

ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE

BELIEVE HIS PROPHETS



ELLEN G. WHITE

Believe His Prophets

Ellen G. White

1955

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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.

Further Links

[A Brief Biography of Ellen G. White](#)
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PREFACE

In September, 1952, the author, while serving as a member of the Ellen G. White Publications staff, gave at the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Conference a series of three Bible studies on the subject “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church.” They were published in volume one of the reports of that conference, which bears the title *Our Firm Foundation*.

Then in December, 1953, he was invited to give a series of twelve studies on the same theme to the workers assembled in Poona, India, at the time of a Southern Asia Division council. The division committee requested permission to put those studies in a small book to be supplied to our workers and English-speaking laymen. That book was published early in 1955 under the title *Divine Guidance*.

Owing to the great interest on the part of our people, and in order to meet a still larger need for material on this very vital subject, the author has revised and enlarged the combined studies mentioned above, and now offers the result of that study and effort in this volume under the title *Believe His Prophets*.

We hope that this book may fulfill its purpose in bringing together from so many sources that which will build greater and greater confidence in the messages God has seen fit to give to His people in these the last days of this world’s history. God has spoken to His remnant church, and His people must hearken to that voice and walk in the light of that counsel.

Denton. E. Rebok

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Chapter 1—The Kind of People God Wants

You and I had nothing to say about our coming into this world; but how and where we spend eternity is entirely in our hands, and depends wholly upon our own choice.

If you choose to spend eternity in God’s everlasting kingdom, then *you* must bring *your* life into harmony with God’s ways, with His ideals and standards, with His laws and patterns of living. For He will not change His kingdom to suit your convenience or to conform to your ideas. His is a kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy. If you want to live in God’s kingdom, you must be righteous, at peace with God and man, and full of joy.

The prophet Isaiah states the case very clearly and leaves none in doubt regarding who shall make the changes. He says:

“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake *his* way, and the unrighteous man *his* thoughts. . . . For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:6-9). [10]

Such is the difference between God’s eternal kingdom and the kingdoms of this world. Here on this earth man’s ideas and ways prevail, but over there God’s thoughts and standards hold absolute sway. If you do not like them, then you will not be there; for God does not want you in His everlasting kingdom *unless* you want to be there and are willing to conform your life in every detail to His ways and wishes, to His pattern of righteousness and noble living.

That is it, as far as His kingdom is concerned, and He says in effect, Take it or leave it. There will be no compulsion, no coercion, no undue persuasion. There will be no more compromising or coddling. It is *this*, or else. God is through with sin and sinners. He has set a day when sin will be eradicated and destroyed wherever it may be found. God knows the kind of people He wants with Him

throughout eternity in His kingdom of peace and joy where no more sin, sickness, or sorrow will be found.

[11] As God looks down upon this world of ours He does not see thirteen great religions, or faiths by which men live. He does not even see one of them—Christianity—divided as it is into 258 sects, groups, or denominations. This division among the Christian people did not originate with God. It is not recognized in the Scriptures. For, if we read correctly in the fourteenth psalm, we must come to the conclusion that in God’s sight there are in the world but two great classes of people. [Verse 2](#) says, “The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.”

That gives us the basis upon which God divides the people of the world. He does not think of them as Christians, Hindus, Mohammedans, Confucianists, or Taoists. He does not think of them in terms of belonging to any one of the thirteen great religions that are extant in the world today. He thinks of them in terms of just two groups—those who are seeking after Him and would understand Him, and those who are not interested in Him, not seeking after Him, and do not care to understand Him.

In the eleventh psalm, God has given us the names of these two groups:

“The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord’s throne is in heaven: ... his eyelids try, the children of men” ([Psalm 11:4](#)).

Now what does He find?

“The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares [margin, “quick burning coals”], fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright” ([Psalm 11:5-7](#)).

[12] So in God’s sight there are but two classes in the world. And the division is made purely on the basis of relationship to God, willingness to know and accept Him, or determination to resist and reject Him.

That being true, we shall find these two classes of people in every country, every city, every town, every village, every street, and *almost* every home. There are no national boundaries. There

are no geographical areas to which the one group is confined and not the other. The two groups are found everywhere. God intended Christians to be one united, happy body, living in peace with one another and at peace with all the world about them.

Now someone is sure to ask, “Why, then, is Christianity divided into 258 sects, denominations, or groups of people?”

That is a good question. When I talked to the Confucianists, the Buddhists, and the Taoists in China about Christianity, they would say, “But we cannot understand. The Baptists, the Methodists, the Presbyterians, the Adventists, the Catholics, the Congregationalists, and all the rest—why so many groups?”

On my first arrival in Hong Kong in the summer of 1917 I met that very problem. It was an exceedingly hot day, and I had nothing but the usual woolen suits worn in the northern part of the United States—rather uncomfortable for hot weather. So the first thing I did was to go to a Chinese tailor. In our conversation the tailor said, “I am a Christian,” to which I replied, “That is wonderful.” Then he added, “I am a Baptist.”

“Well,” I said, “that is fine. I have many very good Baptist friends.” A few minutes later he added, “I am also a Presbyterian.” In my surprise I questioned, “How is that? Why are you both Baptist and Presbyterian?” He explained, “Belong Baptist, one-piece chance go topside. Belong Presbyterian, two-piece chance go topside.” You see, the Chinese are a very practical people.

[13]

Really, it *is* confusing, and we *should* ask ourselves, Why the divisions? I think the reason is given in 2 Timothy, the first chapter, [verse 12](#):

“For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

The division among Christians did not originate with Christ. The difficulty is that we do not think of Christianity in terms of a person, or as the union with a person, but rather as a system of doctrines and teachings and beliefs subject to individual interpretation by people who have varying backgrounds and therefore different opinions.

Christianity is divided over the *what* and not the *who*. Christ is one, and Christianity has but “one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

[14] one God and Father of all.” But, somehow or other, Christians have gotten into difficulty, and we Seventh-day Adventist Christians are not entirely free from it. When we begin to discuss Christianity our minds seem to concentrate on the *what* of it, and we say very little about the *who*—the Man Christ Jesus. The interpretation of the messages, the doctrines set forth in the Scriptures, as seen from varying viewpoints, opinions, and convictions, has resulted in the 258 sects of Christians:

But you say, “Does that come in among Seventh-day Adventists?” Frankly we must admit, “Yes, to some extent.” There are now several “reformed” groups, most of them quite small, who call themselves Seventh-day Adventists. They have come into existence because some of us are forgetting the *who* of Christianity and arguing about the *what*.

These diversions from the Seventh-day Adventist Church have come largely from a difference of opinion regarding the Spirit of prophecy. There is no difference regarding the Sabbath. All these so-called “reformed” groups observe the seventh-day Sabbath. There is no difficulty over the second coming of Christ, or any of the other great fundamental Christian doctrines, but the difficulty comes over an interpretation and application of the teachings of the Spirit of prophecy, and that is one reason for my interest in trying to better understand the real significance and meaning of that gift in the church.

[15] The difficulty grows out of a tendency on the part of some to take a sentence or a paragraph out of the writings and put their own interpretation, their own emphasis, and their own focus upon it, and thus they differ with their brethren. This to me is a very serious thing. I am sure God never intended that the Spirit of prophecy should become a cause for division or stumbling. I believe that the Spirit of prophecy was given so that we might be more closely united, and yet we do find these words of caution:

“Messages of every order and kind have been urged upon Seventh-day Adventists, to take the place of the truth which, point by point, has been sought out by prayerful study, and testified to by the miracle-working power of the Lord. But the waymarks which have made us what we are, are to be preserved, and they will be preserved, as God has signified through His word and the testimony

of His Spirit. He calls upon us to hold firmly, with the grip of faith, to the fundamental principles that are based upon unquestionable authority.”—[Counsels to Writers and Editors, 52](#).

Seventh-day Adventists are a people of the Word and, like Martin Luther, they take their stand on its sure foundation. The Bible, and the Bible only, is their rule of faith and practice. That is the source of the waymarks that have made us a people, and we shall be preserved as such only as we allow the light of God’s Word to shine upon our pathway.

In addition to the Bible, Seventh-day Adventists as a people have an abundance of wonderfully fine material—some fifteen or sixteen million words written by one who said she was the messenger of the Lord. We now have those messages in forty-five bound volumes and in several thousand articles that have appeared in the church papers over these many years.

God has given us an abundance of material that should throw light on our path and cause us to live better lives than any other Christian group in the world. “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.” And so we should know our messages and be able to live by them.

[16]

Let me turn to a portion of Scripture that was one of Mrs. White’s favorite passages, found in the sixth chapter of Hosea and the fifth verse. I am told that in her home, as the family of workers would gather together for morning or evening worship, some one of the secretaries would hand her the Bible, and she would often open to that passage and read verses one to five. We shall read only the fifth verse: “Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets.” The word *hewed* means “to fashion,” “to mold,” “to cut,” “to carve.” It simply means “to shape,” “to make.” The verse then means, “Therefore have I made them (or molded them, or fashioned them) by the prophets.”

This, then, is a brief, concise statement as to the business, or the purpose, of prophets. Through their messages God wants to make us what He would have us to be in order that we may have a place in His kingdom. In other words, God has in mind a pattern, a mold, a certain ideal for people He wants to have with Him throughout eternity. He wants you and me to know just what He has in mind, and then to allow ourselves to be made into that kind of people. It will be done by means of the messages of the prophets.

[17] These messages can and will mold us and fashion us and make us into the kind of people God wants us to be.

True, we did not have any choice when we came into this world. We came, and what we are, we are; but not so in God's everlasting kingdom. You and I will be in that kingdom solely by our own choice, by our own individual decision. If I do not want to be there, God is not going to force me into His kingdom. If you do not choose to be molded after God's pattern, then *you* will not be there either. This very fact brings to each of us a most solemn responsibility, one which cannot be shifted to another, cannot be avoided or neglected without dire consequences to ourselves. You cannot choose for me, nor can I for you. It is purely a personal, individual matter. However, you can influence me in my choices, and counsel me regarding my course of action. You can point out to me the possible and probable results of my decisions.

In this way I do assume a certain amount of responsibility, for each of us is indeed a part and parcel of every man we meet. I am consciously or unconsciously bringing to bear upon you the impact of my words, my deeds, my habits of life. What you see in me and hear from me may cause you to make certain choices or decisions of vital import to your life here and the life to come.

[18] For this reason I must be careful how I live, because of the influence my life can have upon you, and you must be even more careful of what you accept or reject from my life.

No wonder the apostle Paul seriously counsels all of us, and primarily to youth he says,

“Let no one think slightly of you because you are a young man; but in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, be an example to your fellow Christians.” “Take pains with yourself and your teaching. Persevere in these things; for by doing this you will secure your own and your hearers' salvation” (1 Timothy 4:12, 16, Weymouth).

I am indeed “my brother's keeper,” and to a greater extent than I may want to acknowledge, my words and works may have much to do with your life today and tomorrow. Thus one slip of my tongue, one shrug of my shoulders, one minute of self-indulgence, one unkind, unguarded, careless word of mine may cause you to start in a wrong direction, the end of which may be eternal death, complete annihilation.

My daily prayer must be, O God, help me from day to day to live in such a way that I may be the means of helping those about me in the upward path that leads to everlasting life in Thy eternal kingdom.

God has not left us to flounder in this hopeless, troubled world. Rather He has done everything possible to make sure that we may know the right and better way to live our lives and how best to influence others. To accomplish this God has given us His prophets to mold and help make us the kind of people that will reach God's standard—the standard that He has set for His kingdom. Does that not put a great responsibility upon the prophets? The messages of the prophets must then be from God. When we think of it in that way, the prophets really become very important people. They transmit from God to the people of the world God's ideas, God's ideals, God's standards, God's pattern.

[19]

If I submit, if I subject myself, to that molding process, if I allow God to transform me by His messages, given through His prophets, then I have a hope of being in His kingdom. But if I refuse to submit, if I do not cooperate, if I say, "Well, this is not important and that is not important; I will do this, but I will not do that," then God will not have me in His kingdom, because I would manifest that same spirit over there. It is just such a spirit that has been the cause of most of our trouble here in this world. It is, then, my individual idea in conflict with God's idea; and when I do not agree with God I have separated myself from Him.

Reconciliation, then, is the only means by which I can come back to Him, and the call to reconciliation is the work of the prophets. As a part of God's plan you and I have a work to do in calling the attention of the people everywhere to the messages of these prophets. This is our part in the work of reconciliation, and this accounts for the seriousness of the subject and the universal interest in it.

Chapter 2—Three Basic Concepts of Christian

Seventh-day Adventists, in common with all other Christians, have staked their hopes for the present life and the future upon three great facts, which are to the non-Christian mere assumptions, but to the Christian, facts of faith.

In thinking about Christianity we come to the conclusion that we must begin with those three basic concepts.

The first and most important is *a belief in the existence of God*. How do we know that God is? Can we go into the laboratory, take a test tube, and by manipulating certain chemicals and things like that prove that God is? No. How then would you go about to prove that God is?

The fact is that most of us as Christians do not ask for proof. We just say, “Well, God is.” And that in itself is a manifestation of our implicit faith in Him. To us belief in the existence of God is simple, but to non-Christians, to unbelievers, it is more difficult—it is at times a stumbling block. To us God’s existence is a fact, but a fact of faith. To them it is pure foolishness. They demand proof. They demand evidence. Of course, we can use such evidence as the beautiful sunset, the planting of the seed, the growing of the trees, and the bearing of the fruit—all of that. We can easily prove that everything that exists must have a maker, and by inference come to the conclusion that God is the Maker of the world and the universe. So to me as a Christian, and to all Christians generally, there is no difficulty at all about this first great fact upon which Christianity is based—the fact that God is.

Because of our implicit and unbounded faith in God, we take for granted that He is. We simply know that God “is in his holy temple” therefore, “let all the earth keep silence before him” ([Habakkuk 2:20](#)), “for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” ([Hebrews 11:6](#)). (See also [Job 22:21, 26](#).)

Without hesitation or a word of proof, Christ admonishes all who claim His name, “Have faith in God” ([Mark 11:22](#)); and Seventh-day Adventists, more than a million strong, from every corner of the earth declare, “Lord, we believe; help Thou our unbelief.”

Is it important that we know that God is? The importance is this: Only as I know that God exists, that God is in His heaven, that God is looking down upon the earth, that God sees *me* and hears *me*, do I become careful as to what I do and what I say. My faith that God is, causes me to live in such a way that before Him, in His presence, I shall walk and talk in a manner pleasing to Him. [22]

I thought of it the other day as a friend and I were driving through the country. He had a new car. He wanted to show me how good that car was. I noticed that he looked ahead and then he looked into the mirror. He looked all around and then said, “Now, let’s try it.” When we got up to more than eighty miles an hour I said, “You have a good car; now let us slow down.” I noticed that he looked again. Can you guess for whom he was looking? Why, of course, the traffic cop. Had the traffic cop been behind, do you think he would have let loose at almost ninety miles an hour? No, indeed!

We are all just like that. Human nature is that way, and so you and I as Christians must first believe that God is and that we are living every moment in His presence. I call this the first great fact of Christianity—that God exists, that God sees and hears, records, and judges everything I do, every word I say. Do you understand now? The first great fact of Christianity is a fact of faith—God is.

The second great fact of faith is something like it. To be a Christian I must believe that *the Bible is God’s Book*. How do I know? How can I prove it? Oh, we have several simple little proofs, or evidences, that we try to apply to it. But as for me, I am not asking for the proof. I simply believe that it is God’s Book. This is the second great fact of faith upon which Christianity is based. This Bible, my friends, is God’s Book. How do I know? How else could you know? [23]

One answer is that you could go over to Palestine, to some of those old, old places, and find there some stones with inscriptions on them that tell about the Hebrews and that mention the Israelites. Some of those ancient stones tell of the Egyptians, the Flood, and many other things mentioned in the Bible. We have them as an exter-

nal evidence of the internal correctness, the validity, the genuineness of this Book. I do not need to go to Palestine or to Egypt or to any other place to find those things to cause me to believe that this is God's Book. I just believe it, and so it is with every other Christian.

The Bible is a revelation of His love, His will, His plan, His purpose, and His standard for men of all ages and in all climes. Paul's counsel to Timothy is God's word to all men who, by faith, have accepted the Bible from Genesis to Revelation:

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 3:14-17).

[24] Seventh-day Adventists receive the Scriptures as the voice of God speaking directly to them. They fear and tremble at God's Word, for to them every thought, every sentence, every verse, every chapter, is a real message from the living God, given through His chosen messengers of old. Seventh-day Adventists open their hearts and their minds to receive it, for in it are God's commands, entreaties, counsels, appeals, warnings, and promises. They accept it freely, willingly, literally, and fully as of God, and therefore not to be despised or treated lightly. They neither add to nor diminish there from. It is not for them to accept this and reject that according to their own whims, fancies, or convenience. It is indeed “the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:11-13).

The third great fact of faith is simply that *God spoke through His prophets and gave us this Book—the Bible*. How do I know that? How can I prove it? I was not back there when Samuel lived, nor when Daniel had his dreams and visions. But on Tuesday, November 24, 1953, it was my good fortune to go out from the city of Baghdad about sixty miles to the site of the ancient city of Babylon, where are now only piles of sand and dirt and rubbish. As I looked at those piles I said to myself, “How can I know that this is where Daniel lived?” When we came a little closer to the place where the

German archeologist had excavated more of those great piles of dirt, my guide, Melvin Jacobson, said, “This is the very road on which Daniel walked.” I looked at him and said to myself, “How do they know that?”

[25]

As I walked about that place, looked around, and saw the inscriptions on the bricks, I remembered my history books and other books that describe those places. I said, “Well, Brother, this is really a fulfillment of prophecy.” Just then in the midst of all that stillness, where not a man was seen or a sign of life was found, an animal suddenly jumped from one pile to another, and scampered over the mounds. I said, “That, too, is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah.” (See [Jeremiah 50:39](#).)

You see, we have such evidences that will help me to some extent to believe the Book. However, I do not need these evidences. I simply believe that this is God’s Book, and the more firmly I believe in it, the more careful I shall be to observe what it tells me to do. But if I say that Book is just like any other book, I am not likely to pay any particular attention to it.

In Hebrews, the first chapter and the first verse, I read, “God . . . at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.”

Here is all the evidence I need. God says so; therefore it is so. That is the way I see it, because that is the way God states it. Since I believe in God, and know that He cannot lie, I take Him at His word in this as in all other matters. Peter says of those prophets that they were “holy men . . . moved by the Holy Ghost.”

Amos himself says, “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” ([Amos 3:7](#)). Now how do I know that all this is true? What evidence have I that this is indeed God’s Book? and that God spoke the words of this Book through His prophets? The honest answer is that we have only faith, and by this act of faith I believe that this method of communication is the one used by God from the very earliest period of man’s history to our own time. “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](#)).

[26]

If by faith Christians accept the fact of God, and recognize the Bible as God’s Word, then it is but natural and logical that Christians

will accept the fact that God chose prophets as His spokesmen. Christians will, therefore, ask for no more proof for the one great assumption than they do for the other—both alike are matters of faith.

Concerning prophets and their messages from God the apostle Paul says:

“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” ([1 Thessalonians 5:18-23](#)).

[27] Salvation comes through faith in the Lord Jesus. Sanctification and ultimate perfection come through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Through prophets God has set forth in the Bible and in the writings of the Spirit of prophecy a pattern of Christian living that shows us the kind of people Christians must be here and in the everlasting kingdom; for if we would be saints in the kingdom to come, we must be saints in this world now. The business of Christianity is not so much how to get a man into heaven, as it is how to get heaven into the heart of a man. This is the work of prophets in both Old and New Testament times, and also in the present remnant church.

Take away faith and what have you left? No God. No Bible. No prophets. No recognition of man’s sinfulness. No need of the Saviour. No Saviour, Jesus Christ. And what is left of Christianity when you take away all of that? Nothing.

If our reasoning is correct, there were prophets in ancient times, and there might be prophets in modern times. The important fact is that God said there were prophets through whom He spoke in the past, and that there would be prophets through whom He would speak in this our day. If I believe God, then I must accept His prophets.

[28] We have had many movements in the history of the Christian church that have grown out of the leadership of some individual who claimed to be a prophet. There have been prophets, and we all admit the fact. But you say, “How can you tell whether they are true or

false?” To which I must reply, “That is indeed our only problem now.” How may I know whether anyone who steps forth and claims to be a prophet is indeed a true prophet?

Christians everywhere are willing to accept the first fact, *that God is*. They are all willing to accept the second fact, *that the Bible is God’s Book*. But the only one in question is the third. Even this fact is partially accepted, for they do believe that God spoke through prophets, so far as Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Malachi, and John, who wrote the Revelation, are concerned. They will accept all of that. Why do they stop there? They stop only on the last part of this third great fact of faith, namely, that God plans to speak through His servants in modern times. There is the problem. This is where Christians part company.

This makes it clear that Seventh-day Adventists do not have much to prove. All we have to prove is that God has spoken through at least one prophet in our own times.

Dear brethren and sisters, what we need above all else is to come to a conclusion in our own thinking with regard to the Word of God, the conclusion to which the Christians in Thessalonica came nineteen hundred years ago:

“As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:11-13).

[29]

What is the business of the prophets who wrote that word? Hosea says, “Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets.” Paul says, “The word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” What then is the purpose of the message of the prophets contained in this Book, the Word of God? The Bible declares God’s purpose to be that these messages might effectually work within us to make us the kind of men and women God wants us to be—the kind He would have in His kingdom.

You see now that I am leading you to a conclusion; and you have almost reached that conclusion in your thinking, because you believe the great facts of Christianity. I do not *need* to bring *all* the

proofs and evidences to you, but I shall briefly review some of the evidences in this series of studies, so there will be no question in any mind as to whether God chose to speak His word to the remnant church through one whom we know as Ellen G. White.

Chapter 3—Channels of Communication Between God and Man [30]

To accept the existence of God is to accept His statement as to how He has chosen to communicate with man. It is neither reasonable nor sensible to accept God and then deny or reject what He says regarding the prophets through whom He has chosen to speak to man here on earth. The Bible offers neither scientific proof nor a well-reasoned argument for or against prophets. It simply declares that there are prophets through whom God spoke:

“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](#)).

God at Various Times Spoke by the Prophets

In Eden, God spoke directly to Adam and Eve ([Genesis 2, 3](#)). “And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” ([Genesis 3:8](#)). This thought is amplified by James White:

“Once, man walked with God in Eden. With open face he beheld the glory of the Lord, and talked with God, and Christ, and angels, in Paradise, without a dimming veil between. Man fell from his moral rectitude and innocency, and was driven from the garden, from the tree of life, and from the visible presence of the Lord and His holy angels.”—Introduction in Ellen G. White, [The Spirit of Prophecy 1:7](#). [31]

When sin came it formed a wall of partition between God and man. But God did not discard or neglect the work of His hand. He chose to communicate with men primarily through *prophets* ([Genesis 20:6, 7](#)); but also at times through *priests* ([Genesis 14:18](#)) and through angels ([Genesis 16:7-13](#)). (See also [2 Chronicles 36:15](#); [Jeremiah 35:15](#); [2 Peter 1:21](#).)

Ellen G. White states:

“God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies, and He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do this work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was intrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, none the less, from Heaven. The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth.”—[The Great Controversy, 8, 9](#) (C.H.L.).

[32] The men of God chosen to do this very essential and all-important work were generally known as prophets, but there are other names or titles applied to them in the Scriptures: *prophet* in [1 Samuel 9:9](#); son of man in [Ezekiel 4:1](#); [5:1](#); seer in [2 Chronicles 16:7](#); messenger in [Malachi 3:1](#); [Haggai 1:13](#); spokesman in [Exodus 4:16](#); [7:1](#); fellow servant in [Revelation 22:9](#); [19:10](#); servant of God in [1 Chronicles 6:49](#); man of God in [1 Samuel 9:6](#); [2 Peter 1:21](#); watchman in [Isaiah 52:8](#).

The work of all these men, by whatever title they were known, is well stated in these words:

“From the earliest times, prophets had been recognized as teachers divinely appointed. In the highest sense the prophet was one who spoke by direct inspiration, communicating to the people the messages he had received from God.”—[Education, 46](#).

It is but natural that we should expect to see prophets among God’s people, and indeed there have been many who have claimed to be God’s prophets. This is in accord with Scripture, and therefore we are counseled not to despise “prophesyings,” but rather to “prove all things,” holding “fast that which is good” ([1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21](#)).

[33] Jesus Himself, looking down to our day, said, “There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets,” and they shall “shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” ([Matthew 24:24](#)). Through John He adds this caution, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” ([1 John 4:1](#)). Somehow, it is to be expected that where the true exists there is likely to be the false; where there is the genuine, there

likewise will be found the counterfeit. Our business is to try, test, and prove the prophets to find the true and reject the false.

The Call to the Prophetic Office

The call to prophetic office is in the hands of God, who knows what He wants and when, where, and why He wants it at any given time. Therefore, it is not man's responsibility to direct in the choice of the prophet. This call does not come by committee action or by human planning or devising. As with the priesthood, "no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" ([Hebrews 5:4](#); see [2 Peter 1:21](#)). God's men are individually chosen, prepared, called, and directed by Him, and yet it is done in such a way that the call to prophetic office comes to the individual with convincing power and sufficient evidence that both he and his associates know it for a certainty.

The call of Amos is to the point in question. "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel" ([Amos 7:14, 15](#)).

Again, God's call to Isaiah was of an entirely different nature. The young man went into the Temple and while there God opened his eyes and gave him *a vision* of the throne of God and the angels about that throne, which seemed high and lifted up. Isaiah caught that vision of God in all His glory and celestial majesty. Immediately he felt his own *humiliation* and sensed his unworthiness. He would flee from the presence of such awful holiness and grandeur, but the Lord took a live coal from off the altar and, as it were, placed it upon his lips and said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged" ([Isaiah 6:7](#)). Purification made him ready to be God's servant and God's messenger. Then in response to the call, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah in his youth responded, "Here am I; send me."

Isaiah, as God's chosen mouthpiece, became the gospel prophet of the Old Testament, and has left for the Christian world a piece of literature of surpassing beauty. The testimony of Jesus through

Isaiah is an example of the prophetic gift in sublime and powerful action.

Names Applied to the Messages of the Prophets

It is important that we find the various terms used in the Bible to designate the messages spoken or written by the prophets. In these there is a clue as to their use, application, and significance. They are as follows:

1. Prophecy or prophecies ([2 Chronicles 9:29](#); [15:8](#); [1 Corinthians 13:8](#)).
- [35] 2. Word of God ([1 Samuel 9:27](#); [1 Kings 12:22](#)).
3. The Lord's message ([Haggai 1:13](#)).
4. Testimonies ([2 Kings 17:15](#); [Nehemiah 9:30](#)).
5. Counsel ([Isaiah 44:26](#)).
6. Burden ([Jeremiah 23:33, 38](#); [Isaiah 13:1](#); [15:1](#)).

The word “testimony” or “testimonies” is frequently used, and carries with it, among other meanings, that of “intentions.” “The testimony of Jesus” would, therefore, be the “intentions” of God as revealed through Jesus, His angel, and His prophet to the people. The expression “the testimony of Jesus” is used but three times in the whole Bible, in [Revelation 12:17](#) and [19:10](#). The Biblical meaning of the term is found in the latter verse, “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

Seventh-day Adventists, accepting the whole Bible from [Genesis 1:1](#) to [Revelation 22:21](#), believe in God, and in His Word as a revelation of God's “intentions,” or will, as revealed through the prophets. They believe the gifts of God are available in this our day the same as in apostolic times.

Prophets in the New Testament Church

J. Peter Lange's *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* has this to say concerning [Luke 2:26](#):

“If the spirit of prophecy had departed from Israel since the time of Malachi, according to the opinion of the Jews, the return of this Spirit might be looked upon as one of the tokens of the Messiah's advent.”

Without discussing either the opinion of the Jews or the comment by Lange, it is of interest to note that the apostle Luke recognizes that John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah, was indeed a prophet ([Luke 1:76; 7:28](#)). In [Matthew 21:11](#) and [Luke 7:16](#) it is likewise acknowledged that Jesus Himself was a prophet among men. And when He ascended to heaven He “gave gifts unto men,” “some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” ([Ephesians 4:8, 11](#)). [36]

The objectives of these workers in the church of the early apostolic period were to equip His people for service, to build up the church, to help all to arrive at oneness in faith and in knowledge of the Son of God, to attain to the stature of mature men in Jesus Christ instead of remaining babes in the Christian life, and to cease being carried about with every wind of doctrine, but to hold to the truth through union with Christ ([Ephesians 4:12-15](#)).

Paul admonished the Ephesians that Christians should no longer live as the Gentiles live, but become new men who after God are “created in righteousness and true holiness”—fit for God’s everlasting kingdom and for the society of angels ([Ephesians 4:17-24](#)).

These verses, together with those in [1 Corinthians 14:3, 4, 20, 22](#), would lead us to the conclusion that prophets are placed in the church by God primarily for the benefit of the church itself. In the Revised Standard Version we read:

“On the other hand, he who prophesies speaks to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. . . . Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; be babes in evil, but in thinking be mature. . . . Thus, tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers but for believers.” [37]

Thus we can emphasize this very important principle: The work of prophets is essentially for the members of the church—for reproof to the erring and for the “upbuilding, encouragement, and comfort” of the believers. The words of counsel and instruction from God through the prophets to the believer are designed to help the spiritually newborn babe to “grow” by his use of “the sincere milk of the word” ([1 Peter 2:2](#)) “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of

the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children” ([Ephesians 4:13, 14](#)).

The chief business of the prophets in the church has been that of guiding the believers in the path that leads to heaven, of pointing out the signposts along the way so that believers could walk and work intelligently. They are not saved by the signposts or by the instruction given or by the deeds performed along the way. There is but one Saviour, for “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

[38] It is clear that any man who hears the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, who becomes aware of the fact that he is a sinner in need of a Saviour, and who acknowledges Christ as his Saviour, immediately becomes a member of God’s family, a believer. Then, after he believes, and has become “a son of God,” he begins a process of growth in grace by which he becomes an intelligent Christian.

All of this is in harmony with the passage we read in [2 Timothy 3](#), which says that all Scripture is given by inspiration, for the purpose of making a man holy and perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. We therefore draw a conclusion that the gift of prophecy is for you and for me. The Testimonies are primarily for those who already believe. It is the gospel that makes believers into “sons of God,” and it is the messages of the prophets that build up the believers into intelligent Christians.

Therefore, there is no salvation in this historical date or that; there is no eternal destiny at stake in this or that fulfilled or unfulfilled prophecy; there is no salvation in any particular viewpoint of the purely incidental doctrines or theories, or in what Mrs. White herself calls “indefinite, frivolous questions,” “obscure, unimportant points,” “idle sophistries,” things “not essential to our salvation,” “questions not necessary for the perfection of the faith,” and “idle tales.”

We should establish clearly in our minds the fact that as far as salvation is concerned there is one, and only one, fundamental doctrine—that I am a sinner in need of a Saviour, and Jesus Christ is my Saviour if

[39] I only believe on Him and receive Him into my heart by faith.

Surrounding that one great fundamental doctrine of the Christian church are “landmarks,” “way-marks,” “blocks,” “pegs and pins,” which have made us an *intelligent Seventh-day Adventist Christian*

people. These will preserve us as a people only as we clearly understand and live by them, allowing them to mold and fashion our character and to determine every detail in the habits of our daily living. Our ultimate aim is to become fit to live forever in God's everlasting kingdom, and to this end God has placed His prophets in the church to help in our preparation for an entrance into heaven.

Prophets in the Remnant Church

One writer has stated, "The Church which He [Christ] founded was a Church in which prophecy was to be a continuous possession."—G. C. Joyce, *The Inspiration of Prophecy*, p. 139.

Ellen G. White says:

"When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: . . . and He will show you things to come.' . . . [John 16:13](#). Scripture plainly teaches that these promises, so far from being limited to apostolic days, extend to the church of Christ in all ages."—[The Great Controversy, 10](#) (C.H.L.).

This is equally true of the church of God in the time of the end and in the end of time. The Bible refers to God's chosen people of the last days as "the remnant." [40]

The following Bible specifications help us to identify the remnant church:

They will be gathered ([Isaiah 11:11](#)); be distinguished from others ([Micah 5:7, 8](#)); keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus ([Revelation 12:17](#)); shall not do iniquity or speak lies ([Zephaniah 3:13](#)); and shall be saved in God's kingdom ([Romans 9:27](#); [Daniel 7:18](#)).

A study of church history shows that through the centuries there have always been groups of Christian people who have claimed the prophetic gift among them.

To the church waiting for the coming of the Lord, Paul wrote a message:

"That in every thing 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).

Mrs. White adds:

“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.

[41] *Seventh-day Adventists believe they are the remnant church* because they comply with all the Scripture specifications for it. Among them is the gift of prophecy, or “the testimony of Jesus,” which is “the spirit of prophecy.” It is not for Christians to deny or reject or despise, but rather to *test* and *try* the gift as claimed by Ellen G. White, who for seventy years spoke in the name of the Lord, and who claimed to have visions and revelations in which God revealed His “intentions” for individuals and for the church as a whole. Because of the very nature of the divine guidance given through Ellen G. White, Seventh-day Adventists esteem most highly the counsel, the admonitions, the warnings, the reproofs, the encouragement, and the comfort contained in her messages.

Now that a little more than a century has passed since the earliest manifestation of the gift of prophecy among us, Seventh-day Adventists should pause to evaluate the gift of God in the remnant church and apply the Bible tests. How does the work of Ellen G. White stand the test of time? Has the church prospered as the result of heeding her counsel and of molding its policies in harmony with her “testimonies”? These questions are reasonable and logical and deserve a candid and unbiased answer, not so much to prove that God has chosen and used men and women as His prophetic messengers, but rather to show that Ellen G. White was one of those so chosen by God.

Chapter 4—Accepting or Rejecting the Prophets

[42]

This study brings us face to face with a vital question—Shall we accept or reject God’s prophets? For a Scripture lesson we refer again to Hosea, the sixth chapter:

“Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth. O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets” (Verses 1-5).

As mentioned earlier, the chief work of the prophet is to bring a message from God, a message that is designed to mold and to fashion and to make us after the pattern that God has set for His kingdom. This thought is also expressed in [John 17:17](#), which says, “Sanctify them [or “make them holy”] through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

[43]

So the words of the prophet are designed to make us a sanctified, or a holy, people. It is thus that we are to be molded and fashioned and hewed by the Word of God according to the pattern of God.

In 2 Timothy, the third chapter, are some familiar words:

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (Verses 14, 15).

The purpose of the Scriptures, then, is to mold us and fashion us and make us wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (verse 16).

Here again is stated the work of the prophets to hew, to fashion, to mold, to make us “wise unto salvation.” Therefore, the Scriptures, as given through the prophets, are good for doctrine, good for reproof, good for correction, good for instruction, and the object is “that the man of God may be perfect” (Verses 15, 17).

[44] In these few texts of Scripture we have set before us the very purpose that God had in mind when He sent prophets into the church. “God . . . spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” (Hebrews 1:1). Since that is a fact we must accept, the purpose for which He spoke is likewise a fact; and that makes us ready now to enter into the thought of this study.

As mentioned at the very beginning, it is a question of accepting or rejecting the prophets, and you and I personally and individually must make that decision. I cannot make the decision for you; you cannot make the decision for me.

I must accept, or I must reject.

You must accept, or you must reject.

In the beginning it was God’s plan to talk directly to man, to come and speak to him face to face, in order that man might have direct access to God and be in the very presence of God. If man had not sinned, that relationship would have continued, but sin erected a barrier between God and man. Isaiah, the fifty-ninth chapter and the second verse, states that very plainly. That which stands between man and God is sin, and when sin came into man’s life, God did not thenceforth speak to him directly. Thereafter, because of sin, man could not come and talk to God face to face, so to overcome that barrier God arranged another plan, and He began to talk to men through those whom He called prophets and priests, and at times through angels.

[45] The question now comes, What shall we do about the prophets, or those who claimed the gift of prophecy? Let us think of this question in the light of 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21: “Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

So your business and mine is not hastily to say, “I will have nothing to do with the gift of prophecy. I do not want to have anything to do with a person who claims to have revelations from heaven, or visions, or dreams.”

Our attitude, on the contrary, should be: “I shall try this gift of prophecy; I shall test it; I shall prove it, to see whether there is anything in it or not; and then I shall come to a conclusion.” In other words, we must test and try and prove before we come to a conclusion, rather than come to a conclusion first and refuse to have anything to do with it. This has been a question for God’s people all through the years. [1 John 4:1](#) says, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” If there are many false prophets, it becomes all the more important to try them, test them, prove them.

Over in the Middle East I talked on this subject, and after the meeting a young woman came to me. She said, “I am not a Christian; I am a Moslem, and I did not like some things you said this morning. You intimated that my prophet might be true or might be false, and that all I had to do was to test and to try and to prove Mohammed. Why, that is unthinkable!”

Not wishing to offend, or to argue the question, I asked, “How did you come to this conclusion? Did you ever investigate, to really prove your prophet true or false? or did you just accept it without a question?” She replied, “Well, I guess I just accepted it as my mother, my father, and all my people have believed it without any doubt or any question whatsoever. Why, of course he was a true prophet!”

[46]

Then she came directly to the heart of the matter: “Do you want me to take the tests that you have given us and apply them to Mohammed?” I replied, “I suppose if you want to know whether Mohammed were true or false, you would have to apply those tests.” Then she came to a very vital conclusion, and said, “That being the case, it would be difficult to do.”

I would not want to force anyone into a conclusion without first examining the evidence, but let me put it this way: Your business and mine is not to declare that Mohammed was false, but rather our business is to test and to try and to prove Mohammed as a prophet,

and if he should stand up to the test, then we would have to conclude that he was true. If he did not meet the test, then we would come to the conclusion that he was not a true prophet.

[47] The same is true of Ellen G. White. If she does not stand up to the four tests given in the Scriptures, we would have to conclude that she was a false prophet. I think above all things we must be reasonable, we must be fair, we must be honest, we must have a sense of balance and proportion in dealing with the prophet of the Mormons, or the prophet of the Moslems, or the prophet of the remnant church. We must be equally fair, and equally sincere and honest. That brings us now to the question, What are the tests?

I wish to deal with the tests in another chapter, because that is a subject by itself. In this particular study I wish to call your attention to what we should do about prophets in general, and what has been done about the prophets in the past. Perhaps we should read a text of Scripture that will help us to know the attitude of people in the past in regard to prophets.

We shall begin with this word in [2 Chronicles 36:15, 16](#):

“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.”

[48] Jeremiah repeated this idea. He said that God from time to time had sent His messengers with messages for the people. Some accepted, many rejected; and of the rejecting we find an outstanding example in the thirty-sixth chapter of Jeremiah, where we have the experience of King Jehoiakim. You remember in that chapter God said to Jeremiah, “I want you to take a scroll and write on that scroll the words that I have given you, the messages that I have given to My people through you from time to time.” So Jeremiah took the roll of the book and called his secretary, Baruch. To him he said, “You sit down and write and I will dictate the message that God has given.”

As the messages were written on the scroll they were made available for the people to read. In fact, Baruch himself took the messages out and began to read to the people the words of the

prophet. Some of those who heard were princes from the king's own palace, and they were so much impressed that they decided the king himself must hear those words. Thereupon they took the scroll into the palace and began to read to the king. The record at this point says that Jehoiakim was sitting by a fire on the hearth.

As he listened he became interested, but he did not like what he heard. He took the scroll, and with his knife cut pieces from the manuscript and dropped them into the fire until it was all consumed. This is the attitude of some people toward the messages of God's prophets.

Honestly, now, can you get rid of God's message by tearing it all to pieces and casting it into the fire? You cannot get rid of God. You cannot get rid of God's message, nor can you get rid of God's messenger, in that way. Some people, even today, are inclined to treat the prophets and the messages of the prophets in a similar way.

An example comes to mind in the old story of one whose name was Stephen Smith. You may have heard it. Stephen Smith was a middle-aged man who accepted the Advent message back about 1850, and who really believed in the second coming of Christ. He was a very promising man, so gifted with words that everybody enjoyed hearing his messages. Even the good old church paper, the *Review and Herald*, commented that he was a man who they hoped could soon go out and preach the message. And then he came across this idea of the Spirit of prophecy, but he said in his heart that he could have nothing to do with one who claimed to be a prophet, a messenger of the Lord. Stephen Smith shook his head and declared, "When it comes to visions and dreams and revelations through a woman like that, I shall have nothing to do with it."

[49]

Some time later Stephen Smith received in the mail a long envelope bearing the return address of Ellen G. White, and he thought to himself, "There it is. She thinks she is going to give me one of her testimonies. I will have nothing to do with it." So he did not open it. He took the envelope to his home, opened the door, went into the room, and looked around to see where he could put it. There was the old trunk. He unlocked it, lifted the lid, put that envelope down at the bottom. He slammed down the lid and mumbled to himself, "I will have nothing to do with that." And so it was out of his way.

But Stephen Smith had a rather strange experience; for every strange idea that came along he absorbed just like a piece of blotting paper absorbs the ink, and he was off with this movement, and off with that.

[50] In fact, he was given to fanaticism. He had nothing to guide him. During the days when these different offshoots arose, Ellen G. White was there to guide our people, but Stephen Smith had nothing to do with her. He did not like the idea of taking messages from a woman. That was just too much for him. Thus he went his way, and it was not very long until he was out of harmony with our people. He did not agree with them on many points, and, of course, they had to disfellowship him, and out of the church he went.

Stephen Smith became very bitter. That tongue of his, which was given to speaking words so fluently and so fast, turned to speaking the most blistering, the most sarcastic, the most bitter words that one could ever imagine. He became known to Sabbathkeeping Adventists in that part of the country as a very critical man.

