

ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE

ELLEN G. WHITE AND THE SHUT DOOR QUESTION

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Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question

Ellen G. White

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About the Author

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

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A Review of the
*The Experience of Early Seventh-day Adventist
Believers in its Historical Context*¹

(Revised May 9, 1982)

Prepared by Arthur L. White

¹Also Available from the Ellen G. White Estate: *The Shut Door Documents*, Compiled, with occasional commentary, by Robert W. Olson. 58 pages. Price, \$2.00. *Advent Experience*, a series of 10 articles by an eye witness, George I. Butler, published in the *Review and Herald* in 1885. These review the experience of the Advent believers from 1844 to 1851 with special emphasis on the *Shut Door: and the rise of the Third Angels Message*. 20 pages. Price, \$1.00.

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Introduction

The Problem: It has been declared of Seventh-day Adventists that in their early history they held firmly to the position that on October 22, 1844, probation closed for the world generally and there was beyond that point no more mercy for sinners, and further, that Ellen Harmon (White) in her first vision in December, 1844, was shown this to be the case.

Seventh-day Adventist pioneers and E. G. White freely and firmly declare that immediately following the disappointment of October 22, 1844, Advent believers generally held that their work for the world was finished and that probation had closed. Ellen White and Adventist pioneers also declare that while this was generally believed, that neither the first vision, or any other vision given to Ellen Harmon-White taught that probation had closed for the world generally, but that it had, for those who had rejected the light of the first angel's message, or having been in the Advent Movement had abandoned their confidence in the fulfillment of prophecy.

The crux of the matter is the wording of Ellen White's first vision as she wrote it out and the interpretation put upon the wording. It is a complex question requiring a thorough knowledge of just what took place in 1844 and immediately following and an understanding of terms then and subsequently employed.

Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question

The story of the “shut door” provides an example of the way in which God leads His children into truth and does so in such a manner as to maintain their confidence in Him and His guidance. Human nature often calls for bursts of light and prompt declarations, not taking into account that the mind functions deliberately and must find secure pegs to tie to in maintaining an orderly progress in the development of thought patterns.

The Experience of the Disciples

To grasp the full significance of this we have but to turn to the experience of the disciples of old and observe the careful way in which Jesus led their minds. We discover what to us seems to be a slowness of perception and we observe their surprise when events took a turn quite different than was allowed by their preconceived positions and strongly fixed understandings and expectations.

Observe their dismay and disappointment when Jesus failed to set up an earthly kingdom, taking the throne of David! One such occasion which seemed especially opportune to them was after Jesus had fed the 5,000. See [John 6:15](#). And even after the events of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection, the disciples could not forget the hope of Jesus setting up an earthly kingdom, and asked, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?” ([Acts 1:6](#)).

Nor should we lose sight of the agony and despondency which overtook them when Jesus was arrested and crucified. Yet they had been students of the Master Teacher for three years. Their interpretation of Scripture and their cherished concepts blinded them to an understanding of the truth in its fullness.

Another illustration is found in the manner in which the apostles, after the establishment of the Christian Church were led to understand their mission of proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles. Note [3]

what it took in Peter's experience, both in a vision and developing circumstances. Because human thinking does not easily or readily change, and because established patterns of thought are buttressed by widely accepted concepts, it may require a combination of circumstances, earnest Bible study and special revelations from God over a period of time to bring about significant alterations in the pattern of thought.

An abrupt, full revelation of all truth, would in many cases throw the people clear off the track. God must lead His people along gently, firmly, carefully, as they are able to study and contemplate the meaning of what they have studied; as they pass through certain experiences and witness the developments which have a bearing on their views.

The Similar Experience of the Early Adventists

So it was with the Adventists in 1844 and the painful years immediately following. The story is one of agonizing perplexity; of earnest Bible study; of God's providences in the historical developments; and of revelations given through His messenger. All of these combined, first held the people steady to basic truths with confidence in God's leadings in their first "sweet" and then "bitter" experience, and then opened before them the full understanding of the truth and the responsibilities before them as they were to "prophesy again before many peoples and nations." ([Revelation 10:11](#)).

[4] From time to time down through the years there have been those who looking at our spiritual forefathers, have thought it strange that immediately after the great disappointment of October 22, 1844, and, for a few years following, rather than engaging in evangelism, they held that probation for the world generally or for certain classes of people had closed and, as they said, "the door was shut." That such a position was taken is borne out well by the documents of the time. What might be termed the "shut door era" in our history extended from 1844 to 1851 or 1852.

The crucial question, however, is: "Was Ellen G. White shown in vision that the door was shut and consequently probation for the world was closed?"

In dealing with this particular question we have but a slim handful of documents. Our search for the answer will lead us to a careful study of such documents that we do have and a review of the experiences of the times as reported by the participants.

Our forefathers passed through an excruciating experience, clinging tenaciously to each peg which offered some security. They saw many of their fellow believers release their grasp of confidence in God, His Word, and the prophecies, and then flounder in the seas of fanaticism, ridicule, indifference, and atheism. Again and again our pioneers came back to the evidence of God's special blessing in the great Advent awakening under the leadership of William Miller and his associates. Even though sore distressed in their bitter disappointment, they felt they could not deny the manifest working of the Spirit of God. And yet, could it be that nothing took place on October 22? Many pondered as did Hiram Edson:

My advent experience has been the brightest of all my Christian experience.... Has the Bible proved a failure? Is there no God, no heaven, no golden city, no Paradise? Is all this but a cunningly devised fable? Is there no reality to our fondest hopes and expectations?—
[The Review and Herald, June 23, 1921, p. 5.](#)

They dare not release their grasp of one peg until they found another securely driven that would bear their weight. Most of them were in virtual poverty for they had invested their property in heralding the first angel's message. The world treated them as outcasts. It wanted none of the "deluded Adventists."

[5]

And then a maiden in their midst was given a vision. She saw the Advent people traveling to the city of God and Christ leading them. Their advent experience *had not been a grand delusion*, but God was in it, and He was still leading them.

Surely, they thought, Christ's coming was imminent. Would it be in a few weeks, or perhaps a few months? It could not be long delayed. They could not release their grasp of the peg of confidence in the fulfillment of prophecy on October 22. The coming of the Lord must be very near, most likely in the "fourth watch" which some reckoned to be the 10th day of the seventh month in 1845.

(See James White in the [The Day-Star, September 20, 1845](#), and “[A Word to the Little Flock, 22](#))

But again God spoke. He sent a warning message through vision to Ellen Harmon. Those who had fixed their eyes on deliverance in the fall of 1845 would be disappointed. Before Christ could come “the saints must pass through the ‘time of Jacob’s trouble’ which was future.”—*Word to the Little Flock*, p. 22

And so God led, comforted and strengthened “His ‘scattered,’ ‘torn’ and ‘pealed’ people” (*Word to the Little Flock*, p. 21) in their determination to know the truth and walk in it safely. They were often widely separated, and James White refers to the group as “the little remnant scattered abroad.” The lines of communication were tenuous. Some were able to grasp opening truth more quickly than others. But move ahead they did in such a way as to build a firm foundation for the church.

[6]

Now, A Close Look at the “Shut Door”

To understand well the shut door question, as noted earlier, calls for a good knowledge of the great Advent awakening culminating in the disappointment on October 22, 1844. We approach the question on the basis of four presuppositions.

(1) That the great Advent awakening of the early 1840s was a movement of God’s providence, marked by the work of the Holy Spirit. The participants and witnesses establish this point. Out of this experience has grown the Seventh-day Adventist Church. To take any other position is to remove one of the foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

(2) That Ellen Harmon White was chosen by God as His messenger and her work embodied that of a prophet. She served in this prophetic office from 1844 until 1915. There are no situations or experiences which would in any way impair this presupposition. Seventh-day Adventists have witnessed the many evidences which give full support to Ellen White’s prophetic call and her work.

(3) That as a sincere, dedicated Christian and a prophet, Ellen White would not and did not falsify. Therefore, we may accept her statements on their face value. Her witness, then, relating to

the experience of 1844-1851 may be accepted as presenting a true picture of conditions, of positions taken, and work done.

(4) Likewise the witness of those who passed through the experience of 1844 as fellow-believers with Ellen White may be accepted as true and correct to the best of the memory of the individuals who reported. The united testimony of various individuals over quite a period of time provides compelling evidence. Considering the character of the witnesses, their wide geographical separation, and the separation in time, it is most unlikely that collusion could occur, even if this were attempted.

[7]

Were this statement prepared for those without an Adventist background, considerable introductory material would be called for. This has been traced in such eye-witness accounts as presented by Ellen G. White in eight chapters in *The Great Controversy* dealing with the great advent awakening and its aftermath. (See pages 299-432). Also illuminating is George I. Butler's series on "Advent Experience" in *Review and Herald* articles published from February 10 to April 14, 1885. ¹

As Seventh-day Adventists generally accept and hold to the presuppositions enumerated above we can come directly to the points of question. (1) What was Ellen White shown in vision? (2) What did she say in oral statements at the time? (3) What did she say in published statements and unpublished statements which give us documentation, both immediately and in later years? (4) In what way were the people influenced who accepted her testimony in the years of 1844-1851? (5) Did she through these years *teach* on the basis of the visions that probation closed for all the world on October 22, 1844? (6) What was the meaning of the term "shut door" as used in November, 1844, in January, 1845, in 1846, in 1847, in 1848, then on through the years to 1851 and even subsequently? Did the term convey the same meaning at all times, and how was it understood by various individuals during this critical period?

The term "shut door" is employed by Ellen White in certain

[8]

¹Note: See also James White's review of the experience in *Life Incidents* (1868), pages 184-186. The whole matter of the "shut door" question is carefully presented with documentation by F. D. Nichol in his book, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics* (1951). See pages 161-252, 598-642. See also SDA Encyclopedia, article on Millerite Movement; Open and Shut Door, available in facsimile form from the Ellen G. White Estate.

statements appearing in her first book *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, material now found in *Early Writings*. It is used by her in her 1884 *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 4, with a chapter entitled “An Open and a Shut Door,” and it is used in her *Great Controversy* published in 1888, the type for which was reset in 1911 with some minor changes. The term “shut door” is also used in materials appearing in the James White pamphlet “A Word to the Little Flock” published in 1847, and in certain articles appearing in the *Present Truth* in 1849 and 1850, and in issues of the *Advent Review* published in 1850. The question is also discussed by Adventist writers down through the years in articles which have appeared in the *Review and Herald*. Did it always mean the same thing?

The church has reproduced in facsimile form publications in which this term is freely used, as “A Word to the Little Flock,” the issues of *the Present Truth* (1849-1850) and the *Advent Review* (summer of 1850), giving all who wish to do so an opportunity to examine carefully the various statements relative to the shut door. The documents now currently available firmly substantiate that Seventh-day Adventist pioneers did for some time hold shut door views. What the careful student soon discovers is that the meaning and significance of the term “shut door” underwent a marked change between 1844 and 1851. The point at issue is not, Did the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church hold to a shut door for a few years after 1844. That is a matter of historical record. The point is, Did the term as it was so used during a seven-year period mean that these pioneers held that probation for all mankind closed on October 22, 1844, and further, did E. G. White teach on the basis of the visions that probation for all mankind closed on October 22, 1844?

[9] **The Changing Meaning of the Term “Shut Door”**

By way of general introduction, and setting the stage for careful examination of the E. G. White statements relating to the shut door, is a statement published July 19, 1946, which accompanied the volume of reprinted periodicals mentioned above, the *Present Truth* and the *Advent Review* of 1850. This carried the title of “Historical

Setting” and is signed by the Committee on Publication. We give here those parts bearing directly on the question before us:

One expression appears often which serves as a key to these frequently misunderstood years—“the shut door.” Considerable misunderstanding and confusion has sometimes arisen over a relatively simple problem. Adventists came up to 1844 expecting that the Lord would then appear and probation close for all mankind. For a brief period following October 22, those who did not at once repudiate their former faith still held that probation had closed and that there was no more mercy for sinners. Two opposite means of emergence from this mistaken position soon developed and divided the advent body into two groups.

