with general Bible teaching, and that the second group does?

4. Do the same for the Ellen White writings as was suggested in Problems 1-3 for the Bible.

SELECTED REFERENCES

Our Firm Foundation, vol. 1, pp. 260-267.

White, Ellen G., [Testimonies for the Church 5:654-696](#).

Chapter 24—Studying Individual Topics

The purpose for gaining a historical background and an understanding of the function of the gift of prophecy is that we may derive the greatest benefit from the instruction given through the messenger. A thorough knowledge builds confidence, and confidence leads to study. Careful study prepares the way for acceptance and obedience.

Nothing will convince one of the inspiration of the messages of Ellen White more than a thorough study of the topics she deals with, and a comparison with the material found in the Bible. There exists throughout the thousands of pages of her writings a unity that is akin to the unity of the Scriptures. Within this unity there is an ever-expanding revelation of spiritual truth. All the truth regarding any topic is not presented in one place. Precept is added to precept in numerous passages and in a variety of settings. No single portion can be fully grasped without a study of all that has been said on the subject. This, of course, is a wise procedure in the consideration of any field of knowledge.

We have come to the place in our study where we will turn our attention more directly to the writings of Ellen White to learn a practical method of study. There are many ways of going about such study, but only one will be presented here. It must be regarded as suggestive and introductory rather than definitive.

Principles of Procedure

[452] 1. Any study of spiritual matters must be approached prayerfully, and with a mind open to receive truth when it is found. Personal prejudices and preconceived ideas must be set aside if they do not harmonize with the truth that one discovers.

2. Both the Bible and the Ellen White writings must be included in any study so that one may be certain that all his knowledge is in accord with Scripture.

3. A thorough study must be made of all relevant material so that nothing is overlooked that would contribute to an understanding of the topic.

4. Each statement or passage must be considered in its context, so that its meaning will be rightly represented.

5. The principles involved in any instruction should be discovered, so that they may be applied in varied situations or circumstances.

It will be worth while to refer again to chapter 23, which deals in a general way with principles of study but does not outline a step-by-step procedure for the development of a study topic.

It is beneficial to have in mind a general pattern by which one may be guided as he studies. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to the development of a topic according to one of the many plans of procedure that might be followed. Here are some of the many topics that might be chosen for study. Most of the subjects have a number of phases, any one of which would be worth investigation.

Suggested Study Topics

| | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Affliction | Association | Business and Christianity |
| Ambition | Atonement | |
| Amusements | Authors, Infidel | |
| Angels and their work | | Camp meetings |
| Antichrist | Benevolence | Character |
| Anxiety | Bible and science | Character building |
| Apostasy, Causes of | Bible in education | Cheerfulness |
| Appearance | Bible, Understanding the | Child training |
| Appetite | | Christ (many topics) |

| | | |
|------------|----------------|-------------|
| Associates | Burden bearing | Church, The |
|------------|----------------|-------------|

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Commandments of God | Family worship | Knowledge |
| | Fashion and display | Knowledge of God. |
| Competition and rivalry | Father | |
| | Flesh food | Labor unions |
| Confession | Forgiveness | Last days |
| Conscience | Friendship | Latter rain |
| Consecration | | Law and gospel |
| Conversion | Games | Law of God |
| Cooking | Giving | Laymen |
| Courage | Godliness | Leaders |
| Courtesy | Grace | Leadership |
| Courtship | | Lifework |
| Covetousness | Habits | Literature |
| Creation | Happiness | Love |
| Criticism | Healing | Loyalty |
| Culture | Health | Lukewarmness |
| | Health reform | |
| Dancing | Heaven | Mark of the beast |
| Darkness, Spiritual | Heredity | Marriage |
| Debt | Higher classes, Reaching | Medical missionaries |
| Deliverance of God's people | Holiness | Meekness |
| Despondency | Holy Spirit | Mind |

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Diet | Home | Ministers |
| Difficulties | Honesty | Miracles |
| Dignity | Hope | Missionary work |
| Discipline | Humility | Mothers |
| Discouragement | | |
| Display | Idleness | Nature |
| Drama | Idolatry | Needy, Helping the |
| Dress | Imagination | Nerves |
| Drugs | Impatience | Nervous system |
| | Impurity | New earth |
| Economy | Industry | Nurses |
| Education, Christian | Influence | |
| Efficiency | Integrity | Obedience |
| Entertainment | Intemperance | Object lessons |
| Environment | | Offerings |
| Etiquette | Jealousy | Opinions |
| Evangelism | Jewelry | Opportunities |
| Exercise | Judgment | Overcoming |
| Extremes | Justification | Overwork |
| Faith | Kindness | Papacy |
| Familiarity | Kingdom of God | Parables |

| | | |
|----------|--------------------|------------|
| Parents | Reverence | Teachers |
| Parties | Righteousness | Temperance |
| Patience | | Temptation |
| Peace | Sabbath observance | Theater |

| | | |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Perfection | Satan | Thoughts |
| Physicians | Schools | Time |
| Praise and flattery | Seal of God | Tithe |
| Prayer | Self-control | Tobacco |
| Preaching | Self-denial | Trials |
| Pride | Selfishness | Truth |
| Principles | Service | |
| Privileges | Simplicity | Unbelief |
| Probation | Sin | Unity |
| Probation, Close of | Social life | |
| Prophecy | Sorrow | Victory |
| Publishing work | Soul winning | voice culture |
| Purity | Speech | |
| | Spiritism | Weakness |
| Reading | Stewardship | Will |
| Recreation | Students | Work |
| Redemption | Success | Worship |
| Refinement | Suffering | |
| Repentance | Sympathy | Youth |
| Reproof | | |
| Resurrection | Talents | Zeal |

- [453] Let us take the general topic of Christian education from the list.
- [454] It is too broad a subject to deal with in more than a single, restricted aspect of it. We might formulate a list of the objectives of Christian education, or discover what makes Christian education different from secular education. We could investigate the methods by which the goals of Christian education may be achieved, or enumerate some of the subjects that rank high in importance in the program

of Christian education. The field is limited only by the needs and interests of the investigator. For the present, let us focus our attention on what it is that makes Christian education different from secular education.

With our topic in mind—"What Makes Christian Education Different?" we turn to our sources of information. Looking over the Ellen White books, we select three that appear to contain the most information on the subject—*Education*, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, and *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*. Another volume that should be consulted in the study is the *Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*, for it lists more than nineteen columns of references to education. Rather than look up all these references, or even those that seem most closely related to our topic, it is better to turn to the books on education first to get a unified picture of the subject.

[455]

The table of contents in *Education* indicates that the first four chapters deal with "First Principles," and the chapter titles seem to show that there is material here on our topic. There is a later group of chapters under the heading of "Character Building" that should make a contribution. The table of contents in *Fundamentals of Christian Education* lists several chapters that should be read—"Proper Education," "Thoughts on Education," "Importance of Education," "The School of the Ancient Hebrews," and "The Value of Bible Study." The same is true of *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*.

As the chapters are read, it becomes apparent that this is not all the light on the topic in hand, but the background they give will make our understanding broader, and our later selection of specific quotations will be more intelligent. As the reading progresses we discover that the chapters in *Education* deal in broader concepts and principles rather than in some of the details that are presented in the other books. Several statements appear that help us to see the real differences between Christian and secular education: "It means more than a preparation for the life that now is;" "development of ... the spiritual powers;" "It is God's own method of development;" "Love, the basis of creation and of redemption, is the basis of true education." We begin to make selections of quotations and we put each with the reference on a slip of paper or a card, perhaps 3 x 5 or 4 x 6 inches.

[456] With this general reading as a background, we are now ready to turn to the *Index* to find additional information from other books. Scanning the columns of the *Index*, we find a long list of references that should be consulted. Here are a few of them: “Education, apart from Christ, folly to seek; Christ’s, gained directly from heaven-appointed sources; Christian, means acceptance of Saviour’s teachings; confusion in; defective; deficient unless received in school of Christ; general method of, does not meet standard of true; to direct minds to God’s revelation of Himself; should bear different stamp.” One of the last sections is headed: “Education, worldly, false.” At a glance it appears that all the passages referred to in this section should be investigated. Many more entries are made on cards to be considered later.