He grew old, of course, and about 1884, nearly twenty-eight years after he received that envelope, he was sitting one day in his living room. His good wife had remained faithful all that time, and week by week she had put the copy of the *Review and Herald* on the living-room table. One day this man who was old and gray and bent, sat down by the table and looked at the paper. He read one article by Ellen G. White, and said, "That is the truth." The next week when the paper came, he found himself back by the table and he looked at it. He read another article by Ellen G. White. He said, "That is very good. That's God's truth."

[51] Of course, we can imagine he did not want anybody to see him reading those papers, but week by week he read, and in one of those papers early in 1885 he saw that Eugene Farnsworth was coming back to Washington, New Hampshire, where Farnsworth had grown up as a boy and where Stephen Smith had known him as a friend. They knew each other well. Elder Farnsworth was being sent to Washington, New Hampshire, to conduct a series of revival meetings in the old church building. Stephen Smith said to himself, "Well, I think I'll go and hear what Eugene has to say."

So he walked fourteen miles from where he lived over to Washington, New Hampshire. During the meeting on Sabbath morn-

ing he was very much impressed by the message given by Eugene Farnsworth. When the speaker sat down, old Stephen Smith shuffled a bit and stood up. As he rose, the people all gave a sort of sigh, and thought, "Here it comes again! We shall have to listen to another tirade." They had heard that old man so many times during the years, but there seemed nothing to do but let him talk. So they sat back and waited.

This time when Stephen Smith got up he said, "I don't want you to be afraid of me, brethren, for I haven't come to criticize you. I have quit that kind of business." Then he went back and reviewed the past. He told how he had opposed the church organization and almost everything else. He referred to his connections with different parties, including the Messenger Party, and this group and that group. He told it all. Finally he said, "Facts are stubborn things, but the facts are that those who have opposed this work have come to nought, while those who have been in sympathy with it have prospered,— have grown better, more devoted, and Godlike. Those who have opposed it have only learned to fight and to debate, they have lost all their religion. No honest man can help but see that God is with them and against us. I want to be in fellowship with this people in heart and in the church."

[52]

They had not heard anything like that from Stephen Smith for a long, long time. As the days passed he thought about his own condition. He had planned to stay in Washington for the meeting the next Sabbath. But on Wednesday of the next week he happened to remember the letter in the bottom of his trunk, and for the first time in twenty-eight years wanted to know what was in it. So Thursday morning he walked the fourteen miles back to his home, entered the house, unlocked the old trunk, lifted the lid, and went down to the bottom of the trunk, and sure enough, there was the envelope, a bit yellow from age, after so many years had passed. He opened the envelope and began to read. It was a most interesting message. It told him that God loved him and that God was anxious to save him, and further, if he would do so and so, and so and so, his life would be—and she outlined exactly what his life would be. Then the letter told him what his life would be if he followed his own way.

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As the old man read it he thought, "That is a picture of my life, just exactly as I have lived it for these twenty-eight years, and here

is what I might have been.” It made quite an impression on his mind. He folded up the letter and started back to Washington, New Hampshire, to attend the Sabbath meeting.

[54] Elder Farnsworth preached on the subject of the Spirit of prophecy in the Advent Movement, and no sooner had he finished his sermon than Stephen Smith was on his feet again. This time he said, “I received a testimony myself twenty-eight years ago, and I took it home and locked it up in my trunk, and I never read it until last Thursday.” He said he had been afraid to read it for fear it might make him mad, but then he said, “I was mad all the time, nearly,”—mad at everybody and everything. He said, “Brethren, every word of the testimony for me is true, and I accept it, and I have come to that place where I firmly believe they are all of God. And if I had heeded the one God sent to me, as well as the rest, it would have changed the whole course of my life, and I should have been a very different man. Any man that is honest must say that they lead a man toward God and the Bible always. If he is honest he will say that; if he won’t say that, he is not honest. If I had heeded them it would have saved me a world of trouble. The Testimonies said there was to be no more definite time preached after the ‘44 movement, but I thought I knew as much as an ‘old woman’s visions’ as I used to term it. May God forgive me! But to my sorrow, I found the visions were right, and the man who thought he knew it all was all wrong, for I preached the time in 1854 [that is when a little group thought that Christ would come] and spent all I had, when if I had heeded them I should have saved myself all that and much more. The Testimonies are right and I am wrong.” Then he added, “I’m too old to undo what I’ve done. I’m too feeble to get out to our large meetings, but I want you to tell our people everywhere that another rebel has surrendered.” And old Stephen Smith sat down. I understand that the later years of his life were spent in trust in God and sweet fellowship with his brethren. He was a changed man.

You know, dear friend, it may be that we have not received personal messages in that way, but I am convinced that most of us have on our shelves at home the messages bound in red or brown cloth or red or black leather. I hesitate to ask how many of us read the messages. My name was not written directly in any of those messages so far as I have been able to discover, and I have read a

lot of them, but I find my situation described in so many of those messages that I believe the Lord intended them for me as well as for you. The trouble is that while you and I have the messages, and we do not rip them all to pieces or throw them into the fire as did Jehoiakim, yet I am inclined to think that perhaps some of us allow them to stand on our shelves day after day and we never read them. I am inclined to think that in many cases we are about as guilty as was Stephen Smith. [55]

However, there is in the Bible quite another type of record from that of Jehoiakim's. I refer to the record of David, to which I like to turn. You will remember that when David was king he did a very strange thing. The incident is recorded in 2 Samuel, the eleventh and twelfth chapters. It is hard to understand how such a good man of God could stoop to do such a terrible thing as he did. In brief, he wanted another man's wife; and to get rid of the man, he ordered him right out in the very front line of the battle, knowing exactly where the battle was to be heaviest and where the danger spot would be, so that he might be killed. Then David took the man's wife. I consider that to be very low-down trickery, about as despicable as anything you can find in the records. Now what did God do about it? The Bible says that God spoke to His servant. He must have said something like this, "Nathan, I have a little errand for you this morning. I want you to go over to see the king, and I want you to go right into the king's palace and tell him a little story."

Nathan was a man of God, and when God told him to do something he did it. Under such circumstances it was not very pleasant to take a message to the king, but God showed him exactly what had happened. When Nathan went into the presence of the king he did not come right out and say, "Now, King

David, you have done a very wrong thing," because that would have been a rather poor approach. Nathan was most tactful, so he gave his message in a story. David listened attentively, and as Nathan reached the climax he demanded, "O King, what do you think should be done with a man who would do a thing like that?" [56]

David's response was quick and decisive. He was really angry when he responded, "Why, that man should restore fourfold. He should be dealt with summarily." He was very ready to give a verdict, a judgment, in a case like that. Then Nathan pointed his finger at the

king and said, “Thou art the man.” Immediately the king recognized himself as the one whom he had judged.

In such a situation the king might have had the prophet taken out and put to death. He could have gotten rid of the prophet very quickly. David might have become angry and thrown him out of the palace, saying, “I will have nothing to do with you and your message.” But what did David say? The Bible records exactly what we would expect of a man like King David: “I have sinned. I have done wrong. I have made a mistake.”

[57] For a king to admit that he had made a mistake was, I think, pretty good evidence of the kind of man he was at heart. Oh, yes, he made mistakes. He did some very strange things. At times even we do things that we ourselves cannot understand, nor can our very best friends understand them. But I am so glad that there is a God in heaven who understands the frailty of human nature and the weakness of human flesh. When we on our part manifest an attitude of humility, repentance, and sorrow, and when we recognize that we have made a mistake and repent in tears, we have a God who is ready and willing to forgive.

The Bible does not tell us all that was said and done in connection with that particular experience, but the twelfth chapter and the thirteenth verse of 2 Samuel closes the incident with these words, “And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.” Our hearts should rejoice in words like that.

You see, when we accept the messages of the prophets, the messages that come from God to us, they produce a change; a reformation takes place in the heart and life. We have before us these two outstanding examples—King Jehoiakim, who rejected, tore up, and burned the messages; and King David, who accepted the messages, the reproof, the counsel, and profited by the instructions.

Our prayer should be that somehow we shall not be like Jehoiakim and Stephen Smith, but that we shall be like David. May we have courage not only to read but to accept and believe the words of the prophets, and then these messages can work in us and bring about a marvelous transformation.

Chapter 5—The Gift of Prophecy in the Advent Movement

[58]

Let us now project ourselves in imagination back to the year 1844. Many, with William Miller in the lead, were fervently preaching that the coming of Christ and the end of the world would be on October 22, 1844. Excitement ran high. Thousands upon thousands were seriously preparing to meet Christ as He would come in the clouds of heaven. Hundreds of thousands stood by a bit restless and uncertain, but hoping to make the right decision by the fateful day, afraid that He might come, and at the same time hoping that He would not come.

Several years ago D. E. Robinson, my wife, and I made a tour into New England, visiting those old places of historical interest connected with the Advent Movement, and in our travels we came to William Miller's old farm. It was just about sundown when we went out back of the barn to a big flat rock that juts out like a dome in the old field. On that rock we stood that evening and watched the sun go down, but we thought of that little group of Advent people who assembled there on October 22, 1844.

[59]

Elder Robinson told the story in great detail. I wish you could have been there to hear that thrilling narrative. I have never heard it before or since in such detail and with such feeling as he told it that evening. Standing out there on that dome-shaped rock, we could see in all directions, and the sky appeared most beautiful. We could see in all four directions without any obstructions to our view. In the stillness of eventide, as he recounted the story, I could almost feel myself among that group on October 22, looking at the sky, watching for the appearance of Christ, as a small cloud, which would come closer and closer. But the sun went down that fateful evening and He did not come. I could actually sense the disappointment of that early Advent group. My heart went out to them in their bitter disappointment.

The evening wore on, and they waited far into the night before they fully realized that they had fixed their hopes upon something that had not been fulfilled; it was indeed a terrible disappointment. Out of that disappointment on October 22 came confusion, and a scattering of the Advent believers. It was not long until nearly everybody had a different idea, or reason, for the apparent failure of their hope, and out of that failure came much sadness and discontent.

[60] To the Advent believers the passing of October 22 without incident was indeed a terrible disappointment, resulting in frustration, confusion, division, fanaticism, and a sense of defeat and loneliness. This was heightened by the taunts of their enemies. Something indeed had gone wrong. As was to be expected, many Advent believers slipped back into the world and walked no more with God's peculiar people. Many others figured that the event was right but that the time was wrong, and formed a group that set one date after another. A very small number of Advent believers studied the question through again and concluded that the time was right but the event was wrong. And so it was in the latter part of 1844.

The Call of Ellen Gould Harmon

It was at such a time of trouble and distress among God's people that God chose to make His intentions and plans known through a seventeen-year-old maiden named Ellen Gould Harmon. In December of that year she had a strange and unexpected experience. Of that experience while kneeling humbly and quietly in prayer with four sisters in Christ in the home of Mrs. Haines in Portland, Maine, she says, "The power of God came upon me as I had never felt it before."—[Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 64](#).

The infilling of power brought her first vision, in which this girl of seventeen was shown the journey of the Advent people from the disappointment in 1844 to the city of God ([Early Writings, 14-20](#)).

[61] Quickly there followed the bidding that she must go and relate to others what had been revealed to her. Her feelings are pictured as follows:

"After I came out of this vision I was exceedingly troubled. . . . I went to the Lord in prayer and begged Him to lay the burden on some one else. It seemed to me that I could not bear it. I lay upon

my face a long time, and all the light I could get was, ‘Make known to others what I have revealed to you.’”—[Early Writings, 20](#).

That girl rose from prayer to take up the burden and to speak for God, doing so faithfully and well for seventy years. From her pen came no less than twenty-five million words, much of which was published in forty-three books and several thousand periodical articles. Naturally there were critics of her life and her work, but their attacks made little or no impression on the great worldwide work that has grown as the result of following her counsel and revelations.

Francis D. Nichol states:

“After one hundred years the different Adventist bodies—other than Seventh-day Adventists—that stemmed from the Millerite movement of the early 1840’s total less than 50,000 members, which is no more than the total of Advent believers in 1844. Not long ago we enjoyed a delightful fellowship of a few days with an aged, saintly leader in one of these Adventist bodies. He spoke of the expansion of Seventh-day Adventists, their schools, publishing houses, medical institutions, and then he added: ‘Your men were more far-sighted than ours and laid better plans.’ We replied: ‘No, our men were no wiser than yours, but we had a frail handmaiden of the Lord in our midst who declared that by visions from God she saw what we should do and how we should plan for the future.’ No other explanation could, in truth, have been offered for the vitality, distinctiveness, and foresight revealed in connection with the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist movement over the world.”—*Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, pp. 23, 24.

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This represents our attitude toward the life and work of Ellen G. White today, but it was not so easily seen or accepted back in 1844 and 1845. Then it was merely the word of a teen-age girl, claiming that God was speaking to her through His angel. It should be remembered that the leaders in the Advent Movement had counseled against fanatics and those deluded by so-called visions and dreams. In their Boston Advent Conference of May 29, 1843, they took the following action: “We have no confidence whatever in any visions, dreams, or private revelations.”—[The Signs of the Times, June 7, 1843](#), p. 107.

You can imagine the astonishment of that little group of women with a seventeen-year-old girl, after their season of prayer, as that

girl told them of what she had seen in vision. I wonder how many of you women, if you had been there in that little group, would have said, “Now, Ellen, we are sure that what you say is right, and we accept you and believe you to be a prophet. Surely you are one of God’s great prophets.” Would you have said that? I doubt it. I rather imagine that some of those women questioned a bit even what Sister Ellen herself had said.

[63] **Reactions of Early Pioneers to the Claims of Ellen G. White**

How did the early pioneers and believers in general respond to the claims of Ellen Harmon and the physical evidences of her call? Did they see in her the evidence that God was again speaking through a human being the same as He had done all through the history of His people? She expected people to be not only critical but even skeptical, for they were human, much as we are today.

Early in 1847 one believer wrote a note to James White expressing his reaction to Ellen G. White’s visions:

“I cannot endorse sister Ellen’s visions as being of divine inspiration, as you and she think them to be; yet I do not suspect the least shade of dishonesty in either of you in this matter. . . . I think that what she and you regard as visions from the Lord, are only religious reveries, in which her imagination runs without control upon themes in which she is most deeply interested. . . . I do not by any means think her visions are like some from the devil.”—Quoted by James White in *A Word to the “Little Flock,”* p. 22.

You see, he was very kind in saying, “I do not think they are from the devil, but I just cannot accept them as you do.” So it was in the years following 1844 and 1845 that many people turned their backs upon her, and she had a rather difficult time.

[64] We can almost sense her feelings during those years as we try to relive that experience. But not all the people were quite so outspoken as this brother, for we have in the words of James White himself his own testimony, and we believe that he spoke for many like him. These are his words written in 1847:

“Dreams and Visions are among the signs that precede the great and notable day of the Lord. And as the signs of that day have been, and still are fulfilling, it must be clear to every unprejudiced mind,

that the time has fully come, when the children of God may expect dreams and visions from the Lord.

“I know that this is a very unpopular position to hold on this subject, even among Adventists; but I choose to believe the word of the Lord on this point, rather than the teachings of men. I am well aware of the prejudice in many minds on this subject; but as it has been caused principally by the preaching of popular Adventists and the lack of a correct view of this subject; I have humbly hoped to cut it away, with the ‘sword of the Spirit,’ from some minds, at least.”—*Ibid.*, p. 13.

That is James White’s written testimony concerning his attitude back there. Perhaps he spoke for some others, too. Many were not clear as to these manifestations and revelations. They needed some kind of evidence that would convince them that what she said had its origin in a message from God, and was true and accurate, reliable, and something to be depended upon.

The story of the change in attitude concerning Ellen Harmon’s visions, from one of doubt and uncertainty on the part of Captain Bates, to one of full faith and confidence, is an impressive one. Joseph Bates entered upon his seafaring adventures at a very early age, beginning as cabin boy and advancing through various steps in responsibility until he finally became captain and owner of seagoing vessels. As such, he became a sort of authority on astronomy. He read with avidity everything he could find on the subject, and was much interested in Lord John Rosse’s description of “the gap in the sky” that appeared in the *Illustrated London News* of April 19, 1845.

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Captain Bates attended a conference of the Advent believers in Topsham, Maine, in November, 1846. At that time he was still unconvinced on the matter of visions. On one occasion he took opportunity to ask Mrs. White (she had then married James White) what she knew about astronomy. He found her as ignorant as most of us are on the subject, and was disappointed that she had never read a book or an article on it. In fact, she had no inclination even to hear or talk about it.

Imagine Joseph Bates’s surprise one evening during that conference not only to see Ellen G. White in vision but to hear her description of what she was seeing. She began to talk about stars and the rosy-tinted belts around one of them. She said, “I see four

moons.” Captain Bates mused, “Oh, she is viewing Jupiter!” Then she described a planet with rings changing in their colors, and said, “I see seven moons.” “She is describing Saturn,” remarked the old sea captain.

[66] Next came a marvelous word picture of another planet and its six moons, but when she began to describe the “opening heavens” with all its beauty and immensity, Captain Bates exclaimed, “O how I wish Lord John Rosse was here to-night!” Not knowing even the name of John Rosse, Elder White asked, “Who is Lord John Rosse?” Joseph Bates told of this English astronomer and his description of the “opening” in the heavens (J. N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement*, p. 258).

That was enough for Joseph Bates. He was satisfied that the visions came from a power outside Ellen G. White’s knowledge and control. No wonder he concluded, “I believe the work is of God, and is given to comfort and strengthen His “scattered,” “torn,” and “pealed people.”—*A Word to the “Little Flock,”* p. 21.

Not all were won over to full and complete support for Ellen G. White and her singular spiritual manifestations. Some were merely overawed and silenced by what they saw and heard. Such was the case of Robbins and Sargent, who were leading a group of Advent believers into a very serious type of fanaticism in Boston, Massachusetts. We have the story in the handwriting of Otis Nichols, around whose home the story has its setting. It is also presented by Mrs. White in her book *Spiritual Gifts*. She tells the story which we give here, supplying the proper names for the initials used in the original printing:

[67] “By invitation of Br. and Sr. Nichols, my sister Sarah and myself again went to Massachusetts, and made their house our home. There was in Boston and vicinity a company of fanatical persons, who held that it was a sin to labor. Their principal message was, ‘Sell that ye have and give alms.’ They said they were in the Jubilee, the land should rest, and the poor must be supported without labor. Sargent, Robbins, and some others, were leaders. They denounced my visions as being of the Devil, because I had been shown their errors. They were severe upon all who did not believe with them. While we were visiting at Bro. Nichols’, Robbins and Sargent came from Boston to obtain a favor of Bro. Nichols and said they had come to have a

visit, and tarry over night with him. Bro. Nichols replied that he was glad they had come, for sisters Sarah and Ellen were in the house, and wished them to become acquainted with us. They changed their mind at once, and could not be persuaded to come into the house. Bro. Nichols asked if I could relate my message in Boston, and if they would hear, and then judge. ‘Yes,’ said they. ‘Come into Boston next Sabbath, we would like the privilege of hearing her.’

“Accordingly we designed to visit Boston, but in the evening, at the commencement of the Sabbath, I was shown in vision that we must not go into Boston, but in an opposite direction to Randolph; that the Lord had a work for us to do there. We went to Randolph, and found a large room full collected, and among them those who said they would be pleased to hear my message in Boston. As we entered, Robbins and Sargent looked at each other in surprise, and began to groan. They had promised to meet me in Boston, but thought they would disappoint us by going to Randolph, and while we were in Boston, warn the brethren against us. They did not have much freedom. At intermission one of their number remarked that good matter would be brought out in the afternoon. Sr. Nichols answered, ‘I believe it.’ Robbins told my sister that I could not have a vision where he was.

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“In the afternoon the blessing of the Lord rested upon me, and I was taken off in vision. I was again shown the errors of Robbins and Sargent and others united with them. I saw that they could not prosper: that truth would triumph in the end, and error be brought down. I was shown that they were not honest, and then I was carried into the future and shown some thing of the course they would pursue, that they would continue to despise the teachings of the Lord, despise reproof, and that they would be left in total darkness, to resist God’s Spirit until their folly should be made manifest to all. A chain of truth was presented to me from the scriptures, in contrast with their errors. When I came out of vision, candles were burning. I had been in vision nearly four hours.

“As I was unconscious to all that transpired around me while in vision, I will copy from Bro. Nichols’ description of that meeting.

“Sister Ellen was taken off in vision with extraordinary manifestations, and continued talking in vision with a clear voice, which could be distinctly understood by all present, until about sundown.

Sargent, Robbins, and French were much exasperated, as well as excited, to hear sister Ellen talk in vision, which they declared was of the Devil; they exhausted all their influence, and bodily strength, to destroy the effect of the vision. They would unite in singing very loud, and then alternately would talk and read from the Bible in a loud voice, in order that Ellen might not be heard, until their strength was exhausted, and their hands would shake so they could not read from the Bible. But amidst all this confusion and noise, Ellen's clear and shrill voice, as she talked in vision, was distinctly heard by all present. The opposition of these men continued as long as they could talk and sing, notwithstanding some of their own friends rebuked them, and requested them to stop. But says Robbins, "You are bowed to an idol; you are worshiping a golden calf."

"Mr. Thayer, the owner of the house, was not fully satisfied that her vision was of the Devil, as Robbins declared it to be. He wanted it tested in some way. He had heard that visions of satanic power were arrested by opening the Bible and laying it on the person in vision, and asked Sargent if he would test it in this way, which he declined to do. Then Thayer took a heavy, large quarto family Bible which was lying on the table, and seldom used, opened it, and laid it open upon the breast of Ellen while in vision, as she was then inclined backward against the wall in the corner of the room. Immediately after the Bible was laid upon her, she arose upon her feet, and walked into the middle of the room, with the Bible open in one hand, and lifted up as high as she could reach, and with her eyes steadily looking upward, declared in a solemn manner, "The inspired testimony from God," or words of the same import. And then she continued for a long time, while the Bible was extended in one hand, and her eyes looking upwards, and not on the Bible, to turn over the leaves with her other hand, and place her finger upon certain passages, and correctly utter their words with a solemn voice. Many present looked at the passages where her finger was pointed, to see if she spoke them correctly, for her eyes at the same time were looking upwards. Some of the passages referred to were judgments against the wicked and blasphemers; and others were admonitions and instructions relative to our present condition.

[70] "In this state she continued all the afternoon until near sunset, when she came out of vision. When Ellen arose in vision upon her

feet, with the heavy open Bible in her hand, and walked the room, uttering the passages of scripture, Sargent, Robbins, and French were silenced. For the remainder of the time they were troubled, with many others; but they shut their eyes and braved it out without making any acknowledgment of their feelings.’”—[Spiritual Gifts 2:75-79](#).

The “Review and Herald” and the Visions

It is well to analyze another chapter in our early history having to do with the attitude of our early pioneers toward the gift of prophecy. A number of the visions were published in the *Present Truth* in 1849 and 1850. It must be remembered, however, that the *Review and Herald*, which followed in 1850 and on, was both the church paper and the vehicle for presenting the truth to non-church members as well. Some of the brethren were afraid that the visions and testimonies intended primarily for the church members ([1 Corinthians 14:3, 4, 22](#)) would prejudice the non-church member readers of the *Review*. They decided that such material should be printed on a separate sheet and placed in papers going only to our own people.

James White explained all this in a *Review and Herald Extra* in these words:

“This sheet is the form of the paper that we hope to publish once in two weeks. . . . We do not design this extra for so general circulation as the regular paper, for the reason that strong prejudice exists in many minds against a portion of its contents. Those who judge of a matter before they hear are unwise. Says Paul, ‘Despise not prophesyings, prove all things, hold fast that which is good.’ 1 Thess. v. 20, 21. [71]

“We believe that God is unchangeable, that he is ‘the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.’ And that it is his will and purpose to teach his tried people, at this the most important period in the history of God’s people, in the same manner as in past time. But as many are prejudiced against visions, we think best at present not to insert anything of the kind in the regular paper. We will therefore publish the visions by themselves for the benefit of those who believe that God can fulfill his word and give visions ‘in the last days.’”—July 21, 1851.

For five years the *Review* published none of Mrs. White's visions and only five articles from her pen of a general hortatory nature. The leaders thought their position sound and commendable, but the results among the Advent people were not so wholesome. There seemed to result a general lack of appreciation of the gift, and a lowering of its place of importance in the work. This has been the general tendency all through the years, for the individual Adventist as well as for the movement as a whole, when there has been a neglect of the prophetic gift. "Where there is no vision [or an indifference to it], the people perish" seems to be as true in our times as it was in ancient Israel.

[72] A general meeting in 1855 brought a realization that all was not well. There seemed to be a partial withdrawal of the gift of prophecy. From two sources we draw the conclusion that a disregard for the gift and a desire to push it somewhat into the background had met with Heaven's disfavor.

First, we note an action taken by the business session of the conference in 1855, which reads, "That Joseph Bates, J. H. Waggoner, and M. E. Cornell be appointed to address the saints in behalf of the Conference, on the gifts of the church." The report which the small committee drew up in response to this action was published in the *Review*. We extract a few key sentences:

"Confession"

"In view of the present low state of the precious cause of our blessed Master, we feel to humble ourselves before God, and confess our unfaithfulness and departure from the way of the Lord, whereby the spirit of holiness has been grieved, our own souls burdened, and an occasion given to the enemy of all righteousness to rejoice over the decline of faith and spirituality amongst the scattered flock."

"Gifts"

"Nor have we appreciated the glorious privilege of claiming the gifts which our blessed Master has vouchsafed to his people; and we greatly fear that we have grieved the Spirit by neglecting the blessings already conferred upon the church."

“Appreciated in Past”

“We have also, in our past experience, been made to rejoice in the goodness of our God who has manifested his care for his people by leading us in his way and correcting our errors, through the operations of his Spirit; and the majority of Sabbath-keepers in the Third Angel’s Message, have firmly believed that the Lord was calling his church out of the wilderness by the means appointed to bring us to the unity of the faith. We refer to the visions which God has promised to the remnant ‘in the last days.’”

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“Not to Take Place of Bible”

“Nor do we, as some contend, exalt these gifts or their manifestations, above the Bible; on the contrary, we test them by the Bible, making it the great rule of judgment in all things; so that whatever is not in accordance with it, in its spirit and its teachings, we unhesitatingly reject. But as we cannot believe that a fountain sends forth at the same place sweet water and bitter, or that an evil tree brings forth good fruit, so we cannot believe that that is of the enemy which tends to unite the hearts of the saints, to lead to meekness and humility and holy living, and incites to deep heart-searching before God, and a confession of our wrongs.”

“An Attitude Displeasing to God”

“While we hold these views as emanating from the divine Mind, we would confess the inconsistency (which we believe has been displeasing to God) of professedly regarding them as messages from God, and really putting them on a level with the inventions of men. We fear that this has resulted from an unwillingness to bear the reproach of Christ, (which is indeed greater riches than the treasures of earth,) and a desire to conciliate the feelings of our opponents; but the Word and our own experience have taught us that God is not honored, nor his cause advanced, by such a course. While we regard them as coming from God, and entirely harmonizing with his written word, we must acknowledge ourselves under obligation to abide by their teachings, and be corrected by their admonitions. To say that they are of God, and yet we will not be tested by them, is to say that God’s will is not a test or rule for Christians, which

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is inconsistent and absurd.”—Report of Conference in [The Review and Herald, December 4, 1855](#), pp. 78, 79.

The conference began November 15, 1855, and the declaration of confession and neglect was made by the brethren. Then on November 20, Ellen G. White was given a vision, of which she 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. I saw that the Spirit of the Lord has been dying away from the church.”—[Testimonies for the Church 1:113](#).

A few weeks later Mrs. White wrote:

“The visions have been of late less and less frequent, and my testimony for God’s children has been gone. I have thought that my work in God’s cause was done, and that I had no further duty to do, but to save my own soul, and carefully attend to my little family. . . .

“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.”—[The Review and Herald, January 10, 1856](#), p. 118.

[75]

Dr. Brown Comes to Scoff, Flees in Consternation

The manifestation of such a phenomenon in the church was bound to produce a variety of reactions. Some believed and accepted. Others sneered and scoffed. One, a Dr. Brown of Parkville, Michigan, a Spiritualist physician, declared that he could control Mrs. White in vision if he ever had the opportunity.

This opportunity came rather unexpectedly on Sabbath, January 12, 1861, when Elder and Mrs. White for the first time attended church in that very place. At the close of her sermon that Sabbath, Sister White was taken in vision. Immediately somebody thought of Dr. Brown and his loud boasts. He was invited to come and examine her. This he did without a moment’s hesitation.

An eyewitness tells what happened:

“Before he had half completed his examination, he turned deathly pale, and shook like an aspen leaf. Elder White said, ‘Will the doctor report her condition?’ He replied, ‘She does not breathe,’ and rapidly made his way to the door. Those at the door who knew of his boasting said, ‘Go back, and do as you said you would; bring that woman out of the vision.’ In great agitation he grasped the knob of the door, but was not permitted to open it until inquiry was made by those near the door, ‘doctor, what is it?’ He replied, ‘*God only knows; let me out of this house;*’ and out he went.”—*The Great Second Advent Movement*, p. 211.

Thus the “testimony of Jesus,” which is the “spirit of prophecy,” [76] was introduced among the Advent believers, and made its power and influence felt more and more as the years passed.

Advent Believers Accept the Seventh-day Sabbath

In Washington, New Hampshire, in the year 1844, an earnest group of Advent believers were preparing for the coming of the Lord. One Rachel Oakes Preston, a Seventh Day Baptist, came into that community and listened to the preaching on the coming of the Lord on October 22. The believers, of course, urged her to join them in looking for Jesus to come, but she in turn urged them to keep the seventh-day Sabbath if they really wanted to be ready when the Lord returned. Some of the Advent believers in Washington, New Hampshire, accepted the Sabbath truth and began observing the Sabbath faithfully.

Early in 1845, after the terrible disappointment, T. M. Preble wrote an article on the seventh-day Sabbath for the paper called *The Hope of Israel*. Through this article, Joseph Bates, an eager searcher for truth, was convinced that he should observe the Bible Sabbath, and he became an apostle of the Sabbath truth.

Early in 1846 Ellen Harmon and her sister and James White visited Joseph Bates at New Bedford. The thing that was on his heart was the Sabbath. He urged them to accept the Bible Sabbath, and they urged upon him the thing nearest to their hearts.

Regarding the Sabbath, Ellen G. White wrote in *Life Sketches*: [77]

“I did not feel its importance, and thought that he [Bates] erred in dwelling upon the fourth commandment more than upon the other nine.”—Page 95.

As a matter of fact, she was not impressed by Joseph Bates’s enthusiasm for the Sabbath idea. However, about the time of their marriage in August, 1846, James and Ellen White read Bates’s tract *The Seventh-day Sabbath a Perpetual Sign*, and from the Bible verses used they decided that they too must keep the seventh day as the Sabbath. She says, “In the autumn of 1846 we began to observe the Bible Sabbath, and to teach and defend it.”—[Testimonies for the Church 1:75](#).

As one more testimony in this body of evidence that the great truths taught by Seventh-day Adventists came first from the Bible and not from Mrs. White, let us note a letter written by her in 1874, stating:

“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](#).

[78] It was on the first Sabbath in April, 1847, that she had her first vision regarding the Sabbath. By putting together [Testimonies for the Church 1:75 ff.](#), and a letter to Joseph Bates written April 7, 1847, now appearing in [Early Writings, 32-35](#), we get the whole story of what she saw and heard. She seemed to be transferred from earth to heaven, and in vision she was taken through the heavenly sanctuary, where she saw the most holy place and the ark containing the law. She was amazed to see the fourth commandment shining above all the others in glory, with a sort of halo of light all around it. She was told of the change of the Sabbath, of the significance of its acceptance and observance, especially in the troublous times ahead, when it will become a sign or a mark for the people who have chosen to obey God rather than man.

“I was shown that the third angel, proclaiming the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, represents the people who receive this message and raise the voice of warning to the world, to keep the commandments of God as the apple of the eye, and that in

response to this warning many would embrace the Sabbath of the Lord.”—[Testimonies for the Church 1:77](#).

Lo, here are the people of God mentioned in [Revelation 12](#), having the “testimony of Jesus,” which is the “spirit of prophecy” (December, 1844), and keeping the commandments—all ten of them—the seventh-day Sabbath included. Here the remnant church was born, and these two significant truths identify it.

Chapter 6—Four Bible Tests of a True Prophet

Repeatedly the New Testament asserts that there will be prophets in the church. It like-wise states, “There were *false* prophets *also* among the people” (2 Peter 2:1). Clearly, we can expect both true and false prophets in the church. We should not “quench” the Holy Spirit and His manifestations or despise the prophesyings, but rather “prove,” test, and try them. As a result of such a process we are to “hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21).

Ellen G. White claimed the gift of prophecy, and thereby declared herself to be a prophet in the church. However, she preferred the term “messenger.” Thus we find her explaining:

“I said that I did not claim to be a prophetess. I have not stood before the people claiming this title, though many called me thus. I have been instructed to say, ‘I am God’s messenger, sent to bear a message of reproof to the erring and of encouragement to the meek and lowly.’”—[The Review and Herald, January 26, 1905](#), pp. 5, 6.

Writing of this later she explained:

“Some have stumbled over the fact that I said I did not claim to be a prophet; and they have asked, Why is this?

“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 before 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.

“Be not afraid of man, for My shield shall protect you. It is not you that speaketh: it is the Lord that giveth the messages of warning and reproof. Never deviate from the truth *under any circumstances*. Give the light I shall give you. The messages for these last days shall be written in books, and shall stand immortalized, to testify against those who have once rejoiced in the light, but who have been led to give it up because of the seductive influences of evil.

“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.”—[The Review and Herald, July 26, 1906](#), p. 8. [81]

Every member of the remnant church must face the fact of Ellen G. White, her visions, and her testimonies. In all fairness to ourselves, to her, and to the God for whom she said she spoke, we should apply the recognized Bible tests to satisfy ourselves as to her genuineness, and then decide what we shall do about her messages, counsel, and testimonies. This is a decision of tremendous and vital personal import, for that decision will mold and fashion the details of our everyday lives; yea, it will transform them.

Let us, however, first apply the tests of a prophet, see how Ellen G. White meets them, and then discuss final and vital decisions.

The Test of Fulfilled Predictions

Predictions of things to come are of interest to everybody, for without exception we like to peer through the veil of the future. Making predictions, or foretelling, is but one phase of the work of the prophet.

There are four passages of Scripture to keep in mind when talking about the prophet’s predictions of things to come:

1. Secret things belong to God ([Deuteronomy 29:29](#)).
2. God reveals secrets to the prophets ([Amos 3:7](#)).
3. Unfulfilled predictions made in the name of the Lord are presumptuous; fulfilled predictions demonstrate that the prophet was sent by the Lord ([Jeremiah 28:9](#)). [82]

4. Some prophecies are conditional ([Jeremiah 18:7-10](#)).

Prophets have been God's chosen spokesmen, and through them He has made known things to come. Hence it is but natural for men to watch with eager interest to see whether such predictions actually come to pass. A failure of fulfillment would obviously become a factor in acceptance or rejection of the one claiming to be a prophet.

In the work of Ellen G. White we would expect to find some definite predictions and their equally definite fulfillments. Let us very briefly look at some of them.

Streams of Published Light to Encircle the Globe.—In 1848 when our early pioneers were penniless, she was shown that a paper should be printed, and from this small beginning the publishing work would be like streams of light that would go clear round the world ([Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 125](#)). Surely we have seen these words fulfilled as Seventh-day Adventists in 1954 distributed \$17,000,000 worth of literature in 197 languages.

We cite in somewhat more detail another illustration:

Rochester Rappings to Become World-encircling Delusion.—

[83] These mysterious rappings began with the Fox sisters in New York State in 1848. On March 24, 1849, Ellen G. White made the following prediction:

“I saw that the mysterious knocking in New York and other places was the power of Satan, and that such things would be more and more common, clothed in a religious garb so as to lull the deceived to greater security, and to draw the minds of God's people, if possible, to those things, and cause them to doubt the teachings and power of the Holy Ghost.”—[Early Writings, 43](#).

On August 24, 1850, Ellen G. White again predicted:

“I saw that soon . . . it [the mysterious rapping] would spread more and more, that Satan's power would increase, and some of his devoted followers would have power to work miracles.”—[Early Writings, 59](#).

Yet again on January 10, 1854, Mrs. White added these further details:

“I saw the rapping delusion—what progress it was making, and if it were possible it would deceive the very elect. Satan will have power to bring the appearance of a form before us purporting to be our relatives and friends that now sleep in Jesus. It will be made to

appear as though they were present; the words they uttered while here, which we were familiar with, will be spoken, and the same tone of voice, which they had while living, will fall upon the ear. All this is to deceive the saints, and ensnare them into the belief of this delusion.”—[Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White, 5, 6.](#) (See [Early Writings, 87.](#))

Remember the dates of these predictions. In America then there were no mediums, trances, or spirit messages, no organized groups or companies of Spiritualists. It was a bold prediction, but every word has come to pass. Recently a book entitled *Centennial Book of Modern Spiritualism in America* (1848-1948) was issued by the National Spiritualist Association of the USA, which summarizes their history and achievements. Spiritualism now claims millions of believers—eminent judges, physicians, scientists, editors, writers, poets, clergymen, educators, and statesmen of various countries.

[84]

According to the Declaration of Principles adopted by the National Spiritualist Association, those who have passed on are conscious, and can communicate with us; therefore, Spiritualism is God’s message to mortals, declaring that there is no death, that all who have passed on still live, and that there is hope in the life beyond for the most sinful. Spiritualism teaches that every soul will progress through the ages to heights sublime and glorious.

Today all of this is history that records the fulfillment of another of the Ellen G. White predictions.

San Francisco Earthquake Predicted.—From 1902 on she warned of the coming destruction of San Francisco and Oakland, crying out that “not long hence these cities will suffer under the judgments of God.”—Ellen G. White [Manuscript 114, 1902](#); [Evangelism, 403](#). Ask any old resident in San Francisco or Oakland and he will tell you how this prediction was fulfilled.

World War Conditions Foretold Back in 1890.—In an article in the *Signs of the Times*, Mrs. White wrote:

[85]

“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:

1. Troubles on all sides.
2. Thousands of ships will be hurled into the depths of the sea.
3. Navies will go down, and

4. Human lives will be sacrificed by millions.

5. 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.

6. Disasters by rail will become more and more frequent;

7. Confusion, collision, and death without a moment's warning will occur on the great lines of travel. . . . Oh, let us seek God while he may be found, call upon him while he is near!"—April 21, 1890, p. 242.

In 1910 Mrs. White warned, "Soon strife among the nations will break out with an intensity that we do not now anticipate."—[The Review and Herald, November 17, 1910](#), p. 8. The fulfillment of this prediction made when men everywhere were proclaiming the golden age of peace and safety is too fresh in our memories to need any recital of details.

[86] ***Predictions Concerning Our Work in London.***—In connection with divinely fulfilled predictions, I am reminded of an experience that occurred in January, 1953. Elder Branson called me to his office one morning and said, "I would like you to bring together for me all the passages in the writings of Ellen G. White relative to our work in England, in London particularly." I smiled and said, "Elder, I think I know what you have in mind. You are thinking of the very same thing that I am. Now is the time to do something for London, and it seems to me that we should find the way to fulfill the predictions relative to the work in London."

Of course, he was very much interested that my mind should be running along the same line, and immediately we began to think in terms of what we could do for the work in London that would give us the kind of setting Mrs. White had described some fifty or more years before.

I remember so well this passage found in [Testimonies for the Church 6:25 and 26](#):

"There is a great work to be done in England. The light radiating from London should beam forth in clear, distinct rays to regions beyond. God has wrought in England but this English-speaking world has been terribly neglected. England has needed many more laborers and much more means. London has been scarcely touched. My heart

is deeply moved as the situation in that great city is presented before me. . . .

“In the city of London alone no fewer than one hundred men should be engaged. The Lord marks the neglect of His work, and there will be a very heavy account to settle by and by.”

Several weeks ago, as I passed through London, it was my privilege to go down to Regent Street, which is the Fifth Avenue of London, one of the most important of all the business streets in that city. There I saw a remarkable transformation that has taken place in what is known as the New Gallery. Said to be on ground owned by the Crown, it was an art gallery in the old days, a favorite spot for kings and queens, and since 1916 a very well-known theater. [87]

When our people began to look for a place in London, they had in mind a number of different buildings, but it seemed that the Lord was just opening the way and turning us to this particular spot. As I looked in there and saw the complete transformation from a theater to a Seventh-day Adventist preaching hall, I said to myself, “This indeed is a fulfillment of prophecy!”

Such a transformation you cannot imagine. All those pictures that had to do with the theater had been blotted out. Even the old theater carpet with its special symbols or insignia, with the name of the theater woven right into it, was gone. The old theater seats had been taken out, and the building completely renovated. The people of London call it the “conversion of the theater.” And it has been thoroughly converted indeed!

That afternoon as we sat in committee, Elder Armstrong, the president of the British Union, said, “I was born into an Adventist family. As a boy I used to read those statements in the writings of the servant of the Lord and wonder how they would ever be fulfilled. Now to think that the Lord has seen fit to put me here as the president of this union to bring about the fulfillment of that prediction of so many years ago!” Then he called my attention to a paragraph that I had overlooked. Ellen G. White, more than fifty years ago, wrote: [88]

“It seems to me that the necessity of the work in England is a very important question to us in this country [America]. We talk about China and other countries. Let us not forget the English-speaking countries where, if the truth were presented, many would receive

and practice it.”—[The General Conference Bulletin, April 22, 1901; Evangelism, 415.](#)

“Well,” I said, “isn’t that interesting!”

It was because of the crisis in China, which made it impossible for us to send money into that country, that we had funds available from the old China budget to provide a great evangelistic center in London. If it had not been for the crisis in China, we might not have had that money.

The crisis in China means the fulfillment of a prediction concerning the city of London. Again I say, dear friends, we have much for which to be thankful in connection with this Advent Movement. There is no crisis with the Lord. What seems to us to be a crisis is but an opportunity in disguise.

Did Mrs. White’s Predictions Always Come to Pass?