The Sabbatarian Adventists, as they came to be, were for a time known as the “Sabbath and shut-door” brethren, while the First-Day Adventists were called the “open-door” Adventists. This latter group gave up their former positions by denying that the 2300-year period had not as yet expired. They abandoned their belief that in 1844 prophecy had been fulfilled in any sense. They therefore held that the door of salvation was still wide open to the world at large; and they were constrained to continue the preaching of a modified message, now largely divested of its former prophetic basis.

On the other hand, the Sabbatarian Adventists held that the 2300-year period had indeed ended, and that they had rightly sounded the “midnight cry” typified in the parable of the ten virgins. Confident in the integrity of their past experience, they saw themselves in the light of the parable as in the time when “the door was shut;” they believed that to those who had willfully rejected the advent message and had now become embittered, hostile, and adamant, the door had closed. For these they had no burden. Then came the unfolding sanctuary light, and they began to realize that their disappointment

was to be accounted for in a misunderstanding of the nature of the event to take place in 1844.

[10]

They soon came to realize that Christ was now ministering in heaven above in the second phase of His High Priestly ministry—that He had shut the door of the first apartment and had opened the door to the second or Most Holy Place, and they were to announce this grand transition to all who would hear. The door was still open to those who had not willfully rejected the judgment hour message, children who had not then reached the age of accountability, and those in the churches who were still honest in heart. It was much like the initial relationship of the disciples toward the Jews as a whole. The burden was now for honest, individual hearts. Note especially [The Present Truth, December, 1849](#), (volume 1, no. 6), p. 45, last full paragraph of column 2; [The Present Truth, May, 1850](#) (volume 1, no. 10), p. 79, bottom of column 1 and top of column 2; and Edson's *Advent Review Extra*, September, 1850, p. 3, bottom of column 1.

Therefore, the term “shut door” came to mean to them this new relationship of Christ and His ministry for all whose names were “borne in upon His breastplate” into the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. It came to supersede the earlier restricted concept. Gradually this fuller light of the final phase of Christ's ministry in the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, which contains the ark and the ten commandments with their enshrined Sabbath, burst upon their sight with all its implications and obligations.² They came to sense their new commission for the world, as embodied in the third angel's message of [Revelation 14](#).

Thus it is seen that the term “shut door,” used by our spiritual forefathers for a brief decade following the

²Note: See the Ellen G. White Early Writings chapter “The Open and the Shut Door” for an illustration of this point. Reporting the vision of March 21, 1849, Ellen White declares: “I was shown that the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ relating to the shut door could not be separated.”—[Early Writings, 42](#)

Great Disappointment in the autumn of 1844, stood first of all for loyalty to the positions of the “midnight cry” movement through which they had just passed, and for loyalty to the integrity of the date October 22, 1844, as the true and demonstrated close of the 2300 years.³

It came to stand progressively for the acceptance of the Sabbath, the Spirit of Prophecy and its guidance, and the sanctuary truth that explained the nature of the Disappointment and of the actual event of 1844. In time it also came to stand for Christ’s new relationship to both world and church and consequently to His new relationship to the final phase of ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. Thus a transition was effected in the meaning of the term “shut door.”—*Facsimiles of the Two Earliest SDA Periodicals*, pp. 8-10.

[11]

We have given space to this background statement for it is quite essential to an accurate evaluation of the statements of our pioneers, including Ellen White, in which the term “shut door” is employed, made within the critical seven-year period of 1844-1851. The entire study of this matter must be made in the setting of the real issue: “Was prophecy fulfilled on October 22, 1844, or was it not.” This was the prime consideration regardless of terms used.

Ellen G. White Looks Back

In the years 1874, 1883, and 1884, Ellen White looked back in retrospect and recounted the history in which the shut door teaching figured, and commented upon it. We present first her published statement appearing in *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 4, issued in 1884. In this volume, currently available in facsimile reprint, Ellen White devoted an entire chapter to “An Open and a Shut Door.”

The 1884 Ellen G. White Statement. “After the passing of the time of expectation, in 1844, Adventists

³Note: For an early example see James White’s May 30, 1847, statement in which he links the holding of the shut door as inseparably linked with the acknowledgment that “their 7th month experience” was “the work of God.”—[A Word to the Little Flock, 22](#).

still believed the Saviour's coming to be very near; they held that they had reached an important crisis, and that the work of Christ as man's intercessor before God had ceased. Having given the warning of the judgment near, they felt that their work for the world was done, and they lost their burden of soul for the salvation of sinners, while the bold and blasphemous scoffing of the ungodly seemed to them another evidence that the Spirit of God had been withdrawn from the rejecters of His mercy. All this confirmed them in the belief that probation had ended, or as they expressed it, 'The door of mercy was shut.'"—[The Spirit of Prophecy 4:268](#).

[12] Then the chapter closes with these words:

The passing of the time in 1844 was followed by a period of great trial to those who still held the Advent faith. Their only relief, so far as ascertaining their true position was concerned, was the light which directed their minds to the sanctuary above. As has been stated, Adventists were for a short time united in the belief that the door of mercy was shut. This position was soon abandoned. Some renounced their faith in their former reckoning of the prophetic periods, and ascribed to human or satanic agencies the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit which had attended the Advent movement. Another class firmly held that the Lord had led them in their past experience; and as they waited and watched and prayed to know the will of God, they saw that their great High Priest had entered upon another work of ministration, and, following him by faith, they were led to understand also the closing work of the church, and were prepared to receive and give to the world the warning of the third angel of [Revelation 14](#).—[The Spirit of Prophecy 4:271-2](#).

The reader of this chapter "An Open and A Shut Door" is referred to an Appendix note. This is enlightening and we quote a portion of it:

Note 6. Page 268.—Almost all Adventists, including Mr. Miller, did, for a short time after their disappointment in 1844, believe that the world had received its last warning. They could hardly think otherwise, with their faith in the message which they had given,—“the hour of his judgment is come.” [Revelation 14:6, 7](#). They naturally thought that this proclamation must close the dispensation. They were as unable to find their bearings at once as were the disciples when their Lord, whom they had hailed as their King coming to His throne, was crucified and buried. In both cases they were unable to comprehend their terrible disappointment.

But the idea that the work of the gospel was finished was soon renounced, except by some fanatical ones who would neither be counseled nor receive instruction. But most of those who renounced it, and yet retained their faith in the work, *continued to believe that they who clearly saw the light of the heaven-sent warning and persistently rejected it, were rejected of the Lord*. There is no more fanaticism in that than there is in the common belief that those obdurate Jews who continued to reject the light of the advanced truth sent to that generation, were rejected of God.—[The Spirit of Prophecy 4:499](#), Appendix. (Emphasis supplied).

The note then deals with the experience of the early Sabbath-keeping Adventists and their acceptance of the sanctuary truth and an understanding of the message of the Third Angel. It closes with a statement which is well supported in certain of the exhibits which follow in this document. [13]

Among the first who taught the third message and the open door, was the author of this book. [E. G. White] By her untiring zeal, her earnest appeals, and the clear light of the testimony which she bore, she did much to advance the cause, to correct the errors of fanaticism, to renew the hopes of the desponding, and to cheer the hearts of the “little flock” who loved the

appearing of their soon-coming Saviour.—[The Spirit of Prophecy 4:500](#).

See also [The Great Controversy, 429](#), for a similar statement.

Ellen White in 1883 Answers the Charge. The second E. G. White statement we present was penned in 1883, and one of the few written by her in refutation of charges brought against her. It declares:

For a time after the disappointment in 1844, I did hold, in common with the advent body, that the door of mercy was then forever closed to the world. This position was taken before my first vision was given me. It was the light given me of God that corrected our error, and enabled us to see the true position.

I am still a believer in the shut-door theory, but not in the sense in which we at first employed the term or in which it is employed by my opponents.

There was a shut door in Noah's day. There was at that time a withdrawal of the Spirit of God from the sinful race that perished in the waters of the Flood. God Himself gave the shut-door message to Noah:

“My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years” ([Genesis 6:3](#)).

There was a shut door in the days of Abraham. Mercy ceased to plead with the inhabitants of Sodom, and all but Lot, with his wife and two daughters, were consumed by the fire sent down from heaven.

There was a shut door in Christ's day. The Son of God declared to the unbelieving Jews of that generation, “Your house is left unto you desolate” ([Matthew 23:38](#)).

Looking down the stream of time to the last days, the same infinite power proclaimed through John:

[14]

“These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth” ([Revelation 3:7](#)).

I was shown in vision, and I still believe, that there was a shut door in 1844. All who saw the light of the first and second angels' messages and rejected that light, were left in darkness. And those who accepted it and received the Holy Spirit which attended the proclamation of the message from heaven, and who afterward renounced their faith and pronounced their experience a delusion, thereby rejected the Spirit of God, and it no longer pleaded with them.

Those who did not see the light, had not the guilt of its rejection. It was only the class who had despised the light from heaven that the Spirit of God could not reach. And this class included, as I have stated, both those who refused to accept the message when it was presented to them, and also those who, having received it, afterward renounced their faith. These might have a form of godliness, and profess to be followers of Christ; but having no living connection with God, they would be taken captive by the delusions of Satan. These two classes are brought to view in the vision—those who declared the light which they had followed a delusion, and the wicked of the world who, having rejected the light, had been rejected of God. No reference is made to those who had not seen the light, and therefore were not guilty of its rejection.—Ms 4, 1883 in [Selected Messages 1:63, 64](#).

Positive Denial of the False Charge. The third retrospective Ellen G. White declaration which we present was penned in August, 1874, and deals with a charge made by Miles Grant, a First Day Adventist minister, that she had declared on the basis of the visions that probation for the world had closed.

Battle Creek, Michigan

August 24, 1874

Dear Brother Loughborough:

I hereby testify in the fear of God that the charges of Miles Grant, of Mrs. Burdick, and others published in the *Crisis* are not true. The statements in reference to my course in forty-four are false.

[15] With my brethren and sisters, after the time passed in forty-four I did believe no more sinners would be converted. But I never had a vision that no more sinners would be converted. And am clear and free to state no one has ever heard me say or has read from my pen statements which will justify them in the charges they have made against me upon this point.

It was on my first journey east to relate my visions that the precious light in regard to the heavenly sanctuary was opened before me and I was shown the open and shut door. We believed that the Lord was soon to come in the clouds of heaven. I was shown that there was a great work to be done in the world for those who had not had the light and rejected it. Our brethren could not understand this with our faith in the immediate appearing of Christ. Some accused me of saying that my Lord delayeth His coming, especially the fanatical ones. I saw that in '44 God had opened a door and no man could shut it, and shut a door and no man could open it. Those who rejected the light which was brought to the world by the message of the second angel went into darkness, and how great was that darkness.

I never have stated or written that the world was doomed or damned. I never have under any circumstances used this language to anyone, however sinful. I have ever had messages of reproof for those who used these harsh expressions.—[Letter 2, 1874](#). Quoted in [Selected Messages 1:74](#).

The E. G. White Statements In Their Historical Context

Having observed Ellen White's own testimony and explanation as she looked back, as to what she saw and what she taught, we now turn to the mid and late 1840s to examine the contemporary evidence available in documents, published and unpublished, taken in their historical context as provided by her and somewhat by her contemporaries.

We repeat the question before us. It is: *What did God show Ellen White in vision and how did she write, and at the time, interpret this?* Also, what did the visions at the time say to her fellow Adventists? What interpretation did they put upon what she reported as having been shown in vision?