In gathering the quotations in the fashion described we have proceeded in a way that will give us a basis for organization of the material when that step is reached. First we took an over-all view, and we read more widely than might have been necessary if we merely wanted a collection of quotations. Then we branched out into many books for the contributions they could make. By the time this had been done we found we were forming an outline of what makes Christian education different. The material naturally falls into certain related groups, and now we begin the task of arranging and sorting—arranging the groups, sorting the quotations to find the most pertinent ones, then arranging the selected quotations within the group.

Five points seem to stand out among the many differences that might be noted between Christian and secular education—the purpose, basis, source, methods, and results. If we think for a moment of what is involved in these five items, we will realize that the whole system is different. The five points now form the main divisions of the study outline.

1. A different purpose.
2. A different basis.
3. A different source.
4. Different methods.
5. Different results.

[457] We will need an introductory statement, the details inserted in the outline, and a statement of our conclusions. This might appear

to complete the study, but there are still three important items to be considered.

(1) It is helpful to find a single, brief quotation that gives the gist of the study in words that can be easily remembered. This is not possible in every instance; but, usually, if the investigator keeps this in mind throughout his study, he will be able to discover such a sentence. We will call this the key quotation.

(2) What are the principles involved in the solution to the problem? It will seldom be possible to find quotations that state principles as such. Therefore, these will be given in the words of the student.

(3) What is the Bible background for the instruction given? Sometimes a Bible text or group of texts furnishes a specific background. Again, it may be necessary to show the underlying agreement of the statements with the philosophy of the Bible. There is a Bible basis for all the instruction given, and that should be discovered and stated in connection with each topic studied.

These three concluding items will be easier to deal with if they are kept clearly in mind throughout the preparation of the study. They are vital to a carefully planned topic. Now we are ready to organize the study.

What Makes Christian Education Different?

Introduction: [Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 56](#). “We are rapidly nearing the final crisis in this world’s history, and it is important that we understand that the educational advantages offered by our schools are to be different from those offered by the schools of the world.”

I. A different purpose.

A. [Education, 15, 16](#). “To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized,—this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life.”

[458]

B. [Education, 225](#). “True education does not ignore the value of scientific knowledge or literary acquirements; but above infor-

mation it values power; above power, goodness; above intellectual acquirements, character.”

II. A different basis.

A. [Education, 16](#). “Love, the basis of creation and of redemption, is the basis of true education.”

III. A different source.

A. [Education, 16](#). “Since God is the source of all true knowledge, it is ... the first object of education to direct our minds to His own revelation of Himself.”

B. [The Ministry of Healing, 400](#). “His [Jesus’] education was gained from Heaven-appointed sources, from useful work, from the study of the Scriptures, from nature, and from the experiences of life—God’s lesson books, full of instruction to all who bring to them the willing hand, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart.”

C. [Fundamentals of Christian Education, 194](#). “Daniel did not walk in sparks of his own kindling, but made the Lord his wisdom. Divine philosophy was made the foundation of his education.”

IV. Different methods.

A. [Patriarchs and Prophets, 595](#). “All the varied capabilities that men possess—of mind and soul and body—are given them by God, to be so employed as to reach the highest possible degree of excellence.... Every faculty, every attribute, with which the Creator has endowed us, is to be employed for His glory and for the uplifting of our fellow men....

[459] “Were this principle given the attention which its importance demands, there would be a radical change in some of the current methods of education. Instead of appealing to pride and selfish ambition, kindling a spirit of emulation, teachers would endeavor to awaken the love for goodness and truth and beauty,—to arouse the desire for excellence.”

B. [Fundamentals of Christian Education, 328](#). “The general method of educating the youth does not meet the standard of true education. Infidel sentiments are interwoven in the matter placed in schoolbooks, and the oracles of God are placed in a questionable ... light.”

C. [Education, 17, 18](#). “Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator,—individuality, power to think and to do.... It is the work of true

education to develop this power; to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought. Instead of confining their study to that which men have said or written, let students be directed to the sources of truth, to the vast fields opened for research in nature and revelation. Let them contemplate the great facts of duty and destiny, and the mind will expand and strengthen."

V. Different results.

A. [Education, 18](#). "Instead of educated weaklings, institutions of learning may send forth men strong to think and to act, men who are masters and not slaves of circumstances, men who possess breadth of mind, clearness of thought, and the courage of their convictions."

B. [Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 434, 435](#). "Such an education will restore the image of God in the soul. It will strengthen and fortify the mind against temptation, and fit the learner to become a worker with Christ in His mission of mercy to the world. It will make him a member of the heavenly family, prepare him to share the inheritance of the saints in light."

C. [Education, 19](#). "As he [the Christian teacher] awakens a desire to reach God's ideal, he presents an education that is as high as heaven and as broad as the universe; an education that cannot be completed in this life, but that will be continued in the life to come; an education that secures to the successful student his passport from the preparatory school of earth to the higher grade, the school above."

D. [Fundamentals of Christian Education, 328](#). "True education [460] is that which will train children and youth for the life that now is, and in reference to that which is to come; for an inheritance in that better country, even in an heavenly."

Conclusion: [Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 56](#). "Our teachers need to understand the work that is to be done in these last days. The education given in our schools, in our churches, in our sanitariums, should present clearly the great work to be accomplished. The need of weeding from the life every worldly practice that is opposed to the teachings of the word of God, and of supplying its place with deeds that bear the mark of the divine nature, should be made clear to the students of all grades. Our work of education is ever to bear the impress of the heavenly, and thus reveal how far divine instruction excels the learning of the world."

Key quotation: [Fundamentals of Christian Education](#), 328. “True education is that which will train children and youth for the life that now is, and in reference to that which is to come; for an inheritance in that better country, even in an heavenly.”

Principles involved: [Testimonies for the Church 6:142](#). “Altogether too long have the old customs and habits been followed. The Lord would now have every idea that is false put away from teachers and students. We are not at liberty to teach that which shall meet the world’s standard or the standard of the church, simply because it is the custom to do so. The lessons which Christ taught are to be the standard. That which the Lord has spoken concerning the instruction to be given in our schools is to be strictly regarded; for if there is not in some respects an education of an altogether different character from that which has been carried on in some of our schools, we need not have gone to the expense of purchasing lands and erecting school buildings.”

[461] *Bible background:* [Proverbs 1:7](#): “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” [Deuteronomy 6:6, 7](#): “And these words, which I command thee: ... thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.” [1 Corinthians 1:25](#): “The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” [Colossians 2:3](#): “In whom [Christ] are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” [Luke 2:52](#): “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”

Finding Material

No index to any set of writings can cover all the topics on which the researcher might want to find comments. While the *Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White* is helpful and should be used regularly in the gathering of material, it cannot be depended on to list all the references on any subject. It is necessary to think of related topics, and of books in which the desired type of comment might appear. Frequently, a review of the table of contents in some of the books will direct the mind to chapters that should be read. Do not limit the reading to looking for individual sentences or brief paragraphs that might be inserted into the study outline. In every instance read

enough of the context to be certain that any selection from it is to be used in accordance with the intent of the author.

On subjects directly connected with a Bible text or series of texts, the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* will prove helpful. In comments on verses will frequently be found references to Ellen White statements on the subject. At the close of the comments on each Bible chapter is an additional list of references. Each volume of the *Commentary* has at the back of the book a supplement containing further Ellen White comments, drawn from sources not easily accessible, or previously unpublished.

Every serious student of these writings will want to keep a card file in which he will note items he may use in the future. Memory is not reliable enough to recall all that has been read and where an item of particular interest is to be found. It is a waste of time and effort to have to go back to look for something that might have been noted easily when it first attracted attention. There is particular value in materials gathered while one is doing general reading. They stand clearly in their context, and may be items that would not be found in an ordinary search. [462]

SUMMARY

1. The basic unity of the Ellen White writings becomes apparent when one begins to gather material on a particular topic from all the books.