When we study this first test, fulfilled predictions, we should ask ourselves in all sincerity and honesty,

[89] “Did Mrs. White ever make any predictions that were not fulfilled?”

May I say frankly, and at the very outset, that we are frequently asked the question, “What about Ellen G. White’s statement made in 1856 at the conclusion of a workers’ meeting, or conference, when she said, ‘There are some here who will be alive to see the coming of the Lord, and there are some here who will be food for worms’?”

That statement was made in the year 1856, one hundred years ago. Since many have been trying by various means to figure out when Christ will return, it is to be expected that some good people would use this statement as a possible way of finding out the exact time.

They have been disappointed of course, for, so far as we know, every one whose name was listed as having been present at that meeting in 1856 has now passed away. The White Publications office has received many letters asking about that prediction, calling attention to the fact that those people have all passed away, and asking why the Lord has not yet come. I can explain this unfulfilled prediction only by saying that it is a conditional prophecy. Man

failed to do his part; therefore, the Lord has not done as He promised He would do.

The conditional nature of all divine predictions which have to do with human actions or human response to God's will is set forth clearly in the Bible.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God Himself explains it:

[90]

“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, wherewith I said I would benefit them” ([Jeremiah 18:7-10](#)).

A good Bible illustration of God's dealings with man on the basis of conditional predictions is the experience of Jonah at Nineveh:

“So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. . . . And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

“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. . . . And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not” ([Jonah 3:3-5, 10](#)).

Implicit in Jonah's prophecy was the condition “if you do not repent.” The Ninevites repented, and therefore God changed His plan.

It is true that some of God's predictions are unconditional. For instance, Christ's promise to return to this earth the second time for the salvation of His people is a declaration of God's settled purpose. The plan of salvation would be incomplete without it. But the *time* of the Second Advent may be hastened or delayed by the decisions and actions of men.

[91]

It is interesting to read in this connection some of the early documents penned by Ellen G. White. She always presented the Second Advent as very near, even at the door. For instance, in 1849 she wrote: “I saw that the time for Jesus to be in the most holy place was nearly finished and that time can last but a very little

longer.”—[Early Writings, 58](#). When in later years people asked her about the delay in the Lord’s coming and the meaning of her earlier statements, she wrote:

“The angels of God in their messages to men represent time as very short. Thus it has always been presented to me. It is true that time has continued longer than we expected in the early days of this message. Our Saviour did not appear as soon as we hoped. But has the Word of the Lord failed? Never! *It should be remembered that the promises and the threatenings of God are alike conditional. . . .*

“Had the whole Adventist body [after the disappointment in 1844] united upon the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, how widely different would have been our history! It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed.”—[Manuscript 4, 1883](#), quoted in [Evangelism, 695, 696](#). (Italics supplied.)

In 1896 she wrote:

[92] “If those who claimed to have a living experience in the things of God had done their appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would have been warned ere this, and the Lord Jesus would have come in power and great glory.”—[The Review and Herald, October 6, 1896](#), p. 629.

It is thus clear that God intended to bring the history of the world to a close very soon after 1844. The predictions in the vision of 1856 were a part of God’s intentions which were dependent upon the response of men to God’s will and purpose. Men failed God, and so God was forced to delay His plans. The failure is not to be charged upon God, for His promises and His threatenings are alike conditional.

I am very glad to assure you that in view of the fact that so many other predictions have been fulfilled, I am not going to be disturbed by one that we can explain only on the basis of its being a conditional prophecy.

Divine predictions fulfilled are a great test for any prophet. But the failure of a prediction to come true may not prove that the prophet is false.

We must bear in mind that Ellen G. White’s work was not primarily that of making predictions. Her work was of a different nature.

The Test of Divine Guidance in Times of Crisis in the Advent Movement

There are three texts to keep in mind when studying God's guidance of His people:

1. "The Lord shall guide thee continually" ([Isaiah 58:11](#)).
2. He instructs us in the way we should go ([Psalm 32:8](#)).
3. By a prophet the Lord led and guided Israel of old ([Hosea 12:13](#)).

[93]

Here the prophet becomes a "forth-teller"—one who speaks forth the "word of the Lord" when that word is needed most urgently; one who steps in when God's people do not know which way to turn or what to do; or one who warns of impending dangers when they are going in the wrong direction, or of the dire results if the course is pursued.

This phase of the prophet's work calls for remarkable courage, close timing, and specific instruction to meet very specific circumstances. To make a mistake here would be fatal both to the prophet himself and to the situation he could remedy or safeguard. Herein is a test of a prophet.

Time and again Ellen G. White, directed only by God, stepped into critical situations and saved the church by the message she bore. If space permitted, we might recount some of these thrilling experiences—how the denomination was saved at the turn of the century in the crisis over pantheistic teachings, and again at the time of the "holy flesh" movement. We might give the details of the work of false prophets and of the way the situation was met. On many occasions messages received at just the critical moment protected the church or prevented some serious blunder. One outstanding experience must suffice.

The Salamanca Vision.—In the night of November 3, 1890, God looked ahead some four months and saw a meeting of a very small group of men that would be held late on the night of March 7, 1891. Things would be said and done at that meeting that would not be for the best interest of our work. To avert the danger threatening the cause if a certain course should be followed, and to duly impress those who would be participants in that meeting, and to convince them beyond the shadow of a doubt that God was still in control of

[94]

His work, He gave a vision to His servant Ellen G. White on the night of November 3, 1890, and showed her a scene of that very meeting. She saw a man stand up and lift a copy of the *American Sentinel* high in the air and point to several articles, declaring that such topics as the Sabbath and the second coming of Christ should not find a place in the paper that spoke for the Religious Liberty Association.

Several times Mrs. White began to tell what she had seen in that vision at the meeting in Salamanca, New York. Each time she faltered and could not recall a single detail. Finally after four months she came to Battle Creek to attend the conference, which was held from March 5 to 25 in the year 1891. She spoke to the ministers at their 5:30 A.M. meetings. On March 7 the president asked her if she would be back on Sunday morning, March 8, and she declined, thinking that she had given enough instruction already.

[95] The Sabbath closed, the evening meeting was concluded, and Sister White, with all others, retired. Did I say “all others”? Not exactly, for a small group of men went to an office in the Review and Herald building for a strictly secret meeting of their own. They locked the door and resolved not to leave that room until their highly controversial problem was settled. Hour after hour passed. Midnight found them deep in their debate. One o’clock came, two, and then nearly three, when they finally adjourned and went to their respective rooms to sleep and rest.

Shortly after that meeting closed, Ellen G. White, in the privacy of her own room, was awakened. The angel of the Lord bade her attend the five-thirty meeting and present what she had seen at Salamanca four months before. The whole scene came back, and she wrote page after page until time came for the five-thirty ministers’ meeting. She picked up her manuscripts and made her way to the Tabernacle. The ministers were on the platform. W. W. Prescott and O. A. Olsen were prepared to speak, but on seeing Mrs. White enter the room with her papers, Elder Olsen asked whether she had a message. “Indeed I do,” responded Ellen G. White.

The Testimony Delivered on Time.—She stated that she had not planned to be present at that meeting, but she had been awakened at three o’clock and bidden to present some things she had seen in vision at Salamanca, New York, on November 3, 1890.

O. A. Olsen, who was to speak that morning, records what was said and done: [96]

“She then began to read, describing a meeting that was shown her that was held in one of the rooms in the Review Office, where a number of brethren were together. She described their attitude and their earnestness, and the position which they had taken; for there was a heated discussion, as they could not agree on certain questions at issue.

“Personally I sat there in blank bewilderment. I did not know what she referred to. I had neither heard nor had any knowledge of the things that she presented, nor of such a meeting as she described. Indeed, I was so surprised, and the things she presented as having taken place in that meeting seemed so unreasonable, that I was quite nonplused in my mind as to what this meant.”—White Publications Document File, No. 107f.

When Sister White had finished her testimony, the men present looked about in bewilderment, but not for long.

A. F. Ballenger, then secretary of the Religious Liberty Association, arose and said that the meeting described by the servant of the Lord had been held the night before. He declared that he was the one who had held up the copy of the *American Sentinel* and pointed to the article on the Sabbath and the Second Advent. He also confessed that he had been on the wrong side of the controversy.

Captain Eldridge, president of the International Religious Liberty Association, arose and said:

“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 till three o’clock this morning.”—*Ibid.* He stated further: [97]

“If I should have begun to give a description of what took place, and the personal attitude of those in the room, I could not have given it as exactly and correctly as it has been given by Sister White. I now see that I was in error; that the position that I took was not correct; and from the light that has been given this morning, I acknowledge that I was wrong.”—*Ibid.*

Only a messenger in close communion with God could bear such an unusual but absolutely accurate testimony about a meeting to be held four months in the future.

Time and space forbid consideration of many other intensely interesting stories of crises met through divine guidance. We turn now to the third great test.

The Test of Agreement With the Bible

[98] The true prophet must speak and write messages that are in harmony with the law and the testimony, or “there is no light in them” ([Isaiah 8:20](#)). Every true prophet will be in accord with the law of God and the testimony of all the other true prophets. Stated briefly, we must now test the twenty-five million words written by Ellen G. White, most of which appear in her forty-five bound volumes and the several thousand periodical articles in the church papers. Since she wrote so much, the chances of discrepancies are greatly increased. Did she teach and advocate that which harmonizes with the Scriptures?

Here we are looking at the prophet as a “for-teller,” one who speaks for God, who expounds, clarifies, and explains. In this capacity Ellen G. White did the major portion of her work. She added nothing new in doctrine, but exalted the Scriptures, and gave them a central position in all her writings. Hers was the work of a magnifying glass, simply making the details of the observed object stand out in clearer lines, showing its original beauty more perfectly. Hers is a sort of inspired commentary on the Bible.

So clear is this point of the agreement of Ellen G. White’s teachings with those of the Bible that it is unnecessary here to review the work of Ellen White in the light of this test.

The Bible sets forth several characteristics of the true prophet in relationship to the law and the prophets, or the Scriptures as we know them:

1. He will exalt the true God ([Deuteronomy 13:1-4](#)).
2. He will teach obedience to God’s law ([2 Chronicles 24:19, 20](#); [Deuteronomy 13:4](#)).
3. He will believe and teach that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh ([1 John 4:2, 3](#)).

4. He will speak as he is inspired by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:21). [99]

The writings of Ellen G. White not only give every evidence that she was the kind of person set forth in these scriptures, but her work agrees in every detail with the specifications of God as delineated in His Word. She most certainly passes this third great test. There is a harmony that characterizes all her work, from her very first vision at seventeen years of age, through the whole seventy years of her labors. There is a continuity, a unity, and an agreement, that is most marvelous and almost miraculous!

Not long ago I took upon myself the task of checking the writings of the Spirit of prophecy with the teachings of the Bible. I chose twenty different topics, for instance, “Christian,” putting in one column all that the Bible says about a Christian. Then I went through Mrs. White’s forty-three volumes and some of the periodicals that contain several thousand articles, selecting at random statements that Mrs. White has given regarding a Christian, and putting them in a parallel column. It was one of the most interesting studies I have ever made.

If you want an interesting study, do as I did sometime. I advise you to take about a week, for a day will not be sufficient. You will become so engrossed in your study that at the end of the day you will not even want to go to bed; for when you begin a study of that kind—checking the writings, the messages, of Ellen G. White with the teachings of the Scripture—you will find it both wonderful and intriguing. [100]

The Test of the Kind of Fruit Borne in Life and Works

Seventy years is a long time to live and work before the public, under the critical eyes of millions of people, largely skeptical, doubtful, uncertain, suspicious, and in some cases openly hostile. If any faults, errors, or inconsistencies existed, they would be exposed with great satisfaction by opponents.

Mrs. White lived in various places—in New England, Michigan, Switzerland, Australia, and California. She traveled extensively in many parts of the United States, Europe, and Australia, but the fruit of her life and labors attests to her godliness, her sincerity, her zeal

and earnestness, her upright and noble character, and the consistency in her own Christian conduct and experience.

The Testimony of Uriah Smith.—The testimony of one who was in a strategic point for observation must suffice. Uriah Smith, for many years the editor of the church paper, the *Review and Herald*, in constant touch with Mrs. White and her work, sometimes the recipient of her testimonies and counsels, should be able to judge her work by the fruit, or results, of that work. In 1866 he wrote:

[101] “Every test which can be brought to bear upon such manifestations proves them genuine. The evidence which supports them, internal and external, is conclusive. They agree with the word of God and with themselves. They are given, unless those best qualified to judge are invariably deceived, when the Spirit of God is especially present. Calm, dignified, impressive, they commend themselves to every beholder as the very opposite of that which is false or fanatical.

“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 falsehearted. They have warded off dangers from the cause of truth upon every hand. They have aroused and re-aroused 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. Like the Bible they set Him forth as the only hope and only Saviour of mankind. They portray before us in living characters His holy life and His godly example, and with irresistible appeals they urge us to follow in His steps.

“They lead us to the Bible. They set forth that Book as the inspired and unalterable word of God. They exhort to take that word as the man of our counsel, and the rule of our faith and practice. And, with a compelling power they entreat us to study long and diligently its pages, and become familiar with its teachings, for it is to judge us in the last day.

“They have brought comfort and consolation to many hearts. [102] 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. And no person with an unprejudiced mind can read their stirring appeals for a pure and lofty morality, their exaltation of God and the Saviour, their denunciations of every evil, and their exhortations to everything that is holy and of good report, without being compelled to say, ‘These are not the words of him that hath a devil.’”—Quoted in *Life and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, pp. 120, 121.

Ellen G. White’s Attitude Toward Jesus Christ.—If one of the signs of a true prophet is to uplift and exalt and extol Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Son of man, the Saviour of the fallen race, then the fruit of such teaching can be found on every page of her writings and in the lives of Seventh-day Adventists around the world.

Where will you find more beautiful words than these?

“Lift up Jesus, you that teach the people, lift Him up in sermon, in song, in prayer. Let all your powers be directed to pointing souls, confused, bewildered, lost, to ‘the Lamb of God.’ Lift Him up, the risen Saviour, and say to all who hear, Come to Him who ‘hath loved us, and hath given himself for us.’ Let the science of salvation be the burden of every sermon, the theme of every song. Let it be poured forth in every supplication. Bring nothing into your preaching to supplement Christ, the wisdom and power of God. Hold forth the word of life, presenting Jesus as the hope of the penitent and the stronghold of every believer. Reveal the way of peace to the troubled [103] and the despondent, and show forth the grace and completeness of the Saviour.”—*Gospel Workers*, 160.

Just a paragraph, but there are hundreds like it. I say unto you, my brethren and sisters, read the books for yourselves. Fill your minds and your hearts with the messages, and decide whether or not they lead you to a nobler life, or whether they will lead you to that which is base and ignoble. “By their fruits ye shall know them.”

The External Evidence.—The 4,678 ¹ church schools, the 302 intermediate schools, academies, and colleges, the 249,847 students

¹(1954 figures are given as a sample.)

in them, and the \$58,000,000 worth of Seventh-day Adventist school property, all witness to Ellen G. White's work in the field of Christian education.

The 235 sanitariums and treatment rooms, the 550 institutional physicians, the College of Medical Evangelists, the \$40,000,000 worth of medical institutions, all bear witness to Ellen G. White's work in the field of health and healing.

The 43 publishing houses, the \$13,000,000 worth of denominational publishing property, the 6,500 faithful colporteurs, the sale of almost a million and a half dollars' worth of Seventh-day Adventist literature *each month* of the year—all bear their powerful testimony to Ellen G. White's work in the field of Seventh-day Adventist literature ministry.

[104] The 21,129 Sabbath schools, the 1,257,209 Sabbath school members, the \$5,862,458 a year as a Sabbath school gift to foreign missions—all testify to the power of her counsels on Sabbath school work.

The worldwide General Conference organization of Seventh-day Adventists, with its 68 union conference organizations, its 144 local conference and 204 mission organizations, its 11,447 churches, its 18,000 evangelistic workers, and 972,000 baptized church members, reflects the fruit of this gift.

The consistent, godly lives of Seventh-day Adventists around the world, exemplifying in their daily experience the principles set forth in the two score Ellen G. White books, testify to the prophetic gift—all these are the external evidence of the power and influence of Ellen G. White's work for the spiritual uplift of the people of all nations.

All of this, I say, stands today as incontrovertible evidence of the power and influence of the life and work of the messenger who spoke and wrote what she called *the messages of God* to the people of the remnant church. These messages have stimulated, encouraged, and directed the inventive genius, the executive ability, the constructive thinking, and the consecrated efforts of men and women who have been instruments in God's hand to bring about so great an achievement.

[105] Blot out her writings and take out of the Seventh-day Adventist movement the life and influence of Ellen G. White and what would

you have left? Perhaps something similar to what you have today in the Advent Christian Church.

Mrs. White says in one place that the Lord will bless us in our work in proportion to the way we carry out His instruction. I would that all of us might carry out the instruction fully in everything, in order that we might have one hundred per cent of Heaven's blessing on everything we do. And be it remembered that the nearer we keep to the blueprint, as we call it, the greater will be the blessing that rests upon our work.

During the past few months I have become very much interested in finding out exactly the kind of medical work God wants Seventh-day Adventists to conduct. I have brought together many pages of material. I have never read anything so inspiring. I cannot see how Seventh-day Adventist doctors can read these messages without feeling that they have been set in the world to fulfill prophecy. I thank God for our Seventh-day Adventist doctors—men who have a sense of their responsibility not alone for the healing of the body but also for the healing of the soul.

Ellen G. White was the one who gave us our counsel, our direction, in regard to medical work. If we had not these words, we would have no need to operate a medical college of our own, no need to operate Seventh-day Adventist medical institutions, for the world can do a good job in operating just an ordinary hospital, but they cannot and never will be able to operate a Seventh-day Adventist sanitarium. And the interesting part of it is that the people of the world know it.

[106]

I ask you, brethren and sisters, where did our medical ministry come from? It was given us through His chosen instrument. The world cannot give it.

In the city of Washington, D.C., not so long ago I was talking to a specialist in internal medicine at the medical college of George Washington University. He said to me, "Mr. Rebok, we send our people out to your sanitarium not because your doctors are clever—they are just like us, ordinary men—but your nursing service is superb. There is nothing equal to it." I agree with him.

My own brother-in-law is a Catholic, and a very good Catholic. He was taken ill not so long ago, and of course I thought he would want to go to a Catholic hospital. But, to my great surprise, he said,

[107] “I want to go to the Washington Sanitarium,” and he went to our sanitarium. The first evening, after the little nurse had finished her P.M. care, she stepped quietly to his bedside and said, “Mr. A., we are so sorry that you are sick; and now it is our custom to offer a word of prayer for our patients before they go to sleep. Would you mind if I prayed for you?” In telling us of the incident, he said, “She said it in such a nice voice, and she was such a sweet-looking little girl, that I told her, ‘If you are willing to pray for a Catholic, then pray, for I need all the prayers I can get from everybody.’”

No wonder he was thrilled, for there are not many hospitals in which such a noble Christian service is rendered. Of the nurse’s prayer he said, “I have never heard such a sweet prayer in all my life as the prayer of that little nurse by the side of my bed last night.” Night after night he had the same experience, and now he has sent no small number of his friends to the Washington Sanitarium. He was treated so gently and kindly that he wants others to enjoy the same kind of Christian care that he appreciated so much.

Be assured, dear brethren, when we follow the instruction given us regarding our medical work and how we should carry it on, there is something that has a power to draw people to God, and it comes through the service rendered by our doctors and our nurses. Take away all of Ellen G. White’s instruction, fail to follow all of that good counsel regarding our medical missionary work, and what will you have left? Just *another* hospital where they push the patient through as fast as possible—get him out of the way with the least possible inconvenience to the doctors and nurses. Such a person becomes just case number so-and-so, to be pushed out because the room is needed for somebody else. Not so in Seventh-day Adventist sanitariums and hospitals. Today we should thank God for the instruction given through Ellen G. White relative to our medical work.

Chapter 7—Evidences That Ellen G. White Was Used by God

[108]

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 [Thessalonians 5:14-24](#)).

From these verses we gather that the purpose of all Scripture is to prepare a people who are blameless in body, soul, and spirit, and ready when the Lord Jesus returns. This is the work of the prophets, and it has to do with each of us personally and individually.

Therefore we must be clear as to the prophets themselves, and

[109]

understand their messages. We have now examined the four Bible tests of the true prophet. Thus we have done what this Scripture tells us to do—to test, to try, and to prove—and I trust that we shall keep in mind these four tests as we read the instruction and counsel given by the messenger of the Lord. A careful, intensive study of the life and work of Ellen G. White brings us to the conclusion that she met and fulfilled the four Bible tests.

In case more evidence is needed—and I think it is good to seek all that we can find—I should like to present six types of evidence in addition to the four tests that we have already discussed.

1. The timeliness of the messages.
2. The practical nature of the messages.
3. The absolute certainty of the messages.

4. The recognition accorded by contemporaries.
5. The relation to outside influences.
6. The physical phenomena attending the visions.

We need but to reach back into the busy life and prolific writings of Ellen G. White to find any number of experiences, or evidences, that fall under some one or all of these six types.

The Timeliness of the Messages

[110] Time and again the counsel given by the Lord for some particular person arrived at the exact moment when it was needed most. Too early, it would not have been appreciated; too late, it would not have served its purpose. This placed a great responsibility upon the messenger of the Lord, for procrastination would have meant the defeat of God's plans and purposes. This often necessitated her rising very early, writing diligently hour after hour, hurrying to the post office to make connections with a particular train or boat. But the Lord saw to all these details, and the Lord's servant responded to the call of her Master at any hour of the day or night.

In June, 1871, two of our ministers, J. N. Loughborough and a fellow evangelist, began a tent effort in the city of San Francisco. In due time the meetings were transferred from the tent to a hall, and by December 1, 1871, about fifty people had been baptized and brought into the church.

Much to the chagrin of the workers and believers and to the shame of the cause of God, Elder Loughborough's fellow evangelist had fallen into some questionable associations and actions. His conduct became such as to raise serious questions as to his relationship to the church and certainly gave rise to criticism by those opposing our work in that city. He took the attitude that he had a right to do as he pleased, and to walk the streets as he pleased and with whom he pleased.

[111] When counseled and admonished by the brethren, his only response was, "It is none of your business," which was of course not true, for *it is* the business of the church how you and I conduct ourselves and live our lives. On Sabbath, January 27, 1872, it was decided that the church should investigate the situation on Sunday, January 28, at 9 A.M.

As Elder Loughborough started for that Sunday morning meeting, he met the brother on the sidewalk near the boardinghouse. He was weeping and gave evidence of a broken spirit. Looking up, he said, "Brother Loughborough, I am not going to the meeting today." "Not going to the meeting?" said Elder Loughborough. "The meeting relates to your case."

"I know that," said he, "but I am all wrong. You are right in the position you have taken in reference to me. Here is a letter of confession I have written to the church; you take it and read it to them."

"What has occasioned this great change in you since yesterday?" inquired the elder.

"I went to the post office last night, after the Sabbath, and received a letter from Sister White, from Battle Creek, Michigan. It is a testimony she has written out for me," he replied. "Read that, and you will see how the Lord sees my case."

Now what would you do with such a testimony if you were in a similar situation? I have held in my hand the handwritten original of that testimony. It was mailed January 18, 1872. Very early that morning Sister White was awakened in her room in Battle Creek. She was bidden to rise and send the testimony of what she had seen in vision on December 10, 1871, while in Bordoville, Vermont. As long before as December 27 she had written out what she had seen about this worker in San Francisco, but she had not mailed it for the Lord had told her not to send it yet. [112]

Without a moment's delay she rose, for she had been impressed to send out that testimony to California immediately; in fact, to get it into the very next mail, for it was needed. Just before breakfast she called her son William and charged him, "Take this letter to the post office, but don't put it into the drop. Hand it to the postmaster, and have him be sure to put it into the mailbag that goes out this morning."

Thus this letter dated December 27 and mailed January 18 reached San Francisco on January 27, when the worker in trouble needed it most urgently. No, my brother, my sister, such things do not just happen. The very timeliness of the messages is an evidence of their divine origin (J. N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement*, pp. 386, 390).

[113] As he read the message it brought him, of course, to a realization that there is a God in heaven who knew all about him and his doings. Yes, God could see what he was doing, knew exactly where he was going, and with whom he was associating, and the loving Father in heaven instructed His messenger to write a message particularly for that young man. It made a profound impression upon the young man's mind. It caused him to see his error and to repent of his ways. He sat down immediately and wrote his letter of confession, admitting that there was no need for a church trial, for he recognized that all he was doing was known to God, and had been revealed to the servant of the Lord, though he was separated from her by more than two thousand miles.

I submit, dear brethren and sisters, that that kind of message could not come from the mind, or the imagination, of just anybody, near or far. And I also submit that for that message to arrive, not on January 29, or December 1, but on the very day, at the very moment, the message was needed, is but another evidence that God was working through His servant, Ellen G. White.

[114] May I add still another experience of a similar nature, and this one, I am sure, may be known by some of our older workers, perhaps personally, even intimately. In 1891, Ellen G. White was sent over to Australia to help in the establishment of the institutions and our work in general. The increasing demands of the work held her there for a considerable length of time. While she was in Australia, the people in America were carrying on the movement and doing the best they could under the circumstances. Of course, everybody was interested in and concerned over the long absence of Mrs. White. In Battle Creek at that time, in the early 1890's, a young woman by the name of Anna Philips claimed that she had had a vision, a revelation from the Lord. At that time she was living in the home of one of our ministers. She began to write out her messages, and naturally some of our people were very much concerned. Some thought it only reasonable that while Sister White was absent in Australia the Lord should choose someone else to carry on her work in the United States. So they read her messages with great interest, and some began to compare Sister White's messages with the messages of Anna Philips.

About the middle of April A. T. Jones felt very much impressed that he should preach a sermon about this in the Tabernacle on a Sabbath morning. He came to that meeting with the message that God had chosen another messenger. He made it clear that he did not think it necessarily true that the Lord would speak through only one agent. He thought it possible that the Lord would see fit to use many. Here was just another. He took a whole hour to compare the work of Ellen G. White and the work of Anna Philips.

He read the messages, placed them side by side, and declared that they were just the same, having the same ring, the same content, and that they were written in almost the same language. This he proposed as evidence that God had chosen another messenger. And so he urged the people of Battle Creek to accept her as another of God's servants.

When the church service closed that morning you may be sure that quite a few folks did not go home as readily as usual. They stood about in little clusters outside the Tabernacle and talked about it, and wondered if it were possible that God had sent them another messenger. Some were very sure she was not called to speak for God. Others questioned whether all the messages would be in harmony, or if there might be some conflict between them. What would Sister White do about this? And what would she say about it when she heard of the development there in Battle Creek? These were some of the questions that disturbed them. They were all excited and stirred up by the sermon.

[115]

The next morning, Sunday, A. T. Jones went over to the branch post office in the Review and Herald. He stepped up to the window and asked if he had any mail. A long envelope, rather big, post-marked Australia, was handed to him. He opened it and read it right there in the post office. The date, of course, was some weeks before the day on which the letter was received.

It came from Ellen G. White. We can give you just the substance of the contents. She asked Elder Jones who appointed him to preach such a sermon as he had preached in the Tabernacle, who gave him the authority to be judge in such a matter as whether God had chosen another messenger, and why he had stood before the people and compared the message of this one with the messages that God had sent through her. She went on and outlined in detail exactly what

[116] had happened on that particular Sabbath morning in the Battle Creek Tabernacle. She made it plain that God had not called Anna Philips to the prophetic office. She pleaded with him not to do anything that would hinder or thwart or confuse the people of God. It was a very powerful message, very direct, and very timely.

As the preacher sat there on the bench in the post office looking at this message and reading it, there was a young man standing nearby who had come to write a postcard home. When he saw Elder Jones sitting on the bench, he took a little extra time to write, but of course he was observing what was going on.

Just then Elder O. A. Tait came in and Elder Jones called him to come over and sit down.

“Oscar,” he said, “you heard me preach that sermon yesterday?”

When he got an affirmative reply, he said, “Read this,” and handed over Mrs. White’s letter, dated March 15. After a few moments of silence, he asked, “Who told Mrs. White a month ago that I was going to preach that sermon about Anna Philips as a prophetess?”

“Ah, you know, Alonzo,” replied Elder Tait.

“Yes, I do know. God knew what I would do.”

Only the God in heaven knows our thoughts afar off, before they pass through our minds. Only the God of heaven knows where we are and what we are doing and all about us. He knows. Can you deny that the God in heaven sent that message to Ellen G. White in Australia so long before and so far away, and that He had anything to do with the fact that the message arrived there on that particular day?

[117] The next Sabbath morning A. T. Jones was back in the pulpit at the Battle Creek Tabernacle, and he gave his message. It was a powerful sermon. In it he acknowledged that only the God in heaven knows a man’s thoughts a month or two before he thinks them, and only the God in heaven has the power to put those thoughts into the mind of another person thousands of miles away before the man himself thinks them.

Think now of the timeliness of that message. Here again we bring from the life and works of Ellen G. White an experience that certainly proves to us that such messages were not due to any stretch of her imagination. A mere religious reverie could not bring to pass

such an experience as that. No, brethren and sisters, when we come to think of these marvelous things that have taken place in the life of Ellen G. White, we stand very humbly and say, “God, if you know us as well and as intimately as you knew A. T. Jones and the young man who was working with Elder Loughborough in San Francisco, then we are convinced that we ought to be the kind of men you want us to be.”

The Practical Nature of the Messages

The practical nature of Ellen G. White’s messages may well be illustrated by one of her experiences in Australia. She went there to help lay solid foundations for the building of our work in that part of the world. Being a great believer in youth as God’s heritage in the church, and realizing that trained leadership for the church of tomorrow depends upon the training of boys and girls of today, she at once proposed the founding of a college, a Seventh-day Adventist training center—and this was to be not just *another* college, but an institution such as God had shown her to be His kind of school. [118]

How impossible it seemed for our few, poor church members in Australia to carry out such a plan! But there was the counsel given as instruction from the Lord. Not all the Australian brethren were convinced that the plan was a wise one, and some gave expression to their feelings. W. C. White wrote of this attitude:

“One day an influential and talented member of the Melbourne church, after listening to our plans for the establishment of such a school as we had at Healdsburg, said to me, ‘Brother White, this plan of building such a school is not an Australian plan at all, the demand for having such a school is not an Australian demand. The idea of establishing a school at this time, when our cause is so young and weak, is not an Australian idea.’”—Quoted in *Divine Predictions of Mrs. Ellen G. White Fulfilled*, compiled by F. C. Gilbert, p. 340.

All of which was perfectly true and obvious. Neither was it Ellen G. White’s plan or idea, but rather both plan and idea were God’s. Australia had colleges and universities—good ones—but the kind of school that God wanted established in Australia was not just an ordinary one. He knew exactly the kind of school that He wanted established in that country, and for that reason He sent His

messenger there to direct the minds of the people in the achievement of His purpose.

[119] As Sister White went on to describe the school to be established, the Australian brethren shook their heads, and some of them came to a conclusion that she was all wrong.

It was not an Australian idea; it was God's. It was not an Australian demand; it was God's plan. It was, therefore, what God wanted as expressed through His servant, Ellen G. White.

I think, dear friends, there is something here that all of us should catch as significant. We are following not man's ideas, not man's plans; but God's ideas, and God's plans. The closer we follow the pattern, the nearer we shall come to carrying out the specifications for the building of God's kingdom, and the greater will be the blessing that rests upon us as we carry out God's plans. I hope all of us will ever bear in mind that this work is not our work. The success or failure of this work does not depend entirely upon us or upon our efforts. God will see His work through to a successful conclusion. You and I might stand in His way a bit and hinder His plans for a while but not for long. God will finish His work and He will see it done in His own time and way.

The brethren in Australia looked at one another and wondered, "Where shall we find the kind of place that she wants us to use for such a school?" Sister White was sure that God had a place somewhere there in Australia. She suggested that they should look [120] for a farm away from the city. So they appointed a committee to search for a suitable area, but each time they returned with the report that the price was far beyond their financial resources.

In due time the committee found a block of 1,500 acres near Cooranbong, some seventy-five miles north of Sydney. It had but one commendatory feature—it was cheap at \$3 an acre. That price would and could buy only "poor, sandy, and hungry" land. The committee members were disappointed, but it seemed to be the best they could find within their financial resources.

They decided to request a government agricultural expert to visit the land and give his frank and honest appraisal of it. His comment was that the land was so poor that if a bandicoot wanted to cross the 1,500 acres he would have to take with him his lunch in a basket, for there would be nothing for him to eat. This did not bring much

courage to the brethren. It was felt that Sister White should join the group in their final visit to the property for the purpose of making the decision.

From several sources we put the story together. It seems that part of the committee went ahead, leaving Sister White to make the journey with Elder and Mrs. G. B. Starr. On the train she told the Starrs of her dream in which she and they were standing on the piece of property, looking it over, and came upon a neat-cut furrow about one quarter of a yard deep and two yards in length. She saw two of the brethren, who had grown up with the Iowa type of rich, deep soil, standing by the furrow and saying, "This is not good land; the soil is not favorable." As they spoke these words Sister White was told by One who had often given her counsel, "False witness has been borne of this land," and He explained the value of the different strata in the soil and their use. [121]

In due time she and her party arrived at Cooranbong, and they looked over the estate without reaching a decision that day. The next morning, May 25, 1894, the whole group met in a fisherman's hut for a season of prayer. Sister White felt a burden to pray for divine healing to come to Brother McCulloch's tuberculosis-weakened body. As she prayed for him, he felt a sensation like an electric wave pass through his whole body, and he rose from that season of prayer a completely restored man. He lived for more than thirty-five years after this experience.

This manifestation of the divine presence assured them all of divine guidance in the decision to be made that day. The group scattered out to examine further the various parts of the property. The Starrs and Sister White walked over the place and came upon a spot where a neat-cut furrow had been plowed one quarter of a yard deep and two yards in length. As they stood there looking at the turned-up soil, two brethren came upon them from different directions. On seeing Sister White they remarked, "This is not good land; the soil is not favorable." Sister White then told them of her dream and of the fulfillment. With this evidence and evidence of the presence and the power of God as seen in the healing of Brother McCulloch, they decided to take the place, and made a down payment. [122]

In the spring of 1895 the place was bought on the advice of the Lord and in spite of the expert's adverse report. To show her own confidence in what God had revealed to her, Sister White selected sixty-six acres of the same land, moved into a few tents, and began work on her place, which she called "Sunnyside." She demonstrated that with proper cultivation the land would produce abundantly—and so it has all these years—a splendid harvest of fruit and vegetables and of fine Seventh-day Adventist youth to be workers in the great harvest fields.

I have never been there myself, but I have seen pictures of it. It is a lovely place with beautiful green grass, wonderful flowers and trees, the finest kinds of fruit trees. I tell you, dear friends, the messages that came from the servant of the Lord were down-to-earth, practical messages. Sometimes we have not been able to see the wisdom of the message or the counsel, and yet when our people have followed the instruction given we have made no mistakes. It is when we have failed to follow the instruction that we have made mistakes. The very practical nature of all the messages given through the servant of the Lord must appeal to us as another evidence that God is in her work.

Chapter 8—God Revealed Secrets Through Ellen G. White [123]

God Revealed Secrets Through Ellen G. White

We turn our attention now to *the certainty of the messages* that came through the servant of God. I wish to relate a story on this aspect of Ellen G. White's work—one of the most interesting, and certainly one of the most unusual, that we come across in our reading concerning her work. But before that story, we should read a few verses from the 139th psalm, which give a fitting background for the experience we shall present:

“O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee” (Psalm 139:1-12). [124]

We cannot get away from the presence of God.

To think that God knows us individually and so intimately, and is able to look into our personal experiences and tell what is happening to us, is beyond the understanding of men. It is one of the evidences that God knows the secret things and can reveal them to His messengers.

The Certainty of the Messages

Here is a type of evidence that is conclusive and convincing, one in which no mistakes could be made without dire consequences to those involved. Here is no room for guesswork or for human devisings or imaginings. The message was either from God, or else it definitely was not.

Over in Australia, about 1891, shortly after Mrs. White arrived there, she was given a vision in which she saw a number of the workers in that part of the world. Among those brought to her attention in a very special way was a brother by the name of Faulkhead. N. D. Faulkhead was a very successful businessman. He was a man of unusual talents, appreciated not only by the

[125] Advent people when he joined them, but by the people of the city in which he lived—so much so, that he was a prominent leader in some five or more of their secret societies.

This Mr. Faulkhead became a Seventh-day Adventist, and at the time saw no reason why he should not continue to be a member of the Masonic order and all the other lodges. Of himself he says, “I was Master of the Master Masonic Lodge; second, I was First Principal of the Holy Royal of Canada; third, I was Preceptor of the Knight Templars, besides many other minor lodges (five in all), Good Templars, the Rechabites, Odd Fellows, and so forth.” He really was involved in secret societies!

This man sincerely believed that he could continue to be a leader in these societies and at the same time be a devout Seventh-day Adventist and a worker in the cause of God. On account of his business ability he was made treasurer in the publishing house at Melbourne. At first he rendered very good service, but as time went on he became more and more interested in his lodge work, and less and less interested in the publishing house work, until at last the brethren became quite anxious about his spiritual welfare.

[126] Shortly after she arrived in Australia, in December of 1891, Mrs. White had a vision in which she saw Mr. Faulkhead. After that vision concerning him and others, she sat down and wrote out the experience of Brother Faulkhead. It took some fifty pages of manuscript to set forth his situation, and she did it in a most remarkable and very detailed way.

However, when she sought to mail this communication to him, something seemed to hold her back and say, "Not yet! Not yet!" So she withheld this message to him for some time. It was, in fact, about twelve months later that the opportunity came for her to actually bring the message to his attention. She had been away in another part of the country, and on returning she felt that she must give this message to Brother Faulkhead.

The day after her return to Melbourne a meeting of the school board was called. In the morning everyone rejoiced in the closing exercises of the first term of the new Australian Bible school. That afternoon, Tuesday, December 13, Mr. Faulkhead as a board member gave attention to the affairs of that meeting. At the conclusion of the business, W. C. White, the chairman, stepped to the side of Mr. Faulkhead and said, "Brother Faulkhead, Mother wishes to see you before you leave."

Brother Faulkhead, of course, wondered what it might be, for only a short time before that in a dream he had seen that the Lord had shown his situation to Mrs. White and that she had a message for him. He had steeled himself against the idea, and was just waiting for some such suggestion as that, for shortly before his dream one of the brethren, Brother Stockton, our first believer in the Australian field, had talked with

Brother Faulkhead and had told him frankly that they were all concerned over him. They believed that he was losing out spiritually by his contact with all these lodges and by giving so much more time to them and less and less time to his duties in the publishing house. Brother Stockton had asked him what he would do if Sister White should have a message for him. Brother Faulkhead had straightened up and said, "It would have to be a mighty strong statement that would make me believe that the Lord had given her a message for me."

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Now all of this went through his mind when Elder White said to him, "Mother wishes to see you before you leave." So Brother Faulkhead went immediately to Mrs. White. He had a high regard for her as a Christian, but he did not take much stock in the testimonies. He said, "I used to enjoy visiting with her and listening to her talk,

but when it came to her giving testimonies, as it was stated she did and had done all along, I was a little skeptical.”

Thus his attitude was one of uncertainty. He did not exactly believe in the testimonies, and he was not much interested when it came to something for himself, for he thought it to be only her imagination or something like that. Actually, he had little confidence in the gift of prophecy.

[128] With all this in his mind he went to Sister White and asked whether she had something for him. She cordially greeted him, and replied that the burden of his case was upon her heart and that she would like to see him and his wife together for a message that had to do with both of them. He replied, “Why not let me have it now?” “Well,” she responded, “if you want the message now, I shall be glad to give it to you.” She went to the stand and brought out a fifty-page manuscript that she had written twelve months earlier.

As he listened to the words—she not only read the testimony but she talked to him, explaining it as she went along—he began to be very much interested, for in the course of her message and her explanations she told of certain meetings that he had been attending and of what he had said in those meetings, where he had sat, the kind of seat on which he had sat, the position that he occupied in the lodge, and the attitude that he manifested in transacting its business, for he was one of its top-level men. Faulkhead wrote later, “I thought this was getting pretty close home when she started to talk to me in reference to what I was doing in the lodges.”

In the course of her description of what he had done and said, and the position he had occupied, she gave a sign with her hand, and said, “The angel gave me this message for you, but I cannot relate all that was given to me.” She stopped. “Why, Sister White,” he said, “do you know what you have done?” She was not aware that she had done anything unusual. Then he told her that she had given the secret sign that is known only to Masons.

[129] She went on a little longer, and told him that she had heard him addressed as “Worshipful Master” and other names or titles of that nature. She talked of Free Masonry and the impossibility of a man’s being a Free Mason and a Seventh-day Adventist at the same time. Once more she made a certain movement that she said her attending angel had made to her. Again Mr. Faulkhead was startled and turned

deathly pale. "Sister White, do you know what you have done? No woman knows that. No woman is ever allowed to hear or see what is going on in those meetings, and yet you have described a particular meeting in which I took a very important part, and you have told not only what I said, but what I did."

Later he told in a letter his reaction to all of this. He wrote, "This convinced me that her testimony was from God. I can assure you this caused me to feel very queer. But, as Sister White said, the Spirit of the Lord had come upon me and taken hold of me. She went on talking and reading as if nothing had happened, but I noticed how her face brightened up when I interrupted her again and spoke to her about the sign. She seemed surprised that she had given me such a sign. Immediately the statement that I had made to Brother Stockton that it would have to be mighty strong before I could believe that she had a message for me from the Lord, flashed through my mind."

It is an interesting story, and a wonderfully fine account that Brother Faulkhead has given, for it was a very strange experience for a man of his kind and position.