Ellen Harmon's First Vision—December, 1844 ¹

The day of expectation and of disappointment was Tuesday, October 22, 1844. Ellen Harmon received her first vision in December, approximately two months later. ([Letter 3, 1847](#)). As to her attitudes toward the October 22 experience, James White in May, 1847, declared: [16]

When she received her first vision, December, 1844, she and all the band in Portland, Maine, (where her parents then resided) had given up the midnight cry, and shut door, as being in the past. It was then that the Lord showed her in vision, the error into which she and the band at Portland had fallen. She then related her vision to the band, and about sixty confessed their error, and acknowledged their 7th month experience to be the work of God.—*Word to the Little Flock*, p. 22.

¹Note: See Exhibit 1 for the full text of the vision as published in the "Word to the Little Flock" printing with Scripture reference supplied by James White

Ellen White refers to this experience in her letter to Joseph Bates written July 13, 1847.

At the time I had the vision of the Midnight Cry I had given it up in the past and thought it future as also most of the band had.—[Letter 3, 1847](#).

The point made is that the vision changed Ellen White's thinking and convictions. The 1844 experience was valid—God had led in it.

Related Orally, but not Written Out for a Full Year

We are inclined today to think of the accounts of Ellen White's first visions as we now have them, emerging in a tangible record immediately or in close proximity to the time they were given to her. Such was not the case.

As we trace the record we are confronted with the fact that Ellen Harmon did not write her account of the first vision until December 20, 1845, a full year after it was given to her. This she did in a letter to Enoch Jacobs, editor of the *Day Star*. At the time of the vision and for some months following it, she could not hold her hand steady enough to write. But as noted above, she almost immediately told the vision to a sizable company of believers in Portland, Maine. The vision changed their thinking. They acknowledged the 7th month experience to be of God. Shortly after this at Poland, Maine, Ellen was asked to tell the vision to a company of believers in the Advent, there. Otis Nichols in a letter to William Miller dated April 20, 1846, makes reference to this:

When she came to speak, her voice was nearly gone, but God fulfilled His Word: gave her strength of body and a clear, loud, audible voice to talk nearly two hours with tremendous power and effect on the people.

The Earliest Published References to the Vision

The earliest published reference we have to the vision is in a letter James White wrote on August 19, 1845, to the editor of the *Day Star* four months before she wrote it out. White's report was

published on September 6, 1845. Note carefully James White's impression of hearing the first vision related—what he saw in it and what he did not see:

There is one Sister in Maine who has had a clear vision of the Advent people traveling to the City of God. In her vision she heard the “Midnight Cry”—she saw a mighty host start at the point where the cry was made (finished)—soon she saw many denying the light *set behind them*, (which was the midnight cry). By this time they were in darkness, and began to stumble and fall off from the strait and narrow path, down into the dark world below to rise no more. She saw them continually falling till the voice of God was heard as recorded in [Ezekiel 12:25](#), which was a number of days before the “Sign of the Son of Man” appeared—which was the great white cloud. [Revelation 14:14](#)—Day Star, September 6, 1845.

James White's emphasis is on the phases of the account which clearly indicated the validity of the October 22 experience, and the fact that those who denied the “midnight cry” fell from the path to rise no more. Significantly, he said nothing of a shut door.

It must be that the four pages published in *Early Writings* devoted to her account of the vision presents but a brief portion of the total of what was shown to her, for here it can be read in fifteen minutes. This is also confirmed by Nichols in his letter to Miller with which he sent the 1846 broadside carrying the vision. Nichols mentions its content as being “*a part of the vision of E. G. H. of Portland.*” [18] This, of course, is all that we have today. How enlightening it would be if we had the full account before us, but apparently it was never written out, only related orally.

Here is what we have from her first vision as it relates to the “shut door” as sent in a letter to Enoch Jacobs, editor of the *Day Star*, and published by him in the issue of January 24, 1846. It was written from Portland, Maine, but during the eight-month period she was staying with the Nichols family. (See the Nichols' letter in Exhibit 2.).

While praying at the family altar the Holy Ghost fell on me and I seemed to be rising higher and higher, far above the dark world. I turned to look for the Advent people in the world, but could not find them, when a voice said to me, Look again, and look a little higher. At this, I raised my eyes and see a strait and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were traveling to the City, which was at the farther end of the path. They had a bright light set up behind at the first end of the path, which an angel told me was the Midnight Cry. This light shone all along the path and gave light for their feet so they might not stumble. And if they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the City, they were safe. But soon some grew weary, and said the City was a great way off, and they expected to have entered it before. Then Jesus would encourage them by raising his glorious right arm, and from his arm came a glorious light which waved over the Advent band, and they shouted, Hallelujah! Others rashly denied the light behind them, and said that it was not God that had led them out so far. The light behind them went out which left their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and got their eyes off the mark and lost sight of Jesus, and fell off the path down in the dark and wicked world below. It was just as impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the City, as all the wicked world which God had rejected. They fell all the way along the path one after another, until we heard the voice of God like many waters, which gave us the day and hour of Jesus' coming. The living saints, 144,000 in number, know and understand the voice, while the wicked thought it was thunder and an earthquake. When God spake the time, he poured on us the Holy Ghost, and our faces began to light up and shine with the glory

of God as Moses did when he came down from Mount Sinai, ([Exodus 34:30-34.](#))²

As mentioned by James White this vision reestablished the confidence of Ellen and the band of 60 in Portland in the fulfillment of prophecy on October 22, 1844. It led those who heard it recounted to “acknowledge their 7th month experience to be the work of God.”—[A Word to the Little Flock, 22.](#)

[19]

This being the case it appeared to them that this vision inevitably and immediately confirmed their initial understanding that probation had closed on that day. At this juncture in their thinking what other event could have taken place? There was no room at that time for any other conclusion.

One unique feature of the Millerite preaching in America, as distinct from the Advent awakening in the old world was the firm position of its absolute termination of all prophetic periods at the end of the 2300 days. At one of the second Advent conferences it was expressed in this way: “When Christ comes the door is shut, and such as are not ready can never enter in.”—[The Signs of the Times, June 1, 1842.](#)

This could mean only one thing, that is, probation for all mankind would close at the coming of Christ, the confidently expected event they saw forecast by the prophecy of [Daniel 8:14](#). Beyond this point in prophetic history, there would be no opportunity for salvation. (See *SDA Encyclopedia*, 1966 edition, pp. 921-922; 1976 edition, pp 1034-1035). This was ingrained in the hearts and minds of the Advent believers through repetition from the public platform and in the Millerite journals.³

²Note: With some slight editing James White republished the vision in the [Broadside To the Little Remnant Scattered Abroad, dated April 6, 1846](#), then reprinted it in “A Word to the Little Flock,” with Scripture references added, on May 30, 1847. See Exhibit I, for the full text of the vision as there published. In 1851, the most of it was included in Ellen White’s first book, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, and from there became a part of [Early Writings, 11, 12](#)

³Note: See Exhibit 6 for G. I. Butler’s review of the position of leaders in the Millerite movement on the close of probation on October 22, 1844. For the full Butler series of ten articles on “Advent Experience” treating especially the matter of the “Shut Door” see *Review and Herald*, [February 10](#) to [April 14](#), 1885. Copies available from the White Estate

[20] So while the idea of the Adventists of 1844 after October 22 holding to the close of probation may seem strange to us today, we must remember their firmly established positions and we must also remember that the Lord could lead His people only as fast as they could understand and follow His leadings. With the background of their preaching and beliefs, any message at this juncture to the effect that probation had not closed on October 22 would have led to the abandoning of confidence in the fulfillment of prophecy on October 22.

If we are inclined to be critical of our early Advent believers, let us call to mind again the experience of the disciples. It may be correctly said that the first vision given to Ellen Harmon *did not teach a "shut door" for the world*, that is, a close of probation for the whole world. In some of its expressions it carried the seeds of the teaching of a much greater movement yet to take place. Yet the interpretation placed upon it *in confirming confidence in the fulfillment of prophecy on October 22 just naturally established in their minds a close of probation on October 22*. This whole experience to them was clearly linked with a shut door as set forth in the parable of the ten virgins as found in [Matthew 25:10](#).

As Otis Nichols in his letter to William Miller written on April 20, 1846, which he sent along with a copy of the Broadside printing of her first vision, recounts Ellen Harmon's experience and the influence of her message, he declared:

[21] From the time [the telling of the vision in February, 1845, at Poland, Maine] for many weeks she continued to travel day and night talking almost every day until she had visited most of the Advent bands in Maine and the easterly parts of New Hampshire. Her message was always attended with the Holy Ghost, and wherever it was received as from the Lord it broke down and melted their hearts like little children, fed, comforted, strengthened the weak, and encouraged them to hold on to the faith, and the 7th month movement; and that our work was done for the nominal church and the world, and what remained to be done was for the household of faith.

Those that rejected her message very soon fell into the world and a nominal faith, and those that did receive her testimony as from the Lord and afterward denied it, calling it mesmerism or an unholy thing, are many of them like those that are given over to strong delusion and working of Satan—a ship without a helm or anchor and driven by every wind, thus causing the way of truth to be evil spoken of.

This class of persons are her greatest enemies, and have done what they could by calumny, and lies to destroy her influence and character. But God has hitherto protected her in a remarkable manner from all harm; raised up benefactors for her wherever she goes notwithstanding the malice of wicked spirits and fallen Adventists.—Otis Nichols to William Miller, April 20, 1846. White Estate Document File, No. 439b.

This very valuable letter only recently came to our hands, and consequently was not known to exist when earlier statements on the shut door were written. It fills in some important history of which we have had little knowledge and confirms our understanding that those whose faith was confirmed by the vision of the travels of the Advent people to the city of God were not at once divested of their convictions, perhaps somewhat foggily held, that the door of salvation had closed. At the same time, Ellen White, as she later explained—and as was evidenced by an experience in Paris, Maine, in the summer of 1845 in which a sister not in the 1844 movement was understood to be eligible for salvation, was led through the visions to see an open door as it pertained to salvation. There was a period of a few years in which the full truth was only dimly seen.

This should be taken into account when considering statements made in this interim period. There was what Ellen White saw in vision which for the most part is clearly defined, and there were the conclusions reached by those holding shut door views who dared not abandon them for fear of rejecting confidence in the 1844 experience which carried such marked evidences of the work of the Spirit of God. But we repeat, as did Ellen White through the years and also the pioneers who were very familiar with the experience. *Ellen*

White was not shown, nor did she write, that probation for the world generally closed in 1844.

Elder J. N. Loughborough in the [The Review and Herald, September 25, 1866](#), gives a report of an experience in which he was present when James White was conversing with H. E. Carver, and stated:

Considering her youthfulness, and her belief in the shut door, and the views of the Advent people, it would not have been considered very strange, if her vision had received a coloring, in writing it out.

Then Loughborough comments:

I did not understand Brother White, for a moment, to convey the idea that her views colored the vision, but that they did not; and that, for this reason: we had, in the same vision, [the vision at Exeter, Maine, in February, 1845] what she saw about the open door, notwithstanding her vision of the open door was contrary to the faith of the Advent people at that time, and contrary to her own faith, before she had the vision.

Still further, Brother White went on to show that it was the visions that had led them out of the extreme view of the shut door. Immediately after this vision, they labored for some who had made no profession before 1844, which was directly contrary to the practice of those who held the extreme view of the shut door.

This vision was repeated again, as he showed, at Oswego, New York, just before it was published in Saratoga; but instead of leading them to cease labor for the unconverted, it led them to labor for those who are now Brother and Sister Patch of Minnesota.

The reader will recall that God in His providence and wisdom, may at times hide in obscurity some points which if, at the moment were fully revealed could cause perplexity and confusion. It will be recalled that God's "hand was over and hid a mistake in some of the

figures” on the 1843 chart, in spite of the fact that the chart “was directed by the hand of the Lord.” ([Early Writings, 74](#)). [23]

Near His death, Jesus told His disciples, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.” [John 16:12](#). Ellen White was shown a rejection by God of a certain class of people in 1844, but from the wording it seems that just who this included, not being the subject of the vision, was at the time left undefined.