2. There are principles that must be considered in proceeding with topical studies in these books. In general they are the same principles that should be followed in any research project. However, spiritual matters must be approached prayerfully, and the Bible must be given its rightful place as the guide and standard by which all teachings are to be tested.

3. Study topics in the Ellen White books may touch any phase of Christian living, including physical, mental, and spiritual development.

4. In any study program, the gathering of brief quotations from many places must not be permitted to replace consecutive reading for the purpose of grasping the subject as a whole.

5. In connection with each study, attention should be given to certain items, such as a key quotation, principles involved, and Bible background.

6. In finding material for the topic, the *Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*, and the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* are particularly helpful.

7. A card file, or some other type of filing system, will save much time, and avoid the loss of important materials needed in the future.

[463]

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What part does prayer play in research on spiritual subjects, or, for that matter, on any subject that is vital to the Christian?

2. Find one or two examples of sentences which, if taken out of their context, would give a different idea than in their natural setting.

3. Select a general subject from the list of suggested topics—for instance, “Home.” Make a list of some of the phases of the subject, each of which might make a topic for study.

4. What type of research would be done if one restricted his gathering of materials to the items specifically listed in the *Index*?

5. Is it necessary to point to a specific Bible text to prove that there is a Bible background for a line of instruction given in the Ellen White writings?

COMPLETION OF A PROJECT

In connection with Chapter 14 it was suggested that a project be begun which might be continued for some time—even beyond the time of the present study. If you have been gathering evidences that Ellen White fulfills the Bible tests of a prophet, you should now be ready to come to some conclusions. What are your reactions to what you have found and classified under the headings of the four major tests?

“Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper.” [2 Chronicles 20:20](#).

In the list of “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists,” the following declaration appears as No. 19: “That God has placed in His church the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as enumerated in [1 Corinthians 12](#) and [Ephesians 4](#). That these gifts operate in harmony with the divine principles of the Bible, and are given for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ. [Revelation 12:17](#); [19:10](#); [1 Corinthians 1:5-7](#). That the gift of the spirit of prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church. [1 Corinthians 1:5, 7](#); [12:1, 28](#); [Revelation 12:17](#); [19:10](#); [Amos 3:7](#); [Hosea 12:10, 13](#). They recognize that this gift was manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White.”¹³

Although it is the responsibility of each individual to apply the Bible tests of a prophet to the life and ministry of Ellen White in order to be assured of the validity of her claim to be the messenger of the Lord, we can be certain that the gift of prophecy in its modern manifestation is no longer on trial in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The inspiration of the messenger, the Scriptural nature of the instruction, the value and contribution of the messages, have been recognized and accepted since the beginnings of the church, even before there was denominational organization. Time has vindicated the confidence of the pioneers and the present believers and leaders of the advent cause in the guidance of God through the ministry and writings of Ellen White. The circulation of her books increases annually, and Seventh-day Adventists are turning to them with increasing frequency for help in the conduct of personal lives and the work of the denomination. Questions and challenges have been, and no doubt always will be, raised about the prophetic messages, as they have been regarding the Bible, but these messages will continue

¹³For a complete list of fundamental beliefs, see Seventh-day Adventist Year-book, or the baptismal certificate.

to stabilize, direct, and stimulate the church until the return of the Saviour.

The Weight of Evidence

In their acceptance of Ellen White as the messenger of the Lord, and of her writings as special messages for the remnant church, Seventh-day Adventists have recognized both the internal and external evidences that she was divinely inspired. The harmony, consistency, and Biblical nature of these writings constitute the internal evidences of inspiration. The earlier chapters of this book, and the independent studies carried on in connection with the projects suggested in chapter 24, have focused much attention on these internal evidences. More extensive study would multiply examples of the type of evidence already clearly seen. Those who have carried on far-reaching research in the Ellen White writings are most firmly convinced of their inspired origin and most clearly see their value to the church.

External evidences of inspiration come from observing the influence of the life and the writings of Mrs. White, and noting the fulfillment of her predictions. Again, both the chapters of this book and the study and observations of the individual offer multiplied instances that vindicate the confidence of the church. The beneficial effects that have come to the church through accepting and following the counsel given leave no room for question in the mind of one who knows the history of Seventh-day Adventists.

[466] Not all that is found in these special messages is fully understood, even as we do not grasp the full significance of all the Bible. But the weight of evidence presented by the things that can be understood heavily favors complete confidence in and acceptance of them.

Satan's Challenges

Though Bible critics have undergone crushing defeats during recent years as a result of archaeological discoveries, Satan has by no means given up his attempts to destroy confidence in the Scriptures. Now that their historicity has been established, he is willing that men should accept them as authentic as long as they are not impressed that Bible principles apply today as they did in years past. The

deceiver would as soon have men question the binding nature of the Ten Commandments as he would have them reject the stories of Abraham and Moses as folklore. Either method accomplishes his purpose.

Recognizing, as he does, what God intends to accomplish for the remnant church through the gift of prophecy, Satan is attempting and will continue to attempt to destroy confidence in that gift. In a letter written in 1890, Ellen White said, “Satan is ... constantly pressing in the spurious—to lead away from the truth. The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. ‘Where there is no vision, the people perish.’ Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways, and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God’s remnant people in the true testimony.” Ellen G. White [Letter 12, 1890](#). If the enemy can achieve this objective he will turn men and women away from the last-day message to the church.

The vital place of the gift of prophecy in the remnant church is emphasized by the fact that the Bible mentions it as one of the two major marks of identification of the church. [Revelation 12:17; 19:10](#). It is a matter of grave importance. It is to occupy a place of prominence in the thinking of the members of the church. “As the end draws near and the work of giving the last warning to the world extends, it becomes more important for those who accept present truth to have a clear understanding of the nature and influence of the *Testimonies*, which God in His providence has linked with the work of the third angel’s message from its very rise.” [Testimonies for the Church 5:654](#). In some cases, it will be a factor in determining one’s attitude toward the teachings of the Bible. “If you lose confidence in the *Testimonies* you will drift away from Bible truth.” [Testimonies for the Church 5:674](#). It is not the *Testimonies* that are in danger of succumbing to the attacks of Satan, but the individuals who have not been fortified by those *Testimonies* and Bible truth.

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“So Shall Ye Prosper”

Spiritual prosperity results from taking advantage of every opportunity for spiritual growth—using every means God has provided to foster development. Fundamental in Christian growth is the ac-

ceptance of God's communications through His prophets: "Believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper." [2 Chronicles 20:20](#). Today, as in the days of Israel, rejection of the messages of the prophets leads to a condition for which there is "no remedy." [2 Chronicles 36:16](#). However, we are admonished: "In everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." [1 Corinthians 1:5-7](#).

[468] It is the dangerous situation in which the remnant church is placed and the unusual nature of the trials that come to the faithful members that have caused the Lord to bring the gift of prophecy into prominence once more. He knows our need and how these communications will help the remnant to meet present problems and prepare them for the more serious ones that lie ahead. "In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by the *Testimonies* of His Spirit. There was never a time when God instructed His people more earnestly than He instructs them now concerning His will and the course that He would have them pursue." [Testimonies for the Church 4:147, 148](#); also [Testimonies for the Church 5:661](#). To accept this instruction and allow it to shape the life so that God's people will be prepared to enter the kingdom of God is the privilege and responsibility of every member of the remnant Church.

An Experience With a False Prophetess

(This is the incident referred to under point 2, on page 382.)

During 1893 and 1894 there was a maiden lady at Battle Creek by the name of Anna Phillips, sometimes called Anna “Rice-Phillips,” who claimed to have the gift of prophecy. She wrote her visions and sent them to the leading elders. Her claims were whispered around among some of the lay members, and naturally they caused concern and comments.

It was on a Sabbath morning in the middle of April, 1894, that Elder A. T. Jones in the Dime Tabernacle, which seated about four thousand people, presented Anna Phillips’s testimonies as a genuine manifestation of the spirit of prophecy.