It certainly revealed something in his life that was not known to others, not even to his wife; and after all this evidence had been given by the signs and by the specific expressions, along with the description of what had taken place in those lodge meetings, accurately picturing the attitude of the people present, this is what he said: "I accept every word. All of it belongs to me. I accept the light the Lord has sent me through you. I will act upon it. I am a member of five lodges; three other lodges are under my control; I transact all of their business. Now I shall attend no more of their meetings, and shall close my business relations with them as fast as possible."

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I thank God for that kind of reaction. Only God could know what that man had done in the secrecy of those lodges. Only God could see where he sat and what he was doing, could hear what he was saying, and could know his very attitude in all those meetings. God saw fit to reveal all of that to His servant that this man might be reclaimed and have his faith in her thus strengthened.

Now I like the rest of his testimony: "I am so glad you did not send me that testimony, for then it would not have helped me. Your reading the reproof yourself has touched my heart. The Spirit of the Lord has spoken to me through you, and I accept every word

you have addressed especially to me, and the general matter also is applicable to me. It all means me. That which you have written in regard to my connection

[131] with the Free Masons, I accept. . . . I have just taken the highest order in Free Masonry, but I shall sever my connection with them all. . . . It will take me nine months to wind up my business relations with the three under my control.”

The hour was late when they finished their interview. He took the streetcar and started out to his home, and for some reason or other the car was a little late in arriving at a certain station where he had to make a change. Just as he was arriving at the station he saw the train for Preston pull out; so he had to walk the remaining four miles to his home. He enjoyed the quiet walk, for it gave him an opportunity to be alone and to think through all that had happened that afternoon and evening. He came to this conclusion: God had looked down from heaven and had seen him and had deigned to help him turn from the course that would have led him away from the truth and away from the kingdom.

I do not know of any experience recorded in the life and works of Ellen G. White of greater significance than this experience of Brother Faulkhead. On the following Thursday, Brother Faulkhead, accompanied by his wife, had another interview with Mrs. White. In the meantime, she had written more about that experience—I think some twenty-eight pages—and she read all of that testimony to both of them. They both accepted it—the reproof and the counsel that came from the Lord. Finally he told Mrs. White, “I wish you
[132] to know how I look upon this matter. I regard myself as greatly honored of the Lord. He has seen fit to mention me, and I am not discouraged, but encouraged. I shall follow out the light given me of the Lord.”

Now came the real battle. He had fought the battle through on that night as he walked home, but it was not yet entirely won. He went to his office the next morning and dictated a number of letters, enclosing his resignation to each and every one of those organizations, and lest he might weaken, he handed the letters to A. G. Daniells, saying, “Elder Daniells, here they are. I am free from all of those things that have been binding me to the world. You mail them for me!” In relating that part of the story Mr. Faulkhead says,

“How his eyes did sparkle with pleasure to think that the Lord had gained His point at last, and that his prayers had been answered.”

After he had given the letters to Elder Daniells to mail, he began to think it through, and wondered how he was going to extricate himself from all the relations and all the connections with those lodges. He was almost overwhelmed, but declared, “Brethren, I will not give up the conflict. I did not expect that it would be so severe. I thought I could sever my connections easily; but I find it a greater struggle to break the bonds than I had anticipated. But the Lord has honored me greatly in speaking to me through Sister White. He has presented my case to her, and called me by name, and I will heed the instruction from the Lord. Oh, the Lord has engraven my name on the palms of His hands.”

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When a message came to her from the Lord, Ellen G. White never had any doubts as to the meaning of that message and her duty regarding it. She never questioned. She never stood off and wondered whether the Lord really meant what He said. Nor did she hesitate and wonder what the people would think when she gave her message. Neither did she think to change or soften the message to ease the blow or to make it more acceptable to the one involved.

On one occasion, in a vision she did not see the face—she heard only a voice—and the angel of the Lord instructed her that when she heard that voice she was to bear a certain message. And he gave her the message. That was all she had—merely a voice, and a message for that voice. Here is no room for guesswork or for human devisings or imaginings.

It was some time before Mrs. White again heard *that* voice. Then came the day when she and her husband arrived on a certain campground. They were riding in a carriage, a brother having met them at the railway station, and as they approached the campground the brother suggested that they go over to the tent where the Whites would be staying. But Sister White wished to attend the meeting at once.

The people were assembled and a speaker was on the platform in the midst of his sermon. Ellen G. White paused a moment as she approached, and without a bit of hesitation took the arm of James White and they walked down the aisle straight to the place before the desk. James White sat down. She looked up at the man, and pointing

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her finger at him said in a loud voice, "My brother, you have no business to be standing by that desk speaking to these people."

Naturally the man stopped; all eyes were focused on him and on Ellen G. White as they stood there. She had never seen the man before, nor did she know anything about him, *except* what the Lord had revealed to her. She had heard only the sound of his voice, and the Lord told her when she heard that voice to deliver a message to that person. "Tell him that he is not a fit man to preach to the people. There is a woman in another State who calls him husband and children who call him father, and there is a woman here on this campground who calls him husband and children who call him father."

The man disappeared. His sermon was never finished. His own brother sitting in the audience admitted that what Sister White had said was true, that the man had been living a double life and deserved the open rebuke. The effect of that message was immediate. The Spirit of God came into that camp, and a great revival followed.

[135] Suppose Sister White had made a mistake. Suppose she had addressed the wrong man. Suppose it had been a message for a different camp meeting. It is easy to suppose a good many things in a situation like that, but Ellen G. White was certain of her revelations from the Lord only because she recognized a voice she had heard in vision. The Lord makes no mistakes.

No, if the Lord worked through her at all, the messages would be certain and very specific. Such messages could come from God alone; no human mind could devise such things with such deadly accuracy. She had never seen that man. She had heard only a voice, but when she heard that voice coming from the platform, she knew the time had come to give her message. She asked nobody any questions. Whom would she ask? She walked straight down that aisle to the very front of the tent, and pointing her finger at the man declared he was not a fit man to be standing by the desk.

That, my friends, took a lot of courage. But it took more than that. It took a lot of faith and confidence in the Source of that message. Such was her confidence, and such was her faith in the work that God had given her to do.

May God help us as we read the marvelous messages that come from God through His servant, to have greater and greater confidence

in the divine guidance that has come to this people all through their history. We have nothing to fear for the future except as we may forget the way God has led us in the past.

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Chapter 9—The Witness of Contemporaries

We turn our attention to another kind of evidence—to the people who surrounded Ellen G. White. For seventy years she was the center of great activity. She was a woman who lived an unusually busy life. Her work took her to Europe, to Australia, and to many parts of the United States. She was known to thousands, yes, hundreds of thousands of people.

Now we do well to stop right here and find out what recognition she was accorded by her contemporaries. This becomes a most interesting study, and certainly a very good type of evidence by which we may judge her and measure the scope, the nature, of her work.

Recognized by Contemporaries

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Contemporaries are of three kinds—those interested in the subject who approve or accept it, those interested in the subject who disapprove and reject it, and those not interested but who may accept or reject it. Mrs. E. G. White had all three kinds of contemporaries during the seventy years of her ministry, and it is only reasonable that we should get all three kinds of reactions or recognition.

Now for a very short life and for a very short period of work, it might be difficult to use the testimony of contemporaries. But in a long life of service and in such an abundance of material as that which came from her pen, there seems to be no lack of evidence upon which to base a judgment.

Those Interested Who Approved.—If I wanted to know something about W. H. Branson, former president of the General Conference, it is only reasonable that I would go to his very closest associates and to his most intimate friends. I suggest that they should be able to make an appraisal of him and his work. If I would know the facts about Ellen G. White I would certainly not think of going to D. M. Canright or any other man who has much to say

against Ellen G. White. I would not go to her avowed opponents to get my first and most intimate appraisal of Ellen G. White. Would you? Would that be fair?

It is only reasonable that we should go to a man's friends with whom he has been most closely associated, to those who know him best and most intimately. For this reason I want to begin with that group of people—the friends, those who knew Ellen G. White best and worked most closely with her.

The president of the General Conference in 1883 was George I. Butler, who stood in a unique relationship between Mrs. White and the people. He had very intimate relationships with both God's people and God's messenger, and we shall let him speak for those who approved of her call and work. He knew whereof he spoke when he said:

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“We believe these visions because the Bible teaches them. We use the rules given in that holy book and are forced to the conclusion that these manifestations are the work of the Spirit of God. Instead of our setting up these visions above and outside of the Scriptures as another rule of authority, as our opponents pretend, we claim that none can really take the Bible and fairly apply its teachings without accepting these visions as from God. The Bible is the supreme authority in deciding this as well as other questions. When it tells us to ‘try the spirits,’ to ‘prove all things,’ and ‘hold fast that which is good’ it is our duty to do this. We find by so doing that these visions harmonize perfectly with the Scripture, and that they in no case contradict themselves or the Bible. They everywhere teach the purest doctrine, and even their bitterest enemies admit that a person will be saved if he will obey them.

“We have tested them as a people for nearly a quarter of a century, and we find we prosper spiritually when we heed them, and suffer a great loss when we neglect them. We have found their guidance to be our safety. They never have led us into fanaticism in a single instance, but they have ever rebuked fanatical and unreasonable men. They everywhere direct us to the Scriptures as the great source of true instruction, and to the example of Jesus Christ as the true pattern. They never claim to be given to take the place of the Bible, but simply to be a manifestation of one of those spiritual gifts set in

the church by its divine Lord, and as such, should have their proper weight.

[139] “We admit that their influence upon S. D. Adventists during their past history has been weighty, but it has always been for good, and always had a tendency to make us a better people. Having been in exercise for so many years among us, we are certainly prepared to judge by this time in regard to the nature of their teachings.”—[The Review and Herald, June 9, 1874](#).

J. N. Loughborough, a close associate, testifies:

“It is now over fifty-eight years since the writer first saw Mrs. E. G. White in prophetic vision. During these years many prophetic statements have been made by her relative to things that would take place. Some of these predictions relate to events already fulfilled, and some are in process of fulfillment, while others are still future. As to those relating to the past or present events, I know not of a single instance of failure.”—*The Prophetic Gift in the Gospel Church*, p. 72.

“We find that the continual instruction given through Mrs. White has been in the line of unity and harmony, admonishing to ‘counsel together’ and ‘press together,’ to be in union with Christ, thus insuring true fellowship and union with one another.”—*Ibid.*, p. 99.

The testimony of one who was in a strategic point for observation should be most helpful. Uriah Smith, for many years the editor of the church paper, *The Review and Herald*, in constant touch with Mrs. White and her work, and sometimes the recipient of her testimonies and counsels, should be able to judge her work by the fruit or results of that work.

[140] “The Bible, and the Bible alone, ‘The Bible in its purity,’ ‘The Bible a sufficient and only reliable rule of life,’ etc., etc., is now the great cry of those who are giving vent to their opposition to the visions, and are working with their might to prejudice others against them. This course reminds us of the low tricks and maneuvers resorted to by political demagogues to gain their nefarious ends. . . . Such are unworthy weapons in the hands of Christians; yet some, we are sorry to say, who profess that name, do not hesitate to use them.

“The Protestant principle, of ‘The Bible and the Bible alone,’ is of itself good and true; and we stand upon it as firmly as any one can;

but when re-iterated in connection with outspoken denunciations of the visions, it has a specious appearance for evil. So used it contains a covert insinuation, most effectually calculated to warp the judgment of the unguarded, that to believe the visions is to leave the Bible, and to cling to the Bible, is to discard the visions. . . .

“1. When we claim to stand on the Bible and the Bible alone, we bind ourselves to receive, unequivocally and fully, all that the Bible teaches. This being a self-evident proposition, we pass on to inquire what the Bible teaches concerning the outpouring of the Spirit, its operations, the gift of prophecy, visions, etc. . . .

“In view of all these considerations, what shall we conclude? Those who reject these manifestations, do so not only without evidence, but against all evidence. Those who profess to stand on the Bible and the Bible alone are bound to receive what the Bible tells them will exist, and commands them to respect.

“One illustration may help to set this matter in a still clearer light. Suppose we are about to start upon a voyage. The owner of the vessel gives us a book of directions, telling us that it contains instructions sufficient for our whole journey, and that if we will heed them, we shall reach in safety our port of destination. Setting sail we open our book to learn its contents. We find that its author lays down general principles to govern us in our voyage, and instructs us as far as practicable, touching the various contingencies that may arise, till the end; but he also tells us that the latter part of our journey will be especially perilous; that the features of the coast are ever changing by reason of quicksands and tempests; ‘but for this part of the journey,’ says he, ‘I have provided you a pilot, who will meet you, and give you such directions as the surrounding circumstances and dangers may require; and to him you must give heed.’ With these directions we reach the perilous time specified, and the pilot, according to promise, appears. But some of the crew, as he offers his services, rise up against him. ‘We have the original book of directions,’ say they, ‘and that is enough for us. We stand upon that, and that alone; we want nothing of you.’ Who now heed that original book of directions? those who reject the pilot, or those who receive him, as that book instructs them? Judge ye.

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“But some, through lack of perception, or lack of principle, or the ebullitions of an unconquerable prejudice, one, or all combined,

may meet us at this point like this: ‘Then you would have us take sister White as our pilot, would you?’ It is to forestall any efforts in this direction, that this sentence is penned. We say no such thing. What we do say is distinctly this: that the gifts of the Spirit are given for our pilot through these perilous times, and wherever and in whomsoever we find genuine manifestations of these, we are bound to respect them, nor can we do otherwise without in so far rejecting the word of God, which directs us to receive them. Who now stand upon the Bible, and the Bible alone?”—“Do We Discard the Bible by Endorsing the Visions?” in [The Review and Herald, January 13, 1863](#).

[142] ***Those Interested Who Disapproved.***—One of Mrs. White’s most severe and unrelenting critics was D. M. Canright, one-time preacher for the Seventh-day Adventist people. Look at Canright’s attitude toward Mrs. White from three angles: first, as a Seventh-day Adventist; second, as an opposer of the messages; finally as an old man, too proud to admit a mistake, too weak to take his stand for the truth.

We wish, therefore, to give you the story of D. M. Canright, and show how he came to disagree with the Spirit of prophecy and with the Advent Movement. D. M. Canright was a very capable man. He had remarkable talents. He was a very fine speaker. He was a keen debater. He was one who could bring fear and trembling into any opponent; and then he began to think himself to be very good, an expert in his field, too good for such a small denomination. Now, friends, it is dangerous for a man to think highly of himself and of his qualifications and ability, for sometimes it turns his head and causes him to feel a bit superior. We call it an inflated ego.

D. M. Canright’s failure was due to the fact that he thought himself too big and too good for such a little denomination. And when the brethren did not accept him according to his own estimate of himself, he turned against the denomination and began to write against this people.

[143] But let us first go back to the time when D. M. Canright was an interested friend of the movement, and read a few words from his pen. In 1885, just two years before he left the Seventh-day Adventist Church, he wrote in the *Review and Herald* for all to read the following words concerning Ellen G. White’s books:

“While I have carefully read the first, second, and third volumes of ‘Spirit of Prophecy,’ heaven has seemed very near to me. If the Spirit of God does not speak to us in these writings, then I should despair of ever discerning it. Oh, how precious the dear Saviour looks! How infinitely valuable the salvation of one soul! How hateful and inexcusable sin appears! God is good, and the sweetest thing on this earth is to love and serve Him.”—Jan. 6, 1885, p. 16.

“I have read many books, but never one which has interested me so intensely and impressed me so profoundly as Vol. IV. of ‘The Great Controversy,’ by Sr. White. Perhaps it may be partly because I see things differently; but I am sure that is not wholly the reason. The historical part is good, but that which was of the most intense interest to me, was the last part, beginning with the ‘Origin of Evil.’ The ideas concerning the nature and attributes of God, the character of Christ, and the rebellion of Lucifer in heaven, carry with them their own proof of inspiration. They moved the depths of my soul as nothing else ever did. I feel that I have a new and higher conception of the goodness and forbearance of God, the awful wickedness of Satan, and the tender love of Christ. I wish everybody could read it whether of our people or not. Get it, brethren, and read it carefully.”—*Ibid.*, p. 9.

In 1877, ten years before he finally turned his back on the Adventist Church and Ellen G. White, he wrote:

“As to the Christian character of Sr. White, I beg leave to say that I think I know something about it. I have been acquainted with Sr. White for eighteen years, more than half the history of our people. I have been in their family time and again, sometimes weeks at a time. They have been in our house and family many times. I have traveled with them almost everywhere; have been with them in private and in public, in meeting and out of meeting, and have had the very best chances to know something of the life, character, and spirit of Bro. and Sr. White. As a minister, I have had to deal with all kinds of persons, and all kinds of character, till I think I can judge something of what a person is, at least after years of intimate acquaintance.

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“I know Sr. White to be an unassuming, modest, kindhearted, noble woman. These traits in her character are not simply put on and cultivated, but they spring gracefully and easily from her natural disposition. She is not self-conceited, self-righteous, and self-im-

portant, as fanatics always are. I have frequently come in contact with fanatical persons, and I have always found them to be full of pretensions, full of pride, ready to give their opinion, boastful of their holiness, etc. But I have ever found Sr. White the reverse of all this. Any one, the poorest and the humblest, can go to her freely for advice and comfort without being repulsed. She is ever looking after the needy, the destitute, and the suffering, providing for them, and pleading their cause. I have never formed an acquaintance with any persons who so constantly have the fear of God before them.”—[The Review and Herald, April 26, 1877](#), p. 132.

It is strange how quickly the mental machinery of some people can go into reverse. We believe D. M. Canright to have been an honest man and to have meant what he said, at least when he was saying it.

[145] Either he told the truth or he told lies. Now read some words written some time later by the same man and judge for yourself which Canright was telling the truth:

“I have been well acquainted with Mrs. White for nearly thirty years; have been in her family for weeks at a time, and she has often been in my family. I am familiar with all her work and all her books. I am satisfied that the whole thing is a delusion. Her visions have been a constant source of quarrels and divisions among themselves. Many of their ablest men, and thousands of others, have left them on this account. There is a strong antivision party now. . . .

“Mrs. White’s trances are simply the result of disease and religious excitement—hysteria. At the age of nine she received a blow upon her head which broke her nose and nearly killed her. It shattered her nervous system beyond recovery, and affected her mind to melancholy and even to insanity. She was weakly, sickly, often fainted, and did not expect to live. In this condition she was carried away with the Millerite fanaticism, and went into trances with others. All this she tells herself, in *Spiritual Gifts*, Volume II, pages 7-48. . . .

“What harm does she do? Much every way. She teaches a false doctrine, writes a new Bible, leads her people to be narrow, clannish, and bigoted, to oppose the work of all other churches and needed Sunday and temperance laws. She has divided families, broken up churches, driven some to infidelity and others into despair. It leads her advocates to deceive. Being afraid that it will hurt them if it is

known in what light they really hold her visions, they deny that it is a matter of importance with them. This is false and deceptive, for they hold her visions to be as sacred as the Bible. To defend her mistakes and errors, both she and her apologists have to deny the plainest facts and resort to untruthful statements. Fear of her authority compels many to profess faith in her when they have none, and thus become hypocrites.”—D. M. Canright, “No. 4, Mrs. White and Her Visions,” in *Adventism Refuted in a Nutshell* (1889), pp. 2-7. [146]

Many years went by, and D. M. Canright became the pastor emeritus of the Berean Baptist church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In 1919 he published a book, *Life of Mrs. E. G. White*, in which he took one full page to make clear his “present standing“:

“Since I withdrew from the Adventists, over thirty years ago, they have continued to report that I have regretted leaving them, have tried to get back again, have repudiated my book which I wrote and have confessed that I am now a lost man. There has never been a word of truth in any of these reports. I expect them to report that I recanted on my deathbed. All this is done to hinder the influence of my books. I now reaffirm all that I have written in my books and tracts against that doctrine.

“Several Adventist ministers have rendered valuable aid in preparing these pages. Once they were believers in Mrs. White’s divine inspiration, but plain facts finally compelled them to renounce faith in her dreams.”—Page 15.

We come now to the question, Did D. M. Canright ever show any signs of regret for his own course of action? Did he ever indicate that he was sorry for the active and open warfare he conducted against Ellen G. White? In his book published in 1919 he declared that he had not. But in 1915 when Mrs. White rested in her casket in Battle Creek, after the funeral service was ended the people passed quietly by to pay a final tribute to a great, noble, but humble servant of God, and D. M. Canright was among them. He and his brother passed by once, and then came by a second time. He rested his hand upon the side of the casket, and with warm tears trickling down his cheeks, he said, “There is a noble Christian woman gone.”—W. A. Spicer, *The Spirit of Prophecy in the Advent Movement*, p. 127. [147]

This statement is the closest we have to anything that might indicate a regret. No, he never relented; he never recanted from his strong opposition. His chief antagonism was against Ellen G. White. But his nephew, at a Lynwood, California, camp meeting in June, 1953, gave a very interesting side light into D. M. Canright's own thinking during the years after he left the church.

This nephew, who at one time had lived in D. M. Canright's home, and at whose home D. M. Canright used to visit, was able to give firsthand information, which is passed on to you because of the interest it has in connection with this story. At one time a Methodist minister wanted to challenge a Seventh-day Adventist minister to debate regarding the Sabbath. He thought if he could only get to D. M. Canright, he certainly could get the material he needed, and then he would squash that Adventist minister with D. M. Canright's own thunder.

[148] So he went to D. M. Canright's home and said, "I have a debate coming up with a Seventh-day Adventist minister on the question of the Sabbath. I thought you would certainly be the man to give me all the material I need to squash him. Now here I am. I can spend three days!" D. M. Canright, in the presence of his nephew, told the Methodist minister, "Brother, I advise you not to debate with the Adventists on the Sabbath. They have all the facts on their side of the question!" It did not take him three days to tell that man that he had better be careful in a debate on the Sabbath. No, it does not take three days to give anyone the facts of church history regarding the Sabbath or Sunday.

D. M. Canright, we are informed, frequently expressed the thought that Adventists were right in their general doctrines and teachings of the church. He disagreed primarily on the question of visions, revelations, and the relation of Ellen G. White to the church and the Bible.

Those Disinterested Who Approved.—The last group of contemporaries to speak their mind concerning Ellen G. White are those non-Adventists who were neither friend nor foe, but merely onlookers or bystanders, who observed much but said little. They saw her as a woman, a neighbor, a citizen, a busy worker going here and there. They had no special reason for saying anything either good or bad about her.

Yet come with me to Battle Creek, where Ellen G. White lived for many years. The town leaders were preparing for a big mass meeting. They were anxious to make a good impression and to reach a certain objective in something of interest to all the citizens of Battle Creek. They wanted a public speaker with persuasive power, a gift of oratory, and a personality that would draw and hold the crowds. [149]

To whom did they turn? None other than one of their own citizens in the West End—Ellen G. White. Mayor Austin, W. H. Skinner, cashier of the First National Bank, and C. C. Peavey were the committee on arrangements. They invited Mrs. White because they knew her and her work. Mrs. White, in writing of that occasion, says:

“I spoke in the mammoth tent, Sunday evening, July 1 [1877], upon the subject of Christian Temperance. God helped me that evening; and although I spoke ninety minutes, the crowd of fully five thousand persons listened in almost breathless silence.”—[Testimonies for the Church 4:275](#).

The following year (1878) a book was published entitled *American Biographical History of Eminent and Self-Made Men of the State of Michigan, Third Congressional District*. The authors of this book evidently observed and thought independently relative to Mrs. White:

“Mrs. White is a woman of singularly well-balanced mental organization. Benevolence, spirituality, conscientiousness, and idealism are the predominating traits. Her personal qualities are such to win for her the warmest friendship of all with whom she comes in contact, and to inspire them with the utmost confidence. . . . Notwithstanding her many years of public labor, she has retained all the simplicity and honesty which characterized her early life. [150]

“As a speaker, Mrs. White is one of the most successful of the few ladies who have become noteworthy as lecturers, in this country, during the last twenty years. Constant use has so strengthened her vocal organs as to give her voice rare depth and power. Her clearness and strength of articulation are so great that, when speaking in the open air, she has frequently been distinctly heard at the distance of a mile. Her language, though simple, is always forcible and elegant. When inspired with her subject, she is often marvelously eloquent,

holding the largest audiences spellbound for hours without a sign of impatience or weariness.

“The subject matter of her discourses is always of a practical character, bearing chiefly on fireside duties, the religious education of children, temperance, and kindred topics. On revival occasions, she is always the most effective speaker. She has frequently spoken to immense audiences, in the large cities, on her favorite themes, and has always been received with great favor.”—Page 108.

That is a wonderful testimony. Very few people can have such a testimony borne concerning them and their work.

D. M. Canright speaks of Ellen G. White as a sickly person, rather weak and frail; but if she had a voice that could be heard distinctly at the distance of a mile, without a public-address system, she had something that very few speakers have today.

[151] We like to think of this testimonial in the book as coming from those who had no special interest in her, who made no special claims for her, but who simply knew her as a public speaker, one of the most effective speakers of the day.

The Relation to Outside Influences

It would be but human to question and wonder whether at times Ellen G. White was not influenced by someone near her, or working for her, or perhaps by the president of the General Conference, who might give her messages a certain bias or slant. Some have wondered to what extent Milton’s *Paradise Lost* might have influenced her Conflict of the Ages Series, or whether she had been reading Drs. Trall and Jackson before her “health vision” of 1863.

These are good and fair questions, and therefore deserve the same kind of answer. First, let us look at the *Paradise Lost* question. In the spring of 1858 she had the long vision in which the scenes of the great controversy between Christ and Satan were opened before her. She was so thrilled with the message that she told it to the believers in Battle Creek at the morning and evening services.

J. N. Andrews heard the description of the fall of Satan, the fall of man, and the plan of salvation. He asked Mrs. White whether she had ever read Milton’s book. She replied that she had never seen it or read it. A little later J. N. Andrews gave her a copy, but without

opening it she put it up on a high shelf out of reach until she had finished writing out what she had been shown.

Questions concerning the health message of 1863 brought from her pen these words: [152]

“As I introduced the subject of health to friends . . . and spoke against drugs and flesh meats, and in favor of water, pure air, and a proper diet, the reply was often made, ‘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.”—[The Review and Herald, October 8, 1867](#), p. 260.

In the same year she again declared, “My views were written independent of books or the opinions of others.”—[Manuscript 27, 1867](#), quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant*, p. 16.

Immediately someone will say, “But now, wait a minute. What about those quotations from history books that we have in the book *The Great Controversy*? Where did they come from? How did they get into the writings?” Those are good questions and most certainly deserve satisfactory answers. It is a long story, but we can tell you in brief how those passages got into that book in *The Conflict of the Ages Series*. Here again we do well to turn to her own words for the reasons that seemed to satisfy her.

In the very first writing of *The Great Controversy* story which appears currently in the last part of *Early Writings*, not one quotation from a secular history book will be found. We do, however, find quotations in the 1883 manuscript, which became the 1884 edition. Therein some excerpts are in quotation marks, while others are not. More quotations appear in the 1888 edition, but it is not until the 1911 edition that we find all quotations properly documented and acknowledged. Now why? [153]

Mrs. White answers the question in these words:

“The great events which have marked the progress of reform in past ages, are matters of history, well known and universally acknowledged by the Protestant world; they are facts which none

can gainsay. This history I presented briefly, in accordance with the scope of the book, and the brevity which must necessarily be observed, the facts having been condensed into as little space as seemed consistent with a proper understanding of their application. In some cases where a historian has so grouped together events as to afford, in brief, a comprehensive view of the subject, or has summarized details in a convenient manner, his words have been quoted; but in some instances no specific credit has been given, since the quotations are not given for the purpose of citing that writer as authority, but because his statement affords a ready and forcible presentation of the subject. In narrating the experience and views of those carrying forward the work of reform in our own time, similar use has been made of their published works.”—Introduction to [The Great Controversy](#), 13, 14.

[154] From W. C. White, who worked with his mother, Ellen G. White, in the preparation of the 1911 edition of the book, we learn that “in the new edition the reader will find more than four hundred references to eighty-eight authors and authorities,” and further with regard to the “references to the historians quoted, she instructed us to hunt up and insert the historical references. She also instructed us to verify the quotations, and to correct any inaccuracies found; and where quotations were made from passages that were rendered differently by different translators, to use that translation which was found to be most correct and authentic.”—*A statement made before the General Conference Council*, Oct. 30, 1911, pp. 2, 3.

Now back in those days there was greater freedom in one writer using the words or phrases of another in setting forth his presentation. Thus the nineteenth century saw many writers at times borrowing from each other without always using quotation marks and frequently without giving credit. We would not do that today. Thus we find that some of the quotations used in the earlier editions of *The Great Controversy* were without quotation marks or references.

But another question is, What effect does the using of *any* material from other writers have on the question of the inspiration of her writings as a whole? Let us remember that from a mind enlightened in vision Mrs. White spoke forth and wrote the messages. The words employed merely conveyed the thoughts, and she at different times might use different words to express the same thoughts; and if

she found in the writings of another a description in harmony with what was revealed to her, she might employ a phrase or a sentence, or even more, as she explained in her introduction to *The Great Controversy*. The subject of inspiration is discussed in a subsequent chapter, but right here let us remember the words of W. C. White found in the same statement that was quoted above:

[155]

“Mother has never laid claim to verbal inspiration, and I do not find that my father [James White], or Elders Bates, Andrews, Smith or Waggoner put forth this claim. If there were verbal inspiration in writing her manuscripts, why should there be on her part the work of addition or adaptation? It is a fact that mother often takes one of her manuscripts, and goes over it thoroughly, making additions that develop the thought still further.”

Mrs. White did claim thought inspiration, but never verbal inspiration. The very way in which her work was done would preclude any such claim. In 1906 she made a very important declaration on this point. She said:

“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 the printer.”—*The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies to the Church*, p. 4.

To this she added a further explanation:

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“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. 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.”—*Ibid.*

Once again we are impressed with the fact that our people should make no claim for Mrs. White beyond that which she herself made. Neither should we claim less for her than she did for herself. This is both safe and sensible.

With regard to outside influences upon her and her work we are safe in saying that Mrs. White generally did not lack for words when it came to describing what she saw in vision and, therefore, you will find throughout her writings generally very few quotations from any source aside from the Bible.

The Physical Phenomena Attending the Visions

For Seventh-day Adventists in particular and the world in general, seventy years of work by Ellen G. White have produced so many results of varied kinds that she and her works can be appraised and judged by their fruits alone. It was not so in 1844 and the years that immediately followed. Then evidence was needed of a kind so unusual, so specific, as to arrest attention, produce conviction, and cause men and women to believe in her and her revelations.

[157] Physical phenomena, such as are described in the Bible concerning prophets, dreams, and visions, supplied this evidence. They are described in [Daniel 10:16-19](#); [Numbers 24:3, 4](#); [2 Samuel 23:2](#); [2 Corinthians 12:2-4](#). The only question that concerns us here is, Did Ellen G. White actually give evidence of these Biblical signs in the realm of physical phenomena?

Few, if any, now reading these words, can bear a personal testimony of having seen her in vision when she gave evidence of such physical manifestations. The most and the best we can do is to take the word or testimony of those who did have such firsthand knowledge. This we have in abundance from men whose veracity and honor are beyond question or doubt.

The description of the physical phenomena accompanying Mrs. White's visions which was given by G. I. Butler, General Conference president, in 1874, is representative:

“All we ask is that people shall be reasonable. We are prepared to support by hundreds of living truthful witnesses all that we shall claim, so far as facts are concerned, of the manifestation itself, for this thing has not been done in a corner. For nearly thirty years past these visions have been given with greater or less frequency, and have been witnessed by many, oftentimes by unbelievers as well as those believing them. They generally, but not always, occur in the midst of earnest seasons of religious interest while the Spirit of

God is specially present, if those can tell who are in attendance. The time Mrs. White is in this condition has varied from fifteen minutes to one hundred and eighty. During this time the heart and pulse continue to beat, the eyes are always wide open, and seem to be gazing at some far-distant object, and are never fixed on any person or thing in the room. They are always directed upward. They exhibit a pleasant expression. There is no ghastly look or any resemblance of fainting. The brightest light may be suddenly brought near her eyes, or feints made as if to thrust something into the eye, and there is never the slightest wink or change of expression on that account; and it is sometimes hours and even days after she comes out of this condition before she recovers her natural sight. She says it seems to her that she comes back into a dark world, yet her eyesight is in nowise injured by her visions.

[158]

“While she is in vision, her breathing entirely ceases. No breath ever escapes her nostrils or lips when in this condition. This has been proved by many witnesses, among them physicians of skill, and themselves unbelievers in the visions, on some occasions being appointed by a public congregation for the purpose. It has been proved many times by tightly holding the nostrils and mouth with the hand, and by putting a looking-glass before them so close that any escape of the moisture of the breath would be detected. In this condition she often speaks words and short sentences, yet not the slightest breath escapes. When she goes into this condition, there is no appearance of swooning or faintness, her face retains its natural color, and the blood circulates as usual. Often she loses her strength temporarily and reclines or sits; but at other times she stands up. She moves her arms gracefully, and often her face is lighted up with radiance as though the glory of Heaven rested upon her. She is utterly unconscious of every thing going on around her, while she is in vision, having no knowledge whatever of what is said and done in her presence. A person may pinch her flesh, and do things which would cause great and sudden pain in her ordinary condition, and she will not notice it by the slightest tremor.

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“There are none of the disgusting grimaces or contortions which usually attend spiritualist mediums, but calm, dignified, and impressive, her very appearance strikes the beholder with reverence and solemnity. There is nothing fanatical in her appearance. When she

comes out of this condition she speaks and writes from time to time what she has seen while in vision; and the supernatural character of these visions is seen even more clearly in what she thus reveals than in her appearance and condition while in vision, for many things have thus been related which it was impossible for her to know in any other way.”—[The Review and Herald, June 9, 1874](#), p. 201.

Chapter 10—The Relation of Ellen G. White to the Bible [160]

The relation of Ellen G. White to the Bible is one of the most important of the studies in this series. We have tried to indicate in the studies that have gone before that our concern is over three fundamental points of faith: (1) that we thoroughly understand and believe that God is; (2) that we thoroughly understand and believe that the Bible is God's word; and (3) that we thoroughly understand, and have no question whatsoever, that in giving us this Book, God spoke through men called prophets.

If we are satisfied and convinced on these three facts of faith, then we have no reason to doubt anything else concerning the Spirit of prophecy for today. These three facts are absolutely fundamental, and we must have no question or uncertainty whatsoever regarding them. Having established these three facts in our own minds, and having come to a conclusion that they are indeed facts on which the Christian faith is established, then we cannot doubt that God did use men and women as His spokesmen, as His servants, as His messengers. [161]

I take for granted that in the Seventh-day Adventist Church around the world most certainly no one would openly deny and defy God and His simple declaration of the fact that He has chosen to speak to men by His holy men called prophets. This is basic and fundamental.

The question we have raised in this study is simply this: "Was Ellen G. White used by God as His prophet or messenger in the remnant church?" This we have studied, and we think sufficient evidence has been produced to satisfy every one of us that she was indeed chosen by God, and was for seventy years used by Him as His messenger, and that He gave her revelations, which she faithfully wrote out and which are now published for us to read.

Having accepted Ellen G. White as one of God's messengers, and believing that she manifested the gift of prophecy, then we must

decide on the relationship of her writings to the Bible. And this, we say again, is a rather difficult question for some of our people. What position can we safely take? Some people tend to be away over on one extreme, while some tend to be over on the opposite extreme; and some like to follow far behind, while others try to run far ahead! The question for *me* is, Where shall I stand? I have already stated [162] that I have taken my personal stand right beside Ellen G. White on all these questions. I do not intend to be too far to the right or too far to the left; neither do I wish to lag behind or to run ahead of her. I am determined to stand right beside her. Then I know I shall be safe on every issue.

A few Seventh-day Adventists are inclined to give the impression that Ellen G. White's writings are on a par with the Bible, and a very few tend to set the Scriptures aside and give first place in their study to the books written by Sister White. Without doubt the very free use we make of paragraphs and sentences from her writings in our sermons and Sabbath school lessons has given rise to the accusation from our critics that we make of these writings a second Bible.

However, to properly understand how Seventh-day Adventists as a group or as a church regard the writings of Ellen G. White, we should turn first to Mrs. White herself and find out the relation she saw between her writings and the Bible, and then examine statements by the leaders of the denomination as to the relation they see between the Bible and Mrs. White's writings.

Ellen G. White Exalted the Scriptures

No clearer statement can be found from the pen of Ellen G. White concerning the relationship of her writings to the Scriptures than the words with which she closed her first book (*Experiences and Views*) in 1851:

[163] "I recommend to you, dear reader, the word of God as the rule of your faith and practise. 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." [A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White, 64](#); reprinted in [Early Writings, 78](#).

All through her life she exalted the Word of God. Her last words to the General Conference in session were spoken in 1909 as she held the Bible extended on her hands: "I commend unto you this Book." W. A. Spicer, *Certainties of the Advent Movement*, p. 202.

Again and again she reiterated the truth of the supremacy of the Word of God:

"I take the Bible just as it is, as the Inspired Word. I believe its utterances in an entire Bible. Men arise who think they find something to criticize in God's word. They lay it bare before others as evidence of superior wisdom. . . .

"Brethren, let not a mind or hand be engaged in criticizing the Bible. . . . Men should let God take care of His own Book, His Living Oracles, as He has done for ages. . . . Brethren, cling to your Bible, as it reads, and stop your criticisms in regard to its validity, and obey the word, and not one of you will be lost. . . .

"Men of humble acquirements, possessing but limited capabilities and opportunities to become conversant in the Scriptures, find in the Living Oracles comfort, guidance, counsel, and the plan of salvation as clear as a sunbeam. No one need be lost for want of knowledge, unless he is willfully blind.

"We thank God that the Bible is prepared for the poor man as well as for the learned man. It is fitted for all ages and all classes." [Manuscript 16, 1888](#), quoted in F. M. Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus*, pp. 13-15.

[164]

"God committed the preparation of His divinely inspired word to finite man. This word arranged into books, the Old and New Testaments, is the guidebook to the inhabitants of a fallen world; bequeathed to them, that by studying and obeying the directions, not one soul would lose its way to heaven." *Ibid.*, p. 13.

"The truth of God is found in His word. Those who feel that they must seek elsewhere for present truth need to be converted anew. They have wrong habits to mend, evil ways to be abandoned. They need to seek anew the truth as it is in Jesus, that their character building may be in harmony with the lessons of Christ. As they abandon their human ideas and take up their God-given duties, beholding Christ and becoming conformed to His likeness, they say: 'Nearer, my God, to Thee; nearer to Thee.'" [Testimonies for the Church 8:192](#).

“Brother J would confuse the mind by seeking to make it appear that the light God has given through the *Testimonies* is an addition to the word of God, but in this he presents the matter in a false light. God has seen fit in this matter to bring the minds of His people to His word, to give them a clearer understanding of it.” [Testimonies for the Church 4:246](#).

“The word of God abounds in general principles for the formation of correct habits of living, and the testimonies, general and personal, have been calculated to call their attention more especially to these principles.” [Testimonies for the Church 8:323](#).

[165] For further study on this phase of the topic, kindly read the following references: *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 384; *Gospel Workers*, 249; *The Desire of Ages*, 392; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 77; [Testimonies for the Church 2:454, 455, 605-607; 665-667, 674; 402, 403](#); Introduction to *The Great Controversy*.

From her own statements we may conclude that Ellen G. White believed—

1. That the entire Bible is the Inspired Word of God.
 2. That men should “cling” to their Bibles.
 3. That men should believe and obey the Bible and “not one” of them would be lost.
 4. That in the Bible is found “comfort, guidance, counsel, and the plan of salvation as clear as a sunbeam.”
 5. That the Bible is fitted for the needs of all—rich and poor, learned and illiterate, “all ages and all classes.”
 6. That the “truth of God is found in His Word.”
 7. That no one need “seek elsewhere for present truth.”
 8. That the Bible contains all that a man needs for salvation.
 9. That the Bible sets forth the pattern for Christian living.
 10. That the Testimonies were given only because man has neglected his Bible, and that the Testimonies will direct him back to his Bible. They are not given as “an addition to the word of God,”
- [166] or to take the place of that Word of God.

These ten conclusions are all held by men of the past and men of the present who have been most diligent and serious students of the Spirit of prophecy. Now let me introduce one other thought: If all these conclusions are true, did Ellen G. White ever claim to have

given Seventh-day Adventists their doctrinal teaching? their system of theology? Did she ever give us our prophetic interpretations? Did she claim that her writings would supplant all other writings that had to do with the Scriptures and prophetic interpretations? The answer to all these questions is No.

The reason I think that you and I should know what she said, and how she related herself to our doctrines, is this: Too many people today are accusing us as Adventists of having a second Bible, or of setting the Bible aside and using only the red books, as her writings are sometimes called. That accusation probably comes from the fact that many of us, teachers and preachers, use the writings of the Spirit of prophecy in our Sabbath school teaching, in our Sabbath sermons, in much of our writings, because we love the way she expresses her thoughts and the beautiful language in which they are couched. Consequently, many people have taken the attitude that we are setting the Bible aside and using the writings of Ellen G. White in place of the Scriptures. This is not true. The denomination has never done it.

Spirit of Prophecy Relationship to Development of Doctrine [167]

Someone may say, “Is it not a fact that we Adventists got our fundamental doctrines and interpretations of prophecy from the writings of Ellen G. White?”

There is but one answer—No. We did not do so in the past and we cannot do so today. Our doctrines came from the Bible, and then were confirmed by God in the revelations given to Mrs. White. As to interpretations of prophecy, L. E. Froom, in his four volumes, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, has proved conclusively that Seventh-day Adventists have made but few contributions in this field. Nowhere does Ellen G. White claim the right or distinction to any original interpretations of prophecy. That was not her burden or her message.

In 1848 and 1849 the earnest group of Sabbath-observing Adventists came together in a series of Bible conferences. They met in such places as Rocky Hill, Connecticut, April 20-24, 1848; Volney, New York, beginning August 18, 1848, in “Brother Arnold’s barn“: Port Gibson, New York, August 27 and 28, in “Hiram Edson’s barn“:

Rocky Hill, Connecticut, September 8 and 9; and Topsham, Maine, October 20-22, in "Brother Howland's house."