How Firmly Was the Door Closed?

But at this point we should pause to examine how firmly and in what degree “the door” was closed. Looking back in 1883 Ellen White declared:

“It was the light given me of God that corrected our error [that the door of mercy was then forever closed to the world] and enabled us to see our true position.”—[Selected Messages 1:63](#).

In the account of her first vision as first published, there appears a sentence and a half which is cited as evidence that Ellen White was shown in vision that probation for the world generally had closed in 1844. In referring to those who rashly denied the light behind them and said that it was not God that had led them out so far, she declares that they fell off the path down in the dark and wicked world below. Then follow the expressions in question:

It was just as impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the city, as all the wicked world which God had rejected. They fell all the way along the path one after another.—[Selected Messages 1:61](#). See Exhibit I.

Note the words carefully. The statement itself does not declare that probation had closed for the world. It does refer to “all the wicked world which God had rejected.” And it must be noted that the next full sentence refers to “the living saints, 144,000 in number.”

If it was Ellen Harmon’s understanding that there was no opportunity for sinners in the world to be converted and there were in the

- [24] Millerite movement only 50,000 or 100,000, and by this time half of these had disappeared from the ranks of the believers of the second advent, where would the 144,000 come from?

The Vision of the Heavenly Sanctuary—February, 1845

In mid-February, 1845, a vision was given to Ellen White at Exeter, Maine, to which she refers in her letter to Elder Bates. In this she was directed to events transpiring in heaven. She was shown the entry of Christ into the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. An account of what was revealed to her at this time appeared first in print in the *Day Star* of March 14, 1846, was reprinted by James White in the broadside dated April 6, 1846, and is in [Early Writings, 54-56](#). Here is the account of what she saw, reproduced from the broadside:

In February, 1845, I had a vision of events commencing with the Midnight Cry. I saw a throne and on it sat the Father and the Son. I gazed on Jesus' countenance and admired his lovely person. The Father's person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered him. I asked Jesus if his Father had a form like himself. He said he had, but I could not behold it, for said he if you should once behold the glory of his person you would cease to exist. Before the throne I saw the Advent people, the church, and the world. I saw a company, bowed down before the throne, deeply interested, while the most of them stood up disinterested and careless. Those who were bowed before the throne would offer up their prayers and look to Jesus; then he would look to his Father, and appeared to be pleading with Him. A light would come from the Father to the Son, and from the son to the praying company. Then I saw an exceeding bright light come from the Father to the Son, and from the Son it waved over the people before the throne. But few would receive this great light; many came out from under it and immediately resisted it; others were careless and did not cherish the light, and

it moved off from them; some cherished it, and went and bowed down with the little praying company. This company all received the light, and rejoiced in it, as their countenances shone with its glory. And I saw the Father rise from the throne, and in a flaming Chariot go into the Holy of Holies, within the veil, and did sit There I saw thrones that I had never seen before. Then Jesus rose up from the throne, and the most of those who were bowed down arose with Him; and I did not see one ray of light pass from Jesus to the careless multitude after he arose, and they were left to perfect darkness. Those who rose up when Jesus did, kept their eyes fixed on Him as He left the throne and led them out a little way.—Then He raised His right arm and we heard his lovely voice saying, “Wait here—I am going to my Father to receive the Kingdom; keep your garments spotless, and in a little while I will return from the wedding and receive you to myself.” And I saw a cloudy chariot, with wheels like flaming fire, and Angels were all around it as it came where Jesus was. He stepped into the chariot and was borne to the Holiest where the Father sat. There I beheld Jesus, as He was standing before the Father, a great High Priest. On the hem of His garment was a bell and pomegranate. Then Jesus shew me the difference between faith and feeling. And I saw those who rose up with Jesus send up their faith to Him in the Holiest, and pray—my Father give us thy Spirit. Then Jesus would breathe upon them the Holy Ghost. In the breath was light, power, and much love, joy and peace. Then I turned to look at the company who were still bowed before the throne; they did not know that Jesus had left it.—Satan appeared to be by the throne, trying to carry on the work of God; I saw them look up to the throne and pray, my Father give us thy Spirit; then Satan would breathe upon them an unholy influence; in it there was light and much power, but no sweet love, joy and peace. Satan’s object was to keep them deceived, and to draw back and deceive God’s children. I saw one after an-

other leave the company who were praying to Jesus in the Holiest, and go and join those before the throne, and they at once received the unholy influence of Satan

[25] In her letter to Bates she gives the setting of this vision and tells of its fruitage in establishing confidence in the fulfillment of prophecy on October 22, 1844.

The view about the Bridegroom's coming I had about the middle of February, 1845.

While in Exeter, Maine, in meeting with Israel Dammon, James, and many others, many of them did not believe in a shut door. I suffered much at the commencement of the meeting. Unbelief seemed to be on every hand.

There was one sister there that was called very spiritual. She had traveled and been a powerful preacher the most of the time for twenty years. She had been truly a mother in Israel. But a division had risen in the band on the shut door. She had great sympathy, and could not believe the door was shut. (I had known nothing of their differences.) Sister Durben got up to talk. I felt very, very sad.

At length my soul seemed to be in an agony, and while she was talking I fell from my chair to the floor. It was then I had a view of Jesus rising from His mediatorial throne and going to the holiest as Bridegroom to receive His kingdom. They were all deeply interested in the view. They all said it was entirely new to them. The Lord worked in mighty power setting the truth home to their hearts....

Most of them received the vision, and were settled upon the shut door. Previous to this I had no light on the coming of the Bridegroom, but had expected Him to this earth to deliver His people on the tenth day of the seventh month. I did not hear a lecture or a word in any way relating to the Bridegroom's going to the holiest.—

[Letter 3, 1847](#), to Joseph Bates. (July 13, 1847) (See Exhibit 3 for the letter.)

The term “shut door” is not used in any published account of this vision, but Ellen White in 1847, as just seen in her letter to Bates, connected this vision given in mid-February, 1845, to the “shut door.” And in 1874 in her letter answering a question raised by Elder Loughborough she explained:

It was on my first journey east to relate my visions that the precious light in regard to the heavenly sanctuary was opened before me and I was shown the open and shut door. We believed that the Lord was soon to come in the clouds of heaven. I was shown that there was a great work to be done in the world for those who had not had the light and rejected it. Our brethren could not understand this with our faith in the immediate appearing of Christ. Some accused me of saying that my Lord delayeth His coming, especially the fanatical ones.—[Letter 2, 1874](#), in [Selected Messages 1:74](#).

[26]

The pioneers held that a shut door and an open door were factors in the vision. J. N. Loughborough states that “This vision was repeated again and directs attention to the account of what was shown to her March 24, 1849, published under the title of ‘The Open and the Shut Door.’” In [Early Writings, 42-45](#). (See Exhibit 4.)

It is clear that this vision of mid-February, 1845, given only four months after the disappointment, regarding events which took place on October 22, 1844, confirmed the believers in the integrity of the October 22 fulfillment of prophecy, and in so doing, Ellen White tells us, it confirmed them in the “shut door.” But, we may ask, what did the term used in this connection mean? The vision had in it the seeds which would lead to an understanding that probation for the world generally had not closed and yet at the same time what was shown did not destroy confidence in the fulfillment of prophecy on October 22. Ellen White so saw it and the record sustains this.

The Experience of Paris, Maine, in 1845

That the “shut door” did not connote a close of probation for all the world is confirmed by an experience already alluded to involving Ellen Harmon transpiring in the summer of 1845, some four or five months after the February vision at Exeter just referred to. The account of what took place comes to us from the pen of a well-known woman of pioneer Adventist stock, Mrs. Marion C. Truesdail. The experience is attested to by five other persons who were familiar with the circumstances. In her letter written August 17, 1875, and [27] also signed by the five persons just referred to, she states:

During Miss Harmon’s (now Mrs. White) visit to Paris, Maine, in the summer of 1845, I stated to her the particulars of a dear friend of mine whose father had prevented her attending our meetings; consequently she had not rejected light. She smilingly replied, “God never has shown me that there is no salvation for such persons. It is only those who have had the light of truth presented to them and knowingly rejected it.” Miss Harmon’s reply coincided with my idea of a shut door, and in justice no other could be derived from it.—[The Review and Herald, April 7, 1885](#), (quoted in an article by George I. Butler).

Significance of the Time of Publication of the Early Visions

While we speak of Ellen Harmon’s first vision being given in 1844 and the response in early 1845, and while we speak of the vision given to her in Exeter, Maine, in mid-February, 1845, and of its fruitage, we must keep clearly in mind that in this perplexing and confusing period, neither of these visions was printed until a full year after they were received by Ellen Harmon and their influence was quite limited through the year 1845.

As the first vision was published initially in the *Day Star* of January 24, 1846,⁴ and the vision given at Exeter in February, 1845,

⁴Note: In actuality what appears in Early Writings under the title of “My First Vision” (pp. 13-20) is her first vision and the account of what was shown to her about a year later

was published on March 14, 1846—in both cases this was months after the experience at Paris, Maine, reported by Mrs. Truesdail.

The Changing Meaning of the “Shut Door” in 1848

[28]

Reporting on the Sabbath Conference held in David Arnold’s barn in late August, 1848, James White wrote:

Joseph Bates preached the Sabbath to them with strong argument, much boldness and power. My principal message was on [Matthew 25:1-11](#) [The parable of the ten virgins]. The brethren are strong on the Sabbath and Shut Door.—*James White to Brother and Sister Hastings, August 26, 1848.*

On October 2 of the same year, what we term the fifth Sabbath Conference to be held at Topsham, Maine, beginning October 20, James White declared:

The principle points on which we dwell as present truth are the 7th Day Sabbath and Shut Door. In this we wish to honor God’s most holy institution and also acknowledge the work of God in our Second Advent experience.—*James White to Brother and Sister Hastings, October 2, 1848.*

These statements reveal the changing meaning of the term “shut door.” While it carried some connotation of a close of probation for those who had rejected the light of the first and second angel’s messages, its broader meaning and now prime meaning was involved in the sanctuary truth, with the closing of the door in the first apartment

regarding the new earth. She placed the two together in her December 20, 1845, letter to Enoch Jacobs, and as this was reprinted by James White no separation was made until the issuance of the more definitive biographical work *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 2, in 1860. As evidenced in this source and in the biographical sketch in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 1, the account of the first vision closes with the words “made heaven’s arches ring.” ([Early Writings, 17](#); [Spiritual Gifts 2:35](#); [Testimonies for the Church 1:61](#)). The vision of the New Earth in the two last named sources appears a few pages later. The seeming technicality here described is of insignificant importance, but one which cannot be ignored in a complete statement

and the opening of the door into the Most Holy Place where were seen the ten commandments and the Sabbath.

The Vision of Streams of Light Around the World

[29] At the five Sabbath Conferences held in 1848 from April to October, the leading doctrines we as Seventh-day Adventists hold were brought together and bound together in a firm body of teaching. The Sabbath and the sanctuary truths were paramount. Then at a meeting attended by a few of the leading workers at the home of Otis Nichols in Dorchester (South Boston), Massachusetts, over the weekend of November 17 and 18, in what some have termed “the sixth” Sabbath Conference, the brethren gave study to the “Sealing Message” and to their responsibility of proclaiming to others the truths they held and particularly the Sabbath truth. Two visions were given to Ellen White, one on Friday and the other on Sabbath. Joseph Bates who was present made notes of words spoken by Ellen White in these two visions and in January, 1849, in a pamphlet titled, “A Seal of the Living God,” he published his notations. Among some of Ellen White’s expressions while in vision were these:

The angels are holding the four winds.