I will never forget the scene as he stood in the pulpit and read her testimonies. He spoke of the sheep following the True Shepherd, for “they know His voice.” [John 10:4](#). Then he read some of Ellen White’s testimonies, and said, “Do you hear the voice?” (He referred to the voice of God through the Holy Spirit.) “Yes,” said he, “we hear the voice.” Then he read some of Anna Phillips’s testimonies and said, “Do you hear the voice?” “Yes,” he said, “it is the *same voice*.” He then argued the genuineness of Miss Phillips’s testimonies simply because he could hear the voice, as he claimed. Some of the rest of us, for some reason, did not hear the voice.

When the meeting closed, the people quietly left the building; but instead of going to their homes, they gathered in groups and began to discuss the new prophetess. “Can it be so?” some said. Others said, “Do you think Elder Jones is right, or may he be mistaken?” “Will she and Sister White work together?” some inquired. “I should like to know what Sister White has to say about it,” remarked others. Finally the crowd dispersed and went to their homes, musing on the way.

I was a young man attending Battle Creek College, and knew not what position to take. I had confidence in Elder Jones, yet I wanted more evidence of the genuineness of Anna Phillips's testimonies. The Sabbath was passing and the shades of another night drew on.

On Sunday morning I went to the Review and Herald office and purchased a postal card. I had just stepped to the writing board when Elder Jones came in.

"Any mail?" he inquired in his characteristic way. I watched, and saw a long envelope bearing the return address of "Mrs. E.G. White." I was immediately interested, for I recalled his sermon the day before concerning Anna Phillips. I stood and closely watched him as he sat down on a bench and began to read. I saw that he was deeply affected, for tears began to flow freely. He read on.

Presently, Elder A. O. Tait came in, and Elder Jones said, "Oscar, come here. Sit down. You heard me preach that sermon yesterday?"

"Yes," replied Elder Tait.

"Well, read this," he said, as he handed him the testimony he had just received from Sister White.

Here is a part of what Elder Tait read:

"No. 3, George's Terrace,

"St. Kilda Rd.

"Melbourne, Vic., March 15, 1894.

"Elder A. T. Jones.

"Dear Brother:

"I have a message for you. Did you suppose that God has commissioned you to take the burden of presenting the visions of Anna Phillips, reading them in public, and uniting them with the testimonies the Lord has been pleased to give me? No, the Lord has not laid upon you this burden. He has not given you this work to do....

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"My dear brother, I wish to present before you some things concerning the dangers that threaten the work at the present time. The work of Anna Phillips does not bear the signature of heaven. I know what I am talking about....

"How is it, my brother, that you have taken up these communications, and presented them before the people, weaving them in with the testimonies God has given Sister White? Where is your evidence that these are of God? You cannot be too careful how you hear, how you receive, how you believe."

“Who told Sister White a month ago,” said Elder Jones, “that I was going to preach that sermon about Anna Phillips as a prophetess?”

“Ah, you know, Alonzo,” declared Elder Tait, in his calm, yet firm, way.

“Yes, I do know. God knew what I would do, and He impressed Sister White a month before I preached the sermon to send the testimony that I am wrong. Look at that date, ‘March 15, 1894.’ I am wrong.” The two men left the post office.

The next Sabbath Elder Jones read part of the testimony sent him thirty days prior to the date he preached his sermon, mailed from Melbourne, Australia. It reproved him for his position taken concerning Anna Phillips’s testimonies. He said, “I am wrong, and I confess it. Now I am right.” That ended the matter and saved the church from the pitfall of Satan.

Anna Phillips repudiated her experience and became a trusted Bible worker. She died a loyal Seventh-day Adventist.

—W. M. Adams (the young man in the post office).

The Story of the Salamanca Vision

(This is the incident referred to under point 4, on page 383.)

In the year 1890 general meetings were planned in the Atlantic Coast district of our work. It was before the days of union conferences. Elder A. T. Robinson had the work in charge, and he invited Ellen White to be present at these general meetings, which were to be conducted over a period of about three months’ time. The first of these was held late in October at South Lancaster, Massachusetts. From day to day Ellen White bore her testimony, and when the series of meetings was over she was weary, but she took the cars for Salamanca, New York, where the next meetings were to be held.

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While on the cars she caught a severe cold. As she reached Salamanca and was taken to the Hicks home, where she was to stay as a guest, Ellen White recorded in her journal that never again must she attempt to attend meetings at this time of the year—it was not wise for one of her age to do so.

Miss Sara McEnterfer, her traveling companion and private secretary, was insisting that Mrs. White abandon her plans for the

next two and a half months and go back to Battle Creek, where she could have proper treatment. But already announcement had been made of the meetings that would be held. A large Protestant church had been rented for the occasion, and our believers were coming in from southwestern New York State and northern Pennsylvania. Mrs. White determined to go forward with her appointments.

The first of these appointments was on Sabbath afternoon, and, although she was not well, she spoke to the people. The Sunday meeting was to be held in the opera house, for of course the church would be used by the congregation which owned it. It had been widely advertised that Mrs. White would speak. Although ill, she said she would go forward with the plans. But when Sunday morning came, she was not as well as she had been the day before. She could only speak in a whisper. From a human standpoint it seemed futile to attempt to hold such a meeting, especially with the general public. Nevertheless, Mrs. White assured the brethren that she would go forward with the appointment.

[473] At an earlier time, on a similar occasion, she turned to her husband and said, "James, if I could only know that God would sustain me."

He asked, "Ellen, has the Lord ever failed you?"

She answered, "No."

And he assuringly answered, "The Lord will not fail you."

So on this day, stepping forward by faith, she went to the opera house that Sunday forenoon. The building was crowded. Ellen White was a good public speaker, and she stood before that audience and began to speak. At first she spoke in a whisper, but then her voice broke clear, and she addressed them for an hour on her favorite subject, "Christian Temperance." She presented the broad aspects of the theme, carrying it right back to the tables in the homes of the people.

Monday, Ellen White was not as well as she had been the day before. But the announcement had been made that she would speak on Monday afternoon at the church. The meetings were to close on Monday night, so this would be the last time our people would hear her speak in this series. At the appointed time she was taken to the place of meeting and assisted to the pulpit. Then, supporting herself on the pulpit, she spoke to the congregation for about forty-five

minutes. When she closed, the people crowded to the front to bid her farewell. They said, “Sister White, the Lord has given you a message for us this day.” But in her journal (and we have it in her own handwriting, written the next day) she said, “I do not know upon what I spoke. I do not know one word I uttered. I was too ill.”

In her weariness and her illness she made her way to the Hicks home and to her room, thinking to pour out her soul before God and to plead for mercy, strength, and health. She reached her room and dropped on her knees by her chair. She tells us: “I had not uttered a word when the whole room seemed filled with a soft silvery light and my pain of disappointment and discouragement was removed. I was filled with comfort and hope—the peace of Christ.” *Diary*, Nov. 3, 1890.

She was given a vision. After the vision she cared not to sleep or rest. She was healed, she was rested, and as she lay on her cot that night, she thought of the words of Jacob of old, “Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.” [474]

The next morning a decision must be given. Could she go on to Stanley, Virginia, where the next meetings were to be held, or must she go back to Battle Creek, as her nurse insisted? Elder A. T. Robinson, who had the work in charge, and Elder W. C. White, her son, called in the morning at her room to get her answer. They found her dressed and well. Of course she would go on. Then she told of the healing and of the vision. She said, in substance, “I want to tell you about what was revealed to me last night. For in the vision I seemed to be in Battle Creek, and the angel messenger bade me, ‘Follow me.’” Then she hesitated, for the scene had gone from her. She could not call it to mind.

The two men visited with her for a time, and then they left to arrange the transportation. As they were leaving, she said, in effect, “Just a minute. I want to tell you about the vision that was given to me last night. It had to do with important matters. In the vision I seemed to be in Battle Creek, and I was taken to the Review and Herald building, and the angel messenger bade me, ‘Follow me—.’” It was gone again, as verily as Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was gone from him as he tried to call it to mind. She could not remember.