The record states that when they first came together for such study, "hardly two agreed. Each was strenuous for his views." [Spiritual Gifts 2:97](#).

[168] Sister White says:

"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. . . . 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." *Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 2, p. 57.

Of great significance are these words:

"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." *Ibid.*

Without a doubt God intended it to be that way, for the doctrinal truths held by Seventh-day Adventists thus come from the Bible and not from Ellen G. White.

[169] Be not mistaken, dear friends, no Christian group in the world has a more closely knit, more carefully integrated, system of theology than do Seventh-day Adventists. Our doctrines come from the Bible. They came through men who diligently searched the Scriptures, and who put those doctrinal studies together in such a way that there seems to be no way of answering the argument. Did you know that Mrs. White kept the Sabbath for seven months before she had a vision relating to the Sabbath? And so it was with all our doctrines. They came from the Bible first, as noble men and women examined the Word of God. Visions were given which pointed out their errors in reasoning and confirmed their conclusions. Let it

be clearly understood that Seventh-day Adventists did not get their system of theology from the writings of Ellen G. White. Our system of theology comes from the Scriptures alone.

The Greater Light and the Lesser Light

In order that there may be no mistake in the relation of the writings of Ellen G. White to the Bible, God impressed this fact upon her mind by a dream that she had on April 3, 1871. Concerning it she wrote:

“I seemed to be attending an important meeting, at which a large company were assembled. . . .

“I took the precious Bible and surrounded it with 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*. . . .

[170]

“The *Testimonies* are not to belittle the word of God, but to exalt it and attract minds to it, that the beautiful simplicity of truth may impress all.” [Testimonies for the Church 5:664, 665](#).

There is one other statement that seems to set forth Mrs. White’s own attitude and certainly leaves no room for doubt or uncertainty in the matter:

“Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a *lesser light* to lead men and women to the *greater light*.”—[The Review and Herald, January 20, 1903](#), p. 15. (Italic’s supplied.)

We should close this section with the most solemn words she ever wrote on the subject:

“In the Bible the will of God is revealed to His children. Wherever it is read, in the family circle, the school, or the church, all should give quiet and devout attention as if God were really present and speaking to them.” [Testimonies for the Church 5:84](#).

What Others Have Said of the Relation of the Testimonies to the Bible

Ellen G. White leaves us with no doubt as to her own attitude toward the Bible. Now it becomes necessary to discover the attitude of her brethren, and the relation they saw between those writings and the Bible.

James White reproduced in the [The Review and Herald, October 16, 1855](#), what he had first stated in a tract in 1847. He said:

[171] “The Bible is a perfect and complete revelation. It is our only rule of faith and practice. But this is no reason why God may not show the past, present, and future fulfillment of his word, in these *last days*, by dreams and visions, according to Peter’s testimony. True visions are given to lead us to God, and to his written word; but those that are given for a new rule of faith and practice, separate from the Bible, cannot be from God, and should be rejected.” Page 61.

He then quotes from another of his articles on the gifts of the gospel church:

“Every Christian is therefore in duty bound to take the Bible as a perfect rule of faith and duty. He should pray fervently to be aided by the Holy Spirit in searching the Scriptures for the whole truth, and for his whole duty. He is not at liberty to turn from them to learn his duty through any of the gifts. We say that the very moment he does, he places the gifts in a wrong place, and takes an extremely dangerous position.” *Ibid.*

In the February 28, 1856, issue of the *Review*, James White was laboring to correct the attitude of our people on the same topic. He stated his position and viewpoint in these words:

[172] “The Word should be in front, and the eye of the church should be placed upon it, as the rule to walk by, and the fountain of wisdom, from which to learn duty in ‘all good works.’ But if a portion of the church err from the truths of the Bible, and become weak and sickly, and the flock become scattered, so that it seems necessary for God to employ the Gifts of the Spirit to correct, revive and heal the erring, we should let Him work. Yea more, we should pray for Him to work and plead earnestly that He would work by the Spirit’s power, and

bring the scattered sheep to His fold. Praise the Lord, He will work. Amen.” Page 173.

J. N. Andrews was highly respected by our people in the early years of our work. He must have represented a prevailing attitude in 1870 when he wrote:

“1. We understand that the Holy Scriptures are divinely inspired, and that they contain the truth of God which is able to make us wise unto salvation.

“2. But we do not understand that the gift of the Scriptures to mankind, supersedes the gift of the Holy Spirit to the people of God.

“3. On the contrary, we do believe that the Scriptures plainly reveal the office and work of the Holy Spirit; which office and work can never cease while man remains upon probation.

“4. This work is revealed to us in the Bible doctrine of spiritual gifts.

“5. While therefore we do heartily accept the Scriptures as teaching man’s whole duty toward God, we do not deny the Holy Spirit that place in the church which the Scriptures assign to it. . . .

“8. The work of the Holy Spirit may be divided into two parts: First, that which is designed simply to convert and to sanctify the person affected by it. Second, that which is for the purpose of opening the truth of God, and of correcting error, and of reproof and rebuking secret sins. This part of the work is wrought by what the Scriptures term spiritual gifts. . . .

“13. Now the Bible expressly teaches that the existence of these gifts is as necessary to the church of Christ, as the different members are necessary to the well-being of the body. While, therefore, the Bible recognizes the gifts of the Spirit, these are not given to supersede the Bible, nor yet to fill the same place as the Bible. . . .

[173]

“16. . . . We hold that all the tests presented in the Bible should be applied to the gifts, and that they should be found to sustain the test of such examination. . . .

“19. One of the chief gifts of the Spirit of God that he has placed in the New-Testament church is the gift of prophecy.” [The Review and Herald, February 15, 1870](#), pp. 64, 65.

In 1874 G.I. Butler wrote:

“They [the visions] everywhere direct us to the Scriptures as the great source of true instruction, and to the example of Jesus Christ

as the true pattern. They never claim to be given to take the place of the Bible, but simply to be a manifestation of one of those spiritual gifts set in the church by its divine Lord; and as such should have their proper weight.” [The Review and Herald, June 9, 1874](#), p. 202.

And again, in 1883, he said:

“The majority of our people believe these visions to be a genuine manifestation of spiritual gifts, and as such to be entitled to respect. We do not hold them to be superior to the Bible, or in one sense equal to it. The Scriptures are our rule to test everything by, the visions as well as all other things. That rule, therefore, is of the highest authority; the standard is higher than the thing tested by it. If the Bible should show the visions were not in harmony with it, the Bible would stand, and the visions would be given up. This shows plainly that we hold the Bible the highest, our enemies to the contrary, notwithstanding.” *The Review and Herald Supplement*, Aug. 14, 1883, p. 12.

[174] By 1887, Uriah Smith spoke out with great positiveness on this subject. We do well to ponder his words and follow his reasoning:

“As to the relation of the visions to the word of God, our position is, and ever has been, the same as set forth in the work ‘Objections to the Visions Answered,’ published in 1868. In that work (p. 127) we said:

“Some one may say, Then you make the visions a second New Testament, a Mormon Bible in your system. We do not, as the following reason will show: We have ever held, as set forth in this work, that the word of God, the Bible, is the standard by which to test all these manifestations. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” All gifts of the Spirit in the church, must be thus tested. Now it is evident that that which tests occupies a higher position than that which is tested by it. This, in one word, expresses our view of the relative position which the Bible and the visions sustain to each other. But when a manifestation accords with the Word, and gives every evidence that it is a genuine manifestation of the Spirit of God, we submit it to the objector himself to say how far we may regard it lightly, or despise or transgress its teachings with impunity.” [The Review and Herald, October 1887](#), p. 649.

In March, 1888, G. I. Butler, still president of the General Conference, gave a series of talks to the students in Battle Creek College. As is our custom today in presenting the nature and work of the Spirit of prophecy in the remnant church, he gave an opportunity for questions. One of them had to do with the topic under consideration and expressed a denominational viewpoint in that year:

“*Question 14.* I have heard individuals say that if they were obliged to give up the Bible or the testimonies, they would give up the Bible. Is it right to make such statements, especially before those who have no knowledge of the visions? [175]

“*Answer.* I should say it is very unwise and very wrong to make such a statement as that. I believe that the testimonies are from God, because they agree with the Bible—with the rule it gives by which to test such things. I believe them, perhaps, as strongly as any one; but I have never said and never expect to say that the testimonies are to be placed superior to the Bible, or even equal to the Bible. . . . But the thing which tests is superior to the thing tested. The Bible is the standard. And that which comes up to the standard we ought to accept. But to go so far as to say, ‘I would give up the Bible before the testimonies,’ is a very wrong statement to make. And if any one says the testimonies contradict the Bible, I should advise him to cling to the Bible; for the Bible should be the test by which everything is tried.

“Our enemies make great cavil of this, just because of some such unguarded, foolish statements. Do not do it. Such persons are but little short of being fanatical.” Talks to the Students of the “Special Course” at Battle Creek College, White Publications Document File, 105ff.

Seeing the Scriptures Through the Eye of the Spirit of Prophecy

While Ellen G. White made it very clear that her writings were not in any way to supersede, surpass, or supplant the Holy Scriptures, yet she declared that they would help the diligent student of the Word to see more clearly and distinctly the great truths taught in that Word. They become a sort of magnifying glass, or microscope, to enable the searcher for truth to behold the wondrous beauties contained in the passage under observation. [176]

They become a kind of inspired commentary on the Scriptures. The Bible teachers in our day schools, the teachers in our Sabbath

schools, and the ministers who use the writings of God's messenger in connection with their sermons and lessons are soon identified as men who have something to say and who say it with power. Men who live with the Bible and who place the Testimonies alongside that Book as they search for truth are richly repaid with gems of thought, treasures out of the infinite mind of God brought to man by means of the prophets, ancient and modern. I commend this method of study and this use of the writings to my brethren everywhere. You will be richly rewarded for every hour thus spent in study with your God.

[177] The experience of Mrs. S. M. I. Henry, for many years a prominent WCTU worker, with the writings of Ellen G. White, illustrates the point under discussion. She accepted the Sabbath truth and other tenets of our faith before she became acquainted with and believed in the Testimonies. As she associated with our people in those critical days of readjustment in thinking and of coming to conclusions and decisions, she was somewhat perturbed by what she *saw* and what she *heard*. They did not always agree, and therefore caused her some concern until she saw the Testimonies as simply a lens or a telescope through which to look at the truth.

The following are paragraphs from Mrs. S. M. I. Henry's letter stating the relation she saw between the Bible and the Testimonies:

"I supposed these Testimonies were considered as an appendix to the Bible, and of equal authority with it, that there were those among our people who even judged the Bible by these writings. When I came into the church, I stated to the brethren with whom I conversed that I knew nothing at all about this matter but that I was confident that God was leading me hither, and that he would not lead me into any organization where I would find an insuperable barrier to faith, and that if they were willing to accept me upon this condition, I was glad to come in. . . .

"I had so much confidence in the intelligent understanding of my brethren who fully accepted the Testimonies, that I could not repudiate the claim that this is God's way of teaching his people in these days. I had read a few paragraphs only from these writings, but to everything which I had read or heard I had found a chord in my heart ready to respond; nothing seemed strange or new; it was always like a stave or bar from some old song; a repetition or

resetting of some truth which I had known and loved long before; hence I had found nothing which could lead to any controversy. But one question troubled me. Suppose I should find some point in these writings with which I could not agree, which would be of vital significance if it were competent to become the end of controversy, what would I do with it? I knew that so far as any light which I now had would serve me, it would be impossible to surrender my own judgment to this authority. The Bible had my unquestioning obedience; but while the Testimonies might be good, sound, helpful, they were not, I had been compelled to notice, of sufficient authority to command obedience and silence controversy in those who had professed to have been always led by them. [178]

“This fact caused a heavy and sad burden in my soul. I had supposed because of the solemnity of the truth as we believe it and the times in which we live, that the people who are known as Seventh-day Adventists must of necessity most earnestly believe and endeavor to practice all that they did accept as truth. But as I went out from the quiet seclusion of the Sanitarium, and mingled more with people abroad, I found this practical disbelief in the authority of the Testimonies among our own people, especially in the matter of health principles. It was natural that I should take especial note of this, because I had as a W.C.T.U. woman adopted and followed all the health principles which we had discovered; and as new light had come I promptly walked in it. But now I found in some Adventist homes a total disregard of these principles; and learned that there was controversy even among the brethren who were quoting and teaching from these writings.

“In letters and conversation I was assured that these writings were no longer considered of authority by the church; that they were accepted theoretically, but only as obsolete doctrines were by other denominations; for instance, that they stood on the same relative footing with the teaching of eternal torment in other churches, acknowledged at best with a very pronounced mental reservation even by those who preach it. And so at last I came to even question the necessity of considering this matter any further for myself. I reasoned that I was in all essentials a Seventh-day Adventist. I did not like to seem to be standing for something which I did not believe, but, at present, saw no help for it. I realized the importance

[179] of care in anything which I should write or say to others, and was careful, for I could not but see how helpful, inspiring, and full of truth these writings are even if they should carry no special weight over and above those of any good man or woman who had light and experience in Christian doctrine. . . .

“From my standpoint to see anything in the Bible was to believe it, to receive it,—it was the end of all controversy; and if Adventists believed the Testimonies to be invested with authority from the Spirit of God, how could there be all this controversy upon points concerning which they had so clearly spoken?

“My attitude I see now must have been like that of an unbeliever in the Bible before a congregation of Christians, if he should see the same inconsistencies and declare it as he might have done in the same words; and the effect upon my brethren must have been to arouse them to the same earnest self-examination and consecration which any honest Christian would have made in such a crisis. I knew at once that the sympathies of my brethren were aroused for me, but felt that I was beyond any human help. If the Testimonies were the word of God for this time in which we live, if this was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, I wanted to know it, but only God could make me know it. The brethren did their best to help me, but all that was said seemed to only add to my perplexity, until at last, feeling that I could go no further in any direction until this question was disposed of, I determined to give myself to it at the sacrifice of any and all things. Brother Ballenger was arising again to give me something further in the hope that it might be light to me, but I asked him to wait while they should join with me in prayer that the Spirit of the Lord might come to my relief.

[180] “Accordingly, we all bowed in prayer, and I stated the case to God, with as deep a sense of need as I had ever known in my life. All the great and marvelous blessings of my life were for the time forgotten in this present need, and as must always be true, I was heard. The manifestation of the power of the Spirit of God was as clear as sunlight; and in that light I saw the Testimony as simply a lens through which to look at the Truth. It at once grew from a lens to a telescope, a perfect, beautiful telescope, directed toward the field of the heavens:—(that field the Bible); subject to all telescopic conditions and limitations.

“Clouds may intervene between it and a heaven full of stars,— clouds of unbelief, of contention; Satan may blow tempests all about it; it may be blurred by the breath of our own selfishness; the dust of superstition may gather upon it; we may meddle with, and turn it aside from the field; it may be pointed away toward empty space; it may be turned end for end, so that everything is so diminished that we can recognize nothing. We may change the focus so that everything is distorted out of all harmonious proportions, and made hideous. It may be so shortened that nothing but a great piece of opaque glass shall appear to our gaze. If the *lens* is mistaken for the *field* we can receive but a very narrow conception of the most magnificent spectacle with which the heavens ever invited our gaze, but in its proper office as a medium of enlarged and clearer vision, *as a telescope*, the Testimony has a wonderfully beautiful and holy office.

“Everything depends upon our relation to it and the use which we make of it. In itself it is only a glass through which to look, but in the hand of the Divine Director, properly mounted, set at the right angle and adjusted to the eye of the observer, with a field, clear of clouds, it will reveal *truth* such as will quicken the blood, gladden the heart, and open a wide door of expectation. It will reduce nebulae to constellations; faraway points of light to planets of the first magnitude; and to suns burning with glory.

[181]

“The failure has been in understanding what the Testimonies are and how to use them. They are not the heavens, palpitating with countless orbs of truth, but they do lead the eye and give it power to penetrate into the glories of the mysterious living word of God.

“This has been the most beautiful experience which has ever been granted me; it grows on me from day to day. I think I feel very much as Galileo must have felt when with his first telescope before him, he was bringing himself into position to look:—just to look, at last, beyond the stars which he had seen, into the vast, unexplored fields where worlds on worlds were keeping rhythmic step to the throbbing heart of the Infinite One whose steady strokes of power set the pace for every moving thing. The simple possession of it must have given a sense of might, even before one glimpse had been taken through it. He knew that revelations such as eye had never seen nor ear heard were waiting him as soon as he should humble

himself to the instrument, acknowledge its right to control his vision, and fix his eye upon the point of observation. I have often tried to imagine how Galileo's heart must have throbbed and his whole soul been filled, even before he obtained one glimpse;—and now I think I know." *The Gospel of Health, January 1898*, pp. 25-28.

[182] Sister White herself said that Mrs. S. M. I. Henry had caught the relationship between the writings of the Spirit of prophecy and the Bible as clearly and as accurately as anyone could ever put it into words. I love those writings because they help me to understand the Book. As a Bible teacher I have never thought of going into a classroom to teach any portion of the Scriptures without first finding out what the Spirit of prophecy has to say about those passages.

Many an assignment that I gave to my students was something like this: "For tomorrow let us find what the Scripture means through the eye of the Spirit of prophecy." And when you approach the book of Isaiah, the book of Jeremiah, the book of Daniel, the book of Revelation, the Gospels, through the eye of the Spirit of prophecy, I want to tell you, dear friends, you will find a wealth of material in those writings that you cannot find in any other commentary, any other book, written by man.

Such is my confidence in these writings. We call them *the lesser light* that helps us to understand *the greater light*. We call them *the microscope* that will help to magnify and make clear the details of the truths of the Word. There is in them a power for all who take them to heart, to live by their counsel, by their instruction, by their reproof. They will correct our ways of living, and make ready a people for God's kingdom. Such is the relationship between the writings of the Spirit of prophecy and the Scriptures.

Chapter 11—Ellen G. White’s Attitude Toward Her Own Writings [183]

Our scripture for this study is 2 Chronicles, the twentieth chapter and the twentieth verse: “Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.”

We must now come to a conclusion in our thinking as to the relationship of the writings of Ellen G. White to us as members of the remnant church. We must think in terms of what God would have us do, not only with the prophets of the Old and the New Testaments, but with His chosen servant, His messenger, in the remnant church.

I am convinced, dear friends, as we think through this topic that we shall have to do a great deal of praying, because the issues become very concrete, very pointed, very personal. And they compel us to do something about them.

All of this leads us to the point in our study where we must settle our own individual and personal attitude toward the writings of Ellen G. White. To help us in arriving at this conclusion we shall first see how Mrs. White regarded her own work, and then search to find the attitude of the brethren toward her writings, and finally attempt to draw a statement of what our personal attitude should be today. [184]

Ellen G. White’s Claim to Inspiration

Mrs. White, in all the long years of her life, never had any doubt regarding her divine call to the prophetic work, nor any question about the source or nature of her messages. Hundreds of times, perhaps, in public meetings and in her writings, she claimed that her messages to the church came from God by divine inspiration. She told of her visions. She repeatedly used the expression “I saw,” and what she saw in vision she spoke about and wrote about.

In simple language she described her call:

“It was not long after the passing of the time in 1844, that my first vision was given me. I was visiting a dear sister in Christ, whose

heart was knit with mine. Five of us, all women, were kneeling quietly at the family altar. 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. At this time I was given a view of the experience of the advent believers, the coming of Christ, and the reward to be given to the faithful.

[185] “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.” [Testimonies for the Church 5:654, 655](#).

In obedience to this call she spoke in public meetings and to private individuals, wrote letters to individuals and groups, wrote out what she called “testimonies” to both individuals and groups, and later wrote many periodical articles and books. In all this she was following out the instruction given her by God.

Of her testimony letters she wrote:

“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.” [Testimonies for the Church 5:67](#).

Then of the many articles she furnished to the papers of the denomination from week to week through the years, she says:

“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.” *Ibid*.

Of her books she penned these lines:

“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.”—[The Colporteur Evangelist, 36](#).

[186] Always she set forth the Testimonies as God’s message to the church:

“I have been looking over the *Testimonies* given for Sabbath-keepers and I am astonished at the mercy of God and His care for His people in giving them so many warnings, pointing out their dangers, and presenting before them the exalted position which He would have them occupy. . . .

“I have waited anxiously, hoping that God would put His Spirit upon some and use them as instruments of righteousness to awaken and set in order His church I ask: Wherein have those who profess confidence in the *Testimonies* sought to live according to the light given in them? Wherein have they regarded the warnings given? Wherein have they heeded the instructions they have received?” [Testimonies for the Church 5:483, 484.](#)

“In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of the 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 he would have them pursue.” [Testimonies for the Church 4:148.](#)

In all this Ellen G. White was claiming for herself the same inspiration of the Holy Spirit that prompted the ancient prophets to write what we now call the Bible. The messages were from God. To her just as verily as to the ancient Bible writers “the word of the Lord came.”

Ellen G. White's Definition of Inspiration

The nature of that inspiration Mrs. White describes as follows:

“The writers of the Bible had to express their ideas in human language. It was written by human men. These men were inspired of the Holy Spirit. Because of the imperfections of human understanding of language, or the perversity of the human mind, ingenious in evading truth, many read and understand the Bible to please themselves. It is not that the difficulty is in the Bible. Opposing politicians argue points of law in the statute book, and take opposite views in their application and in these laws.” [Manuscript 24, 1886](#), quoted in F. M. Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus*, p. 16.

[187]

And so it is with people who read the Bible. Their interpretation depends upon the attitude and background they bring to the reading.

On this point I digress just a moment. Some years ago I hastened down to the riverbank in the city of Nanking, China, planning to take one of the steamers down the Yangtze River to Shanghai. It was an overnight trip, a very pleasant trip, restful, quiet, and free from the dust and dirt of the train. For these reasons I would occasionally go down the river by boat instead of going on the train. It had been a very busy week and I was tired, mentally and physically, and I thought to myself, "I shall get at least one full night's sleep."

[188] When I went aboard that boat the steward said to me, "Come, Mr. Rebok, I will give you this room." I had hoped that I would have a room to myself, but that evidently was not to be my lot or privilege. Instead, as I entered the room a gentleman was sitting there. He looked up at me and smiled, and, of course, I can return a smile with no great difficulty. He asked, "Are you going to Shanghai?" I replied, "Yes, sir, I am going to Shanghai. Are you?" He nodded affirmatively.

That man looked me over carefully and said, "You look like a missionary."

I said, "True," and added, "You do, too." To his inquiry, "What are you?" I replied, "I am a Seventh-day Adventist."

"Ah" he chuckled, "I have been waiting for this opportunity for a long, long time. Shall we begin now or shall we wait until after we have eaten supper?"

"Well," I said, "if you don't mind, sir, I should just as soon eat my supper first, and then we shall talk."

He gave me his name, of course. I recognized him as being the secretary of a national organization of churches in China, a very fine man, a man with a great and good reputation. After supper we went back to the cabin and sat down.

He began by saying, "I have some questions. I have been waiting a long time for an opportunity to ask these questions of a Seventh-day Adventist."

My reply was, "Make them easy, brother, because I am not a theologian."

He assured me, "You will not find them difficult. I want you to give me the scriptural basis for your belief in the imminent return of the Lord Jesus."

"Well," I sighed, "that is an easy one."

I took my Bible and began to read passage after passage with very little comment. I connected them up, of course, in the sequence that I had learned in my Bible doctrines class in college. [189]

“Now,” he observed, “I see your scriptural connections. Give me now your interpretation of those scriptures.” Then I proceeded to do that for about two hours, which led to a discussion that lasted another two hours or more. Around one o’clock he said very seriously, “If I could believe that Bible as you do, and accept it literally as you do, then I would be forced to come to the same conclusion to which you have arrived. But,” he said, “brother, you know that Book was never intended to be taken literally. That Book is designed as a spiritual guide to spiritual-minded men. I take you to be a very simple-minded person. If you thought in terms of the spiritual teachings of the Book you would never come to those conclusions.”

Mrs. White says, “Many read and understand the Bible to please themselves.” There we had talked for five or six hours and did not get anywhere. Was the trouble with the Bible? No. The trouble was that he brought one kind of mind to the Bible, and I brought quite another. Thus, reading the very same passages, we came to two very different conclusions. Was it a lack of inspiration of the Scripture? No. He had formed his pattern of thinking; I had formed my pattern of thinking. And I thought I was right and he was wrong, and he thought he was right and I was wrong. That made it rather hard to get together. The trouble is not with the Scriptures, or with the words, but with our interpretation of words. You and I get into difficulties over the writings of the Spirit of prophecy on the very same basis and for the very same reason. [190]

That brings us to a point that must be made clear. We must understand the meaning of the words as the inspired writer intended them to be understood, that God’s message may be impressed on our minds. How can I develop the right attitude of mind? It comes only from a complete surrender of my will and of my own personal desire, so that God may have His way. It is when I completely surrender to God that He gives me the mind of Jesus, and with the mind of Jesus I can think His thoughts. This is absolutely essential if we would come to a clear understanding of the writings of the Spirit of prophecy. A surrender of our own ideas, of our own rules and

motives and objectives, is essential in order that we might know and follow the will of God.

I think this will become clearer as we proceed in this study. I continue to quote Mrs. White:

“The Bible is not given to us in grand superhuman language. Jesus, in order to reach man where he is, took humanity. The Bible must be given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect. Different meanings are expressed by the same word; there is not one word for each distinct idea. The Bible was given for practical purposes. . . .

[191] “The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God’s mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers.

“It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man’s words or his expressions, but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the Word of God.” [Testimonies for the Church 4:17, 18.](#)

In the Introduction to *The Great Controversy* also Mrs. White set forth her understanding of divine inspiration:

“Before the entrance of sin, Adam enjoyed open communion with his Maker; but since man separated himself from God by transgression, the human race has been cut off from this high privilege. By the plan of redemption, however, a way has been opened whereby the inhabitants of the earth may still have connection with heaven. God has communicated with men by His Spirit, and divine light has been imparted to the world by revelations to His chosen servants. ‘Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.’ [2 Peter 1:21.](#)

“During the first twenty-five hundred years of human history, there was no written revelation. Those who had been taught of God, communicated their knowledge to others, and it was handed down

from father to son, through successive generations. The preparation of the written word began in the time of Moses. Inspired revelations were then embodied in an inspired book. This work continued during the long period of sixteen hundred years,—from Moses, the historian of creation and the law, to John, the recorder of the most sublime truths of the gospel.

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“The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all ‘given by inspiration of God’ (2 Timothy 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. The Infinite One by His Holy Spirit has shed light into the minds and hearts of His servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures; and those to whom the truth was thus revealed, have themselves embodied the thought in human language.

“The Ten Commandments were spoken by God Himself, and were written by His own hand. They are of divine, and not of human composition. But the Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that ‘the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’ John 1:14.

“Written in different ages, by men who differed widely in rank and occupation, and in mental and spiritual endowments, the books of the Bible present a wide contrast in style, as well as a diversity in the nature of the subjects unfolded. Different forms of expression are employed by different writers; often the same truth is more strikingly presented by one than by another. And as several writers present a subject under varied aspects and relations, there may appear, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight, discerns the underlying harmony.

“As presented through different individuals, the truth is brought out in its varied aspects. 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 guid-

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ance 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. And the truths thus revealed unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life.

“God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies, and He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do this work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was intrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, none the less, from Heaven. The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth.

“In His word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. 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. ‘Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.’ [2 Timothy 3:16, 17](#), Revised Version.” [The Great Controversy, Introduction, 7-9](#).

This is Ellen G. White’s conception of inspiration.

[194] To my mind it is the clearest statement you can find from her pen on the inspiration of the Scriptures and her own writings.

Perhaps you noticed two or three sentences in the quotations just cited which raise some question in your mind. You probably checked the sentence which states, “It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired.” And also, “The writers of the Bible were God’s penman, not His pen.” Or, “Inspiration acts not on the man’s words or his expressions, but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts.” *The Testimony of Jesus*, p. 18.

All these sentences, taken together say just one thing: The Bible is not verbally inspired; and neither are the writings of Ellen G. White.

In regard to her own writings Ellen G. White expressed this truth in the following words:

“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](#), quoted in F. M. Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus*, p. 87. (Italics supplied.)

An interesting story out of the past will illustrate this.

In 1906, Dr. David Paulson, one of the most enthusiastic and interesting men I have ever known, wrote a letter to Mrs. White, stating his opinion, his convictions, regarding her and her work. [195]

We have that letter in the file, but I am not particularly interested in his letter. I am, however, very much interested in Mrs. White's response to it. Let me read three paragraphs from the letter she wrote in reply to Dr. Paulson. I quote:

“In your letter, 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 you ever spoke in public or private, that every letter you wrote under any and all circumstances, was as inspired as the ten commandments.’

“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.

“In my preface to ‘Great Controversy,’ . . . you have no doubt read my statement regarding the ten commandments and the Bible, which should have helped you to a correct understanding of the matter under consideration.”

This appears in the file as letter No. 206, written in the year 1906. It also appeared in the [The Review and Herald, August 30, 1906](#), p. 8.

Now what does it say? and what does it mean? Here was a zealous man, a fine Christian gentleman, a man who wanted above everything else to do right for God and be right with his brethren. He wrote to Ellen G. White and gave her his impression or conviction that every word she had ever said in public and in private, every letter that she had ever written, of whatever nature it might have been, was just like, and on a par with, the Ten Commandments. Mrs. White [196]

corrected his impression in these words, “My brother, . . . you have never found that I have made any such claims.” If Ellen G. White never made such a claim, then neither should you or I.

Inspiration and Infallibility

A very natural question may arise at this juncture: “If the Bible and Mrs. White’s writings are inspired, should we not expect them to be free from all error or mistakes? Are they not infallible?”

We must answer, Inspiration and infallibility are not identical. Ellen G. White never claimed verbal inspiration for either her own writings or the Bible itself. Neither did she claim infallibility for herself or the Bible writers.

On infallibility she said:

“In regard to infallibility, I never claimed it; God alone is infallible. His word is true, and in Him is no variableness or shadow of turning.” Ellen G. White **letter 10, 1895**.

At another time she wrote:

“God and heaven alone are infallible.” **The Review and Herald, July 26, 1892**.

[197] Infallibility does not belong to Ellen G. White. She never claimed it. Infallibility does not belong to any *man*—only to God. Therefore even the authors of the Scriptures are subject to possible human error and inaccuracy. The remarkable thing is that there are so very few inaccuracies in all the twenty-five million words written by Mrs. White.

If you ever find anything in Mrs. White’s writings that to you seems without doubt to be a mistake—a historical inaccuracy, a mistake in geography, arithmetic, or chronology—just remember that Mrs. White never claimed infallibility, and that her inspiration is in no wise affected by such a slip of the pen. It might even turn out that Mrs. White herself was not responsible for the mistake at all.

I believe that right here it would be helpful if we all understood how Mrs. White did her work; then we could see the impossibility of her being infallible, and wherein came the inspiration. Ellen G. White herself was not a highly educated person. Her formal schooling consisted of only a few grades. A stone thrown by a

schoolgirl hit her on the face, broke her nose, and caused a physical deformity. Because of the shock that came to her, she dropped out of school and never had the opportunity to go on and learn to spell correctly every word in the dictionary or to write perfectly every grammatical construction. She never enjoyed that privilege, but the remarkable thing is that God could take such a humble instrument, lacking in some of those things we consider so essential in the educated person, and could work through her to accomplish the marvelous things we see in all of her grand books that are in our hands today. That indeed is a most remarkable accomplishment. [198]

She herself says that when she began to write her hand was so feeble she could not write very long without pain. But the angel said, "Write, and write the things that have been shown to you." She says of herself, "The more I wrote, the easier it became to write," and that before long she could write page after page with a flowing hand for hours at a time, and never tire. That was another remarkable thing with regard to the servant of God.

A vision of something would be given to her, or some circumstance, some situation, some need, would be presented to her, and then she would sit down to write what she had seen or heard. The longest vision, about four hours, in which she saw the conflict of the ages from the beginning to the end, took her many, many weeks to write out.

How did she write? She took her pen and paper and wrote as the Spirit of God impressed her to write, setting forth that which she had seen in the vision. She paid little attention to the commas and the semicolons, the colons and the periods. She did not stop even for a misspelled word. She was writing to get the thought on paper.

Now I do not claim to be an inspired or inspiring writer, but when I write I do it in about the same way as Sister White did. And so do many other writers.

When Mrs. White had finished the manuscript, which was written very swiftly, she turned it over to a secretary. May I add here that the handwriting is an interesting study. In the very early days it was small and neat, and the letters were well formed and careful, but as with some of the rest of us, as she grew older her writing became less legible, and the writing she did near the end of her days is not [199]

so easily read. Yet her secretaries, who worked with her for years, could read it off just like printed material.

Her handwritten manuscript was turned over to a secretary, who copied it on the typewriter, correcting the inaccuracies in spelling, punctuation, and so forth. Did I say “inaccuracies”? Yes. The Holy Spirit does not teach one how to spell. It takes hard work to learn how to spell, and God will not perform a miracle and make up for our mistakes in spelling.

[200] We read that when the redeemed appear in heaven they will stand in the form of a hollow square, and to each one will be given a crown and a harp. I have often wondered how God is going to fulfill the statement He makes that when the angels sound the note the whole assembly with their harps will play in perfect harmony and accord. I do not know one note from another. I have never learned to play any instrument. I cannot sing. I have no musical ability whatsoever. When we get over there, and I assure you that I am planning to be there, I do not know just how I shall be able to play that harp and be in harmony with all the rest. I think God will then have to work a miracle, and I believe He will, but He has not promised to work a miracle in my spelling, neither did He in Mrs. White’s spelling. Yes, there are some misspelled words in the original manuscripts. Does that destroy my confidence in the writings? Not in the least.

So this secretary would do the mechanical work and hand the manuscript back to Mrs. White. Then she studied it very carefully to make sure that every word was in the right place to convey the correct thought. She often added a phrase here or a sentence there. After she had gone over it carefully, it went back to the secretary to be typed again in a clear, correct copy. Again it went back to Mrs. White, so that once more she could make sure that the wording was just what it should be. She read it again to make sure it conveyed the correct thought, and signed her name “E. G. White” on the finished copy. This is what we call thought inspiration in contrast to verbal inspiration. Mrs. White never claimed verbal inspiration, and now you can understand the reason why. The very method of doing her work would make it impossible to have verbal inspiration.

In [Jeremiah 36:2](#), God said, “Jeremiah, take the roll of a book, write in that book the messages that I have given to you.”

So Jeremiah called his secretary, Baruch, and told him, "Baruch, bring a scroll, get your pen and your ink, and have everything all ready. I am now going to dictate to you the messages God has given me." Thus it was that he dictated, and Baruch wrote down the messages. [201]

I assure you, dear friends, when we think of the work of the prophet as being done in that way, there will be no difficulty in our minds if one or two little inaccuracies should appear in the many printed books and the thousands of periodical articles that came from the pen of Ellen G. White. Very few people in the history of the world have produced more in volume, in quantity, than did Ellen G. White in the seventy years of her activity as a messenger for God.

The remarkable thing is that for so long a period of service there should be such a unity and a harmony of thought throughout all the writings, from the very first page to the very last page. To me this is one of the greatest evidences of the inspiration of the writer.

Not everybody has been given the privilege of spending some sixteen months sitting near the vault at the Ellen G. White Publications office and reading those most interesting and wonderful manuscripts. That, however, was my privilege. I consider it to be the most important period in my life. It gave me an opportunity for which I had longed, but which I never thought possible of fulfillment. I want to tell you frankly that to spend days and weeks and months doing little else but live with those writings was a wonderful experience. I thank God for it. I thoroughly enjoyed it, and may I say that my confidence in the gift of prophecy, and in the writings of the Spirit of prophecy, is stronger today than ever before. I have no question regarding the gift or the instrument used by God. [202]

Mrs. White was a very reasonable person. If she was anything, she was a very human person. As I read those letters and manuscripts I found letters addressed to Willie, or Edson, or some other member of the family, and they were characteristic letters of a good mother, a fine Christian. In those letters she often spoke of the common affairs of life, her journeys, the places she visited, and the people she saw. I would say that such things are not inspired. Therefore, we should not say that every letter she ever wrote, under any and all circumstances, was an inspired testimony. We must not claim for her what she did not claim for herself.

Mrs. White herself drew a distinction between the common and the sacred. Here is how she put it:

“There are times when common things must be stated, common thoughts must occupy the mind, common letters must be written and information must be 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.” [Manuscript 107, 1909](#), quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant*, p. 117.

It thus becomes apparent that Ellen G. White—

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1. Never claimed *infallibility* either for herself or for the writers of the Scriptures. “God alone is infallible.”
 2. Never claimed *verbal inspiration* either for her own writings or for the Scriptures.
 3. Did claim *thought inspiration* both for her own writings and for the Scriptures.
 4. Did not look upon her writings as being comparable to the “commandments of God,” but saw them as “reproofs,” “counsels,” “warnings,” “encouragements,” “messages,” “testimonies,” “cautions.”

How the Writings Came to Be

“Early in my public labors I was bidden by the Lord, ‘Write, write the things that are revealed to you.’ At the time this message came to me, I could not hold my hand steady. My physical condition made it impossible for me to write. But again came the word, ‘Write the things that are revealed to you.’ I obeyed; and as the result it was not long before I could write page after page with comparative ease. Who told me what to write? Who steadied my right hand, and made it possible for me to use a pen?—It was the Lord.” [The Review and Herald, June 14, 1906](#), p. 8.

Purpose of the Testimonies

“The Lord designs to warn you, to reprove, to counsel, through the testimonies given, and to impress your minds with the importance of the truth of His word. The written testimonies are *not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed*. Man’s duty to God and to his fellow man has been distinctly specified in God’s word, yet but few of you are obedient to the light given. *Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the Testimonies simplified the great truths already given and in His own chosen way brought them before the people to awaken and impress the mind with them, that all may be left without excuse.*” [Testimonies for the Church 5:665](#). (Italics supplied.)

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“The *Testimonies* are not to belittle the word of God, but to exalt it and attract minds to it, that the beautiful simplicity of truth may impress all.” [Testimonies for the Church 2:606](#).

“The word of God is sufficient to enlighten the most beclouded mind and may be understood by those who have any desire to understand it. But notwithstanding all this, some who profess to make the word of God their study are found living in direct opposition to its plainest teachings. Then, to leave men and women without excuse, God gives plain and pointed testimonies, bringing them back to the word that they have neglected to follow.” [Testimonies for the Church 2:454, 455](#).

“The word of God abounds in general principles for the formation of correct habits of living, and the testimonies, general and personal, have been calculated to call their attention more especially to these principles.” [Testimonies for the Church 4:323](#).

“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](#).

“The Lord reproves and corrects the people who profess to keep His law. He points out their sins and lays open their iniquity because He wishes to separate all sin and wickedness from them, that they may perfect holiness in His fear. . . . God rebukes, reproves, and

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corrects them, that they may be refined, sanctified, elevated, and finally exalted to His own throne.” [Testimonies for the Church 2:453](#).

Perhaps I could best illustrate Ellen G. White’s messages in this way: To me Christ is the Great Architect, building a kingdom with many mansions in the capital city of that kingdom. He is also the designer of the character of the people He wants in that kingdom. So as the Great Architect He has a blueprint of His kingdom and of the kind of people He wants with Him throughout eternity. Then, like all great architects, He has a book of specifications, detailed specifications, which deal with the blueprint, giving in greater detail everything that has to do with the development of His kingdom. Christ is the Architect. The Bible is the blueprint. The writings of the Spirit of prophecy are the detailed specifications.

I think if you will analyze that thought a little you will see in it tremendous possibilities. And now when you sit down with these books—the Conflict of the Ages Series, for example—and read from the beginning of *Patriarchs and Prophets* to the end of *The Great Controversy*, you will see what I mean. There are the detailed specifications that greatly magnify the blueprint found in the Scriptures, all of which comes from the mind of the Great Architect. Personally I like the detailed specifications. They do not take the place of the blueprint, but they go along with the blueprint in a remarkably interesting and vital way. The great truths that are found in the Bible are presented by Sister White in such a simple way, in such beautiful thoughts, that anyone who reads them will be greatly impressed by the message, by the thought in the message, by the inspiration that comes through reading and studying the message.

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I believe, dear friends, it is only as we put these messages into our hearts and minds that they can hew us, fashion us, mold us, and make us into the kind of people God wants in His everlasting kingdom. From what we have found thus far I think we can all come to the conclusion that Ellen G. White was a very sensible, very humble, very good person. She was well aware of the dangers that might come to the cause through those who do not fully understand the work given her to do. Therefore she set forth in her writings much instruction as to how we should relate ourselves to her works and use them in our daily lives. In her own relationship to her work she has given us an example of what we should be and do.

Attitudes Toward the Testimonies

During a crisis in 1903 Ellen G. White clearly depicted the various attitudes that would reflect the reaction of the people toward the Testimonies:

“Soon every possible effort will be made to discount and pervert the truth of the testimonies of God’s Spirit. We must have in readiness the clear, straight messages that since 1846 have been coming to God’s people.

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“[1] There will be those once united with us in the faith who will search for new, strange doctrines, for something odd and sensational to present to the people. They will bring in all conceivable fallacies, and will present them as coming from Mrs. White, that they may beguile souls. . . .

“[2] Those who have treated the light that the Lord has given as a common thing will not be benefited by the instruction presented.

“[3] There are those who will misinterpret the messages that God has given, in accordance with their spiritual blindness.

“[4] Some will yield their faith, and will deny the truth of the messages, pointing to them as falsehoods.

“[5] Some will hold them up to ridicule, working against the light that God has been giving for years, and some who are weak in the faith will thus be led astray.