It is God that restrains the powers.

The angels have not let go, for the saints are not all sealed.

When Michael stands up this trouble will be all over the earth.

Why they are just ready to blow. There’s a check put on because the saints are not sealed.

Yea, publish the things thou hast seen and heard, and the blessing of God will attend. Look ye! that rising is in strength, and grows brighter and brighter. That truth is the seal, that’s why it comes last. The shut door we have had. God has taught and taught, but that experience is not the seal, and that commandment that has been trodden under foot will be exalted. And when ye get that you will go through the time of trouble. *A Seal of the Living God*, pp, 25, 26, (Joseph Bates, 1849).

Ellen White recounting this experience states:

At a meeting held in Dorchester, Massachusetts, November, 1848, I had been given a view of the proclamation of the sealing message, and of the duty of the brethren to publish the light that was shining upon our pathway.

After coming out of vision, I said to my husband: "I have a message for you. You must begin to print a little paper and send it out to the people. Let it be small at first; but as the people read, they will send you means with which to print, and it will be a success from the first." From this small beginning it was shown to me to be like streams of light that went clear round the world.—[Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 125.](#)

The significance of this experience in November, 1848, cannot be overlooked. If the publishing work called for was to become worldwide, a large task of evangelizing the whole world loomed [30] before our pioneers. The implications are very strong.

The Vision of "The Open and Shut Door," March 24, 1849 ⁵

On March 24, 1849, a vision of an open and a shut door was given to Ellen White, and this is referred to by some of our early workers as a repetition of the vision at Exeter, Maine, in mid-February, 1845. Many of the same points are dealt with. She saw Jesus transfer His ministry from the Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary to the Most Holy Place, closing one door and opening another. As Ellen White wrote of this vision to Brother and Sister Hastings she referred to the fact that there were those at Paris, Maine, who had given up the "shut door." In other words, they had abandoned their confidence in the fulfillment of prophecy on October 22. We give here the exhibit.
Topsham, Maine
March 24-30, 1849
Dear Brother and Sister Hastings:

⁵Note: See Exhibit 4 for the full vision as published in [Early Writings, 42-45.](#)

I now sit down to write you a few lines and give you a little history of our journey and of the dealings of God with us since we left you....

The first Sabbath we spent in Topsham [March 24] was a sweet, interesting time. It seemed that Jesus Himself passed through our midst and shed His light and glory upon us. We all had a rich draught from the well of Bethlehem. The Spirit came upon me and I was taken off in vision. I saw many important things, some of which I will write you before I close this letter.

I saw Brother Stowell of Paris was wavering upon the shut door. I felt that I must visit them. Although it was fifty miles off and very bad going, I believed God would strengthen me to perform the journey. We went and found they needed strengthening.

[31]

There had not been a meeting in the place for above two years. We spent one week with them. Our meetings were very interesting. They were hungry for present truth. We had free, powerful meetings with them.

God gave me two visions while there, much to the comfort and strength of the brethren and sisters. Brother Stowell was established in the shut door and all the present truth he had doubted. Strength was given me from on high so that my journey wearied me not at all and my health has been better ever since. Thank God He gives us strength as we need....

I will now write you the vision God gave me on the Sabbath, the 24th of March. We had a glorious meeting. I was taken off in vision.

I saw the commandments of God and shut door could not be separated. I saw the time for the commandments of God to shine out to His people was when the door was opening in the inner apartment of the heavenly sanctuary in 1844. Then Jesus rose up and shut the door in the outer apartment and opened the door in the inner apartment and passed into the Most Holy Place,

and the faith of Israel now reaches within the second veil where Jesus now stands by the ark.

I saw that Jesus had shut the door in the Holy Place and no man can open it, and that He had opened the door in the Most Holy Place and no man can shut it; and that since Jesus had opened the door in the Most Holy Place the commandments have been shining out and God has been testing His people on the holy Sabbath.—[Letter 5, 1849](#). [The account of the vision continues. As given here, it parallels very closely the account given in [Early Writings, 42-45](#), in the chapter “The Open and the Shut Door,” Exhibit 4 of this document.]

Attention should be given to the closing paragraph of this vision:

I saw that mysterious signs and wonders and false reformations would increase and spread. The reformations that were shown me were not reformations from error to truth. My accompanying angel bade me look for the travail of soul for sinners as used to be. *I looked, but could not see it; for the time for their salvation is past.*—[Early Writings, 45](#) (Emphasis supplied).

From this the pattern is beginning to develop. Truths are opening up. Standing out are the Sabbath and the understanding of the sanctuary in heaven. Inseparably linked with this is confidence in the fulfillment of prophecy on October 22, 1844. Of the passage quoted above, Ellen White in 1854 wrote:

The “false reformations” referred to on page 27 ([Early Writings, 45](#)) are yet to be more fully seen. This view relates more particularly to those who have heard and rejected the light of the Advent doctrine. They are given over to strong delusions. Such will not have “the travail of soul for sinners” as formerly. Having rejected the Advent, and being given over to the delusions of Satan, “the time for their salvation is past.” This does not, however, relate to those who have not heard and

[32]

have not rejected the doctrine of the Second Advent.—
Supplement to Christian Experience and Views, p. 4.

Labor for Sinners 1845-1851

We now introduce several exhibits corroborating the fact that James and Ellen White were, as there were opportunities, working for sinners through the years between 1845 and 1851.

Reference was made on page 26 to Ellen Harmon's experience in Paris, Maine, in the summer of 1845 as reported by Mrs. Truesdail.

Elder Loughborough, in an article in the [The Review and Herald, September 25, 1866](#), quoted on page 22 after making reference to the vision given to Ellen White in Exeter, Maine, in mid-February, 1845, states:

Brother White went on to show that it was the visions that led them out of the extreme view of the shut door. Immediately after this vision they labored for some who made no profession before 1844, which was directly contrary to the practice of those who held the extreme view of the shut door. This vision was repeated again as he showed at Oswego, New York, just before it was published in Saratoga. [In *Experience and Views*.] But instead of leading them to cease to labor for the unconverted, it led them to labor for those who are now Brother and Sister Patch of Minnesota.

The Hiram Patch Experience

The Patch experience is an interesting one. Their names come in in connection with meetings held by Elder and Mrs. White in Oswego, New York, in the winter of 1849-1850. As this experience involved young people never connected with the Advent Movement it is of particular significance and we recount it in detail.

[33]

In the winter of 1849-1850, Elder and Mrs. White lived at Oswego. While there, Elder White published several numbers of *The Present Truth*. He also held meetings and presented our message, particularly the

Sabbath truth. The Methodists were especially disturbed, and with a very earnest businessman leading out, they held revival meetings. This man, whom we know only as Mr. M., (See [Spiritual Gifts 2:123](#)) was the county treasurer. The people were very much impressed and some found it hard to decide as to who was right, this man who upheld Sunday, or Elder White, the young minister who had just moved to Oswego, and who lived in a rented house with borrowed furniture, and was teaching the Sabbath truth.

Mr. Hiram Patch and his fiancée were especially troubled. How could they know what was the truth in this matter? They were deeply impressed with the earnestness of the Methodist county treasurer and the meetings he held. They could also see clearly the Bible proofs for the Sabbath truth and the Third Angel's Message.

About this time, Sister White was given a vision in which she was shown the true character of Mr. M., and that he was not honest. And she was instructed to tell Mr. Patch, "Wait a month, and you will know for yourself the character of the persons who are engaged in this revival, and who profess to have such a great burden for sinners."

Mr. Patch said, "I will wait."

About two weeks later, as Mr. M., the county treasurer, in one of the revival meetings was praying in agony for sinners, a blood vessel in his stomach broke, and he was carried home in great pain. As others took over his treasurer's work at the county courthouse, they discovered a shortage in the county funds, of one thousand dollars. The sheriff and his deputy were sent to the treasurer's home to ask about the missing money. The sheriff went to the front door and the deputy stayed out in the yard. The sheriff found Mr. M. in bed. He told the sheriff that he did not know anything about the missing money.

Just then the sheriff's deputy came in the back door with Mrs. M. and he had in his hand a bag of money. He got there just in time to hear the treasurer call on God to witness that he had not taken the money. The deputy then held up the bag of money and asked, "What is this?"

[34] As he stood outside while the sheriff went into the house, he had seen Mrs. M. go out the back door carrying a bag and this she quickly hid in a pile of snow. Then as she returned to the house, she met the man who had been watching her, and he took her back with him to get the bag. Just as he had suspected, it contained the missing money. The treasurer was put under arrest. The revival meetings collapsed. The people of the town were shocked.

Now Mr. Patch knew who had the truth, and he, with the young lady he soon married, accepted fully the Third Angel's Message, joined the Sabbath-keeping Adventists and were very faithful members. When they saw the fulfillment of the predictions of Sister White, they knew that God was guiding this people and that they had the truth.—See *The Great Second Advent Movement*, 230-232.

The Wilcox Experience

At the first Sabbath Conference of 1848, Elder and Mrs. White labored for the conversion of John Y. Wilcox. Of this he wrote:

I was brought into the truth at the time meetings were held in the unfinished chamber of Brother A. Belden's house, Rocky Hill, Connecticut. My receiving the light of present truth was under the labors of Brother and Sister White. I was baptized soon after by Brother White. But for the encouragement and strength I received from them I don't know as I would ever have dared to think or feel that I was accepted of the Lord. They were deeply interested for me, and labored to help me.—*The Great Second Advent Movement*, p. 224.

The Ira Abbey Testimony

After the time passed I was a strong shut door believer. But when the Third Angel's Message was preached, I with my wife embraced it. Between 1846 and 1850 Brother and Sister White came to our house, and were very zealous for the children and those that had not rejected the truth. They labored for unconverted souls, and never do I remember of hearing Sister White say that there were no hopes of the unconverted; but there were hopes of the backsliders and those that had not rejected the truth.—Quoted by G. I. Butler in [The Review and Herald, April 7, 1885](#).

E. G. White Letter to Brother and Sister Hastings (January 11, 1850)

O my brother and sister, I wish all of God's people could get a sight of it as God has shown it me. *The work of the Lord is going on. SOULS are coming in to the truth and soon the work will be all done.* Keep up good courage, hope in God, let nothing weigh thee down. We have the truth. We know it. Praise the Lord. I saw yesterday our work was not to the shepherds who have rejected the former messages, but to the honest deceived who are led astray. I saw the false shepherds would soon be fed with judgment. Let the truth come out everywhere we go, the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord our God. Cheer up. There are better days coming.—[Letter 18, 1850](#) (January 11, 1850) (Emphasis supplied).

[35]

E. G. White Letter to Brother and Sister Collins (February 10, 1850.)

We were very glad to hear from you that you were striving to be overcomers by the blood of the Lamb and the word of your testimony. Be bold in the cause of God. Do not falter...

The way is now fully open for James to go forward in publishing the Present Truth...

Let us not rest unless we have the abiding witness that our ways please God. *Souls are coming out upon the truth all around here. They are those who have not heard the Advent doctrine and some of them are those who went forth to meet the Bridegroom in 1844, but since that time have been deceived by false shepherds until they did not know where they were or what they believed.*—[Letter 4, 1850](#) (February 10, 1850) (Emphasis supplied)

Experience of Heman Churchill (July, 1850)

The *Advent Review* volume 1, number 1, published in August, 1850, at Auburn, New York, carries a report from James White of “Our Tour East.” Meetings were held at Johnson, Vermont, on July 6 and 7 with “quite a number of scattered brethren and sisters present.”—*Advent Review*, August, 1850, p. 15.