The men hurried on to arrange for the transportation. Ellen White, in good health, attended the meetings for the next two and a

half months. She spent one day visiting the Luray Caverns. As she went through the caverns, she carried a tin can with three candles in it for light, and she did enjoy the day of sightseeing. I mention this, that you may know she was in good health, healed completely from her illness.

[475] In the days that followed she recorded in her journal that which she was not allowed to tell the men that day in Salamanca. (We have the handwritten record in our vault.) Many things were revealed to her. Here are a few sentences from her journal record concerning the *American Sentinel*. Now, the *American Sentinel* was to our work in the nineties what the *Liberty* magazine is today. It was a weekly journal, published by the Pacific Press in New York City, devoted largely to religious liberty interests. The journal records:

“In the night season I was present in several counsels, and there I heard words repeated by influential men to the effect that if the *American Sentinel* would drop the words ‘Seventh-day Adventist’ from its columns, and would say nothing about the Sabbath, the great men of the world would patronize it; it would become popular, and do a larger work. This looked very pleasing. But what is the nature of the work that would be done to meet the world’s ideas? These men could not see why we could not affiliate with unbelievers and nonprofessors to make the *American Sentinel* a great success.”

“I saw their countenances brighten, and they began to work on a policy to make the *Sentinel* a popular success. The whole matter was introduced by men who needed the truth in the chambers of the mind and soul.

“This policy is the first step in a succession of wrong steps. The principles which have been advocated in the *American Sentinel* are the very sum and substance of the advocacy of the Sabbath, and when men begin to talk of changing their principles, they are doing a work which does not belong to them. Like Uzzah, they are attempting to steady the ark which belongs to God and is under His special supervision.”

You get the picture as she draws it. A group of men are discussing the editorial policy of one of our journals.

After finishing these general meetings, Ellen White returned to her home in Battle Creek and prepared for the General Conference, March 5-25, 1891. When the conference opened, she was asked to

speaking to the workers each morning in the week at half-past five. On Sabbath afternoon she addressed the conference. In the Battle Creek Tabernacle, before four thousand of our workers and believers, she [476] stood and read as her text, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." The discourse was a powerful appeal for Seventh-day Adventists to hold forth the distinctive features of their faith.

Then she said in substance, "While at Salamanca, New York, matters of importance were revealed to me. In a vision of the night I seemed to be here in Battle Creek, and the angel messenger bade me, 'Follow me—.'" She hesitated; the scene was gone. She could not call it to mind. She continued to speak of how we must hold forth the distinctive features of our faith. Then she said, "I must tell you of the vision which was given to me at Salamanca; for in that vision important matters were revealed to me. In the vision I seemed to be in Battle Creek. I was taken to the Review and Herald office, and the angel messenger bade me, 'Follow me—.'" Again she faltered; it had gone from her. She went on with her sermon, and a third time that afternoon she attempted to recount that vision, but she was not allowed to tell it. Finally she said, "Of this, I shall have more to say later." She rounded out her sermon in about an hour's time, and the meeting was dismissed. Everyone had noticed that she was unable to call the vision to mind.

The president of the General Conference, Elder O. A. Olsen, came to her. "Sister White," he said, "will you be with us in the morning?"

"No," she replied, "I'm weary. I've borne my testimony. You must make other plans for the morning meeting."

As Mrs. White returned to her home, she told the members of her family that she would not be attending the morning meeting. She was tired, and she was going to have a good night's rest.

That night, after the close of the conference session, a small group of men met in one of the offices in the Review and Herald building. At that meeting were representatives of the Pacific Press, who published the *American Sentinel*. There were present also the [477] representatives of the Religious Liberty Association. They met to discuss and settle a vexing question—the editorial policy of the *American Sentinel*. Someone locked the door, proposing that it

should not be unlocked until the question was settled. Ten o'clock passed; eleven o'clock; twelve o'clock struck, and the men were still there;—one o'clock, and they had reached no decision; two o'clock, and the doors were still locked, and the men were not able to settle the matter.

A little before three o'clock on Sunday morning the meeting ended in a deadlock, with the assertion on the part of the Religious Liberty men, that unless the Pacific Press would accede to their demands and drop the term "Seventh-day Adventist" and "the Sabbath" from the columns of that paper, they would no longer use it as the organ of the Religious Liberty Association. That meant killing the paper. They unlocked the door, and the men went to their rooms to sleep.

But God, who never slumbers or sleeps, sent His angel messenger to Ellen White's room at three o'clock that morning. She was aroused from her sleep and instructed that she must go into the workers' meeting at half past five to present what was shown to her at Salamanca. She dressed, went to her bureau, took out the journal in which she had made the record of what had been shown to her. As the scene came clearly to her mind, she wrote more to go with it.

As the workers passed her home early Sunday morning, Elder W. C. White among others noticed there was a light in her room. "Strange," he said to the man with whom he was walking, "mother was not planning to attend the meeting today. She seems to have changed her mind." He stepped into the house to see what she was doing. He found her dressed and putting on her bonnet to go to meeting. She told her son that at three o'clock that morning she had been aroused from her sleep and instructed to go into the workers' meeting and present what was shown to her at Salamanca.

[478] Elder White was keenly interested. Five times he had heard her begin to tell it, and five times she had been prevented.

The audience were arising from prayer as Mrs. White entered the rear door of the tabernacle, a bundle of manuscript under her arm. The president of the General Conference was the speaker, and he addressed her: "Sister White," he said, "we are happy to see you. Do you have a message for us?"

"Indeed I do," she said, and she stepped to the front. She began where she had left off the day before. She told the listeners that at

three o'clock that morning she had been aroused from her sleep and instructed to go to the workers' meeting at half past five to present what had been shown to her at Salamanca, New York.

"In the vision," she said, "I seemed to be in Battle Creek. I was taken to the Review and Herald office, and the angel messenger bade me, 'Follow me.' I was taken to a room where a group of men were earnestly discussing a matter. There was a zeal manifest, but not according to knowledge." She told of how they were discussing the editorial policy of the *American Sentinel*, and she said, "I saw one of the men take a copy of the *Sentinel*, hold it high over his head, and say, 'Unless these articles on the Sabbath and the second advent come out of this paper, we can no longer use it as the organ of the Religious Liberty Association.'" Ellen White spoke for an hour, describing that meeting which had been shown to her in vision months before, and giving counsel based upon that revelation. Then she sat down.

The president of the General Conference did not know what to say. He had not heard of any such meeting. However, he did not wait long for an explanation, for a man stood up in the back of the room and began to speak:

"I was in that meeting last night."

"Last night!" Sister White remarked, "last night? I thought that meeting took place months ago when it was shown to me in vision."

"I was in that meeting last night, and I am the man who made the remarks about the articles in the paper, holding it high over my head. I am sorry to say that I was on the wrong side; but I take this opportunity to place myself on the right side." He sat down.

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Another man stood to speak. He was the president of the Religious Liberty Association. Note his words: "I was in that meeting. Last night after the close of the Conference some of us met in my room in the Review office where we locked ourselves in and there took up and discussed the questions and the matter that has been presented to us this morning. We remained in that room until three o'clock this morning. If I should begin to give a description of what took place and the personal attitude of those in the room, I could not give it as exactly and as correctly as it has been given by Sister White. I now see that I was in error and that the position that I took

was not correct. From the light that has been given this morning, I acknowledge that I was wrong.”

Other persons spoke that day. Every man who was in the meeting the night before stood and bore his testimony, saying that Ellen White had accurately described the meeting and the attitude of those in the room. Before the meeting closed, the Religious Liberty group were called together, and they quickly took action in harmony with the inspired counsel.

Now you may ask, Why was it that Ellen White was not allowed to give the vision when five times she tried to tell it? If she had told it, it would have been said that it was not true, for no such meeting had taken place. If the counsel which was sent out by her in her manuscripts, based upon this revelation, but not making mention of this particular view, had been followed, the meeting never would have been held. If, following that Sabbath afternoon when Ellen White tried to tell the vision and was three times prevented, the men had accepted her counsel to hold the light high, the meeting never would have been held.