“[6] But others will be greatly helped by the messages. Though not personally addressed, they will be corrected, and will be led to shun the evils specified. . . . The Spirit of the Lord will be in the instruction, and doubts existing in many minds will be swept away. The testimonies themselves will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scripture is explained by scripture. Many will read with eagerness the messages reproving wrong, that they may learn what they may do to be saved. . . . Light will dawn upon the understanding, and the Spirit will make an impression on minds, as Bible truth is clearly and simply presented in the messages that since 1846 God has been sending His people. These messages are to find their place in hearts, and transformations will take place.” Ellen G. White *letter 73, 1903.*

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Wrong Use of the Testimonies

While the larger part of our Seventh-day Adventist church members are found in the last class named—those who are helped by the messages as light comes to them correcting evils and pointing the way to life—yet there are some who may be found in one of the other classes.

Mrs. E.G. White was fully aware of the situation regarding her and her work, and did her best to make clear what she was appointed by God to do, and why. She gave a number of cautions and suggestions to her contemporaries, and indirectly to us, so that we might not make unjustifiable claims for her and her writings, nor an unwise use of her words and her position in relation to God and the Holy Spirit.

The reproduction of some of them here may help us find and maintain a sensible, balanced, middle-of-the-road attitude toward her and her work:

1. Do not use the Testimonies as proof for unbelievers ([Testimonies for the Church 1:119, 120](#); vol. 5, p. 669).

2. Do not use them as a test of fellowship ([Testimonies for the Church 1:327-329](#)).

3. Do not use the visions as a rule to measure all ([Testimonies for the Church 1:382, 383](#)).

4. Do not use the Testimonies as an iron rule or club ([Testimonies for the Church 1:369](#)).

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5. Do not take the extreme meaning of what has been shown in the visions ([Testimonies for the Church 1:166](#)).

6. Do not use the Testimonies to give force to certain subjects to impress them upon others ([Manuscript 23, 1911](#)).

Each one of us should keep in mind that, first of all, the Spirit of prophecy counsels are messages to us personally. There is a growing tendency on the part of some among us to apply the counsels to someone else, and to use certain portions of the Ellen G. White writings as a sort of club over the heads of others. This is not a right or a proper use of the Testimonies. On the part of some, her words are used to give expression to harsh criticism of others. All of this brings to mind the following paragraph:

“There are many whose religion consists in criticising habits of dress and manners. They want to bring every one to their own measure. They desire to lengthen out those who seem too short for their standard, and to cut down others who seem too long. They have lost the love of God out of their hearts; but they think they have a spirit of discernment. They think it is their prerogative to criticise, and pronounce judgment; but they should repent of their error, and turn away from their sins. . . . Let us love one another. Let us have harmony and union throughout our ranks. Let us have our hearts sanctified to God. Let us look upon the light that abides for us in Jesus. Let us remember how forbearing and patient He was with the erring children of men. We should be in a wretched state if the God of heaven were like one of us, and treated us as we are inclined to treat one another.” [The Review and Herald, August 27, 1889](#), p. 530.

Then, again, there are some who isolate a phrase or sentence and place the most extreme interpretation upon it, and then endeavor to persuade or drive everyone else to the same conclusion. Such have usually failed to study the full counsel, placing statement with statement in an endeavor to find the great underlying principles that should guide to right conclusions.

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Mrs. White maintained a very sensible, well-balanced, middle-of-the-road attitude in everything she taught and in everything she did. That may seem strange when we think of some people who have developed an attitude toward the writings of the Spirit of prophecy that is anything but sensible. The fault is not with Ellen G. White or with her writings. The fault must be somewhere else.

I say again, the Testimonies were written for us individually, and not for us to use on someone else. Most certainly we misrepresent and frequently misinterpret the writings of the Spirit of prophecy when we take a sentence here and a sentence there, a little paragraph here and a little paragraph there, and then put them together out of their context. Thus they are made to teach what the Spirit of prophecy did not have in mind at all, but what somebody wants to use on his brethren. It is not the correct way to use the writings of Ellen G. White.

[211] Chapter 12—Ellen G. White’s Message on Health

Three texts of Scripture introduce the thought of this study.

“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 [John 2](#)).

“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” (1 [Corinthians 6:19, 20](#)).

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

The message that Seventh-day Adventists have for the world at this time is one that is calculated to prepare a people for the second coming of Christ and for an eternity in a sinless new earth where righteousness, and peace, and joy shall prevail ([Romans 14:17](#); [Revelation 14:1-12](#)).

This calls for a transformation that includes the spiritual, the mental, and the physical—the heart, the mind, and the body.

[212] The writings of Ellen G. White, like the Bible itself, deal with this threefold reformation needed by all men everywhere. Her messages but reinforce the plan of salvation, which is the theme of the Scriptures and the only plan whereby men may be saved from a life of sin and made ready for a life of right thinking and right doing.

In this particular chapter we look into the health message as it is set forth in the writings of Ellen G. White, and in doing so we wish to emphasize the fact that the instruction on this subject is abundant and scattered throughout the whole field of her writings. Therefore it becomes necessary to read extensively before one is qualified to say, “This is what Mrs. White teaches on this phase of the over-all subject of health.” This chapter merely introduces the subject, opens it up for more detailed study, and points out some dangers and pitfalls into which some of our people are likely to fall.

Again we should take our stand by the side of Mrs. White, and not go to extremes in any direction. Many people are turned against

the remnant church by the unwise and unwarranted use of sentences and paragraphs lifted out of their context.

I am especially serious about this, and I shall tell you why. Back in 1910, when the truth first came to our family, I was only a small boy, but was very much interested in all that I was hearing from a good lay brother who was doing missionary work. We were coming along very nicely in the acceptance of the messages he was giving to us from week to week. Just as we were reaching the point of decision, there came to our town a very well-intentioned woman. She was so zealous and so earnest and so sincere that everyone admired her, but she lacked tact and understanding. [213]

She made it her business to come to our house just at mealtime—be it dinner, breakfast, or supper. She did not come every day, but each visit was at mealtime—not an hour before, not an hour after, but just in time to be invited to join the family as we sat down to eat. And, of course, since we were good Pennsylvania Dutch people, our table was spread with the appetizing dishes of southern Pennsylvania. This woman never refused to sit down and have a meal with us.

When the whole family was seated around the table we would thank God for the food and ask His blessing upon it. Then she would look over the table, and very seriously say, “That should not be on the table of a good Seventh-day Adventist. No Seventh-day Adventist would eat that! This certainly is not proper. Why, Sister, if you begin to be an Adventist and eat things like that, you will never go to heaven!” Thus she spent the whole time of the meal hour criticizing everything that was on the table. My dear friends, that is not right or proper. My mother was very anxious and much concerned during every one of those meal occasions. The result was that every member of my family turned against the truth except my mother, an older sister, and me. We have not been able to break down the prejudice that was thus created by that well-intentioned, but very unwise and untactful woman. [214]

Brethren and sisters in the church, we must learn *how* to use the Testimonies, and we must know *where* and *when* to use the Testimonies. We can turn people against this truth and harden their hearts by a misuse of them. I think that is a very serious thing, for because of this experience of more than forty years ago my family

cannot be reached by this message even today. It turned them against this truth. I speak very seriously and very earnestly out of a rather personal family experience. I accepted the truth in spite of what the sister did, not because of what she did or said. I cannot emphasize it too strongly. Ellen G. White would never have used such a method. I am confident of that. Neither should we. We should learn the proper use of the Testimonies, and remember that they are written primarily for ourselves personally.

A year or so ago I was on a campground, and a good brother came rushing up to me one day. He said, "Elder Rebok, do you eat three meals a day?"

I answered, "Yes, brother, I eat three meals a day when I can get them."

To which he replied, "You will never get into the kingdom of heaven if you eat more than two meals a day."

"Well, now," I countered, "I am not so sure about that. Where did you ever get hold of that idea?"

[215] "Why," he said, "it is in the Testimonies. Mrs. White wrote it."

I asked, "Could you tell me just where that is found? I would like to read it."

He hesitated and stammered, "Well—but—Brother, I can't remember the book, nor the chapter, nor the page, but it's there. If you eat more than two meals a day, you will never be in the kingdom of heaven!"

"Well," I said, "I think I can read to you what Mrs. White has written on this subject." We were very close to the book tent, and so we went over there. I picked up a volume entitled *Medical Ministry*, and turned to page 284. This is what I read:

"It is plain that two meals a day are better than three."

"Why," he shouted, "of course, that is the very thing. Now that shows you that what I said is right. And still you eat three meals a day?"

I said, "Yes, sir."

He replied somewhat triumphantly, "Brother, your name is just wiped off the page. There is no hope for you at all!"

Then I looked at him, and said very calmly, "But listen to the rest of the paragraph:

“I believe and practice this, but I have no ‘Thus saith the Lord’ that it is wrong for some to eat the third meal.”

Now I smiled, “Brother, that means me. But that is not all. Listen to the rest of the paragraph: ‘We are not to be as the Pharisees, bound about by set rules and regulations.’” [216]

His face changed. He said, “Brother, is that in there?”

And I replied, “Not only that. Let me read a little more:

“God’s word has not specified any set hours when food should be eaten. We are to be careful not to make laws like the laws of the Pharisees, or to teach for doctrines the commandments of men. Let your regulations be so consistent that they will appeal to the reason of those even who have not been educated to see all things clearly.”

I looked at the poor man and said, “Brother, what do you get out of the whole passage?”

“Well,” he shook his head, “I don’t know what to say about that. I’ve been taught that anybody who eats more than two meals a day just can’t be saved, and that the Lord is going to judge every individual by how many meals a day he eats; if he eats two, he will be saved; if he eats more than two, he will not be saved.”

In pity and with a sad heart I said to him, “Brother, you are all wrong. That is not the teaching at all.” He was very much perplexed, and wanted to know more about it. “When I go back to the office in Washington,” I assured him, “I shall gather together all the instruction that I can find on the two-meal-a-day question and send you a copy.”

I went back to the Ellen G. White Publications office and found some fourteen pages of very interesting material on that subject alone. Now I believe, brethren, that it is right and proper that we should be fair to all in dealing with such questions. We should be consistent and well balanced in our convictions and in our promoting of such ideas. To that dear brother the number of meals eaten by each and every church member was a very serious problem, and to me it was a very serious matter when he was condemning me to the nether regions because of the third meal that I had been in the habit of eating. [217]

I am of the opinion that when we deal with any topic in the Spirit of prophecy we should not be satisfied with one word, or one sentence, or one paragraph. We should bring together everything

that is said on that subject, and then look at all the counsel and instruction. Until we have done that, we are not qualified to pass judgment on anybody or anything—indeed, we are not qualified to bring judgment even on ourselves. This ill-advised and unfortunate way of using the writings of the Spirit of prophecy is so serious that I want to emphasize it again and again. When we talk to others about the teachings of the Spirit of prophecy, let us be sure that we know what she says and what she teaches.

Let me present just a few very interesting paragraphs from this collection of statements on the number of meals Seventh-day Adventists should eat each day.

[218] *“In most cases, two meals a day are preferable to three. [And I know some of our very, very fine people who eat but two meals a day. It is good for them.] Supper, when taken at an early hour, interferes with the digestion of the previous meal. When taken later, it is not itself digested before bedtime. Thus the stomach fails of securing proper rest. The sleep is disturbed, the brain and nerves are wearied, the appetite for breakfast is impaired, the whole system is unrefreshed, and is unready for the day’s duties.”* [Education, 205](#). (Italics supplied.)

That sounds very sensible indeed.

Again, I read in the book [The Ministry of Healing, 321](#):

“The practise of eating but two meals a day is generally found of benefit to health; yet *under some circumstances*, persons may require a third meal. This should, however, if taken at all, be very light, and of food most easily digested.” (Italics supplied.)

That, too, seems to be very reasonable.

“*Most people* enjoy better health while eating two meals a day than three; others, under their existing circumstances, may require something to eat at suppertime; but this meal should be very light. *Let no one think himself a criterion for all—that every one must do exactly as he does.*

“Never cheat the stomach out of that which health demands, and never abuse it by placing upon it a load which it should not bear. *Cultivate self-control. Restrain appetite; keep it under the control of reason.*”—[Counsels on Health, 156](#). (Italics supplied.)

You see, the brother was going about with a mistaken idea of his duty and a wrong conception of the message. Everybody he met was

asked the same question, "Do you eat three meals a day?" Of course, there were others like me, and he put the same condemnation on all of them that he put on me. That, my friend, is not what Mrs. White says at all. [219]

She frankly and freely counsels, "Let no one think himself a criterion for all, that every one must do exactly as he does." Well, I like that kind of instruction, and I have made it a practice to allow each person to settle such questions between himself and God. It is entirely up to that person. It is not any of my business how many meals a day he eats. My business is to find out what agrees best with *me*, and to do the thing that is best for *me* under *my* own personal, peculiar circumstances.

To make sure of my position in this matter I approached D. E. Robinson, who lived in Mrs. White's home for many years, and I asked him, "How many meals a day did Mrs. White serve in her home?" "Two meals a day at the table, and then she frankly told each one, 'Now if you feel the need of something light in the evening, you may feel free to go to the pantry or to the icebox and help yourself.'" He added, "And this I always did. Furthermore, everybody else in that household did the same."

Mrs. White ate only two meals, but she was not engaged in heavy physical labor. She found that she did not need that extra food, so she got along very well on her two meals, but she never forbade the rest of her household to eat the third. She did say, "If you eat the third meal you do well to eat a light meal in the evening." That is my own personal habit, and I find that I get along very well on it. Somehow I like the way she puts her counsels and instructions, and I shall follow the plan that seems to agree with my physical habits and to meet my need in maintaining good health. [220]

Here is another very interesting bit of instruction that comes from volume 4 of the [Testimonies for the Church 4:501, 502](#). In writing these testimonies she would refer to Brother H or Brother A or Brother T, because the instruction was directed to some particular person, and yet it might have an application to others in a similar situation. It is evident that the course of Brother H had not been what it should have been. Of him she says:

"His likes and dislikes are very strong, and he has not kept his own feelings under the control of reason. Brother H, your health is

greatly injured by overeating, and eating at improper times. This causes a determination of blood to the brain. The mind becomes confused, and you have not the proper control of yourself. You appear like a man whose mind is unbalanced. You make strong moves, are easily irritated, and view things in an exaggerated and perverted light. Plenty of exercise in the open air, and an abstemious diet, are essential to your health. You should not eat more than two meals a day. If you feel that you must eat at night, take a drink of cold water, and in the morning you will feel much better for not having eaten.”

You see, that was the specific instruction to a man who needed such counsel. There may be a number of Brother H’s around the world. When I see them pile up one plate after another, I begin to wonder whether

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I should say anything, but I refrain, for that is not my business. I am sure you know that overeating is one of the greatest weaknesses among Seventh-day Adventists generally. Our women have learned how to prepare such delicious and tasty dishes that most of us tend to overeat. But I shall not make it my business to go around and tell which one is overeating and which one is not! God has given to you and me alike the same instruction, and we can each read it.

I came across a very interesting letter written in 1901, under our File No. 145. In it was this paragraph:

“With regard to the diet question, this matter must be handled with such wisdom that no overbearing will appear. It should be shown that to eat two meals is far better for the health than to eat three. *But there must be no authoritative forcing seen. No one connected with the sanitarium should be compelled to adopt the two-meal system.* Persuasion is more appropriate than force.” Ellen G. White, [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 117](#). (Italics supplied.)

This again was written to a specific person, in a specific institution, and for a very specific reason. Yet it has a caution in it that we do well to heed.

In 1902 Mrs. White wrote a letter, No. 200, in which she said:

“In regard to the third meal, *do not make eating but two meals compulsory.* Some do best healthwise when eating three light meals, and when they are restricted to two, they feel the change severely.” [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 178](#). (Italics supplied.)

I once had that experience, and I came to the conclusion that those who live on two meals a day are generally the poorest examples of real health reform among us as a people. They eat more in their two meals than the ordinary person eats in three moderate meals. [222]

We must be consistent. We must be sensible. We must live according to reason. If Ellen G. White was anything at all, she was reasonable, sensible, and took good care of those about her.

We could read much more on this subject, but there are other subjects far more important. I use it only as an example of how we can become extremists in our viewpoints and misuse the writings of the servant of the Lord. None of us want to do that, I am sure.

Mrs. White then describes another class, who in their desire to set a right example go to the opposite extreme. Concerning them she says:

“Some are unable to obtain the most desirable foods, and instead of using such things as would best supply the lack, *they adopt an impoverished diet*. Their food does not supply the elements needed to make good blood. Their health suffers, their usefulness is impaired, and their example tells against rather than in favor of reform in diet.

“Others think that since health requires a simple diet, there need be *little care in the selection or the preparation of food*. Some restrict themselves to a very meager diet, not having sufficient variety to supply the needs of the system, and they suffer in consequence.” Ellen G. White, [The Ministry of Healing](#), 318. (Italics supplied.)

I was in a home several years ago where they had a kind of mixing machine. The lettuce went in at the top—the cabbage, the carrots, the tomatoes, the potatoes, about everything that you could imagine, all went in the top—and all raw. Out it came a sort of thick liquid. The lady took a glass of that mixture and handing it to me, said, “Here is your dinner.” I drank it along with the rest of the family. [223]

Ellen G. White never used such methods in her home. The people who lived with her for years tell of the bountiful attractive table of well-selected and well-prepared foods. There was always an abundance for all. No, my brothers and sisters, health reform does not demand that we become extremists in anything. It expects that we shall be good, sensible people, able to reason from cause to

effect, ready to choose that which is wholesome, and discard that which is harmful.

From the examples cited thus far it becomes apparent that we must read everything Mrs. White has written on any given aspect of health reform before we are qualified to speak with authority as to just what she taught and advocated. This becomes more apparent as we deal with questions as to the use of eggs, milk, butter, cheese, flesh foods, and the like.

[224] It is high time that we faced these problems and dealt with them frankly and fairly, so as to do justice to the one who is so frequently misquoted, misinterpreted, and misunderstood. Again I say that on all these questions we must take our position right by her side, giving due consideration to every statement, not going to either extreme, not running ahead of her, or falling so far behind that we are out of step with her.

To make sure of our position on all of these much-discussed issues let us classify her instruction in three groups: first, the instruction that sets forth the ideal, that which is best, most positive, most strict—the highly desirable; second, the instruction that recognizes the exceptions, the emergencies, the conditions that do not permit of the ideal, the perfect, and that call for a second best—the best one can do under existing conditions; third, those statements that seem to be a summarization or a conclusion of the whole matter.

To my mind, that is a fair, a reasonable, and a sensible approach to these questions that are now proving so troublesome and perplexing to some, and are even becoming obstacles and stumbling blocks to others. When all the instruction on any given topic is studied, Ellen G. White is found to present what must be recognized as a well-balanced, reasonable, and highly satisfactory solution or exposition.

My appeal to all Seventh-day Adventists everywhere is that we might use just such a sane and sensible approach to all the counsel and instruction contained in the writings of Ellen G. White. By thus taking our position by her side, we can and should be correct in our interpretation, and a harmony of thought and action should result.

[225] Let us apply this principle first to the question regarding the eating of eggs. From volume 2 of the [Testimonies for the Church 2:400](#), we read:

“Eggs should not be placed upon your table.”

Without giving heed to the setting of this statement it seems to be all-inclusive, and has a finality that is beyond compromise. And some of our folks say, “Therefore, eat no eggs.”

In that second group of qualifying statements I find this:

“It is true that persons in full flesh and in whom the animal passions are strong need to avoid the use of stimulating foods. Especially in families of children who are given to sensual habits, eggs should not be used.” [The Ministry of Healing, 320.](#)

Now that gives quite a different view of the subject. The first sentence said, “Eggs should not be placed upon your table.” Let us continue:

“But in the case of persons whose blood-making organs are feeble,—especially if other foods to supply the needed elements can not be obtained,—*milk and eggs should not be wholly discarded.* Great care should be taken, however, to obtain milk from healthy cows, and eggs from healthy fowls, that are well fed and well cared for.” *Ibid.* (Italics supplied.)

We now turn to volume 9 of the [Testimonies for the Church 9:162](#), for Mrs. White's final summarizing statement regarding eggs:

“While warnings have been given regarding the dangers of disease through butter, and the evil of the free use of eggs by small children, yet *we should not consider it a violation of principle to use eggs from hens that are well cared for and suitably fed.* Eggs contain properties that are remedial agencies in counteracting certain poisons.” (Italics supplied.)

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Suppose we had stopped on the first sentence. Suppose we had stopped on the first two sentences. Then I would not be doing justice to the teaching of the Spirit of prophecy on this subject. It means that I must have the whole picture before me in order to understand the significance and the meaning of the instruction given.

Brethren, sisters, I appeal to you once again. Let us be sure that we have the whole picture, the whole body of instruction, before we pronounce a judgment upon anyone. It seems to me that we should be most careful to use the writings of the Spirit of prophecy in the way that Ellen G. White intended they should be used.

Frankly, what was the situation that called forth the positive statement on page 400 of volume 2? A brother and his wife were

having trouble with their boys. The boys had some habits that were not good for them, affecting their health and their mentality. Mrs. White sent them a testimony which we find in volume 2 of the *Testimonies*. The chapter in which that particular sentence is found is entitled “Sensuality in the Young.” There you will find the whole picture set forth, and the reason for that sentence, which so many of our people lift right out of its context. They use it as a basis for everybody, everywhere, and declare that the eating of eggs is wrong. You see, you must read the whole chapter, beginning on page 390, in order to get the clear picture.

More than that, you should read the chapter in *The Ministry of Healing*, the chapter in volume 9 of the *Testimonies*, and in fact, everything that has to do with eggs before you begin to tell anybody else what to do about eggs.

Dr. Daniel Kress, over in Australia, away back in 1900 and 1901 was a very careful health reformer, and in every sense a fine, true Christian gentleman. But he had taken an extreme view of health reform and had brought upon himself a very serious case of anemia. Dr. Kress was going down physically very fast, and his prospects for living were becoming rather uncertain. Mrs. White, who was in California, was given a vision in which Dr. Kress’s condition was revealed to her, and the reasons for his impaired health. Of course he was not using meat, but he had also given up eggs, milk, butter, and cheese. In vision Mrs. White was shown that he should return to the use of dairy products, and that he should use raw egg in grape juice every day, for it would save his life. Dr. Kress, in telling the story, said that he was completely amazed at such instruction coming from Mrs. White. He followed the counsel, turning from his extreme interpretation of health reform, and he regained his health. He served the cause of God nearly fifty years after that, and at this writing is still living, well over ninety years of age.

As I said before, Ellen G. White was very sensible, and she would have us be the same.

Let us turn to another food problem and take a brief glance at the instruction on dairy products—milk, cream, and butter. Here, too, is a question that vexes many of our people. Again we must take our stand by the side of Ellen G. White if we would rightly understand and represent her views on this subject.

We begin with the unqualified statements:

“The light given me is that it will not be very long before we shall have to give up any animal food. Even milk will have to be discarded. Disease is accumulating rapidly. The curse of God is upon the earth.” ([Australasian Union Conference Record, July 28, 1899](#), quoted in [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 357](#).)

“Tell them that the time will soon come when there will be no safety in using eggs, milk, cream, or butter, because disease in animals is increasing in proportion to the increase of wickedness among men.” [Testimonies for the Church 7:135](#) (published in 1902).

Disease in the animals is the reason given for these statements. The contamination of the source, and the method of handling, would seem to justify the discontinuance of dairy products from one's diet. Before coming to a conclusion, however, we turn to the qualifying instruction, and we must give it due consideration because it, too, came from the pen of Mrs. White:

“God has furnished man with abundant means for the gratification of an unperverted appetite. He has spread before him the products of the earth,—a bountiful variety of food that is palatable to the taste and nutritious to the system. Of these our benevolent heavenly Father says we may freely eat. Fruits, grains, and vegetables, prepared in a simple way, free from spice and grease of all kinds, make, *with milk or cream*, the most healthful diet. They impart nourishment to the body, and give a power of endurance and a vigor of intellect that are not produced by a stimulating diet.” [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 92](#). (Italics supplied.)

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Further we read:

“The time *may come* when it will not be safe to use milk. But *if* the cows are healthy and the milk thoroughly cooked, there is no necessity of creating a time of trouble beforehand.” [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 357](#). (Italics supplied.)

“As for myself, I have settled the butter question. I do not use it. *This question should easily be settled in every place where the purest article cannot be obtained.* We have two good milch cows, a Jersey and a Holstein. *We use cream*, and all are satisfied with this.” [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 351](#). (Italics supplied.)

It was in 1909 at a General Conference session that Ellen G. White preached a powerful sermon on health reform. This sermon

now appears in *Testimonies*, volume 9, and I consider it as a sort of summarization of her teachings on this important topic. Every Seventh-day Adventist would do well to read and analyze it. From it we take several statements:

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“*Food should be prepared in such a way that it will be appetizing as well as nourishing. . . . Vegetables should be made palatable with a little milk or cream, or something equivalent. . . . Some, in abstaining from milk, eggs, and butter, have failed to supply the system with proper nourishment, and as a consequence have become weak and unable to work. Thus health reform is brought into disrepute. . . .*

“*The time will come when we may have to discard some of the articles of diet we now use, such as milk and cream and eggs; but it is not necessary to bring upon ourselves perplexity by premature and extreme restrictions. Wait until the circumstances demand it, and the Lord prepares the way for it.*” Page 162. (Italics supplied.)

A few years earlier she wrote:

“Milk, eggs, and butter should not be classed with flesh meat. In some cases the use of eggs is beneficial. *The time has not come to say that the use of milk and eggs should be wholly discarded.* There are poor families whose diet consists largely of bread and milk. They have little fruit and cannot afford to purchase the nut foods. *In teaching health reform, as in all other gospel work, we are to meet the people where they are. Until we can teach them how to prepare health reform foods that are palatable, nourishing, and yet inexpensive, we are not at liberty to present the most advanced propositions regarding health reform diet.*”—[Testimonies for the Church 7:135](#). (Italics supplied.)

When the health message is studied in this way duty and responsibility become apparent to everyone. There is no need or basis for extreme views, for narrow bigotry, for pharisaical restrictions, or for salvation by works.

Seldom do we travel in any part of the world today and talk about the Spirit of prophecy but that some people come and say, “Now tell us all about the meat question. What did Mrs. White really have to say regarding the eating of flesh foods?”

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It is a good question. I am inclined to think that some are more exercised about it than they should be. It gives me the impression that the food question is a great cross in the lives of many of our people,

for they talk and fret so much about it. When my mother, sister, and I became Adventists in 1910, and learned that flesh food was not a part of the Seventh-day Adventist diet, we immediately cast it out of our house and out of our experience. Our family had been eating some kind of flesh food three times a day—breakfast, dinner, and supper—and yet it was dropped from our dietary immediately. We did not understand all the reasons why. We were simply told we should not eat it. I did not take the time to read all the instructions for myself, but when we were told that it is not a part of a Seventh-day Adventist's life, we canceled it out, along with everything else objectionable.

We lived next door to the manager of the motion-picture theater. He had two small children, and he wanted them to see the pictures every night, so I took them every night, and never paid a cent during the years we lived beside those people. Yet when this truth came to me, and I found that the theater does not fit into the life of a Seventh-day Adventist, I stopped that immediately. So one thing after another was given up, and I find that I am not the loser for having given up any or all of these things. Indeed, they have no place or part in my happy Christian life. God does not ask us to give up anything that is good for us. He asks us only to give up those things that are not good for us. Thus one thing after another promptly disappeared from our lives and from our table until we thought we were living in harmony with God's teachings.

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The sad part of my experience is that, after giving up so much, I actually became guilty so far as real health reform was concerned, but in a different way—perhaps different from anything that you have ever heard of or done. In spite of giving up all these things—tea and coffee and flesh foods and all such—I became guilty in other matters that are equally important in the full health message.

For some reason or other, I do not know why, I thought it my duty to get up at three o'clock in the morning and begin my day's work. I felt that I had so much to get done, and so little time in which to do it, that I must begin at three o'clock in the morning. For a number of years I did that conscientiously, and worked like a slave all day long because I thought it must be done.

As a good, conscientious Seventh-day Adventist I thought it was my duty to work harder than anybody else, but when I married a

young woman who did not like such early rising, I changed my habits and got up at four-thirty. All through my twenty-three years of work in China it was either four-thirty or five o'clock when my day began, and it ended about eleven at night.

Then to make matters still worse I came to think that I had to worry for everybody on the school campus.

[233] I became the official worrier for everybody, and with that kind of program—up at four-thirty or five in the morning, to bed at eleven at night, and worrying about everybody's problems between eleven and four in the morning—it was not long until my stomach gave way, and I suffered for about eight years.

Nobody ever told me that I was a poor example of health reform. I just lived that kind of life. I never thought of taking time out for a rest, relaxation, or vacation. As a matter of fact, a vacation or a holiday was for me a waste of time and a terrible bore. I just could not stand it. I had to have something to do every minute, or I was of all men most miserable. With no hill leave, or anything of that kind, from 1917 to 1940, I was a good subject for a permanent return to the United States, and home they sent me and my family.

After reaching the United States of America in June, 1940, I went to our own White Memorial Hospital, and paid a lot of money for the X-rays, and all the regular and special examinations, but I was not much impressed by what the doctors said. Honestly, I paid no attention to it, but kept going until the fall of 1940 when I reached the place where I could not stand erect. With constant pain in the abdomen I had to walk like a bent-over old man, and finally had to go to a doctor.

[234] This time I went to a doctor who was not a Seventh-day Adventist, but a specialist in internal medicine and a professor at the George Washington University Medical College. He looked me over and said, "Well, Mr. Rebok, so you are a Seventh-day Adventist. Don't you believe in God? Don't you pray?"

Somewhat perplexed, and a bit ashamed, I said, "Surely."

He inquired, "But don't you think God hears your prayers?"

"Well," I mumbled, "I think so."

To which he thoughtfully replied, "But you don't act like it. You would not be in the condition you are in today if you believed in God, and if you knew how to pray and how to work."

Remember, he was not an Adventist.

Then he said, "Now, of course, I know that in the diet I am going to give you, you would prefer not to eat meat."

"That is right," I agreed, "if I can get a perfectly balanced diet without it."

He assured me that I could get a perfect diet without meat, and then proceeded to give me the simplest kind of diet one could ever imagine. He went further and prescribed, "You must stay in bed until six o'clock in the morning. You must be in bed before ten o'clock at night. You must lie down for twenty minutes of rest at noon when you come back from your work, before you eat." He said that I must do this and that until he had given me a complete program of activity, and a simple, well-balanced diet to live on.

It came the nearest to being what I find described in the Ellen G. White books of anything I could imagine. No cakes, no pies, no sugar, and no sweets of any kind. No meat, no condiments—none of these things. He said, "Of course, I know there is no need to tell you about tobacco and liquor. I know you do not use them. If you did, they, too, would all go." When all was said and done he gave me the program by which I was to live for two years.

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After I had been faithfully carrying out this program without a deviation in any way whatsoever for more than a year, I said to him, "Have you ever read our Seventh-day Adventist books on health?"

The doctor replied, "No, I have never seen them."

"Well," I said, "what you have given me to eat, and the daily program on which you have placed me, corresponds more closely to the pattern set forth in our books than anything else I have ever seen."

At the end of two years I was completely recovered, and have had no return of that trouble since.

What was the cause of all my trouble? In the first place, I did not know how to work. In the second place, I did not know how to relax. Third, I did not know how to take proper physical exercise that would really build up and strengthen my body. I had no problem or questions regarding food, but I must admit that I seldom if ever thought about the eight factors in the complete health message, and especially the eighth which is 'trust in divine power.' Somehow or other I had just taken that for granted, but we must become more

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aware of God's presence and power in our daily lives.

Living on that simple program of work and exercise and rest with the simplest kind of food in the most simple combinations, I found that I could live happily and keep perfectly well. All of that was in the books from the time I accepted this truth in 1910, but I tell you honestly, my friends, most of us allow it to remain in the books unheeded, and certainly seldom carry it out in all of its detail.

I am convinced that the Lord through Mrs. White has given us a program of health that includes all phases of healthful living. You will find it stated in one sentence on page 127 of the book *The Ministry of Healing* I wish you would memorize it. If it is not memorized, then remember where it is found. "Pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power—these are the true remedies." Our health message is all wrapped up in that sentence, and it includes all eight phases of living, and not just one. We can be ever so careful in what we eat, but if we lack the other seven essential factors, which are of equal importance, we shall not be living true health reform. So I appeal to you at this time to learn what health reform really means and all that is included in it.

[237] Now we come to the question of flesh foods. Someone asks, "Can you prove from the Bible that you should not eat meat?" My answer is, "No, we cannot prove it from the Bible. The Bible merely makes clear to us the diet God provided for men originally, and in this we see God's plan, His intention. Under certain circumstances He permitted the use of flesh foods." Therefore I never use the Bible to prove that I should not eat meat. My appeal is to God's original design, to the facts of science, and to the fact that disease among animals is so prevalent, and the preparation and marketing of meat and fish are so uncertain, that we do well to find a safer source of food.

I read in *Counsels on Diet and Foods*:

"Again and again I have been shown that God is bringing His people back to *His original design*, that is, not to subsist upon the flesh of dead animals. He would have us teach people a better way. . . .

"If meat is discarded, if the taste is not educated in that direction, if a liking for fruits and grains is encouraged, it will soon be as God

in the beginning designed it should be. No meat will be used by His people." Page 82. (Italics supplied.)

"Vegetables, fruits, and grains should compose our diet. Not an ounce of flesh meat should enter our stomachs. The eating of flesh is unnatural. *We are to return to God's original purpose* in the creation of man." Page 380. (Italics supplied.)

Reading further we find these words:

"Among those who are waiting for the coming of the Lord, meat eating will eventually be done away; flesh will cease to form a part of their diet. We should ever keep this end in view, and endeavor to work steadily toward it. I cannot think that in the practice of flesh eating we are in harmony with the light which God has been pleased to give us." [238]

We also read the following caution:

"There are those who ought to be awake to the danger of meat eating, who are still eating the flesh of animals, thus endangering the physical, mental, and spiritual health. Many who are now only half converted on the question of meat eating will go from God's people to walk no more with them." [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 382.](#)

"Is it not time that all should aim to dispense with flesh foods? How can those who are seeking to become pure, refined, and holy, that they may have the companionship of heavenly angels, continue to use as food anything that has so harmful an effect on soul and body?" [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 380.](#)

"It is for their own good that the Lord counsels the remnant church to discard the use of flesh meats, tea, and coffee, and other harmful foods. There are plenty of other things on which we can subsist that are wholesome and good." [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 381.](#)

Thus it becomes apparent to all that God would have His people eat a diet as near to the original ideal diet as is possible. The advantages and blessings are clearly outlined. Just as far as possible we should live by the ideal, the best.

To be absolutely fair and unbiased on this matter of meat eating we should also present the passages that recognize emergencies, special cases and situations. These are known by some, and they are frequently used as justification for using flesh foods even when there is an abundance of other food available. We present them in [239]

order to have the whole picture before us and to enable us to come to right conclusions.

The compilers of the book *Counsels on Diet and Foods* listed on page 481 some principles that guided Ellen G. White in her dietetic practices:

“*First*: ‘The diet reform should be progressive.’

“*Second*: ‘We do not mark out any precise line to be followed in diet.’

“*Third*: ‘I make myself a criterion for no one else.’”

Mrs. White wrote of her own experience in these words:

“I accepted the light on health reform as it came to me. It has been a great blessing to me. I have better health today, notwithstanding I am seventy-six years old, than I had in my younger days. I thank God for the principles of health reform.”—[Counsels on Diet and Foods, 482](#).

“Light came to me, showing me the injury men and women were doing to the mental, moral, and physical faculties by the use of flesh meat. I was shown that the whole human structure is affected by this diet, that by it man strengthens the animal propensities and the appetite for liquor.

“I at once cut meat out of my bill of fare. After that *I was at times placed where I was compelled to eat a little meat.*” [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 487](#). (Italics supplied.)

The compilers add this cross reference:

“[At times compelled to eat a little meat *when other food was not available—699*].”

On page 394 we find this paragraph, No. 699:

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“*Where plenty of good milk and fruit can be obtained there is rarely an excuse for eating animal food; it is not necessary to take the life of any of God’s creatures to supply our ordinary needs. In certain cases of illness or exhaustion it may be thought best to use some meat, but great care should be taken to secure the flesh of healthy animals. It has come to be a very serious question whether it is safe to use flesh food at all in this age of the world. It would be better never to eat meat than to use the flesh of animals that are not healthy. 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.*” (Italics supplied.)

There is another paragraph written back in 1894 that gives some light on possible exceptions to the general rule Mrs. White sets forth as good practice for Seventh-day Adventists:

“Some honestly think that a proper dietary consists chiefly of porridge. To eat largely of porridge would not ensure health to the digestive organs; for it is too much like liquid. Encourage the eating of fruit and vegetables and bread. *A meat diet is not the most wholesome of diets, and yet I would not take the position that meat should be discarded by every one.* Those who have feeble digestive organs can often use meat, when they cannot eat vegetables, fruit, or porridge. If we would preserve the best health, we should avoid eating vegetables and fruit at the same meal. If the stomach is feeble, there will be distress, the brain will be confused, and unable to put forth mental effort. Have fruit at one meal and vegetables at the next.” [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 394, 395.](#)

For a summarization of the principles and counsels, given in 1909, we read:

“If we could be benefited by indulging the desire for flesh foods, I would not make this appeal to you; but I know we cannot. Flesh foods are injurious to the physical well-being, and we should learn to do without them. Those who are in a position *where it is possible to secure a vegetarian diet*, but who choose to follow their own preferences in this matter, eating and drinking as they please, will gradually grow careless of the instruction the Lord has given regarding other phases of the present truth, and will lose their perception of what is truth; they will surely reap as they have sown.” [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 402, 40](#)[Testimonies for the Church 9:156, 157.](#) (Italics supplied.) [241]

“*We do not mark out any precise line to be followed in diet; but we do say that in countries where there are fruits, grains, and nuts in abundance, flesh food is not the right food for God's people.*” [Testimonies for the Church 9:159.](#) (Italics supplied.)

“*We are not to make the use of flesh food a test of fellowship*, but we should consider the influence that professed believers who use flesh foods have over others. As God's messengers, shall we not say to the people, ‘Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.’ ... Erroneous eating and drinking

result in erroneous thinking and acting.” [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 404, 405](#); [Testimonies for the Church 9:159, 160](#). (Italics supplied.)

On several occasions Mrs. White gave counsel on the care that should be exercised in leading people to change their dietetic habits. Note this:

“Among the people in general [in Australia], meat is largely used by all classes. It is the cheapest article of food; and even where poverty abounds, meat is usually found upon the table. Therefore *there is the more need of handling wisely the question of meat eating.*

[242] In regard to this matter *there should be no rash movements.* We should consider the situation of the people, and the power of lifelong habits and practices, and should be careful not to urge our ideas upon others, as if this question were a test, and those who eat largely of meat were the greatest of sinners.

“All should have the light on this question, but let it be carefully presented. Habits that have been thought right for a lifetime are not to be changed by harsh or hasty measures. We should educate the people at our camp meetings and other large gatherings. While the principles of health reform should be presented, let the teaching be backed by example. Let no meat be found at our restaurants or dining tents, but let its place be supplied with fruits, grains, and vegetables. We must practice what we teach. *When sitting at a table where meat is provided, we are not to make a raid upon those who use it,* but we should let it alone ourselves, and when asked our reasons for doing this we should in a kindly manner explain why we do not use it.” [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 462](#). (Italics supplied.)

“*I have never felt it was my duty to say that no one should taste of meat under any circumstances.* To say this when the people have been educated to live on flesh to so great an extent would be carrying matters to extremes. I have never felt that it was my duty to make sweeping assertions. What I have said I have said under a sense of duty, but I have been guarded in my statements, because I did not want to give occasion for any one to be conscience for another.” [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 462, 463](#). (Italics supplied.)

Now what would you make of all that advice and instruction? Is it right to eat meat under any circumstances? Would God permit flesh foods at all under any conditions?

[243] He outlines first the ideal—that which is best for us all—and

then He seems to make provision for those who live in some parts of the world where that ideal diet is not available. Likewise, He makes provision for those who, because of some special physical condition, might find it necessary to use flesh foods rather than combinations of vegetables and fruit, and milk and sugar, and other things that you could mention.

To me this is very sensible. God tells us the best thing to do, and He wants us to do it, and then He makes provision where we cannot do the best. In my reading I came across this paragraph, and I think it sums it all up so far as what to eat is concerned:

“Health reform is an intelligent selection of the most healthful articles of food prepared in the most healthful, simplest form.” [My Life Today, 132.](#)

Dear brethren and sisters, if we follow that instruction, we shall be safe and in harmony with the very best counsel. This is the primary purpose in all the writings. What we have presented is only a small part of the mass of instruction that we have in her writings.

Unfortunately, some of our people have tended to make the food question the all-important thing in connection with the writings of the servant of the Lord. I think it is very unfortunate, because it gives us a wrong impression and tends to cause many of us to lose an interest in all the other subjects that are so vitally important.

Now you say, “Is there a time when we could or should properly use flesh foods?” Well, as I have traveled through the different parts of the world I must confess I have very seldom found myself in a place where it seemed necessary to resort to flesh foods. Several times in China I have found myself where they had taken the vegetables out of the garden, after having fertilized them in their own way with night soil or human excreta, and then stirred them around in a little dirty water, and put them in a pan with a little grease at the bottom, moved them around for a minute or two, put them in a dish, and handed them to me to eat. Frankly I could not eat them, for that would not have been in accord with health reform. I would in that way be getting some types of animal life which I could not take into my stomach without paying a price in dysentery or cholera or something of that type, and therefore I would not and did not eat such vegetables.

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Yes, I have been in a position where there was nothing to eat but rice and fried eggs—three times a day for eight or ten weeks at a time. That, I must admit, got a little tiresome, but there was nothing else I could eat. I did not dare touch the vegetables, for I knew they were not safe. And in such a situation I think the Lord expects us to use good common sense, and we should do the best we can. Remember the definition given by Mrs. White herself: “Health reform is an intelligent selection of the most healthful articles of food prepared in the most healthful, simplest form.” And I believe, dear friends, the Lord has made provision for such emergencies—the difference in climate and the various geographical sections of the world field.