“We left the brethren in that vicinity,” reports White, “strong in the ‘commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.’” One brother, who had not been in the Advent, and had made no public profession of religion until 1845, came out clear and strong in the whole truth. He had never opposed the Advent, and it is evident that the Lord had been leading him, though his experience had not been just like ours. Such, who come into the truth at the eleventh hour, may expect great trials.—*Ibid.*

George I. Butler remembered the meeting and identified the man as Heman Churchill of Stowe, Vermont. Butler writes:

His was one of the very first cases of conversion from the world to the present truth, which occurred after 1844.... I remember him well as he came to Waterbury, Vermont, and attended meeting in my father’s house where a few met from time to time.

[36] They were quite surprised at first that one who had been an unbeliever should manifest an interest in the Advent doctrine. He was not repulsed but welcomed. He was earnest and zealous, and as they discerned in him sincerity, they accepted him as a true convert.—[The Review and Herald, April 7, 1885.](#)

J. H. Waggoner recalls the experience much like his own:

I have before me the report of a meeting held in Vermont, signed Joseph Bates, dated Fairhaven, November 4, 1850. In the last paragraph the report says:—

The two Brother Martins and their companions, with two others in Bennington, professed their clear convictions of the Seventh-day Sabbath and shut door.

This, then, was noted as an article of their faith as late as 1850. But now notice further. In this same report he says: “Brother and Sister Butler came from Waterbury with Brethren Chamberlain and Churchill.” And yet Brother Churchill was not in the first message; his first advent experience was in the faith of the Third Angel’s Message, the Sabbath, and the shut door! It is also true that Brother Churchill was held off for a time by some who were in doubt about his case, but *Sister White had a message of hope for him*, which silenced the objections of all who had confidence in the visions, and of course they rejected him, but they were not the Seventh-day Adventists. Of course many embraced the Sabbath who were believers in that view, but the visions were the means of bringing them out to the faith of an *open door* as well as the shut door.—*Review and Herald Supplement*, August 14, 1883.

The 1851 Developments

In this statement we have pointed out that God could lead His people only as fast as they could grasp developing truth and follow intelligently. This leading is found in His Word, in His messages to the prophets and by a development in circumstances. All three played a part in the developments of 1851, but the latter, that is, circumstances, here played a leading role. Listen to Ellen White as she later described conditions in 1850:

In 1850 my husband and myself visited Vermont, Canada, New Hampshire, and Maine. The meetings were held in private houses. It was then next to impossible to obtain access to unbelievers. The disappointment in 1844 had confused the minds of many, and they would not listen to any explanation of the matter.—*The Review and Herald*, November 1883. (Emphasis supplied)

But by 1851 a change was taking place. In the *Review and Herald* Elder White could report:

Now the door is open almost everywhere to present the truth, and many are prepared to read the publications who have formerly had no interest to investigate.—[The Review and Herald, August 19, 1851](#), p. 13, column 2.

This change in the situation which now provided circumstances favorable for the heralding of the three angels' messages was indeed welcome. During the seven years since the great disappointment there had come onto the stage of action a multitude of those who in 1844 were children and had not yet reached the age of accountability. Added to these were many who had not taken a decided stand against the truths presented in the great Advent awakening, and with the fading memory of the 1844 experience were now ready to listen. (See Exhibit 7 for James White's answer to a man seeking light in April, 1851).

We have shown that James and Ellen White had been in the lead in advocating an open door to salvation on the part of those who had not rejected the message in 1844. A basic factor in this was the visions given to Ellen White.

But the record indicates that not all moved as quickly or as firmly as did Elder and Mrs. White. It took time for most to come into understanding of all the involvements in the shut door—the door of mercy for all the world; the open and shut door in the heavenly sanctuary; the door which closed for those who had rejected the clear Advent preaching of the 1840s; the door open to youth which had not attained the age of accountability; the open to those who had not heard and rejected the Advent preaching in the Millerite awakening.

[38] The situation is reflected in a reference made by Ellen White in her 1883 statement written in answer to A. C. Long (Mr. C.). In this statement the man referred to is Elder J. H. Waggoner, a newspaper editor and publisher, who in 1851 accepted the message.

The First Vision as Published in Mrs. White's First Book

With the coming of the opportunity to reach people of the world with the *Review and Herald*, Elder James White announced in the

July 21, 1851 *Review* “*Extra*” that “As many are prejudiced against visions we think best at present not to insert anything of the kind in the regular paper.” And he promised: “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 these last days.*’”

Already the type was being set for what he promised as a “small, neat pamphlet,” which when published was a 64-page book which they titled: *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and views of Ellen G. White*.⁶ The “*Extra*” had been devoted largely to the presentation of a brief sketch of Ellen White’s experience and included her first vision, the vision of the New Earth, and the vision of April, 1847, in which she was shown the halo of light about the fourth commandment. ([Early Writings, 32-35](#))

But as noted earlier, there were some portions of the first vision which were not included in these 1851 printings. Some 32 years later, this was on the part of certain critics to be occasion of some discussion. *There is no record or hint of concern over this in 1851*. In fact, as Ellen White presented her early visions in the 1851 *Review EXTRA* and the next month in her first book, they were introduced [39] by this clear-cut explanation:

Here I will give the view that was first published in 1846. In this view I saw only a very few of the events of the future. More recent views have been more full. I shall therefore leave out a portion and prevent repetition.—*Review Extra*, July 21, 1851, and [A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White](#), 9. (August, 1851).

Before discussing these deletions she refers to, allow us to review the various printings of her first vision up to this time.

1. The letter dated December 20, 1845, bearing the account of the vision addressed to Enoch Jacobs, editor of the *Day Star* and published by him in the issue of

⁶Note: See Exhibit 5 for Ellen G. White letter to Brother and Sister Dodge concerning the publication of *Experience and Views*

January 24, 1846. A postscript states that it “was not written for publication.”

2. *The Broadside*, published in Portland, Maine, by James White and H. S. Gurney on April 6, 1846, and titled, “To the Little Remnant Scattered Abroad.”

3. The James White printing in his 24 page pamphlet “A Word to the Little Flock” published in Brunswick, Maine, May 30, 1847, with Scripture references he added. Pages 14-16.

Except for very minor editorial changes the three printings of the vision are identical. As “A Word to the Little Flock” is currently available in a facsimile reprint, our reference will be to this source. (See Exhibit 1.)

Then in 1851 it was embodied in Mrs. White’s first book and from there it went into *Early Writings* in 1882. It was following this reprinting that questions were raised and charges of suppression brought by A. C. Long of the Seventh-day Church of God, a group which in the 1860s withdrew from Seventh-day Adventists because of church organization and the Spirit of Prophecy. It was these charges that Ellen White herself met in the statement filed as Ms 4, 1883, now found in [Selected Messages 1:59-73](#), several times quoted from in this statement.

[40]

A Closer Look at the Deleted Words

As the printing in “A Word to the Little Flock” was the last printing of the full account of the vision, we will compare the 1851 printing with that. Already we have presented Mrs. White’s explanation concerning deletions. The reasons were valid, for with economy in mind, the pamphlet printing was planned as being 64 pages—to a printer, even “signatures” of 16 pages each—(which in those days, would require four sheets of paper). The vision in “A Word to the Little Flock” fills 130 lines. Of these 130 lines, 25 were omitted in the 1851 E. G. White book. This is 19% of the text. But it is the omission of three lines only upon which attention is focused. They read:

“It was just as impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the City, as all the wicked world which God had rejected. They fell all the way along the path one after another.”

It is asserted that these lines were omitted to suppress what are said to be “shut door” teachings of the vision. The argument of suppression is seriously undermined by the inclusion in this same first book, *Experience and Views*, of the account of the vision of March 24, 1849, carrying even stronger expressions. That particular chapter from the time of its first printing carried the title “The Open and the Shut Door.” ([Early Writings, 42-45](#). See Exhibit 4.) The closing sentence reads:

“My accompanying angel bade me look for the travail of soul for sinners as used to be. I looked, but could not see it; for the time for their salvation is past.” [Early Writings, 45](#) ⁷

At this juncture it would be well to take a close look at the key words in the three-line phrase in question from the first vision penned in December, 1845—“All the wicked world which God had rejected.” The statement itself does not declare that probation had closed for all the world. It referred to “all the wicked world which God had rejected.” In speaking of an experience which was in the near past, it would be reasonable to assume that isolated phrase might be subject to two interpretations: [41]

(1) That God had rejected for all time all the wicked world; or
(2) That there was a segment which because of their course of action, had been rejected by God. In a situation of this kind the careful student would investigate the historical setting, that is, what were the declarations and actions before the writing, at the time of the writing, and subsequently. He would search for comparable statements made at about the same time; and he would seek for other declarations over a period of time, either in support or in explanation.

⁷Note: Commenting on this particular phrase in 1853, Ellen White declared: “This does not, however, relate to those who have not heard and rejected the first and second messages.” (Notes of explanation inserted in *Experience and Views*. See also p. 55.)

Let us look at the historical setting of the writing on December 20, 1845, the date of the letter to Enoch Jacobs carrying the first known written record of the first vision given in December the year before.

First, as already noted, we can but conclude that what she wrote in this letter presented only the high points of what was shown to her in the December vision, for in relating it in early 1845 at a meeting in Poland, Maine, she spoke for two hours telling what God had shown her. Obviously, in writing a letter she would condense the presentation and confine the written statement to just the essential features.

[42] At the same time, she would write with much less painstaking than would be ordinarily required in preparing material for publication. She soon discovered—as is shown in some notes of explanation which in 1853 she added to her first book—that an author must be very careful to write for print in a way that none may misunderstand the intent.

But as pointed out, a few months before these words were penned, Ellen Harmon at Paris, Maine, had made it clear that from what God had shown her there was opportunity for the salvation of a person who had not heard and rejected the first angel's message. *This and the absence of statements declaring the extreme shut door position*, would guard the careful student from reading into the phrase in question the interpretation of probation's close for the world generally in 1844.

Then, it may be asked, why were the three lines omitted from the printing of the vision in Mrs. White's first book? In introducing it she gives a very general reason for all omissions in the account as published in 1851, but beyond this, the author herself had the right, yea more, the responsibility, to choose that which she would present in her book in order to correctly convey what was revealed to her. If there were phrases which were capable of distortion or interpretation to mean that which she did not intend to teach, she had the privilege and even the duty of handling the matter in such a way that that what was printed should correctly reflect her intentions.

Again, one must take into account Ellen White's reference to "the 144,000 living saints" and her later statement of what she meant by the "shut door." One must be alert to other evidences which we

have indicating that she did not hold the *extreme view* of no salvation for sinners, either at the time she wrote the letter to Enoch Jacobs on December 20, 1845, or in 1851 when her first book was published.

Significant in this connection is the two-page item titled “Notes of Explanation” which was tipped into copies of *Experience and Views* in early 1853. She deals with a number of points and tells exactly what she meant for it is clear that some readers had reached other conclusions.

[43]

Ellen G. White’s Explanation

And then, of course, we have the explanation Mrs. White herself made in answering the charges of A. C. Long in 1883, quoted in part earlier in this document. This exhibit is of prime importance, for in it she deals directly with the point in question. She wrote:

My attention has recently been called to a 16-page pamphlet published by C., of Marion, Iowa, entitled *Comparison of the Early Writings of Mrs. White With Later Publications*. The writer states that portions of my earlier visions, as first printed, have been suppressed in the work recently published under the title *Early Writings of Mrs. E. G. White*, and he conjectures as a reason for such suppression that these passages teach doctrines now repudiated by us as a people....

The first quotation mentioned by C. is from a pamphlet of 24 pages published in 1847, entitled “A Word to the Little Flock.” Here are the lines omitted in *Experience and Views*:

“It was just as impossible for them [those that gave up their faith in the ‘44 movement] to get on the path again and go to the city, as all the wicked world which God had rejected. They fell all the way along the path one after another.”