[480] But somehow the men thought they knew better. You know how it is—some say, “Well, perhaps Sister White did not understand,” or “We are living in a different day now,” or “That counsel applied years ago, but it doesn’t fit now.” You know how we do at times, and so did they in 1891. Then God, in His own time and in His own way, made it clear that it was His work; He was guiding; He was guarding; He had His hand upon the wheel. Ellen White tells us God “has often permitted matters to come to a crisis, that His interference might become marked. Then He has made it manifest that there is a God in Israel.” [Testimonies for the Church 9:91, 92](#).

—Arthur L. White, Secretary, Ellen G. White Publications.

A Good Place to Live

(This is the incident referred to under point 8, on page 385.)

It happened in New Zealand years ago. At the conference office we received a brief note from a faithful sister who for years had been an isolated Sabbathkeeper. She had been ill, and felt that she had not much longer to live. However, she made no plea for anyone to visit her to comfort or encourage her. The blessed hope to her was

something real and substantial. What she asked was that for the sake of her neighbors and friends we would be sure that when she died one of our ministers would come to conduct the funeral service. She would see to it, she said, that when the end drew near one of the neighbors would send us word in time.

A few months later the telegram came. The sister was dying. We asked Pastor J. Hookings, who was then the conference Missionary Volunteer secretary, to go to her town.

Upon his arrival, Brother Hookings found that the dear sister had lapsed into unconsciousness. He was introduced to her physician, and as they sat quietly in a dimly lighted adjoining room, the doctor, who was quietly turning the pages of a book he had taken from the table, said in an undertone to Brother Hookings, “These are wonderful books, Mr. Hookings.”

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Brother Hookings assented to the remark, but was inclined to think that the doctor had perhaps mistaken the volume of the *Testimonies for the Church* for some other similarly bound volume. After a brief interval the doctor said again, “Mr. Hookings, I think these are very wonderful books.”

He spoke with such positiveness that Brother Hookings replied, “I agree with you, doctor. But may I ask, what do you know about them?”

The doctor said that over a period of months he had been visiting the home as the sister’s physician. “Whenever I have had to wait awhile in this room,” he said, “I have taken the opportunity of reading in these red-covered volumes.”

He went on. “Mr. Hookings, I have a large library of my own, and I read a great deal. I have read much concerning Christianity and the Christian religion, for though I am a Roman Catholic I have been interested also in the writings of Protestant authors. I would like to say to you that in all my reading I have never found the gospel in so beautiful a setting as I find it in these books of yours. Tell me, Mr. Hookings, do your people believe the things that are written in these books? Do they live according to the wonderful instruction that is given here? I notice that the messages are called *Testimonies for the Church*. To me they seem to be so practical and at the same time so comprehensive. They deal with home problems and family life and business affairs, as well as with church relationships and

missionary work. I want to ask you, Mr. Hookings, do your people live according to the instruction that is given here?"

Brother Hookings was impressed by the physician's earnest inquiry. He replied, "Doctor, we believe that this is indeed wonderful instruction, that it is given of the Lord to the church for these times. We teach it to our people, and we and they do try to order our lives according to it."

[482] The doctor answered, "I am so glad to hear that. I will tell you why I ask that question. You see, Mr. Hookings, I am getting on in years. Soon I will have to ask some younger man to take over my practice. As I have contemplated retirement, do you know I have felt that it would be a wonderful thing for a man in his declining years to be able to go and settle down in a community of Christian people who believe in the kind of Christianity that is taught in these books and who shape their lives accordingly. I can think of no outlook that would be more attractive, that would be likely to be more restful and satisfying. I feel that that is what I would like to do."

—A. W. Cormack.

Appendix B

The Published Works of Mrs. E.G. White

In listing all the Ellen White works, there are included some volumes in which there is more or less duplication of subject matter. For instance, in noting the *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 1 was published in 1885, but the content is a republication of *Testimonies* Nos. 1-14, which were first issued between 1855 and 1868. Titles appearing in italics are out of print.

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Title</i> | <i>Pages</i> |
|-------------|--|--------------|
| 1851 | ¹⁴ A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White | 64 |
| 1854 | ¹⁵ Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White | 48 |
| 1855 | ¹⁶ Testimony for the Church, No. 1 | 16 |
| 1856 | ¹⁷ Testimony for the Church, No. 2 | 16 |
| 1857 | ¹⁸ Testimony for the Church, No. 3 | 16 |
| 1857 | ¹⁹ Testimony for the Church, No. 4 | 48 |
| 1858 | ²⁰ Spiritual Gifts, vol. 1 | 219 |
| 1859 | ²¹ Testimony for the Church, No. 5 | 32 |
| 1860 | ²² Spiritual Gifts, vol. 2 | 295 |
| 1861 | ²³ Testimony for the Church, No. 6 | 64 |
| 1862 | ²⁴ Testimony for the Church, No. 7 | 64 |
| 1862 | ²⁵ Testimony for the Church, No. 8 | 64 |

| | | |
|------|--|-----|
| 1863 | ²⁶ Testimony for the Church, No. 9 | 48 |
| 1864 | ²⁷ Testimony for the Church, No. 10 | 80 |
| 1864 | <i>Appeal to the Youth</i> (95 pages, 40 of which were written by Ellen G. White) | 40 |
| 1864 | <i>Appeal to Mothers</i> | 64 |
| 1864 | ²⁸ Spiritual Gifts, vol. 3 (Facts of Faith) | 304 |
| 1864 | ²⁹ Spiritual Gifts, vol. 4 (Facts of Faith) | 156 |
| 1865 | <i>How to Live</i> (a series of six pamphlets bound together, containing in all 296 pages, 86 of which were written by Ellen G. White) | 86 |
| 1867 | ³⁰ Testimony for the Church, No. 11 | 53 |
| 1867 | ³¹ Testimony for the Church, No. 12 | 96 |
| 1867 | ³² Testimony for the Church, No. 13 | 172 |
| 1868 | ³³ Testimony for the Church, No. 14 | 102 |
| 1868 | ³⁴ Testimony for the Church, No. 15 | 96 |
| 1868 | ³⁵ Testimony for the Church, No. 16 | 104 |
| 1869 | ³⁶ Testimony for the Church, No. 17 | 204 |
| 1870 | ³⁷ Testimony for the Church, No. 18 | 208 |
| 1870 | <i>Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 1</i> | 414 |

¹⁴Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.

¹⁵Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.

¹⁶Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.

¹⁷Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.

¹⁸Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.

¹⁹Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.

²⁰Recently reprinted with facsimile pages.

²¹Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.

²²Recently reprinted with facsimile pages.

²³Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.

²⁴Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.

²⁵Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.

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| 1870 | ³⁸ Testimony for the Church, No. 19 | 96 |
| 1871 | ³⁹ Testimony for the Church, No. 20 | 200 |
| 1872 | ⁴⁰ Testimony for the Church, No. 21 | 200 |
| 1872 | ⁴¹ Testimony for the Church, No. 22 | 192 |
| 1873 | ⁴² Testimony for the Church, No. 23 | 116 |
| 1875 | ⁴³ Testimony for the Church, No. 24 | 192 |
| 1875 | ⁴⁴ Testimony for the Church, No. 25 | 192 |
| 1876 | ⁴⁵ Testimony for the Church, No. 26 | 208 |
| 1876 | ⁴⁶ Testimony for the Church, No. 27 | 190 |
| 1877 | <i>Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 2</i> | 396 |
| 1878 | <i>Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 3</i> | 442 |
| 1879 | ⁴⁷ Testimony for the Church, No. 28 | 192 |
| 1880 | ⁴⁸ Testimony for the Church, No. 29 | 192 |
| 1880 | Life Sketches of James White and Ellen G. White (450 pages, of which 221 were written by Ellen G. White) | 221 |
| 1881 | ⁴⁹ Testimony for the Church, No. 30 | 192 |
| 1882 | ⁵⁰ Testimony for the Church, No. 31 | 244 |
| 1882 | Early Writings (reprint of <i>A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White</i> , 1851; <i>A Supplement to Christian Experience and Views</i> , 1854; and <i>Spiritual Gifts 1</i> , 1858) | 284 |
| 1883 | <i>Sketches From the Life of Paul</i> | 334 |
| 1884 | <i>Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 4</i> | 492 |
| 1885 | Testimonies for the Church, vols. 1-4 (current edition, reprint of <i>Testimonies</i> , Nos. 1-30) | 2,655 |
| 1885 | ⁵¹ Testimony for the Church, No. 32 | 238 |