But now you say, “Are you giving us liberty to eat flesh foods any time, anywhere?” No, you will not find such a statement in the chapter in volume 9 of the *Testimonies*. She makes provision only for the exception. The trouble is that if I have made meat and diet the all-important thing in my life, I may be inclined to think that wherever I am there will be an emergency all the time, everywhere. That I am sure would not be in harmony with the instruction. Again I say God has made provision for emergencies in this old world in which we find ourselves today.

I wish, dear friends, above everything else, that in every church, in every center where our people live and gather in church services, somebody would take upon himself or herself the burden of teaching our people how to prepare good, wholesome foods, and then we should not need to be like the sister I met at a camp meeting last summer. She came to me in desperation. She wrung her hands and said, “Elder Rebok, I am so tired of hearing about food that I never want to hear about it or see it again. I am anxious that the Lord shall come soon, so that I do not have to worry about what to eat and what not to eat.”

“Well,” I said, “Sister, you have made a mistake. God never intended that you should worship your stomach and make it the all-important thing in your life. That should be the least of your worries, and it will be, when you have made the preparation for your entrance into God’s kingdom the one and only objective of your sojourn in the world.”

I believe some of us have been thinking too much about what we eat and what we do not eat. I have learned from experience that I can get along on a very simple diet—I marvel at the simplicity of it—and yet there is a perfect balance of all the elements I need for my body. God has made ample provision. It is for you and me to find out what we can do about it and how.

There is another subject that means much to the health of our boys and girls. It has to do with the question of sports. Here again I have followed my plan of dividing up the instruction into three groups. The first presents the ideal, or the strongest possible statement on the question; the second brings the balancing statements; and then the third group sets forth the summarizing statements. This I have done in the matter of sports. Listen:

“A view of things was presented before me in which the students were playing games of tennis and cricket. Then I was given instruction regarding the character of these amusements. They were presented to me as a species of idolatry, like idols of the nations.”—[Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 350.](#)

“How much time is spent by intelligent human beings in horse racing, cricket matches, and ball playing! But will indulgence in these sports give men a desire to know truth and righteousness? Will it keep God in their thoughts? Will it lead them to inquire, How is it with my soul? All the powers of Satan are set in operation to hold the attention to frivolous amusements, and he is gaining his object.” [Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 456.](#)

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“The public feeling is that manual labor is degrading, yet men may exert themselves as much as they choose at cricket, baseball, or in pugilistic contests, without being regarded as degraded. Satan is delighted when he sees human beings using their physical and mental powers in that which does not educate, which is not useful, which does not help them to be a blessing to those who need their help. While the youth are becoming expert in games that are of no real value to themselves or to others, Satan is playing the game of life for their souls, taking from them the talents that God has given them, and placing in their stead his own evil attributes.” [Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 274, 275.](#)

It looks as though there is no place for the game of ball or any other sports of that nature in a Seventh-day Adventist Christian's

life. Is that right? Now listen again while I read the counsel in the middle group:

“I do not condemn the simple exercise of playing ball; but this, even in its simplicity, may be overdone.” [The Adventist Home, 499](#). Now what shall we do about that? Again we find Mrs. White to be very human and very sensible. She did not condemn the throwing of a ball. She did not condemn the hitting of a ball. She did not condemn the running after you have hit the ball. What then did she condemn? She warns against overdoing such things, against making something of that kind so all-important in the life that everything else fades into insignificance.

[248] Brothers, sisters, when you put the instruction all together, there is a place for the boy and his ball. There is a place for the boy and his bat. The question is, How far? and when? May I say, dear friends, that the book *The Adventist Home* has a whole section on recreation, on sports and amusements, and it sets forth a balanced picture so that our young people in reading it will know what they can do with sports and what they should not do. Again I say, I love these writings because they are so sensible, so reasonable.

Seventh-day Adventists need periods of rest and relaxation. As a people we tend to be too serious in our task, and so intense that we do not take periods away from our work. This is good to a certain extent, but too many of our people forget that the body is in need of time for recreation. Therefore, to live health reform in all its phases we must be consistent and use good judgment.

The writings of Ellen G. White set forth a program of living that will bring honor to God in all that we do as good Seventh-day Adventist Christians. We must give heed to every phase of her counsel and instruction, for only in so doing can we be consistent, well-balanced representatives of the health message.

Chapter 13—Ellen G. White’s Message on Dress²

[249]

Relatively speaking not many people will come to our churches or to our evangelistic meetings to hear the message; but people everywhere are watching Seventh-day Adventists. They are learning our message by what they see revealed in our daily lives. They are actually forming their opinion of God and His remnant church by what they see in you and me.

“Ye are my witnesses,” says the God of heaven. Here in this world we are to be a demonstration of the kind of people God wants and will have in His eternal kingdom. We should walk the streets of our home town just as we expect to walk the streets of the New Jerusalem.

That paragraph gives us plenty to think about. If we are not God’s witnesses in our own home city, we shall not be His witnesses in the New Jerusalem. The consequences of our study are just that serious. Our witness in our home town must be so correct as to cause people to say, “There is one of the loveliest, finest, and best persons in this city. I wish I could live as she does.”

[250]

Someone has said, “Your clothes, and that includes every detail, should be the perfect background for your personality. They should add confidence to your manner, assurance and poise to your bearing.” Since clothes do so much to make a person either attractive or unattractive, we do well to begin with a statement on this important point made by Ellen G. White at a time when some thought our sisters should adopt a healthful but very mannish attire known in the early 1880’s as the American costume:

“No occasion should be given to unbelievers to reproach our faith. We are considered odd and singular, and should not take a course to lead unbelievers to think us more so than our faith requires us to be. Some who believe the truth may think that it would be

²(This chapter has been prepared by the author and his wife, Florence Kneeland Rebok. Much of this material appeared in two articles in [The Review and Herald](#), May 4 and May 11, 1944. Used by permission.)

more healthful for the sisters to adopt the American costume, yet *if that mode of dress would cripple our influence among unbelievers so that we could not so readily gain access to them, we should by no means adopt it*, though we suffered much in consequence. But some are deceived in thinking there is so much benefit to be received from this costume. While it may prove a benefit to some, it is an injury to others.” [Testimonies for the Church 1:456, 457](#). (Italics supplied.)

[251] “Oddity and carelessness in dress have been considered a special virtue by some. Such take a course which destroys their influence over unbelievers. They disgust those whom they might benefit.” [Testimonies for the Church 1:275](#).

Thus we have the question before us, and we hasten to add that our Seventh-day Adventist women are anxious to know just what Mrs. White did teach on the subject of dress, so that they may be able to meet God’s ideal for them in this, as in all other essential matters. One of them wrote a letter to our church paper, the *Review and Herald*, and here it is:

“Dear Editor:

“I read an article in one of the recent *Reviews* on the subject of women’s dress. I know that our people have grown lax on that subject and have followed after the world in their customs and fashions. It is my belief, as was said, that we should take the standard of the Bible and the Spirit of prophecy for our guide. But it is hard to know just what that standard is, without going from one extreme to the other, in the matter of length. I quote from [Testimonies for the Church 1:464](#):

““I was shown that we should shun both extremes. By wearing the dress reaching about to the top of a woman’s gaiter boot we shall escape the evils of the extreme long dress, and shall also shun the evils and notoriety of the extreme short dress.”

“I would judge from that statement and the context of the whole chapter in volume 1 that the standard is nine inches from the floor. That is very neat and becoming for a woman in her seventies or eighties, but I can hardly see it for a young person or middle-aged person. I quote again from volume 1, page 458:

[252] “Christians should not take pains to make themselves a gazing-stock by dressing differently from the world. But if, when following out their convictions of duty in respect to dressing modestly and

healthfully, they find themselves out of fashion, they should not change their dress in order to be like the world; but they should manifest a noble independence and moral courage to be right, if all the world differ from them. If the world introduce a modest, convenient, and healthful mode of dress, which is in accordance with the Bible, it will not change our relation to God or to the world to adopt such a style of dress.”

“Of course, the world has not introduced such a style of dress, and we will have to be different. But do you think the plain statements made in volume 1 are for our time?

“My sister and I are about twenty and we both have a sincere desire to do what is right and carry out God’s instructions fully and yet shun any extremes. Do you think a dress three and a half or four inches below the knee is a modest length for us; and for a woman about fifty, six inches below the knee?

“If that length is modest for our times, why did not Sister White give us as definite a standard for our time as was given for her time; because she could look ahead into the future, could she not?

“I am sorry to take any of your time, but this has been a question between us for several years, and I would like to get your opinion.

“Sincerely yours,

-----”

“Dear Sister:

“The editor of the *Review* has appealed to me to answer the questions raised in your letter with regard to the specific length of dresses for our time, in the light of standards of the Bible and the Spirit of prophecy counsel. You refer to the length of the skirt as mentioned in the testimony in 1867, as well as to the caution against extremes, and you ask the relation of this counsel to the determining of a proper present-day standard of skirt length. In order to reply satisfactorily, I have spent some time in reading, and now wish to share with you some of my findings.”

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That which follows represents the answer to that appeal.

Reviewing the Past

It was about the middle of the nineteenth century that, here and there in our country, women with their heavy trailing or hoop skirts

began to awaken to the fact that the clothes they were wearing had a decidedly detrimental effect upon their health. It was as though a new day were dawning, and a few brave individuals stepped forward to introduce a much-needed reform. This was not an easy thing to do, for previous to this time women had been accorded no “rights,” and in the matter of dress had always followed along as custom had decreed. The idea of a reform dress actually originated among progressive women in Europe, but was quickly championed in this country by many outstanding persons. Here in America we find that the dress reform was at first linked not only with health reform but also with temperance and rights for women.

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The first actually to wear a dress intended to bring about an improvement in women’s clothing was Elizabeth Smith Miller. Her father, Congressman Gerrit Smith, had been very outspoken in favor of this needed reform; so she had his support as well as that of her husband in this new venture. She wore the dress first on the streets of Washington, D.C., where it was hailed as quite an item of news in the press. After wearing it for about three months, Mrs. Miller went to Seneca Falls, New York, to visit her cousin, Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, one of the honored women of the nation because of her efforts in the cause of women.

Speaking of the advantages of the new dress in contrast with the inconvenience of the prevailing styles, Mrs. Stanton wrote:

“To see my cousin [Mrs. Miller] with lamp in one hand, a baby in the other, walk upstairs with ease and grace, while, with flowing robes, I pulled myself with difficulty, lamp and baby out of the question, readily convinced me that there was sore need of a reform in woman’s dress, and I promptly donned a similar costume. What incredible freedom I enjoyed for two years! Like a captive set free from his ball and chain, I was always ready for a brisk walk through sleet and snow and rain, to climb a mountain, jump over a fence, and work in the garden, and, in fact, for any necessary locomotion.” Stanton and Blatch, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, vol. 1. Harper’s.

The next to join these two women was Mrs. Amelia Bloomer. She was editor of *The Lily*, a monthly paper for women, published at Seneca Falls, New York. In her position she was able to give great publicity to the reform dress. In fact, her name was given to an

adaptation of the new costume, although she insisted that the credit really belonged to Mrs. Miller.

Some months after Mrs. Miller's visit to Seneca Falls, Mrs. Stanton and Mrs. Bloomer, with others, visited Dr. Jackson's health institute at Glen Haven, New York. Here they met Dr. Harriet Austin, who became an ardent promoter of the reform dress, and it was through her influence that the style was modified and became generally known as the American costume, concerning which Mrs. White says: [255]

"It consists of a vest, pants, and a dress resembling a coat and reaching about halfway from the hip to the knee. This dress I have opposed." [Testimonies for the Church 1:465](#).

Dr. Austin and Dr. Jackson, as editors of the *Water Cure Journal*, gave prominence to this new style of dress.

Later the reform was advocated in *Laws of Life*, successor to *Water Cure Journal*. In all sections of the country were to be found those who adopted the new style of dress. Also there were those who criticized and ridiculed any attempt to change the fashion of the day.

Reasons for Reform

At that time there were three outstanding features of women's dress that demanded the attention of those advocating a reform: (1) the decided unhealthfulness of the prevailing style; (2) the immodesty of the hoop skirt then being worn; and (3) the inconvenience to the wearers.

A writer in the [The Health Reformer, March, 1868](#), made the following statements regarding the first point: [256]

"When the Health Reform Institute was established, the physicians decided that a better style of dress for women than the long, dragging skirts, was desirable. . . . The physicians declared it was not only desirable, but necessary in the treatment of some cases; and that being so, it would be useless and wrong to receive such cases without adopting what they were assured was essential to effect cures. Again, it seemed to be understood and conceded by all health reformers who had investigated the subject, that a reform dress was necessary, and if it was not adopted at the Institute, a

class of patients would surely be driven to other institutions, where something different from the cumbersome, prevailing fashion was adopted. Therefore, to neglect this reform would be to sacrifice the best interests of the Institute, and of a certain class who most needed its benefits.”

It is difficult for us, perhaps, to realize the unhealthful aspect of the dress of that time. Not only were the skirts so long that they dragged on the ground in all kinds of weather and under varying conditions, but the weight of the twenty to thirty yards of material used to make one skirt rested entirely on the hips instead of being suspended from the shoulders; nor was there any freedom of movement.

In a secular book of that time, *Four Years in a Boys' College*, Mrs. S. L. Anderson gives these words to one of her characters:

[257] “Ninety-nine hundredths of all diseases on record belong to women, and they all arise from her mode of dress. What would you think of tying up a race horse that way and starting him on the course? It is just as absurd to expect a woman to run this race of life creditably in her present style of dress.”

Concerning the point of immodesty, a writer made this observation in the [The Review and Herald, June 18, 1867](#):

“Anyone that has traveled as much as I have, can bear testimony with me to the immodesty of the hoop skirt. A lady with one on very seldom enters a carriage, omnibus, car, and such places without immodestly exposing herself.”

Ellen G. White wrote earlier in the [The Review and Herald, August 27, 1861](#), emphasizing the same point:

“Hoops, I was shown, are an abomination, and every Sabbath-keeper’s influence should be a rebuke to this ridiculous fashion, which has been a screen to iniquity.”

In 1868 Ellen G. White wrote a tract entitled, *The Dress Reform*. In it, speaking of the inconvenience of the dress of the times, she stated:

“If she goes into her garden to walk or to work among her flowers, to share the early, refreshing morning air, unless she holds them up with both hands, her skirts are dragging and drabbling in dirt and dew, until they are wet and muddy. Fashion attaches to her, cloth that is, in this case, used as a sort of mop. This is exceedingly

inconvenient. But for the sake of fashion it must be endured.” Page 4.

Upon the first presentation of Handel's *Messiah*, in Dublin, on April 13, 1742, it was announced publicly beforehand that “ladies should not wear hoopskirts nor men their swords,” so that the auditorium, which ordinarily accommodated six hundred persons, might have room for seven hundred at the performance. [258]

Thus we can see that the agitation on the entire dress question originated outside the ranks of Seventh-day Adventists, many years before the reform dress was adopted by them. It was a cry for freedom from a burden that Dame Fashion had imposed upon the women of that time.

Now that we have seen the beginning of dress reform in the United States among those not of our faith, let us see how the early Adventists related themselves to it. Living at that time and under those conditions, they were bound to feel its influence, for they were verily a part of the time in which they lived, even as we are today.

Instruction From Ellen G. White

In *Life Sketches* Ellen Harmon wrote of her experience between 1840 and 1844, which was typical of the experience of those who were looking for the Second Advent of Christ:

“I had no temptation to spend my earnings for my own personal gratification. My dress was plain; nothing was spent for needless ornaments, for vain display appeared sinful in my eyes. . . . The salvation of souls was the burden of my mind.” Pages 47, 48.

And of the early days in the experience of the Sabbathkeeping Adventists, we observe that— [259]

“From time to time articles appeared in the *Review and Herald* counseling simplicity in dress, though the consideration of the matter from the standpoint of health was for some years subordinated to the thought of the scriptural injunctions against pride and display.” D. E. Robinson, [The Story of Our Health Message, 104](#).

It was not until August 5, 1858, that anything at all was said in the *Review and Herald* in condemnation of a specific style of dress. And it was thirteen years *after* Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Stanton, and Mrs.

Bloomer had initiated the dress reform that Mrs. White began to advocate a reform dress for Seventh-day Adventists.

As is true of every reform movement, there were some who stood ready to swing the pendulum from one extreme to the other rather than to take a sane, sensible, middle-of-the-road attitude on this dress reform movement. Getting the skirts off the ground was one thing, but keeping them at a proper length was something else. In the American costume, as it was called, the clothing adopted by many women of the world was very similar to men's attire, and went to the extreme of raising the skirts to the knees or above!

[260] With the agitation of the time and the various reactions to the dress reform, it is not strange that our sisters began to ask counsel. In vision Mrs. White was shown the general principles that should guide in the matter, and she herself was searching for something that would meet the needs of Christian women. During a visit to Dansville, New York, where the reform dress was worn at a health institute, she wrote:

“They have all styles of dress here. Some are very becoming, if not so short. We shall get patterns from this place and I think we can get out a style of dress more healthful than we now wear, and yet not be Bloomer or the American costume. Our dresses, according to my idea, should be from four to six inches shorter than now worn, and should in no case reach lower than the top of the heel of the shoe, and could be a little shorter even than this with all modesty. . . . I am going to get up a style of dress on my own hook which will accord perfectly with *that which has been shown me*. Health demands it. Our feeble women must dispense with heavy skirts and tight waists if they value health. . . .

“We shall never imitate Miss Dr. Austin or Mrs. Dr. York. They dress very much like men. We shall imitate or follow no fashion we have ever yet seen. We shall institute a fashion which will be both economical and healthy.” From a letter to Brother and Sister Lockwood, dated September, 1864.

While this question was such a live issue, Mrs. White wrote about the dress of three companies of women as they had been presented to her in vision:

“The first were of fashionable length, burdening the limbs, impeding the step, and sweeping the street and gathering its filth; the

evil results of which I have fully stated. This class, who were slaves to fashion, appeared feeble and languid.

“The dress of the second class which passed before me was in many respects as it should be. The limbs were well clad. They were free from the burdens which the tyrant, Fashion, had imposed upon the first class; but had gone to that extreme in the short dress as to disgust and prejudice good people, and destroy in a great measure their own influence. This is the style and influence of the ‘American Costume,’ taught and worn by many at ‘Our Home,’ Dansville, N.Y. It does not reach to the knee. I need not say that this style of dress was shown me to be too short. [261]

“A third class passed before me with cheerful countenances, and free, elastic step. Their dress was the length I have described as proper, modest and healthful. It cleared the filth of the street and side-walk a few inches under all circumstances, such as ascending and descending steps, etc.” [The Review and Herald, October 8, 1867.](#)

Avoiding Extremes

In the same article Mrs. White explained how this subject was presented to her:

“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. As I wrote upon the subject of dress the view of those three companies revived in my mind as plain as when I was viewing them in vision; but I was left to describe the length of the proper dress in my own language the best I could.” *Ibid.*

Of her experience in developing a style of dress harmonizing with that shown her in the vision, Mrs. White wrote further in the same article:

“I put on the dress, in length as near as I had seen and described as I could judge. My sisters in Northern Michigan also adopted it. And when the subject of inches came up in order to secure uniformity as to length everywhere, a rule was brought and it was found that the length of our dresses ranged from eight to ten inches from the [262]

floor. Some of these were a little longer than the sample shown me, while others were a little shorter.

“Numerous letters came to me from all parts of the field, inquiring the length of the dress shown me. Having seen the rule applied to the distance from the floor of several dresses, and having become fully satisfied that nine inches comes the nearest to the samples shown me, I have given this number of inches in [Testimony] No. 12 [see [Testimonies for the Church 1:521](#)], as the proper length in regard to which uniformity is very desirable.” *Ibid.*

Of the experience at the Health Institute in Battle Creek, one wrote:

“At my request the physicians at the Institute named a number of its inmates whose dresses they considered as nearly correct in make and appearance as could be found to that number amongst the varieties. I measured the height of twelve, with the distance of their dresses from the floor. They varied in height from five feet to five feet seven inches, and the distance of the dresses from the floor was from 8 to 10½ inches. The medium, nine inches, was decided to be the right distance, and is adopted as the standard.” *The Health Reformer, March, 1868.*

In 1865 Mrs. White warned against the adoption of the American costume because of its imitation of men’s clothing:

[263] “Those who adopt and advocate this style of dress, are carrying the so-called dress reform to very objectionable lengths. . . . They could be instrumental in accomplishing vastly more good if they did not carry the matter of dress to such extremes.” *How to Live*, No. 6, chap. 6 (1865).

In 1866 Mrs. White set forth some basic principles to guide the sisters of the church in their selection of clothes:

“Christians should not take pains to make themselves a gazing-stock by dressing differently from the world. But if, when following out their convictions of duty in respect to dressing *modestly* and *healthfully*, they find themselves out of fashion, they should not change their dress in order to be like the world; but they should manifest a noble independence and moral courage to be right, if all the world differ from them. If the world introduce a modest, convenient, and healthful mode of dress, which is in accordance with the Bible, it will not change our relation to God or to the world to adopt such a

style of dress. Christians should follow Christ and make their dress conform to God's word. *They should shun extremes.*" [Testimonies for the Church 1:458, 459](#). (Italics supplied.)

"I was shown that God would have us take a course consistent and explainable. Let the sisters adopt the American costume, and they would destroy their own influence and that of their husbands. *They would become a byword and a derision.* . . . There is a great work for us to do in the world, *and God would not have us take a course to lessen or destroy our influence with the world.*" [Testimonies for the Church 1:458](#). (Italics supplied.)

The quotations I have used give the background of conditions existing generally at that time. They also indicate how our women were influenced by these conditions, and their earnest attempt to arrive at a satisfactory solution. However, there were many of our own women who either failed to adopt the recommended standard or who went to an extreme. For this reason, dress reform became a decided stumbling block to many.

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Some took the attitude that the wearing of the reform dress must be obligatory, but Mrs. White wrote ([Testimonies for the Church 4:637](#)), "I did not make the dress a test question."

Still others with misguided zeal placed it entirely out of its setting:

"With extremists, this reform seemed to constitute the sum and substance of their religion. It was the theme of conversation and the burden of their hearts; and their minds were thus diverted from God and the truth. . . . To those who put it on reluctantly, from a sense of duty, it became a grievous yoke. Still others, who were apparently the most zealous reformers, manifested a sad lack of order and neatness in their dress." [Testimonies for the Church 4:636, 637](#).

"They sought to control others' conscience by their own. If they wore it, others must put it on. They forgot that none were to be compelled to wear the reform dress." [Testimonies for the Church 4:636](#).

"Some were greatly troubled because I did not make the dress a test question, and still others because I advised those who had unbelieving husbands or children not to adopt the reform dress, as it might lead to unhappiness that would counteract all the good to

be derived from its use. For years I carried the burden of this work, and labored to establish uniformity of dress among our sisters.” [Testimonies for the Church 4:637](#).

[265] For these reasons, less and less was said about the reform dress until, as George I. Butler wrote:

“A point was reached where it became evident that the short dress, which was designed to be a blessing to our people, became an actual hindrance to the cause, because of the unreasonable course of many among us concerning it. Sister White ceased to speak in its behalf, and did not wear it herself, and it soon ceased to be generally worn.” *The Review and Herald* Supplement, Aug. 14, 1883.

Renewal of Agitation Discouraged

It was in the early and middle sixties that most of the agitation on the question of a reform in women’s dress was seen in our own ranks. Because of the extremists and the opposers of the changes in dress Mrs. White dropped the subject for several years. Very little more was heard of the dress question among our writings until about 1897, when some asked why the specific reform dress of earlier days was not being worn, and wished to revive the issue. Mrs. White wrote at that time:

[266] “In answer to the questions that have recently come to me in regard to resuming the reform dress, I would say that those who have been agitating this subject may be assured that they have not been inspired by the Spirit of God. The Lord has not indicated that it is the duty of our sisters to go back to the reform dress. The difficulties that we once had to meet are not to be brought in again. *There must be no branching out now into singular forms of dress.* New and strange things will continually arise, to lead God’s people into false excitement, religious revivals, and curious developments; but our people should not be subjected to any tests of human invention that will create controversy in any line.

“The advocacy of the old reform dress proved a battle at every step. With some there was no uniformity and taste in the preparation of the costume, and those who refused to adopt it caused dissension and discord. Thus the cause was dishonored. *Because that which*

was given as a blessing was turned into a curse, the burden of advocating the reform dress was removed.

“There were some things that made the reform dress a decided blessing. With it the ridiculous hoops, which were then the fashion, could not possibly be worn; nor the long, trailing skirts, sweeping up the filth of the streets. *But in recent years a more sensible style of dress has been adopted by the world, which does not embrace these objectionable features; and if our sisters wish to make their dresses after these models, simple and plain, the Lord will not be dishonored by their doing so.*

“Some have supposed that the skirt and sacque mentioned in Testimonies, Vol. IV, page 640, was the pattern that all should adopt. This is not so; but something as simple as this should be used. *No one precise style has been given me as the exact rule to guide all in their dress.* Should our sisters think they must adopt a uniform style of dress, controversy would arise, and those whose minds should be wholly given to the work of the third angel's message, would spend their time making aggressive warfare on the outward dress, to the neglect of that inward piety, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

“The dress question is not to be our present truth. To create an issue on this point now would please the enemy. He would be delighted to have minds diverted to any subject by which he might create division of sentiment, and lead our people into controversy.

[267]

“I beg of our people to walk carefully and circumspectly before God. Follow the customs in dress so far as they conform to health principles. Let our sisters dress plainly, as many do, having the dress of good, durable material, appropriate for this age, and let not the dress question fill the mind. Our sisters should dress with simplicity. They should clothe themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety. . . .

“The working of the Spirit of God will show a change outwardly. Those who venture to disobey the plainest statements of Inspiration, will not heed any human efforts made to induce them to wear a plain, neat, unadorned, proper dress, that will not in any way make them odd or singular. They will continue to expose themselves by hanging out their colors to the world. . . .

“Therefore I say to my sisters, Enter into no controversy in regard to outward apparel, but be sure you have the inward adorning of a meek and quiet spirit. Let all who accept the truth show their true colors. We are a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. False prudence, mock modesty, may be shown by the outward apparel, while the heart is in great need of the inward adorning. Stand ever committed to the right.” [Manuscript 167, 1897](#). Quoted in D. E. Robinson, [The Story of Our Health Message, 361-364](#). (Italics supplied.)

Fundamental Principles

[268] There are several points presented here for our consideration. The specific instruction given in the sixties was to meet a definite crisis. At that time, however, certain fundamental principles of dress were laid down that will always remain true, and our course of action today should be based upon these principles. For that reason it is not necessary that detailed instruction be given our sisters from time to time. One of the first principles stressed in the dress reform program was that of *health*. Back there it was especially needed. I suppose there has never been a time when, generally speaking, fashion has decreed a dress more healthful than now. Thus the question of health in dress is not the extreme issue today.

The second point stressed was that of *modesty*. The reason for cultivating and cherishing this virtue is just as much present today as it was eighty or a hundred years ago, or at any other time. Christian women are expected to dress modestly. If for any reason Dame Fashion introduces a passing style that calls this virtue into question, then a responsibility rests upon the Christian woman to stay by what she knows to be right, regardless of prevailing fashion.

The third feature of the dress reform movement was *simplicity and appropriateness*, which applies equally as well today as at any other time. Wearing a dress that drags on the ground would be no more appropriate today than the extremely short skirts were back there. “Consistency, thou art a jewel.”

A careful study of the light given us on the whole dress question forms itself into a picture of the well-dressed woman at any time. We are told that the materials chosen should be the best we can

afford to buy, for that is economy. Our dress should be neat, and not of a gaudy nature that would attract undue attention. This is where modesty comes in, too. No properly dressed woman need fear that she will be insulted if her actions are in keeping with her attire; nor that insulting remarks will be made about her. Somehow there is planted in the heart of every woman a sense of modesty that can and should be cultivated. Now, honestly, can't you tell when your own dress is modest, or when it doesn't feel *just* right? The following statement is to the point: [269]

“In dress, as in all things else, it is our privilege to honor our Creator. He desires our clothing to be not only neat and healthful but appropriate and becoming.

“A person's character is judged by his style of dress. A refined taste, a cultivated mind, will be revealed in the choice of simple and appropriate attire. Chaste simplicity in dress, when united with modesty of demeanor, will go far toward surrounding a young woman with that atmosphere of sacred reserve which will be to her a shield from a thousand perils.” [Education, 248.](#)

Just to show how true principles are recognized everywhere, may I call your attention to the application of these principles in our present day? *Personality Unlimited*, by Veronica Dengel, is a good book, published in 1943 (John C. Winston Company), with the subtitle, *The Beauty Blue Book*. How familiar this instruction on principles of dress sounds:

“Good taste in clothes starts with simplicity, proceeds to becomingness, and culminates in appropriateness for the occasion. No matter how beautiful any article of clothing may be, unless it suits the wearer, unless it is functional and right for the specific purpose and time it is worn, it is not in good taste. Loud, flashy colors, poor fabrics and workmanship, and inharmonious combinations all contribute to bad taste. . . . [270]

“Simplicity should border on plainness, but with the distinction that is achieved by perfect fit, beautiful line, fine tailoring, and complete suitability to the figure type. Absence of ornamentation helps to bring out the beauty of the fabric and cut; badly designed clothes are often betrayed by the surplus of trimming used in an attempt to conceal the inferior workmanship. But it is possible to find inexpensive dresses of good line and fabric which have been

‘decorated’ to catch those who dote on fancy extras. Your keen eye will help you to find the basic good style underneath all this. By removing the bows, flowers, or whatnots, you may have a dress that will look as expensive as a higher priced dress with the addition of a choice accessory.” Pages 366, 367.

“Your clothes, and that includes every detail, should be the perfect background for your personality. They should add confidence to your manner, assurance and poise to your bearing. This is not vanity; it is merely the realization that your clothes are as impeccable as your deportment.

“To be sure, your attire should and does attract attention, but if your costume is a foreground instead of a background, then it has been badly chosen, and you are overdressed.

[271] “Do not protest that you cannot afford to be smartly dressed. Basic good style is always to be desired rather than the novelty fashion of the moment. Your appearance advertises your ability to make the most of your natural attributes. If you wear outmoded clothes and are carelessly groomed, you will convey the impression that your mentality is also dated, and that you are not capable of development along the modern trends. Such a reputation is a serious drawback to any woman.” Page 387.

Perhaps we have given enough of the background discussion of the dress question as it appears in the Spirit of prophecy, and as it is considered today, even by those who set the best standards for the world. A careful study shows that there is a surprising harmony between these two.

Appropriate Length of Dress

Now for consideration of the definite question on the proper length of dress for Christian young women today. From the facts presented it is clear that the nine-inch standard was selected at the time when the dress question was being agitated everywhere, as a balance between the dress dragging on the ground and the one that had been raised above the knees. At that time principles were laid down that were to serve us all as we should apply them to ourselves. There is no need for a separate statement of skirt length to be made for each succeeding age or era—modesty is the standard.

With this thought of modesty is to be coupled “appropriate for this age.” *Appropriate* means “specially suitable, fit, proper”: so we see that this also places the question of dress in its proper setting as regards time, climate, age of the wearer, and so forth. We are not required to be so different in our dress as to become gazingstocks to those about us, but rather what is generally accepted as appropriate for the time in which we live will be suitable, *if it is healthful and modest*. It is generally conceded, too, that the appropriate length of dress varies with a woman’s age. An elderly woman would not expect to dress like a girl in her teens, nor should a young girl be expected to dress like her middle-aged mother. Not only does age enter into the decision of the right style of the dress, but the person’s *build and type must also be considered*. Some women are tall, while others are short; then there are the fat ones, the skinny ones, and those in between. Some dresses are made very full, while others are narrower, and this is another factor to be considered. [272]

The current book previously referred to has this to say about standards for dress length:

“The fashionable skirt length is the one to adopt; but if skirts are worn short, do not go the modes one better and have yours at or above your knees, for the knee is not an attractive sight either from the front or back. *Your skirt should always end below the knee, at or just above the fullest part of the leg. One extreme is as bad as the other.* If your legs are very heavy, do not attempt to hide them by wearing your skirt too long, for you will only draw attention to yourself. An inch, or even half an inch, longer than usual will suffice.” Veronica Dengel, *Personality Unlimited*, pp. 385, 386. (Italics supplied.)

“With the right line you can make a figure seem taller or shorter, narrower or wider, as may be required. . . .

“The tall girl must avoid any silhouette that will extend her height, whereas the short or heavy woman can create an impression of height by carrying the eye ‘up and down’ in every possible way. On the other hand, the heavy or short woman must avoid lines that carry the eye from side to side, because these certainly will make her look shorter and heavier. Horizontal lines, which tend to ‘cut’ height, are only for the tall, slender person. . . . [273]

“A very short skirt cuts the height and increases width. A long skirt increases height.” *Ibid.*, pp. 374-376.

Thus I cannot give a definite answer as to whether “three and a half or four inches below the knee is a modest length for girls of twenty; and for a woman of fifty, six inches below the knee,” because build, height, weight, the style chosen, or the kind of material to be used—all have a bearing on the proper length of dress. The instruction that we have considered all agrees that the knees should always be covered, whether one is standing or sitting, and that the dress should extend far enough below the knee to reach gracefully to the fullest part of the leg. A mirror will guide in determining the proper length for individual needs, as can the honest opinion of one who has these standards in mind.

Represents Character

Our dress is to represent our character—what we are, and what is in our heart. The following statement brings out the thought I have in mind:

[274] “Are we confessing Christ in our daily life? Do we confess him in our dress, adorning ourselves with plain and modest apparel? Is our adorning that of the meek and quiet spirit which is of so great price in the sight of God? Are we seeking to advance the cause of the Master? Is the line of demarcation between you and the world distinct, or are you seeking to follow the fashions of this degenerate age? Is there no difference between you and the worldling? Does the same spirit work in you that works in the children of disobedience? If we are Christians, we shall follow Christ, even though the path in which we are to walk cuts right across our natural inclinations. There is *no use in telling you that you must not wear this or that*, for if the love of these vain things is in your heart, your laying off your adornments will only be like cutting the foliage off a tree. The inclinations of the natural heart would again assert themselves. *You must have a conscience of your own.*” [The Review and Herald, May 10, 1892](#). (Italics supplied.)

As Christian women today, it is our privilege at all times to be so modestly attired that our dress will be a witness of our profession.

In closing this chapter I wish to quote our 1946 General Conference declaration of standards of Christian living on the matter of dress. It sums up the counsel from Mrs. White and the best thinking of the best-informed people of the world on this subject, and gives us *our own denominational standard* on this very important topic.

“Seventh-day Adventists have been called out from the world. We are reformers. True religion which enters into every phase of life must have a molding influence on all our activities. Our habits of life must stem from principle and not from the example of the world about us. Customs and fashions may change with the years, but principles of right conduct are always the same. Dress is an important factor in Christian character. Early in our history, instruction was given as to the way Christians should dress, the purpose of which was ‘to protect the people of God from the corrupting influences of the world, as well as to promote physical and moral health.’—[Testimonies for the Church 4:634](#). Truly a comprehensive purpose. There is no virtue in dressing differently from those about us just to be different, but where the principles of refinement or morality are involved, the conscientious Christian will be true to his convictions rather than follow the prevailing customs. [275]

“Christians should avoid display and ‘profuse ornamentation.’ Clothing should be, when possible, ‘of good quality, of becoming colors, and suited for service.’ It should be chosen for ‘durability rather than display.’ Our attire should be characterized by ‘beauty,’ ‘modest grace’ and ‘appropriateness of natural simplicity.’—[Messages to Young People, 351, 352](#). That it may not be conspicuous, it should follow the conservative and most sensible styles of the time.

“The adoption of fads and extreme fashions in men’s or women’s dress indicates a lack of attention to serious matters. Regardless of how sensibly people generally may dress, there are always extremes in style which transgress the laws of modesty, and thus have a direct bearing upon the prevalence of immoral conditions. Many who blindly follow the styles are at least partly unconscious of these effects, but the results are no less disastrous. The people of God should always be found among the conservatives in dress, and will not let ‘the dress question fill the mind.’—[Evangelism, 273](#). They will not be the first to adopt the new styles of dress or the last to lay the old aside. ‘To dress plainly, and abstain from display of

[276] jewelry and ornaments of every kind is in keeping with our faith.’—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 366. It is clearly taught in the Scriptures that the wearing of jewelry is contrary to the will of God. ‘Not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array,’ is the admonition of the apostle Paul. ([1 Timothy 2:9](#).) The wearing of ornaments of jewelry is a bid for attention which is not in keeping with Christian self-forgetfulness.

“In some countries the custom of wearing the marriage ring is considered imperative, having become, in the minds of the people, a criterion of virtue, and hence is not regarded as an ornament. Under such circumstances we have no disposition to condemn the practice.

“Let us remember that the elements of beauty lie not so much in feature and color as in the expression of intelligence and benevolence. The use of lipstick, unnatural shades of fingernail polish and similar cosmetics employed in the common ‘make-up’ partake of the artificial and are out of keeping with Christian simplicity. Cleanliness and Christlike modesty should also be observed in the care and grooming of the person seeking at all times to please and rightly represent Christ our Lord.

“Our Christian parents should bring to bear the weight of their example, instruction, and authority, to lead their sons and daughters in modestly attiring themselves, and thus winning the respect and confidence of those who know them. Let our people consider themselves well dressed only when the demands of modesty are met.” *Standards of Christian Living*, pp. 7-9.

For a helpful assemblage of the Spirit of prophecy counsels on the question of dress, we urge the reader to study carefully the section entitled Fitting Attire found in [Child Guidance](#), 413-436.

Chapter 14—What Manner of Persons Ought We to Be? [277]

Today I am more convinced than ever before that Seventh-day Adventists have the truth for this time, and that God has been good to the remnant church. He speaks to us through His servants of old and through His messenger in our time. To introduce the thought of this chapter and in keeping with these very critical days of this world's history we turn to the apostle Peter for our message. He declares:

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? [278]

“Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless (2 Peter 3:9-14).”

Thinking through this solemn instruction given by the apostle, I have come to the conclusion that the warning is for *me* personally, and the appeal is to *me* as to what kind of person *I* am going to be from today on. It is not my business primarily to think about you and your condition—the kind of person you ought to be. That is your problem. My problem is, What kind of person ought I to be? If each of us will answer that question for himself, I feel confident

that we shall be ready for this great event that is described in such graphic terms.

On this vital question I turn now to the counsel from the messenger of the Lord, and as I read the counsel for myself I hope that each one of you will make a personal application. Ellen G. White says:

“I make myself a criterion for no one else.” [Medical Ministry, 285](#).

“Let no one think himself a criterion for all—that everyone must do exactly as he does.” [Counsels on Health, 156](#).

[279] “Some are continually anxious lest their food, however simple and healthful, may hurt them. To these let me say, Do not think your food will injure you; do not think about it at all. Eat according to your best judgment; and when you have asked the Lord to bless the food for the strengthening of your body, believe that He hears your prayer, and be at rest.” [The Ministry of Healing, 321](#).

“If there are those who are better in health when eating three meals, it is their privilege to have three.” [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 178](#).

“We are not to be as the Pharisees, bound about by set rules and regulations. . . . We are to be careful not to make laws like the laws of the Pharisees, or to teach for doctrines the commandments of men.” [Medical Ministry, 284](#).

“Those who have but a partial understanding of the principles of reform are often the most rigid, not only in carrying out their views themselves, but in urging them on their families and their neighbors. The effect of their mistaken reforms, as seen in their own ill-health, and their efforts to force their views upon others, give many a false idea of dietetic reform, and lead them to reject it altogether.” [The Ministry of Healing, 318, 319](#).

“Shun the extremes, both of indulgence and of restriction.” [The Ministry of Healing, 319](#).

“These extremes frequently do more harm in a short time than could be undone by a lifetime of consistent living.” [The Ministry of Healing, 324](#).

“It is impossible to make an unvarying rule to regulate every one’s habits, and no one should think himself a criterion for all.” [The Ministry of Healing, 319](#).

“Carefully consider your diet. Study from cause to effect. Cultivate self-control. Keep appetite under the control of reason. Never abuse the stomach by overeating, but do not deprive yourself of the wholesome, palatable food that health demands.”—[The Ministry of Healing, 323](#).

It was my privilege while in India to live in the home of the division secretary. Each day at mealtime a dish containing honey was kindly passed to me, and if I am not mistaken the honey came from Assam, and therefore it was especially delectable. But unfortunately, each time I had to pass the dish of honey by, and I shall give you the reason why.

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Many years ago I found that by eating honey, even so small an amount as a teaspoonful, I gave myself a real old-fashioned stomach-ache, which lasted about three days. Therefore, this instruction is very good for me. “Carefully consider your diet. Study from cause to effect.” This I have done, and no one can persuade me to eat honey knowingly. Now, you may eat it. You may enjoy it. You may not have the reaction that I have. But, since I have that reaction, I would not want you to force on me your idea that honey is the best food in the world, no matter where it comes from.

In studying my own health habits over a period of years, I have learned what is good for me and what is not. There are a number of fruits and vegetables that do not agree with me. I cannot eat them with safety. So I pass them by in accordance with this good instruction, “Keep appetite under the control of reason.” However, I would not want to force my restriction regarding honey on somebody else, because I notice that most people enjoy honey very much indeed, and the Bible says much approving its use.

Mrs. White continues:

“The narrow ideas of some would-be health reformers have been a great injury to the cause of hygiene.” [The Ministry of Healing, 323](#).

[281]

“Those who are governed by principle will be firm and decided in standing for the right; yet in all their associations they will manifest a generous, Christlike spirit and true moderation.” [The Ministry of Healing, 324](#).