I will give the context, that the full force of the expressions may be clearly seen:

“While praying at the family altar, the Holy Ghost fell on me, and I seemed to be rising higher and higher,

[44]

far above the dark world. I turned to look for the advent people in the world, but could not find them—when a voice said to me, ‘Look again, and look a little higher.’ At this I raised my eyes and saw a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the advent people were traveling to the city, which was at the farther end of the path. They had a bright light set up behind them at the first end of the path, which an angel told me was the midnight cry. This light shone all along the path, and gave light for their feet so they might not stumble. And if they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city, they were safe. But soon some grew weary, and they said the city was a great way off, and they expected to have entered it before. Then Jesus would encourage them by raising His glorious right arm, and from His arm came a glorious light which waved over the advent band, and they shouted Hallelujah! Others rashly denied the light behind them, and said that it was not God that had led them out so far. The light behind them went out, leaving their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and got their eyes off the mark and lost sight of Jesus, and fell off the path down into the dark and wicked world below.”

Now follows the passage said to be in the original work, but not found in *Experience and Views* nor in *Early Writings*:

“It was just as impossible for them [those that gave up their faith in the ‘44 movement] to get on the path again and go to the city, as all the wicked world which God had rejected. They fell all the way along the path one after another.”

The “Shut Door” Defined

It is claimed that these expressions prove the shut-door doctrine, and that this is the reason of their omission in later editions. But in fact they teach only that

which has been and is still held by us as a people, as I shall show.

For a time after the disappointment in 1844, I did hold, in common with the advent body, that the door of mercy was then forever closed to the world. This position was taken before my first vision was given me. It was the light given me of God that corrected our error, and enabled us to see the true position.

I am still a believer in the shut-door theory, but not in the sense in which we at first employed the term or in which it is employed by my opponents.

There was a shut door in Noah's day. There was at that time a withdrawal of the Spirit of God from the sinful race that perished in the waters of the Flood. God Himself gave the shut-door message to Noah:

“My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years” ([Genesis 6:3](#)).

There was a shut door in the days of Abraham. Mercy ceased to plead with the inhabitants of Sodom, and all but Lot, with his wife and two daughters, were consumed by the fire sent down from heaven.

There was a shut door in Christ's day. The Son of God declared to the unbelieving Jews of that generation, “Your house is

left unto you desolate” ([Matthew 23:38](#)).

[45]

Looking down the stream of time to the last days, the same infinite power proclaimed through John:

“These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth” ([Revelation 3:7](#)).

I was shown in vision, and I still believe, that there was a shut door in 1844. All who saw the light of the first and second angels' messages and rejected that light, were left in darkness. And those who accepted it and

received the Holy Spirit which attended the proclamation of the message from heaven, and who afterward renounced their faith and pronounced their experience a delusion, thereby rejected the Spirit of God, and it no longer pleaded with them.

Those who did not see the light, had not the guilt of its rejection. It was only the class who had despised the light from heaven that the Spirit of God could not reach. And this class included, as I have stated, both those who refused to accept the message when it was presented to them, and also those who, having received it, afterward renounced their faith. These might have a form of godliness, and profess to be followers of Christ; but having no living connection with God, they would be taken captive by the delusions of Satan. These two classes are brought to view in the vision—those who declared the light which they had followed a delusion, and the wicked of the world who, having rejected the light, had been rejected of God. No reference is made to those who had not seen the light, and therefore were not guilty of its rejection.—Ms 4, 1883; [Selected Messages 1:59-64](#).

Ellen White Looks Back to Soul-Winning Work from 1845 On

Two exhibits of later vintage will be in place here, presenting Ellen White's memory of soul-winning work from the beginning of her ministry. Note these:

Looking Back in 1886.

I speak because I know what I am talking about. *For more than forty years I have stood in the desk proclaiming salvation to sinners*, and my heart has yearned over them. God has opened before me the glory of Heaven, and I have obtained a sight of the majesty and glory of my Redeemer. I have obtained a sight of the angels in glory.

I was very young when the physicians said, “You must die, you cannot live more than three months.” It was then that God gave me a sight of His glory, and said, “Go proclaim the message I give you, to the people.” I started out in my weakness. I could hardly stand. I had not spoken aloud for weeks, but when I stood before the people, God’s power came upon me. Voice was given me and I talked from two to three hours with clearness. But when I had finished, my voice again was gone.

[46]

I traveled for three months in this way and then the pain of the lungs ceased, and ever since I have been doing the work which the Master has given me to do. I have traveled and labored and God has given me strength to continue unto this day.—Ms 6a, 1886, (Sermon at Orebro, Sweden, Sunday, June 27, 1886, emphasis supplied).

Looking Back in 1906 to 1845 and 1846.

I spoke in the Sanitarium chapel yesterday, [March 24, 1906] and related some of our experiences in connection with the beginning of our work. I spoke of my conversion, and of how I traveled for months, unable to speak except in a low, husky voice....

The Lord worked with us wherever we went. His glory was in every meeting. I was so blessed, and God worked so wondrously by His Holy Spirit, that I had not the least excuse to doubt that the Lord had chosen me, young as I was, to communicate to others the light given me. The opposition that came, whether from high or low, had no impression upon my mind. Evidence was constantly given that dispelled doubt. *Many souls confessed their sins and were converted.*

Soon after the beginning of my work, Elder James White and I were married.—[Letter 102, 1906](#), (to Mrs. Nellie H. Druillard, written March 25, 1906. Emphasis supplied.).

In Summation

1. We see from the history of the New Testament church and from the experience of the Adventists in 1844 and onward, that God can lead the minds of His people only as fast as they can grasp truth. And the factors which bring about change are: (a) A clearer understanding of God's Word; (b) His teachings through inspired messages, given at the time of need; and (c) Experiences and circumstances which have a bearing on the situations.

[47] 2. That following the disappointment of October 22, 1844, the view was widespread among the Adventists generally, under the leadership of William Miller, that on October 22, 1844, the door was shut, that is, that their work for the world was closed.

3. That Ellen White for a short time held the extreme view of the "shut door," that probation had closed for all the world on October 22.

4. That her first vision confirming confidence in the October 22 fulfillment of prophecy was taken by most as support for a close of probation on October 22. To Ellen White, it was God's rejection of those who had rejected the Advent preaching. At that juncture any message sustaining confidence in the October 22 date would seem to support "shut door" views held. The view of the 144,000 held seeds of a great soul-winning work yet ahead.

5. In the summer of 1845, even before the first vision was written out and sent to Enoch Jacobs, Ellen White at Paris, Maine, had made it clear that God had never shown her that salvation was past for those who had not heard and rejected light.

6. In the vision at Exeter, Maine, in February, 1845, as reported in Ellen White's letter to Joseph Bates in July, 1847, she was shown Christ beginning His ministry in the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary, and He would not come until He finished that work and returned from the wedding. This vision convinced some who had given up confidence in the integrity of the fulfillment of prophecy in 1844 that a work did take place at that time, and so just naturally confirmed them in the "shut door."

7. James White in his 1847 "A Word to the little Flock" equates the holding to the "shut door" with the understanding that the "7th

month experience” was “the work of God.” Thus there emerges a broadening concept of the term as used by our pioneers.

8. In the vision at Dorchester, Massachusetts, November 18, 1848, Ellen White was shown a work before them in publishing that would be like streams of light that “went clear round the world.” There was a great soul-winning work before them. [48]

9. In the vision of March 24, 1849, Ellen White was shown that “the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ relating to the shut door could not be separated.” And Brother Stowell of Paris, Maine, who had given up the shut door was established in it by the visions.

10. The records of the early days indicate that souls were won from the world during the crucial “shut door era,” 1847-1851, as the result of active evangelistic labors of James and Ellen White and others.

11. While James and Ellen White were in advance of most of the Sabbath keeping Adventist pioneer group in an understanding of the work before them, the others moved more slowly, but move they did in response to a better understanding of God’s Word, the influence of the visions given to Ellen White and the developing providence of God.

12. Ellen White herself in two statements explains her position on the “shut door,” recognizing that there was a close of probation for those who knowingly rejected light and that she had never indicated that she had been shown in vision or stated orally or in print that probation for all the world closed on October 22, 1844.

Washington, D. C.

November 10, 1971

Revised May 9, 1982.

Exhibit 1—Ellen Harmon’s First Vision

As published by James White in “A Word to the Little Flock” with scripture references added. The boxed portions which appeared also in the December 20, 1845 letter to Enoch Jacobs and published by him in the [The Day-Star, January 24, 1846](#), and in the 1846 broadside were not carried through to Ellen White’s first book, “A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G., White”

To The Remnant Scattered Abroad

As God has shown me in holy vision the travels of the Advent people to the Holy City, and the rich reward to be given those who wait the return of their Lord from the wedding, it may be my duty to give you a short sketch of what God has revealed to me. The dear saints have got many trials to pass through. But our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory—while we look not at the things which are seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. I have tried to bring back a good report, and a few grapes from the heavenly Canaan, for which many would stone me, as the congregation bade stone Caleb and Joshua for their report, ([Numbers 14:10](#).) But I declare to you, my brethren and sisters in the Lord, it is a goodly land, and we are well able to go up and possess it.

While praying at the family altar, the Holy Ghost fell on me, and I seemed to be rising higher and higher, far above the dark world. I turned to look for the Advent people in the world, but could not find them—when a voice said to me, “Look again, and look a little higher.” At this I raised my eyes and saw a straight and narrow path,¹ cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were travelling to the City, which was at the farther end of the path. They had a bright light set up behind them at the first end of the path,

¹Mat. 7:14

which an angel told me was the Midnight Cry. ² This light shone all along the path, and gave light for their feet so they might not stumble. And if they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the City, they were safe. But soon some grew weary, and they said the City was a great way off, and they expected to have entered it before. Then Jesus would encourage them by raising his glorious right arm, and from his arm came a glorious light which waved over the Advent band, and they shouted Hallelujah! Others rashly denied the light behind them, and said that it was not God that had led them out so far. The light behind them went out leaving their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and got their eyes off the mark and lost sight of Jesus. and fell off the path down in the dark and wicked world below. It was just as impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the City, as all the wicked world which God had rejected. They fell all the way along the path one after another until we heard the voice of God like many waters, ³ which, gave us the day and hour of Jesus' coming. ⁴ The living saints, 144,000 in number, knew and understood the voice, while the wicked thought it was thunder and an earthquake. ⁵ When God spake the time, he poured on us the Holy Ghost, and our faces began to light up and shine with the glory of God as Moses' did when he came down from Mount Sinai. ⁶ By this time the 144,000 were all sealed and perfectly united. On their foreheads was written, God, New Jerusalem, and a glorious Star containing Jesus' new name. ⁷ At our happy, holy state the wicked were enraged, and would rush violently up to lay hands on us to thrust us in prison, when we would stretch forth the hand in the name of the Lord, and the wicked would fall helpless to the ground. Then it was that the synagogue of Satan knew that God had loved us who could wash one another's feet, and salute the holy brethren with a holy kiss, and they worshipped at our feet. ⁸ Soon our eyes

[50]