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| 1886 | <i>Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists</i> (294 pages, 120 of which were written by Ellen G. White) | 120 |
| 1888 | The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan (enlargement of <i>Spirit of Prophecy</i> , vol. 4) | 678 |
| 1889 | ⁵² Testimony for the Church, No. 33 | 288 |
| 1889 | Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5 (reprint of Nos. 31-33) | 745 |
| 1890 | Patriarchs and Prophets | 755 |

²⁶Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.
²⁷Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.
²⁸Recently reprinted with facsimile pages.
²⁹Recently reprinted with facsimile pages.
³⁰Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.
³¹Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.
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³³Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.
³⁴Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.
³⁵Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.
³⁶Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.
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³⁹Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.
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⁴⁴Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.
⁴⁵Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.
⁴⁶Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.
⁴⁷Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.
⁴⁸Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.
⁴⁹Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.
⁵⁰Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.
⁵¹Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.

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| 1890 | <i>Christian Temperance</i> (The second part of this book is entitled “Bible Hygiene,” and was compiled from the writings of James White. The entire book contains 268 pages.) | 162 |
| 1892 | Steps to Christ | 153 |
| 1892 | <i>Gospel Workers</i> (first edition) | 471 |
| 1894 | <i>Christian Education</i> | 248 |
| 1896 | Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing | 205 |
| 1896 | Story of Jesus (originally called <i>Christ Our Saviour</i>) | 183 |
| 1898 | The Desire of Ages | 835 |
| 1900 | Christ’s Object Lessons | 421 |
| 1900 | <i>Testimonies on Sabbath School Work</i> | 122 |
| 1900 | Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6 (No. 34) | 482 |
| 1902 | Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7 (No. 35) | 298 |
| 1902 | <i>Manual for Canvassers</i> | 70 |
| 1903 | Education | 309 |
| 1904 | Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8 (No. 36) | 335 |
| 1905 | The Ministry of Healing | 516 |
| 1909 | Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9 (No. 37) | 288 |
| 1911 | The Acts of the Apostles | 602 |
| 1913 | Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students Regarding Christian Education | 556 |
| 1915 | <i>Gospel Workers</i> (new and revised edition) | 520 |
| 1915 | Life Sketches of Ellen G. White (480 pages, 254 pages written by Ellen G. White) | 254 |
| 1916 | Prophets and Kings | 733 |
| 1920 | <i>Colporteur Evangelist</i> | 103 |

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| 1922 | Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White | 223 |
| 1923 | Fundamentals of Christian Education | 540 |
| 1923 | Counsels on Health | 634 |
| 1923 | Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers | 520 |
| 1925 | Christian Service | 275 |
| 1930 | Messages to Young People | 466 |
| 1932 | Medical Ministry | 335 |
| 1933 | <i>Life and Teachings of Ellen, G. White</i> | 128 |
| 1937 | The Sanctified Life (reprint of <i>Bible Sanctification</i>) | 69 |
| 1938 | Counsels on Diet and Foods | 498 |

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| 1938 | Counsels on Sabbath School Work (a rearranged, enlarged edition of <i>Testimonies on Sabbath School Work</i>) | 186 |
| 1940 | Counsels on Stewardship | 350 |
| 1946 | Evangelism | 707 |
| 1946 | Counsels to Writers and Editors | 181 |
| 1947 | The Story of Redemption | 438 |
| 1949 | Temperance | 300 |
| 1949 | Testimony Treasures, vols. 1-3 | 1,623 |
| 1950 | The Remnant Church | 72 |
| 1952 | Welfare Ministry | 349 |
| 1952 | The Adventist Home | 583 |
| 1952 | My Life Today | 377 |
| 1953 | Colporteur Ministry | 156 |
| 1954 | Child Guidance | 550f |

⁵²Initial edition out of print, but available in other form.

Appendix C

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William Foy and Hazen Foss

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William E. Foy, a member of the Freewill Baptist Church, who was preparing for the ministry, was given two visions in Boston in 1842—one on January 18 and the other on February 4. In the first of these revelations, Foy viewed the glorious reward of the faithful and the punishment of sinners. Not being instructed to relate to others what was shown him, he told no one of his vision; but he had no peace of mind. In the second revelation he witnessed the multitudes of earth arraigned before heaven's bar of judgment; a "mighty angel" with silver trumpet in hand about to descend to earth by "three steps;" the books of record in heaven; the coming of Christ and the reward of the faithful. He was bidden, "Thou must reveal those things which thou hast seen, and also warn thy fellow creatures to flee from the wrath to come." *The Christian Experience of Wm. E. Foy, Together With the Two Visions He Received* (1845).

Two days after this revelation he was requested by the pastor of the Bloomfield Street church in Boston to relate the visions.

Although he was a fluent speaker, he reluctantly complied, fearing that the general prejudice against visions, and the fact that he was a mulatto, would make his work difficult. The "large congregation assembled" was spellbound, and with this initial encouragement, Foy traveled three months, delivering his message to "crowded houses." Then to secure means to support his family, he left public work for a time, but, finding "no rest day nor night," he took it up again. Ellen Harmon, when but a girl, heard him speak at Beethoven Hall in Portland, Maine. (Interview of D. E. Robinson with Mrs. E. G. White, 1912. White Publications, D.F. 231.)

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Near the time of the expectation in 1844, according to J. N. Loughborough, Foy was given a third vision in which were presented three platforms, which he could not understand in the light of his

belief in the imminent coming of Christ, and he ceased public work. (*The Great Second Advent Movement*, pages 146, 147.)

It so happened that a short time after this, Foy was present at a meeting in which Ellen Harmon related her first visions. She did not know that he was present until he interrupted with a shout, and exclaimed that it was just what he had seen. (D.F. 231.) Foy did not live long after this.

Hazen Foss

Near the time of the expected advent in the fall of 1844, there was also given to Hazen Foss, a young Adventist of talent, a revelation of the experience of the advent people. Shortly after the passing of the time, he was bidden to relate the vision to others, but this he was disinclined to do. He was warned of God as to the consequences of failing to relate to others what had been revealed to him, and was told that if he refused, the light would be given to someone else. But he felt very keenly the disappointment of 1844, and “said that he had been deceived.” After a severe mental conflict, he “decided he would not relate the visions.” Then, “very strange feelings came to him, and a voice said, ‘You have grieved away the Spirit of the Lord.’”—E. G. White [Letter 37, 1890](#).

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“Horried at his stubbornness and rebellion,” he “told the Lord that he would relate the vision,” but when he attempted to do so before a company of believers, he could not call it to mind. In vain were his attempts to call up the scenes as they had been shown to him; and then in deep despair he exclaimed, “It is gone from me; I can say nothing, and the Spirit of the Lord has left me.” Eyewitnesses described it as “the most terrible meeting they were ever in.” *Ibid.*

Early in 1845, Foss overheard Ellen Harmon relate her first vision to the company of believers at Portland, Maine. He recognized her account as a description of what was shown to him. Upon meeting her the next morning, he recounted his experience, of which she had not before known, and encouraged her to faithfully perform her work, stating: “I believe the visions are taken from me and given to you. Do not refuse to obey God, for it will be at the peril of your soul. I am a lost man. You are chosen of God; be faithful in doing your work, and the crown I might have had, you will receive.”—*Ibid.*

On comparing dates, they discovered that it was not until after he had been told that the visions were taken from him, that Ellen Harmon was given her first revelation. Although Hazen Foss lived till 1893, he never again manifested interest in matters religious. (Arthur L. White in *Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant*, pages 29, 30.)

Here is Ellen White's description of Foss's experience:

"Washington, D.C.

"December 22, 1890.