“Health reform must not be urged in a radical manner. . . . We must be careful to make no innovations, because under the influence

of extreme teaching there are conscientious souls who will surely go to extremes. Their physical appearance will injure the cause of health reform; for few know how to properly supply the place of that which they discard. . . . Thus health reform is brought into disrepute.” [Counsels on Diet and Foods, 352, 353.](#)

Now the strangest thing about those who are very radical in health reform, and those who are most insistent in passing their ideas on to the other person, is that they are usually thin, emaciated, scrawny—just the opposite of what we would expect as an example of health. Therefore, with Mrs. White I would suggest that if such a person is what your health reform has made of you, you had better not talk about it, for you are a poor specimen of the blessings that should come from a consistent following of the health messages.

[282] I close this part of my message with this thought: The God who gives His beloved sleep has furnished them also suitable food to sustain the physical system in a healthy condition, and I thank God for that. I find very few places in the world that do not enjoy the blessings from heaven of a fine and bountiful supply of good, wholesome, nourishing food. There are only a few places in the world that I have found so far where I would have to digress from my habits of eating.

Yes, I think the health message is a most wonderful message for me. I have decided to live it out as carefully as possible, including not only what I eat, but how I use my time, my strength, and my energy. Believing that Christ is coming soon, that this world is on the verge of dissolution, and that the apostle writes, “What sort of man should D. E. Rebok be?” I have decided to study my physical nature and try to bring it into complete harmony with the full instruction that has come through the Scriptures and through the writings of the servant of the Lord.

But there is another part of man’s being. Man does not just eat. He does not live to eat, but rather I am told that a man ought to eat in order to live; that his living is primary, and eating is only a means to an end. There is something far more important than my physical being. And I want to emphasize that part in these words from several passages of Scripture.

[Romans 14:15](#), and I read it from Weymouth:

“Still, if your brother is pained by the food you are eating, you are no longer following the guidance of love. Do not by your food ruin a man for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let what is a boon to you and others bring reproach. For the Kingdom of God does not consist in eating and drinking, but in uprightness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit; and whoever in this way serves Christ, pleases God and is approved by men. Therefore let us aim at whatever makes for peace, and the spiritual upbuilding of one another.” [283]

This phase of my living, namely, my character, my moral life, the kind of person I really am, is equally as important as the physical. I find it described in these words in [1 Corinthians 10:31](#):

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

Whatever I do includes much more than what I eat and what I drink. My eating and drinking has become just a sort of necessity; in fact, at home we spend very little time thinking about eating and drinking. My wife says I am very easily satisfied, and therefore our problem of eating is not a big one. But there is another angle to my living that is not so easily dealt with, and that is the way I talk, the way I conduct myself, my attitude of mind and body, the way I deal with my fellow men, the way I mingle with my fellow workers, the kind of example I live before the people in the church and the people out of the church. This is the place upon which I need to put some emphasis.

[Colossians 3](#) gives me the method by which I may heed the instruction from the servant of the Lord. Whether the Christian virtues are being developed, cultivated, in my daily life and experience is to me a very important part of my living.

I read in [Colossians 3:1-4](#):

“If, however, you have risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, enthroned at God’s right hand. Give your minds to the things that are above, not to the things that are on the earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ appears—He is our true Life—then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Weymouth). [284]

This is the great objective of my life today, to somehow learn to live in such a way that I may become the sort of man that Christ was, so that when He comes I shall be like Him, He will recognize

me as one of His own, and I shall have the courage to look up into His face and recognize Him as my personal Saviour and my King of kings. This then is the kind of instruction that I now read for myself:

“Therefore put to death your earthward inclinations—fornication, impurity, sensual passion, unholy desire, and all greed, for that is a form of idolatry. It is on account of these very sins that God’s wrath is coming, and you also were once addicted to them, while you were living under their power” ([Colossians 3:5-7](#), Weymouth).

Is that the end of it? No. If we have had that type of earthly or earthward inclinations in the past, the instruction is, Put them to death. Cut them off. Get rid of them.

Continuing:

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“But now you must rid yourselves of every kind of sin—angry and passionate outbreaks, ill-will, evil speaking, foul-mouthed abuse—so that these may never soil your lips. Do not lie to one another, for you have stripped off the old self with its doings, and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being remoulded into full knowledge so as to become like Him who created it” ([Colossians 3:8-10](#), Weymouth).

How can I get rid of all these things that would tend to pull me down and keep me tied to the earth—such things as anger, passionate outbreaks, evil speaking, ill-will, and foul-mouthed abuse? How can I get rid of them? The answer is, By being molded and fashioned by the prophets. This molding work is the specific purpose of having the gift of prophecy in the ancient church, and in the modern.

In the new creation there will be neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian nor Scythian, slave nor free man. And I should like to add a few others: There will be neither Indian nor Chinese, Japanese nor Javanese, German nor Italian, nor any other nationality. There will be nothing of that kind. There will be no division by race or creed or color. There will be no geographical divisions among God’s people, who are living in harmony with the instruction given through the prophets. “But Christ is all, and in all,” and what a difference that makes in every man who allows the Lord Jesus Christ, by faith, to come in and take up His abode in the heart.

In India a representative from the city government came out to our estate to see me, and while we were waiting for Chad Israel, our

public relations man, he looked around and asked, “Sir, have you been in India very long?”

I replied, “Not long; in fact, only two weeks.”

Then he inquired, “Have you seen India?”

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I hesitated for a moment, not knowing exactly how to answer. “I have seen Poona. No, I have not really seen very much of Poona—I have spent these two weeks here at this headquarters, the Salisbury Estate.”

“Well,” he said, “then you have not yet seen India.”

To which I agreed, “I am sure you are right.”

He continued, “As a matter of fact, when you are here on this estate you are not actually seeing India as she is.”

I asked him frankly, “What makes the difference?”

He did not answer my question, but I can give you the answer. It is having Jesus in the heart of a man or woman, a boy or a girl, that makes the difference. I thank God for what I saw on that estate. I saw men and women, boys and girls, who have had this very experience that makes the difference. “Christ is all, and in all.” O that we might see that difference made in millions of the people of the world!

“Clothe yourselves” you see over there he says to put off, to get rid of, and now he turns to the opposite idea and says to put on—

“Clothe yourselves therefore, as God’s own people holy and dearly loved, with tenderheartedness, kindness, lowliness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another and readily forgiving each other, if any one has a grievance against another” ([Colossians 3:12, 13](#), Weymouth).

Is not that a wonderful way to live? That is what it means to be the sort of man whom Christ will welcome into His kingdom. The kind of person who, if slapped on one cheek, can with a smile offer the other and say, “Brother, do it to this one also.” The kind of man who, when he is roughly treated or abused, when he is reviled, or when something is said against him, can stand with a smile and say, “Brother, that is nothing compared with the way they treated my Master, my Saviour.” The kind of man who, when sharp words are spoken to him, can smile and return a soft answer. The kind of man who, when he is cheated or deceived, can smile and say, “Brother, do not worry about that. I know you are in difficulties; let me give you more than I am duty bound to give.”

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It is that kind of person I want to be—holy and dearly loved, tenderhearted and kind, lowly in mind, meek and long-suffering, willing to bear with the mistakes of others, and readily forgiving others.

I came across this paragraph in my reading, and I want to share it with you:

“As children of God, we should be constantly gaining in fitness for the heavenly mansions which Christ told His disciples He was going away to prepare for them. He who lays hold upon the righteousness of Christ may become a perfect man in Christ Jesus. Working from a high standpoint, seeking to follow the example of Christ, we shall grow up into His likeness, possessing more and more refinement.” [Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 150.](#)

[288] I liked that paragraph, and I said to myself, “That is the kind of experience I want in my daily life, gaining in fitness for *my* heavenly mansion He is preparing over there for *me*.” Is that making it too realistic? Is that making it too common, bringing it down on my level of understanding?

“All who would enter the city of God must during their earthly life set forth Christ in their dealings. It is this that constitutes them the messengers of Christ, *His witnesses*.” [Christian Service, 15, 16.](#)

It is my aim to be there, dear friends, and I plan to be in that city of God, in His everlasting kingdom. Mrs. White says if I would enter the city of God, I must during my earthly life learn to set forth Christ in all my dealings.

There are a few more interesting paragraphs along the same line:

“Religion means the abiding of Christ in the heart, and where he is, the soul goes on in spiritual activity, ever growing in grace, ever going on to perfection.” [The Review and Herald, May 24, 1892.](#)

“Some of us have a nervous temperament, and are naturally as quick as a flash to think and to act; but let no one think that he cannot learn to become patient. Patience is a plant that will make rapid growth if carefully cultivated. By becoming thoroughly acquainted with ourselves, and then combining with the grace of God a firm determination on our part, we may be conquerors, and become perfect in all things, wanting in nothing.” [Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists, 134.](#)

Of course, it is so easy to let go and give vent to that temper that is down inside. It seems to be so close to the surface, and breaks forth so easily when that explosion inside takes place. Then I try to explain, “You see, I am that way by nature. My father was that way. He was that kind of man, and so I am just that way.” Is that all it takes to get rid of it? Oh, no! I cannot blame it on my father or on my mother either. The instruction is that when I feel that I must give vent to my feelings—speak as quick as a flash and act in the same way—it is then that I need to take hold of myself.

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Mrs. White puts it in this way:

“When tempted to say sarcastic things, refrain. Censure no one, condemn no one. Let the life argue for Jesus, and the lips be opened with wisdom to defend the truth. The consistent life, the long forbearance, the spirit unruffled under provocation, is always the most conclusive argument and the most solemn appeal. We are often brought into positions that are trying, where human nature longs to break forth, but in such cases, be still, do not retaliate.” [Gospel Workers \(1892\), 467.](#)

Let me add just one more paragraph from Mrs. White, and then I shall draw my conclusions:

“The largest share of life’s annoyances, its heartaches, its irritations, is due to uncontrolled temper. In one moment, by hasty, passionate, careless words, may be wrought evil that a whole lifetime’s repentance cannot undo. O, the hearts that are broken, the friends estranged, the lives wrecked, by the harsh, hasty words of those who might have brought help and healing! . . . In his own strength man cannot rule his spirit. But through Christ he may gain self-control.” [The Signs of the Times, 25, 1904.](#)

I have often told my wife that if I could just learn to hold back when something happens to me, when somebody speaks in a rather sharp, caustic way, there would be no argument, there would be no trouble. My difficulty—and I think some of you are somewhat like me—is that when someone speaks to me in that kind of voice, my tendency is to give it back, twice as hard as it came to me. Is that the way it is in your experience?

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There will never be a fight so long as just one man wants to engage in the fight. It takes at least two, and I, as a Christian, cannot with safety be that second person.

“Do not reply unless you can return a pleasant answer. Say to yourself, ‘I will not disappoint my Saviour.’ The Christian woman is a gentlewoman. On her lips is ever the law of kindness. She utters no hasty words. To speak gentle words when you are irritated will bring sunshine into your hearts, and make your path more smooth. A schoolgirl, when asked for a definition of meekness, said, ‘Meek people are those who give soft answers to rough questions.’ Christ says, ‘Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.’ They will be fit subjects for the kingdom of heaven; for they are willing to be taught.” [The Review and Herald, April 7, 1904.](#)

It is such counsel and instruction as this that occupies so prominent a place in the writings of Ellen G. White.

These are the words God speaks to the remnant church—to you and me—who keep all of His commandments, and who cling to the testimony of Jesus Christ, which is the Spirit of prophecy.

Chapter 15—My Attitude on the Life and Work of Ellen G. White [291]

I wish to give you my own conception of the writings of Ellen G. White, and the philosophy that comes out of the writings as I see it today. Perhaps if I quote several texts of Scripture I can best explain my own personal reactions to the great mass of instruction. The first text is [Daniel 7:18](#), which says:

“But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.”

Now as I have read the Conflict of the Ages Series, and many of the other volumes, I have come to the conclusion that what Mrs. White wants me to do, above everything else, is to be one of the saints of the Most High. That seems to be her primary objective. Her appeal to me is to be among those who will stand before the throne of God, to be among the overcomers who will develop a character worthy of a place in God’s kingdom.

I put with that the twenty-second verse of the same chapter:

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“Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.”

The twenty-seventh verse says:

“And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”

Four times in this chapter we have mention of the everlasting kingdom and the kind of people to whom the kingdom will be given. The fourteenth verse:

“And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

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Reading through the Bible and the many volumes and articles prepared by Ellen G. White, I find there stands out in all of them the thought of the everlasting kingdom. This seems to be held before God's people here in this world as the great objective, and in the seventh chapter of Daniel four times the thought is mentioned that this kingdom is to be given to the saints. Three times out of the four it is preceded by the thought of a judgment that must come before the second coming of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom. Therefore, God has set up a judgment by which He will determine who is ready to enter into His kingdom, and who shall be called "the saints of the most High."

This sets before me personally my great objective, namely, the everlasting kingdom. It gives me the basis of judgment, the standard by which God will determine whether or not I am qualified to enter into that kingdom and spend eternity with Him. Put with it now the sixth chapter of Matthew, the thirty-third verse:

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

There is nothing more important to me as a Christian than the kingdom of God and the preparation necessary that I might be called one of the saints of God. It is first and primary in my life. Therefore, I allow the thought of the kingdom to take possession of me—my mind, my heart, my body. Everything is wrapped up in that one purpose—to be ready for the kingdom.

Now I put with that [1 Corinthians 6:9-11](#):

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

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This text gives us a list of the people who will not be found in God's kingdom. "And such were some" of us until we were washed, until we were sanctified or made whole, until we were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. It is this experience that every one of us must enjoy before we shall be qualified for a place in God's kingdom.

He tells us again the kind of people who will not be there, and I suppose it must be important, for several times in the New Testament we have this list enumerated in order that we make no mistake. Here is [Galatians 5:19-21](#):

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

The Bible sets before us the kind of men and women whom God *does not* want in His kingdom. It likewise sets before us the kind of men and women whom God does want in His kingdom:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” ([Verses 22-24](#)).

So if you and I would cultivate these virtues, these characteristics, found in the kind of people that God wants in His kingdom, we must do it by crucifying the lusts of the flesh.

Something will have to come into our lives that will help us to appreciate the fact that the kingdom of God is all-important; then everything else will fade into insignificance. Nothing will I allow to stand between me and His kingdom. I must reach that place in my thinking in order that I may appreciate the writings of the Spirit of prophecy. They are designed to help me put the kingdom of God first, and to put out of my life all these other things that are not tolerated in His kingdom.

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With that thought in mind I should like you to read one more passage, [2 Peter 3](#), beginning with the tenth verse:

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless

we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”

[296] My dear friends, when I completed my intensive study of this subject, the Spirit of prophecy, I stopped on that verse. It seems to me that if I can understand the meaning of that verse in relationship to all the Ellen G. White writings, there is nothing that I will hold back from God when He makes clear to me just what He expects of me in order that I may have a part in His kingdom. That becomes my duty and my pleasure.

This was the verse that appeared in the *Washington Post* at the time of the explosion of the first atom bomb, when a whole city was wiped out of existence, when buildings and material things seemed to disappear into nothingness. The artist who draws the cartoons for the *Post* drew a picture of the earth going into pieces, and in the background he wrote the words of this text, “Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” It was a very impressive cartoon to appear on the front page of the *Washington Post*, and be placed in thousands and thousands of homes. It gave Seventh-day Adventist ministers a text for the sermon to be preached on the Sabbath following that terrible experience.

[297] Recently I have had placed in my hand several confidential business service letters. They deal with the question of the atomic bomb and atomic power. Two paragraphs are sufficient to give me a reason for thinking more seriously about the kind of person I am today, and the kind of person I ought to be in order that I may have a place in God’s kingdom. President Eisenhower has voiced his fears and apprehensions for this old world of ours. His special message before the United Nations made it clear that there is only one alternative to peace, and that is man-made self-annihilation.

I want to emphasize what you already know: The people of the world today are greatly concerned over the atom. The future may be a golden age for the men who know how to control themselves, but you and I know that it is not to be golden until after there has been black and bleak destruction. When we think of these things, and

try to keep them in mind, then we begin to understand the meaning and the significance of the writings of Ellen G. White. For they are designed to help us know where we are today in this world's history, and the kind of men we ought to be in the light of the fact that we are living in the very last days. It is God who sends the messages to mold and fashion, to hew and shape us after the divine similitude and according to the heavenly pattern and standard. That, my friends, is what I should like to emphasize.

May I bring to you a few more of the interesting things contained in the writings? Since I have carefully and thoughtfully made my decision that nothing shall stand between me and God and His kingdom, far be it from me to allow tea or coffee or any article of diet to keep me out of the kingdom of heaven. That is what the writings of the servant of the Lord have come to mean to me.

When some of our people get all fussed up and terribly exercised [298] about what they should eat and what they should not eat, I am constrained to think that they are still fighting a battle within, that they have not yet fully surrendered to the Lord Jesus, and that they have their eyes fixed on the wrong thing. If we understand the kingdom of heaven, if we understand the times in which we are living, if we understand the nearness of the end of time, if we understand what kind of men and women God wants in His kingdom, there is nothing that we will not sacrifice or give up in order that we may be that kind of men and women.

My Salvation and the Writings of Ellen G. White

Our study has brought us a long way from the point of departure, and yet there is a very close connection so far as you and I are concerned personally. My belief in the three great facts of faith upon which Christianity is based leads me to the one and only possible conclusion, namely, that God has spoken to man through His Word—the Scriptures—and has used holy men and women of God as His spokesmen in Old and in New Testament times, and also in our own time.

The evidence thus far presented proves that Ellen G. White was chosen by God as His messenger in the remnant church. Now the

question before us is simply this: “How is my salvation, how is your salvation, related to the writings of Ellen G. White?”

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What Doth the Lord Require?

By “salvation” I mean the plan by which a sinner can be saved out of this world of sin and given an entrance into God’s everlasting kingdom as a saint. The question, then, is, What must I be or do in order to qualify for such a transfer? What are God’s requirements for an entrance into His kingdom? What bearing have the writings of Ellen G. White on our fitness for a place among the saints of all ages to whom the everlasting kingdom shall be given?

Ellen G. White is very consistent in her answer to these questions, and she has not left us in doubt in the matter. A few paragraphs from her pen are typical of what we find in all her writings:

“All who would enter the city of God must during their earthly life set forth Christ in their dealings. It is this that constitutes them the messengers of Christ, His witnesses.” [Testimonies for the Church 9:23](#).

“Who are the subjects of the kingdom of God?—All those who do His will. They have righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The members of Christ’s kingdom are the sons of God, partners in His great firm. The elect of God are a chosen generation, a peculiar people, a holy nation, to show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. They are the salt of the earth, the light of the world. They are living stones, a royal priesthood. They are in copartnership with Jesus Christ. These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.” [Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 422](#).

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“The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been,—just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents,—perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. . . . We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us.” [Steps to Christ, 62](#) (Army and Navy ed.).

“The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God’s holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can ‘be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.’ [Romans 3:26](#).” *The Desire of Ages* (1940), p. 762.

“This robe [of Christ’s righteousness], woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us. . . . When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. . . .

“Righteousness is right doing, and it is by their deeds that all will be judged. Our characters are revealed by what we do. The works show whether the faith is genuine.” [Christ’s Object Lessons](#), 311, 312.

“The Lord’s philosophy is the rule of the Christian’s life. The entire being should be imbued with the life-giving principles of heaven. The busy nothings which consume the time of so many shrink into their proper position before a healthy, sanctifying, Bible piety.

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“The Bible, and the Bible alone, can produce this good result. . . . The whole Bible is a revelation of the glory of God in Christ. Received, believed, obeyed, it is the great instrumentality in the transformation of character. And it is the only sure means of intellectual culture. . . .

“The Scriptures are the great agency in the transformation of character. . . . If studied and obeyed, the Word of God works in the heart, subduing every unholy attribute. . . . The truths of the Word

of God meet man's great practical necessity—the conversion of the soul through faith.” [The Signs of the Times, October 10, 1906](#), p. 3.

The Conclusion From Her Own Statement

The conclusion is as simple as it is certain. Ellen G. White turns the sinner's attention to the Bible and to Christ as man's only hope for salvation. Every page of her writings uplifts Jesus, upholds Christ as man's only Saviour, points unerringly to the Son of God as the one who takes away the sins of the penitent sinner. *Steps to Christ*, *The Ministry of Healing*, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, *Christ's Object Lessons*, and *The Desire of Ages* all set forth the doctrine of righteousness by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[302] “What are we to do,’ they asked, ‘to carry out what God requires?’” ([John 6:28](#), Weymouth). It was Jesus Himself who gave the answer, “This’ . . . ‘is above all what God requires—that you should be believers in Him whom He has sent’” ([verse 29](#)).

Paul and Silas came forth with a similar answer to the earnest appeal of the keeper of the prison, “O sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They did not hesitate or falter for a moment, but knew the answer, and so must you and I as Christ's ministers today. They declared, “Believe on the Lord Jesus,’ . . . ‘and both you and your household will be saved’” ([Acts 16:30, 31](#), Weymouth).

“As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” ([John 1:12](#)).

The whole story of God's requirements for our salvation is told in one verse—[John 3:16](#); in one chapter—[Ephesians 2](#); in one book—the Bible, “the greater light“: and in one library—“the lesser light,” the forty-five bound volumes and several thousand Ellen G. White articles that have appeared in our church papers over the past one hundred years.

“The revelation of God's love to men centers in the cross. Its full significance tongue cannot utter; pen cannot portray; the mind of man cannot comprehend. Looking upon the cross of Calvary we can only say: ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ [John 3:16](#).

“Christ crucified for our sins, Christ risen from the dead, Christ ascended on high, *is the science of salvation that we are to learn and to teach.*” *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 287. (Italics supplied.) [303]

My faith in Christ as my personal Saviour causes me to make a full and complete surrender to Him:

“He asks for a whole heart; give it to Him; it is His, both by creation and by redemption. He asks for your intellect; give it to Him; it is His. He asks for your money; give it to Him; it is His. ‘Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price.’ God requires the homage of a sanctified soul, which has prepared itself, by the exercise of the faith that works by love, to serve Him. He holds up before us the highest ideal, even perfection. He asks us to be absolutely and completely for Him in this world as He is for us in the presence of God.” [The Acts of the Apostles, 566.](#)

Now what is the purpose of the Bible? Christ and the cross are at the center of the Bible, and rise up, as it were, out of the Book as the focal point of interest for me; but God gave the Book, from [Genesis 1](#) to [Revelation 22](#), as the story of redemption, the standard of His everlasting kingdom, a guidebook from earth to heaven, a complete pattern for Christian living. (See [2 Timothy 3:15-17.](#))

We must keep in mind that a man is not saved by merely assenting to the doctrines of the Bible, but by his faith in the Lord Jesus. The doctrines, the reproofs, the instruction are given as the detailed specifications for building a perfect Christian character, for the making of an intelligent Christian. This is what Peter means by growing in grace as set forth in [2 Peter 1:5-11](#). We begin with our faith in Jesus Christ, and He then comes into our hearts by faith and takes up His abode ([Ephesians 3:17](#)). This abiding presence brings about a transformation of character, so that the Christian shows forth the virtues of Christ in every business transaction, in every social relation, in every phase of his daily life. [304]

Ellen G. White describes it this way:

“Every moment of our lives is intensely real, and charged with solemn responsibilities. Ignorance will be no excuse for lack of spiritual understanding and attainment; for we are exhorted to add to virtue, knowledge. Many are very ignorant of Bible truth, and they do not realize the duty and necessity of becoming intelligent Christians. . . . The uncultured fishermen became men of refinement

and ability; and the lessons that they were privileged to learn are written for our admonition and instruction. We are invited to become learners in the school of Christ. We need to acquire all the knowledge possible. We cannot afford to be ignorant of the things that pertain to our eternal welfare. If all would cease gossip and evil communication, devoting the time to contemplation of Christ and the plan of salvation, they would add the knowledge essential to a growth in grace.” [The Review and Herald, February 21, 1888](#), p. 113.

[305] Let us pause for a moment and think that through. Is it possible that we as Seventh-day Adventist preachers and teachers have been putting our emphasis in the wrong place? Have we shifted our focus from the great fundamentals to the incidentals and perhaps the nonessentials? Is my salvation still dependent on my faith in Jesus Christ? Or is it dependent on my readiness to give mere intellectual assent to certain designated answers to specific questions regarding a Seventh-day Adventist system of theology, and to certain interpretations of prophecies that were originally designed to help me know how far along I am today in the path leading to the everlasting kingdom?

Brethren, we do well to ponder these things lest we be guilty of doing the very things Ellen G. White warns against. Listen to her words:

“More people than we think are longing to find the way to Christ. Those who preach the last message of mercy should bear in mind that Christ is to be exalted as the sinner’s refuge. Some ministers think that it is not necessary to preach repentance and faith; they take it for granted that their hearers are acquainted with the gospel, and that matters of a different nature must be presented in order to hold their attention. But many people are sadly ignorant in regard to the plan of salvation; they need more instruction upon this all-important subject than upon any other.

“*Theoretical discourses* are essential, that people may see the *chain of truth*, link after link, uniting in a perfect whole; but no discourse should ever be preached without presenting Christ and Him crucified as the foundation of the gospel. Ministers would reach more hearts if they would dwell more upon practical godliness. . . .

“The thought that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, not because of any merit on our part, but as a free gift from God, is a precious thought. The enemy of God and man is not willing that this truth should be clearly presented; for he knows that if the people receive it fully, his powers will be broken. . . .” [306]

“The people must be instructed that Christ is unto them salvation and righteousness. *It is Satan’s studied purpose* to keep souls from believing in Christ as their only hope.” [Gospel Workers, 158-162](#). (Italics supplied.)

Righteousness by Faith—the Latter Rain and the Loud Cry

May I call to your attention one more challenging question? Is it possible that our failure to give due emphasis to this topic of Righteousness by Faith is delaying the outpouring of the latter rain and the loud cry?

“The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people. . . . This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. . . . *This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel’s message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.*” *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 91, 92. (Italics supplied.)

No, my salvation does not depend upon the twenty-five million words written by Ellen G. White, but *upon Jesus Christ, to whom they point, who only can save me from my sins and give me an entrance into His everlasting kingdom.* She sums up her whole message to me in these words: [307]

“The sum and substance of the whole matter of Christian grace and experience is contained in believing on Christ, in knowing God and his Son whom he hath sent.” [The Review and Herald, May 24, 1892](#), p.322.

“Religion means the abiding of Christ in the heart, and where he is, the soul goes on in spiritual activity, ever growing in grace,

ever going on to perfection.” [The Review and Herald, May 24, 1892](#), p.321.

A letter written by Sister White from Melbourne, December 21, 1892, was read by W. W. Prescott to the General Conference in session on Sabbath, January 28, 1893. One paragraph is pertinent to our discussion:

“The whole earth is to be lightened with the glory of God’s truth. The Lord will not close up the period of probation until the warning message shall be more distinctly proclaimed. The trumpet must give a certain sound. The law of God is to be magnified, its claims must be presented in their true, sacred character, that the people may be brought to decide for or against the truth. Yet the work will be cut short in righteousness. *The message of Christ’s righteousness is to sound from one end of the world to the other. This is the glory of God which closes the work of the third angel.*” [The General Conference Bulletin, January 27, 28, 1893](#), p. 16. (Italics supplied.)

[308] You see, there are some portions of the world that have none of the Ellen G. White writings, other portions have only two or three small books from her pen, while other areas are blessed with all of her writings. This fact in itself makes it improbable that God would set up the Testimonies as basically necessary and essential for man’s salvation.

The same is true of the Bible and its availability to each and every language area. It is safe for us to conclude that God will judge a man and his salvation on the basis of how well *he has lived up to the amount of light he has had available*.

Here is one paragraph on this topic from Ellen G. White herself: “Said the angel: ‘If light come, and that light is set aside or rejected, then comes condemnation and the frown of God; but before the light comes, there is no sin, for there is no light for them to reject.’” [Testimonies for the Church 1:116](#).

The Attitude of the Brethren Toward the Writings of Ellen G. White

One of the finest statements by the pioneer brethren showing their attitude toward the writings of Ellen G. White came from the pen of Uriah Smith in the [The Review and Herald, June 12, 1866](#).

“Further, their [the Testimonies’] 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 re-aroused us to greater consecration to God, more zealous efforts for holiness of heart, and greater diligence in the cause and service of our Master. . . .

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“With all this array of good fruit which they are able to present, with all this innocency of any charge of evil that can be brought against them, *they everywhere encounter the bitterest opposition.* They are the object of the blindest prejudice, the intensest hate, and most malignant bitterness. Worldlings and formal professors of all denominations, join in one general outcry against them of vituperation and abuse. Many will go a long distance out of their way for the purpose of giving them an uncalled-for and malicious thrust. And false-hearted brethren in our own ranks make them the butt of their first attacks, as they launch off into apostasy and rebellion. *Why is all this?* Whence all this war against that of which no evil can be said? From the example of Cain who slew his brother, of the Jews who clamored for the blood of the innocent Saviour, of the infidel who storms with passion at the very name of Jesus, and from the principle of the carnal heart which is at enmity with everything that is holy and spiritual, *we leave the reader to answer.*” (Italics supplied.)

In answer to Uriah Smith’s question I would say that opposition or indifference to the Spirit of prophecy and spiritual gifts in general grows out of:

1. A failure to accept one or all of the three great facts of faith on which Christianity is based.
2. A failure to read enough of, or all of, the writings of Ellen G. White to thoroughly understand her over-all and well-balanced instruction on any given topic.

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3. A failure to understand the proper relation of her writings to the Scriptures, and of the whole Bible to the one and only great fundamental requirement for salvation and an entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

4. A failure to grasp the true nature of her writings with respect to inspiration and infallibility.

5. A failure to recognize the principle of time and place in connection with the counsel she has given.

6. A failure to acknowledge that the counsels given in the early days of the message are safe counsel for these its closing days.

7. A failure to recognize that while sufficient evidence is given to convince the honest in heart, the Lord does not purpose to remove the opportunity for doubt or to take away the hooks upon which doubts may be hung. The Lord requires the exercise of faith.

8. A failure to recognize that the veracity of the Spirit of prophecy counsels cannot be appraised by the changing dictums of science, or the prejudiced or molded assertions of historians.

9. An unwillingness to make a personal sacrifice of some personally cherished habit, custom, or practice that seems out of harmony with the counsel given in the pattern for Christian living as set forth in the writings of Ellen G. White. Individual opposition stems from the point where a man's "darling" taste, fancy, whim, habit,

[311] or practice is touched. He gets rid of that particular item by doing away with all.

Most Adventist opposition would disappear—

1. If our ministers and our laymen would stop using some pet sentences or paragraphs as a club with which to hit somebody else.

2. If each of us would take the counsel to himself instead of trying to apply it to someone else.

3. If all of us would remember [1 Corinthians 14](#), which tells us that prophecy and prophesying are primarily for the *church members* and not for *nonchurch* people.

4. If each of us would determine not to use or pass on unfounded rumors or sayings without proper reference in book, page, and paragraph.

5. If we would not discuss a topic or question unless and until we have *fully* studied *all* the writings on it. Partial knowledge is more dangerous than no knowledge at all. "I do not know" is an

acknowledgment that can be excused, but a half-truth or a lie is not soon forgiven or forgotten.

6. If we would recognize that one person's failure, or that of many people, to live up to or carry out the counsel given by Ellen G. White has absolutely nothing to do with the authenticity or reliability of the visions of, or the instruction from, Ellen G. White.

Perhaps one more statement, from J. N. Andrews, published in the [The Review and Herald, February 15, 1870](#), must suffice.

“The object of spiritual gifts is to maintain the living work of God in the church. They enable the Spirit of God to speak in the correction of wrongs, and in the exposure of iniquity. They are the means whereby God teaches his people when they are in danger of taking wrong steps. They are the means by which the Spirit of God sheds light upon church difficulties, when otherwise their adjustment would be impossible. They also constitute the means whereby God preserves his people from confusion by pointing out errors, by correcting false interpretations of the Scriptures, and causing light to shine out upon that which is in danger of being wrongly understood, and therefore of being the cause of evil and division to the people of God. In short, their work is to unite the people of God in the same mind and in the same judgment upon the meaning of the Scriptures. . . .” [312]

“Finally, in the reception of members into our churches, we desire on this subject to know two things: 1. That they believe the Bible doctrine of spiritual gifts; 2. That they will candidly acquaint themselves with the visions of Sr. White which have ever held so prominent a place in this work. We believe that every person standing thus and carrying out this purpose will be guided in the way of truth and righteousness. And those who occupy this ground, are never denied all the time they desire to decide in this matter.”

My Attitude Toward the Life and Work of Ellen G. White

This brings us to the heart of this entire study. That which we have presented thus far is but a background for the all-important questions, What is my own personal attitude toward the life and work of Ellen G. White? What is yours to be today and for all time to come? [313]

Personally, many years ago I settled my attitude toward the three great facts of faith on which Christianity is built. Therefore, there is no need of proofs and evidences to convince me of the gift of prophecy manifested through men and women chosen and called by God; there is no need for any further evidence to convince me that Ellen G. White was the one chosen by God as His messenger to the remnant church. Furthermore, I believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church, and that God's requirements for my salvation from this sinful world and for my entrance into His everlasting kingdom are still, as they always have been, "perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness," neither of which I have in and of myself, but both of which are made available to me through my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. ([Steps to Christ, 62](#), [pocketed].)

I believe that the Bible is given to me to show me how God thinks, how God works, what God wants me to become as a candidate for citizenship in His kingdom.

I also believe that the prophecies in the Bible have made plain to me where we stand today in relation to the grand consummation of all God's plans. It seems to me that my business as a Christian is not so much how to get into heaven by and by, as it is how to get heaven into me here and now.

[314] "Our happiness comes not from what is around us, but from what is within us; not from what we have, but from what we are." [The Youth's Instructor, January 23, 1902](#).

"The surrender of all our powers to God greatly simplifies the problem of life. It weakens and cuts short a thousand struggles with the passions of the natural heart. Religion is as a golden cord that binds the souls of both youth and aged to Christ. Through it the willing and obedient are brought safely through dark and intricate paths to the city of God." [The Youth's Instructor, February 2, 1893](#).

"The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit."—[The Desire of Ages, 172](#), (1940).

The cleansing of the soul temple is the objective set before us:

“From eternal ages it was God’s purpose that every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator. Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God. Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the divine One. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled. God dwells in humanity, and through saving grace the heart of man becomes again His temple. . . . In cleansing the temple from the world’s buyers and sellers, Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin,—from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul. . . . No man can of himself cast out the evil throng that have taken possession of the heart. Only Christ can cleanse the soul temple. But He will not force an entrance.” [The Desire of Ages, 161.](#)

The indwelling of the spirit of Christ works an entire transformation: [315]

“The grace of Christ is to control the temper and the voice. Its working will be seen in politeness and tender regard shown by brother for brother, in kind, encouraging words. An angel presence is in the home. The life breathes a sweet perfume, which ascends to God as holy incense. Love is manifested in kindness, gentleness, forbearance, and long-suffering.

“The countenance is changed. Christ abiding in the heart shines out in the faces of those who love Him and keep His commandments. Truth is written there. The sweet peace of heaven is revealed. There is expressed a habitual gentleness, a more than human love.

“The leaven of truth works a change in the whole man, making the coarse refined, the rough gentle, the selfish generous. By it the impure are cleansed, washed in the blood of the Lamb. Through its life-giving power it brings all there is of mind and soul and strength into harmony with the divine life. Man with his human nature becomes a partaker of divinity. Christ is honored in excellence and perfection of character. As these changes are effected, angels break forth in rapturous song, and God and Christ rejoice over souls fashioned after the divine similitude.” [Christ’s Object Lessons, 102.](#)

I believe that the writings of Ellen G. White describe what God wants of me and what God will do for me through His Son Jesus Christ. They are words of beauty and of power. They present before

[316] me the pattern for the Christian life. I accept her words as she has declared them to be, words of reproof for the “erring,” words “of encouragement to the meek and lowly,” words of “counsel,” “instruction,” “correction.” They are not the “commandments of the Decalogue,” but the wise counsel and earnest entreaties of a kind heavenly Father through His chosen messenger.

I find myself in perfect agreement with the great mass of counsel given, but like so many others I am tempted to despise and reject *ONLY the testimonies which reprove my darling sins, conflict with my own preconceived ideas of theology, and disturb my self-complacency.*

In these few, very few, items I am daily praying that God will help me to conform completely and perfectly to His will and standard.

I believe that I am voicing the opinion and describing the experience of Seventh-day Adventists generally in all parts of the world. Such opposition and indifference as is seen here and there is not directed against such books as the Conflict Series, *Steps to Christ*, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, and a score of other such books, but rather to a very few paragraphs, a small percentage indeed, of the total messages given by Ellen G. White. Each one of us would do well to set down on paper a list of the things that cause us concern or that we may be inclined to ignore, and then give careful and prayerful study to each item.

It may be that your experience and mine are described in the words of these paragraphs from the *Testimonies*:

[317] “As the word of God is walled in with these books and pamphlets [by Ellen G. White], so has God walled you in with reproofs, counsel, warnings, and encouragements. Here you are crying before God, in the anguish of your souls, for more light. I am authorized from God to tell you that not another ray of light through the *Testimonies* will shine upon your pathway until you make a practical use of the light already given. The Lord has walled you about with light; but you have not appreciated the light; you have trampled upon it. While some have despised the light, others have neglected it or followed it but indifferently. A few have set their hearts to obey the light which God has been pleased to give them.” [Testimonies for the Church 5:666](#).

“Let ministers and people remember that gospel truth hardens when it does not save. The rejection of light leaves men captives, bound about by chains of darkness and unbelief. . . . ‘The more self is exalted, the more will faith in the *Testimonies* of the Spirit of God be lessened. . . . Those who trust wholly in themselves will see less and less of God in the *Testimonies* of His Spirit.’” [Testimonies for the Church 5:681](#).

Such paragraphs will cause any man down deep in his heart to desire to live a better life, to be a better man. But we must ever remember that the power to inspire is not wrapped up in the words themselves, but in the God who inspired the messenger with His thoughts and then allowed the human agent to find the human words to give expression to those inspired thoughts.

In a letter penned by Ellen G. White back in 1890 she wrote concerning the last work of Satan:

“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.’ [[Proverbs 29:18](#).] Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God’s remnant people in the true testimony.” [Letter 12, 1890](#).

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“If the people who now profess to be God’s peculiar treasure would obey His requirements, as specified in His word, special testimonies would not be given to awaken them to their duty and impress upon them their sinfulness and their fearful danger in neglecting to obey the word of God. Consciences have been blunted because light has been set aside, neglected, and despised.”—[Testimonies for the Church 2:607](#).

“I was shown that many had so little spirituality that they did not understand the value of the *Testimonies* or their real object. They talked flippantly of the *Testimonies* given by God for the benefit of His people, and passed judgment upon them, giving their opinion and criticizing this and that, when they would better have placed their hands upon their lips, and prostrated themselves in the dust; for they could not appreciate the spirit of the *Testimonies*, because they knew so little of the Spirit of God.” [Testimonies for the Church 7:672, 673](#).

“If you lose confidence in the testimonies you will drift away from Bible truth. . . . As you now hold the testimonies, should one be given crossing your track, correcting your errors, would you feel at perfect liberty to accept or reject any part or the whole? That which you will be least inclined to receive is the very part most needed.” [Testimonies for the Church 7:98](#). (See also [Testimonies for the Church 5:674](#).)

[319] “My brethren, beware of the evil heart of unbelief. The word of God is plain and close in its restrictions; it interferes with your selfish indulgence; therefore you do not obey it. The testimonies of His Spirit call your attention to the Scriptures, point out your defects of character, and rebuke your sins, therefore you do not heed them. And to justify your carnal, ease-loving course you begin to doubt whether the testimonies are from God. If you would obey their teachings you would be assured of their divine origin. Remember, your unbelief does not affect their truthfulness. If they are from God they will stand.” [Testimonies for the Church 5:234](#). (See also [Testimonies for the Church 5:674](#).)

“I have been shown that unbelief in the testimonies of warning, encouragement, and reproof is shutting away the light from God’s people. Unbelief is closing their eyes so that they are ignorant of their true condition.” [Testimonies for the Church 3:255](#). (See also [Testimonies for the Church 5:674](#).)

“The question to be settled with them is: Shall I deny myself and receive as of God the *Testimonies* which reprove my sins, or shall I reject the *Testimonies* because they reprove my sins?” [Testimonies for the Church 4:32](#). (See also [Testimonies for the Church 5:675](#).)

“Satan has ability to suggest doubts and to devise objections to the pointed testimony that God sends, and many think it a virtue, a mark of intelligence in them, to be unbelieving and to question and quibble. Those who desire to doubt will have plenty of room. God does not propose to remove all occasion for unbelief.” [Testimonies for the Church 3:255](#). (See also [Testimonies for the Church 5:675](#).)

“God gives sufficient evidence for the candid mind to believe; but he who turns from the weight of evidence because there are a few things which he cannot make plain to his finite understanding will be left in the cold, chilling atmosphere of unbelief and questioning doubts, and will make shipwreck of faith.” [Testimonies for](#)

the Church 4:232, 233. (Also see [Testimonies for the Church 5:675, 676.](#))

“Many now despise the faithful reproof given of God in testimony. . . . But opposition to God’s threatenings will not hinder their execution.” [Testimonies for the Church 4:180.](#) (See also [Testimonies for the Church 5:678.](#)) [320]

Brethren and sisters of the Advent family, let us give most careful, thoughtful, and prayerful consideration to the topic of this study, and take our stand with the remnant church for the message given to us as a people, and for the messenger whom God chose to accomplish His will and purpose in and for us as probationary time comes to an end, as history comes to its last chapter, as Christ finishes His work for the salvation of men, and as closing events in the great controversy bring us ever nearer to the grand consummation of all things earthly.

We have every reason to rejoice as Seventh-day Adventists in the abundant provision made by God Himself for our salvation. He loves us with a tender love. He is kind and good and gentle. He has anticipated our every need, and has given us the help we must have at every turn in life’s way. He is ready to *fit* us for His kingdom. May each and every one of us be molded and fashioned according to His own divine pattern. He wants you and me in His presence throughout eternity.

“Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets” ([Hosea 6:5](#)).