"Dear Sister Mary Foss:

"I wrote to you a few days ago, and now another matter comes up. Elder Loughborough is writing me, asking if I know of any one now alive who was present at the meeting I have mentioned held at MacGuire's Hill, where I related the first visions I had.

"You know Hazen Foss had visions once. He was firm in the faith that Christ would come in 1844. He interpreted the visions given him in harmony with his belief that time would close in 1844. After the time passed, he was told by the Lord to relate the visions to others. But he was too proud spirited to do this. He had a severe conflict, and then decided he would not relate the visions. The people had assembled to hear him, but he refused.

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"The first vision given to me while in Portland, Maine, was right after this decision. I had three visions, and was then bidden to relate these to others. At this time your husband, Mr. Foss, came to our house in Portland in a sleigh, and said that Mary was anxious that Ellen should visit her.

"I thought that this was an opening from the Lord. I was in feeble health; my lungs were diseased; I was spitting blood. But I decided to go with your husband. As I could not bear the cold air, I sat in the bottom of the sleigh, with the buffalo robe over my head.

"I had not spoken in a loud voice for some time. After I arrived at Poland, you said that there was to be a meeting at MacGuire's Hill, and asked me to go.

"I went with you and your husband. There, that night, I stood upon my feet to relate the testimony given me of God. For above five minutes I labored to speak, and then everything broke away, and my voice was as clear as a bell, I talked for about two hours. I knew nothing of the experience Hazen Foss had been passing through.

In this meeting the power of the Lord came upon me and upon the people.

[489] “The next day I had related to me the exercises of Hazen Foss. I was told by one, in the presence of a room full, that they had urged Hazen Foss to tell them the things which the Lord had shown him. He had been greatly disappointed that the Lord did not come in ‘44. He said that he had been deceived, and he refused to obey the promptings of the Spirit of God. After having plainly declared that he would not go from place to place and relate the visions God had given him, very strange feelings came to him, and a voice said, ‘You have grieved away the Spirit of the Lord.’

“He was horrified at his stubbornness and rebellion, and told the Lord that he would relate the vision. The Lord had told him that if he refused, He would give the light to someone else, and when he attempted to relate the vision, his mind could not grasp it. He tried and tried to relate it, but he said, ‘It is gone from me; I can say nothing, and the Spirit of the Lord has left me.’ Those who gave a description of that meeting said it was the most terrible meeting they were ever in.

“The next morning, I met Hazen Foss. Said he, ‘Ellen, I want to speak with you. The Lord gave me a message to bear to His people, and I refused after being told the consequences. I was proud; I was unreconciled to the disappointment. I murmured against God, and wished myself dead. Then I felt a strange feeling come over me. I shall be henceforth as one dead to spiritual things. I heard you talk last night. I believe the visions are taken from me, and given to you. Do not refuse to obey God, for it will be at the peril of your soul. I am a lost man. You are chosen of God; be faithful in doing your work, and the crown I might have had, you will receive.’

“He looked as I never saw him look before, so full of despair. Now, Mary, you were at the meeting, were you not? Your memory is so good. Do you have any remembrance of this? If so, state on paper what you do know in regard to it.

“I have spoken three times in this place, and will return from here to my home in Battle Creek, having been away three months, laboring constantly from place to place. I speak here four times more, then returning home.

“Will you please answer this? My address is Battle Creek, Michigan.

(Signed) “Ellen G. White.”

“Please send me Hazen Foss’s address.”

—E. G. White [Letter 37, 1890](#).

Appendix D

Statements of Dr. J. H. Kellogg Regarding Ellen G. White and Her Work

In the preface to *Christian Temperance*, by Ellen G. White, Dr. Kellogg wrote in 1890:

“Nearly thirty years ago there appeared in print the first of a series of remarkable and important articles on the subject of health, by Mrs. E. G. White. These articles at once commanded earnest consideration by those who were acquainted with Mrs. White’s previous writings and labors. Thousands were led to change lifelong habits, and to renounce practices thoroughly fixed by heredity as well as by long indulgence. So great a revolution could not be wrought in a body of people without the aid of some powerful incentive, which in this case was undoubtedly the belief that the writings referred to not only bore the stamp of truth, but were endorsed as such by a higher than human authority. This is not the proper place for the consideration of the grounds upon which this belief was based, but the reader’s attention is invited to a few facts of interest in this connection:

“1. At the time the writings referred to first appeared, the subject of health was almost wholly ignored, not only by the people to whom they were addressed, but by the world at large.

“2. The few advocating the necessity of a reform in physical habits, propagated, in connection with the advocacy of genuine reformatory principles, the most patent and in some instances disgusting errors.

“3. Nowhere, and by no one, was there presented a systematic and harmonious body of hygienic truths, free from patent errors, and consistent with the Bible and the principles of the Christian religion.

[491] “Under these circumstances, the writings referred to made their appearance. The principles taught were not enforced by scientific authority, but were presented in a simple, straightforward manner

by one who makes no pretense to scientific knowledge, but claims to write by the aid and authority of the divine enlightenment.

“How have the principles presented under such peculiar circumstances and with such remarkable claims stood the test of time and experience? is a question which may very properly be asked. Its answer is to be found in facts which are capable of the amplest verification. The principles presented have been put to the test of practical experience by thousands; and whenever intelligently and consistently carried out, the result has been found in the highest degree satisfactory. Thousands have testified to physical, mental, and moral benefits received. Many of the principles taught have come to be so generally adopted and practiced that they are no longer recognized as reforms, and may, in fact, be regarded as prevalent customs among the more intelligent classes. The principles which a quarter of a century ago were either entirely ignored or made the butt of ridicule, have quietly won their way into public confidence and esteem, until the world has quite forgotten that they have not always been thus accepted. New discoveries in science and new interpretations of old facts have continually added confirmatory evidence, until at the present time every one of the principles advocated more than a quarter of a century ago is fortified in the strongest possible manner by scientific evidence.”

Dr. David Paulson reported (circa 1913) a conversation with Dr. Kellogg, as follows:

“Dr. Kellogg asked me in New York City twenty-two years ago if I knew how it was that the Battle Creek Sanitarium was able to keep five years ahead of the medical profession. I did not know. Then he told me.

“He said when a new thing is brought out in the medical world he knew from his knowledge of the spirit of prophecy whether it belonged in our system or not. If it did, he instantly adopted it and advertised it while the rest of the doctors were slowly feeling their way, and when they finally adopted it he had five years the start of them.

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“On the other hand when the medical profession were swept off their feet by some new fad, if it did not fit the light we had received he simply did not touch it. When the doctors finally discovered their

mistake they wondered how it came that Dr. Kellogg did not get caught.” (E. G. White Publications Document File 45.)

On December 2, 1900, Dr. Kellogg wrote to Mrs. White:

“There is no place in the world where you would receive a more hearty welcome than at the Battle Creek Sanitarium and no place where your work is more appreciated. Your writings have been used as textbooks in our classes here for years and the family has received, every Sabbath morning at eight o’clock, special instruction from the Testimonies. This is the custom every Sabbath morning and has been for the last four years. There is always a good turnout. Miss Parkinson who has charge of our little children here was telling me this morning how much impressed they were with the instruction she is giving them. She reads them some passages from *Early Writings* every morning and talks about you and your work, and they are wonderfully interested and anxious to see you.” J. H. Kellogg correspondence, Ellen G. White Publications vault.

Early in 1903 Dr. Kellogg in a letter to Ellen G. White included the following paragraph:

“I wish to say here and to put it in writing over my signature so that you may have it to make any use of that you may feel that circumstances require, that I have the utmost confidence in your sincerity as a Christian woman: and more than that, that I still believe as I formerly believed and as I have believed for more than thirty-five years that the Lord has made you the leader of the great movement for the promulgation of truth which Seventh-day Adventists are carrying forward, has made you the channel of truth for this people, and has given you special wisdom for instruction and reproof such as none others have. I know that this instruction and the special light which the Lord has given you has been like a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day to this people, and has been especially so to the particular department of the work in which I have been engaged.” (E. G. White Publications Document File 45-h.)