²Mat.25:6

³Ezekiel 43:2. Joel 3:16. Revelation 16:19

⁴Ezekiel 12:25. Mark 13:32

⁵John 12:29

⁶Isaiah 10:27

⁷Revelation 3:12

⁸Revelation 3; 9

were drawn to the East, for a small black cloud had appeared about half as large as a man's hand, which we all knew was the Sign of the Son of Man. ⁹ We all in solemn silence gazed on the cloud as it drew nearer, lighter, and brighter, glorious, and still more glorious, till it was a great white cloud. ¹⁰ The bottom appeared like fire, a rainbow was over it, around the cloud were ten thousand angels singing a most lovely song. And on it sat the Son of Man, ¹¹ on his head were crowns, ¹² his hair was white and curly and lay on his shoulders. ¹³ His feet had the appearance of fire, ¹⁴ in his right hand was a sharp sickle, ¹⁵ in his left a silver trumpet. ¹⁶ His eyes were as a flame of fire, ¹⁷ which searched his children through and through: Then all faces gathered paleness, and those that God had rejected gathered blackness. Then we all cried out, who shall be able to stand? Is my robe spotless? Then the angels ceased to sing, and there was some time of awful silence, ¹⁸ when Jesus spoke. Those who have clean hands and a pure heart shall be able to stand, my grace is sufficient for you. At this, our faces lighted up, and joy filled every heart. And the angels struck a note higher and sung again while the cloud drew still nearer the earth. Then Jesus' silver trumpet sounded, as he descended on the cloud, wrapped in flames of fire ¹⁹ He gazed on the graves of the sleeping saints, then raised his eyes and hands to heaven and cried out, ²⁰ Awake! Awake! Awake! ye that sleep in the dust. and arise. Then there was a mighty earthquake. The graves opened, and the dead came up clothed with immortality. The 144,000 shouted, Hallelujah! as they recognized their friends who had been torn from them by death, and in the same moment we were changed and caught up together with them to meet the Lord

⁹Mat.24; 30

¹⁰Revelation 14; 14

¹¹Luke 21; 27

¹²Revelation 19; 12

¹³Revelation 1:14

¹⁴Revelation 1; 15

¹⁵Revelation 14; 14

¹⁶These.4; 16

¹⁷Revelation 1; 14

¹⁸Revelation 8; 1

¹⁹2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8

²⁰John 5; 25

in the air. ²¹ We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass, when Jesus brought along the crowns and with his own right hand placed them on our heads. ²² He gave us harps of gold and palms of victory. ²³ Here on the sea of glass the 144,000 stood in a perfect square. Some of them had very bright crowns, others not so bright. Some crowns appeared heavy with stars, while others had but few. All were perfectly satisfied with their crowns. And they were all clothed with a glorious white mantle from their shoulders to their feet. ²⁴ Angels were all about us as we marched over the sea of glass to the gate of the City. Jesus raised his mighty glorious arm, laid hold of the gate and swung it back on its golden hinges, and said to us, You have washed your robes in my blood, stood stily for my truth, enter in. ²⁵ We all marched in and felt we had a perfect right in the City. Here we saw the tree of life, and the throne of God. Out of the throne came a pure river of water, and on either side of the river was the tree of life. ²⁶ On one side of the river was a trunk of a tree and a trunk on the other side of the river, both of pure transparent gold. At first I thought I [51] saw two trees. I looked again and saw they were united at the top in one tree. So it was the tree of life, on either side of the river of life; its branches bowed to the place where we stood; and the fruit was glorious, which looked like gold mixed with silver. We all went under the tree, and sat down to look at the glory of the place when brothers Pitch and Stockman, who had preached the gospel of the kingdom, and whom God had laid in the grave to save them, came up to us and asked us what we had passed through while they were sleeping. We tried to call up our greatest trials, but they looked so small compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ²⁷ that surrounded us, that we could not speak them out, ²⁸ and we all cried out Hallelujah, heaven is cheap enough and we touched our glorious harps and made heaven's arches ring.—And as we were,

²¹Thess.4; 17

²²2 Esdras, 2; 43

²³Revelation 15, 2. Revelation 7; 9

²⁴Revelation 7:9

²⁵Isaiah 26:2

²⁶Revelation 22; 1, 2

²⁷2 Corinthians 4:17

²⁸Isaiah 65; 17

gazing at the glories of the place our eyes were attracted upwards to something that had the appearance of silver. I asked Jesus to let me see what was within there. In a moment we were winging our way upward, and entering in; here we saw good old father Abraham; Isaac, Jacob, Noah; Daniel, and many like them. And I saw a vail with a heavy fringe of silver and gold, as a border on the bottom; it was very beautiful. I asked Jesus what was within the vail. He raised it with his own right arm, and bade me take heed. I saw there a glorious ark, overlaid with pure gold, and it had a glorious border, resembling Jesus' crowns; and on it were two bright angels—their wings were spread over the ark as they sat on each end, with their faces turned towards each other and looking downward. ²⁹ In the ark, beneath where the angels' wings were spread, was a golden pot of Manna, of a yellowish cast; and I saw a rod, which Jesus said was Aaron's; I saw it bud, blossom and bear fruit. ³⁰ And I saw two long golden rods, on which hung silver wires, and on the wires most glorious grapes; one cluster was more than a man here could carry. And I saw Jesus step up and take of the manna, almonds, grapes and pomegranates, and bear them down to the city, and place them on the supper table. I stepped up to see how much was taken away, and there was just as much left; and we shouted Hallelujah—Amen. We all descended from this place down into the city,—³¹ and with Jesus at our head we all descended from the city down to this earth, on a great and mighty mountain, which could not bear Jesus up, and it parted asunder, and there was a mighty plain. ³² Then we looked up and saw the great city, with twelve foundations, twelve gates, three on each side, and an angel at each gate, and all cried out, "the city, the great city, it's coming, it's coming down from God, out of heaven;" ³³ and it came and settled on the place where we stood. Then we began to look at the glorious things outside of the city. There I saw most glorious houses, that had the appearance of silver, supported by four pillars, set with pearls, most glorious to

²⁹Exodus 25; 18, 20. Hebrews 9; 8-5

³⁰Numbers 17; 8

³¹End of First Vision Devenber, 1844. Vision of the New Earth Circa December, 1845.

³²Zechariah 14; 4

³³Revelation 21, 10-18

behold, which were to be inhabited by the saints; ³⁴ in them was a golden shelf; I saw many of the saints go into the houses, take off their glittering crowns and lay them on the shelf, then go out into the field by the houses to do something with the earth; ³⁵ not as we have to do with the earth here; no, no. A glorious sight shone all about their heads, and they were continually shouting and offering praises to God. And I saw another field full of all kinds of flowers, and as I plucked them, I cried out, well they will never fade. Next I saw a field of tall grass, most glorious to behold; it was living green, and had a reflection of silver and gold, as it waved proudly to the glory of King Jesus. Then we entered a field full of all kinds of beasts—the lion, the lamb the leopard and the wolf, altogether in perfect union; ³⁶ we passed through the midst of them, and they followed on peaceably after. Then we entered a wood, not like the dark woods we have here, no, no; but light, and all over glorious; the branches of the trees waved to and fro, and we all cried out, “we will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in this woods.” ³⁷ We passed through the woods, for we were on our way to Mount Zion. As we were travelling along, we met a company who were also gazing at the glories of the place. I noticed red as a border on their garments; their crowns were brilliant; their robes were pure white. As we greeted them, I asked Jesus who they were? He said they were martyrs that had been slain for him. With them was an innumerable company of little ones; they had a hem of red on their garments also. ³⁸ Mount Zion was just before us and on the Mount sat a glorious temple, and about it were seven other mountains, on which grew roses and lillies, ³⁹ and I saw the little ones climb, or if they chose, use their little wings and fly to the top of the mountains, and pluck the never fading flowers. There were all kinds of trees around the temple to beautify the place; the box, the pine, the fir. the oil, the myrtle, the pomegranate, and the fig tree bowed down with the weight of its timely figs, that made the place look all over

[52]

³⁴Isaiah 65, 21

³⁵Isaiah 65:21

³⁶Isaiah 11:6, -9

³⁷Ezekiel 34:25

³⁸Jeremiah 31:15-17. Mat.2:18

³⁹2 Esdras, 2:19

glorious. ⁴⁰ And as we were about to enter the holy temple, Jesus raised his lovely voice and said, only the 144,000 enter this place, and we shouted Hallelujah.

Well, bless the Lord dear brethren and sisters, it is an extra meeting for those who have the seal of the living God. ⁴¹ This temple was supported by seven pillars, all of transparent gold, set with pearls most glorious. The glorious things I saw there, I cannot describe to you. O, that I could talk in the language of Canaan, then could I tell a little of the glory of the upper world; but, if faithful, you soon will know all about it. I saw there the tables of stone in which the names of the 144,000 were engraved in letters of gold; after we had beheld the glory of the temple, we went out. Then Jesus left us, and went to the city; soon, we heard his lovely voice again, saying—“Come my people, you have come out of great tribulation, and done my will; suffered for me; come in to supper, for I will gird myself, and serve you.” ⁴² We shouted Hallelujah, glory, and entered into the city.... And I saw a table of pure silver, it was many miles in length, yet our eyes could extend over it. And I saw the fruit of the tree of life, the manna, almonds, figs, pomegranates, grapes, and many other kinds of fruit. We all reclined at the table. I asked Jesus to let me eat of the fruit. He said, not now. Those who eat of the fruit of this land, go back to earth no more. But in a little while, if faithful, you shall both eat of the fruit of the tree of life and drink of the water of the fountain; and he said, you must go back to the earth again, and relate to others, what I have revealed to you. Then an angel bore me gently down to this dark world. Sometimes I think I cannot stay here any longer, all things of earth look so dreary—I feel very lonely here, for I have seen a better land. O, that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away, and be at rest.

⁴⁰Isaiah 60:13. Isaiah 41:19

⁴¹Revelation 14:3

⁴²Luke 12:37

**Exhibit 2—Otis Nichols’ Letter to William Miller,
April 20, 1846**

[53]

(Biographical Portion Without Editing)
Brother Miller.

Although a stranger to you and not accustomed to writing I have desired to write you a few words. I have always believed that God called you to preach the definite time of the Lord’s coming in 1843, and that it was just as it should be; and if definite time had not been preached then, the church and world would never been effectually warned....

Within is a part of the vision of E. G. H. of Portland. [The April 6, 1846 Broadside]. I fully believe them to be from heaven. The manner and circumstances attending is unlike any thing I have seen or read of since the days of the Apostles. I would ask you to lay aside prejudice and suspend judgment until you have read and compared them with the *scripture and present truth*. And if they speak not according to this word (and *present truth*) it is because there is no light in them [Isaiah 8:20](#). Despise not prophesyings, prove all things, hold fast that which is good. [1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21](#). Visions are either from heaven [Acts 10:9-16](#) or from satan [Deuteronomy 10:1-5](#). Many of them at the present time are undoubtedly satan’s counterfeit, so of course there is a true coin. We are to judge of them by their fruits according to the bible and the truth. If they are from heaven with a command to make it known to others, God will hold all accountable that hear. We are told in [Deuteronomy 18:22](#): how to know whether it is from the Lord, “If the thing follow not nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken.” But many now say that every vision has failed. Well this is fulfilling [Ezekiel 12:22-28](#) That proverb has been used to perfection for a few months past in the land of Israel saying *the days are prolonged and every vision faileth*. But God says “I will make this proverb to cease” with “*the effect of every vision.*“

[54] The first vision of E. G. H. was in the fall of 1844 which never was published to the world. It was a view of the travels of the advent company from the 7th mo, 44 and so far as fulfilled they have had as perfect a fulfillment as could possibly be especially in most [?] advent bands, and individuals wherever we are acquainted. Her calling was most remarkable only 17 years of age sick with a dropsical consumption and confined to the house for most of the time for 5 years and been given over by physicians to die. In this state God called her and told her to go out and tell the flock what he had revealed to her—that an angel should accompany her all the time and sometimes two in time of need—that no wicked power on earth should have dominion over her if she would obey the Lord.

At the time she first went out to deliver her message (January, 1845) she was scarcely able to walk across the room and could not speak with an audible voice, but she had perfect faith in God and was carried in this state a few miles to deliver her message and when she came to speak her voice was nearly gone but God fulfilled his word: gave her strength of body and a clear loud audible voice to talk nearly two hours with tremendous power and effect on the people and without fatigue of body, and from that time for many weeks she continued to travel day and night talking almost every day until she had visited most of the advent bands in Maine and the easterly parts of New Hampshire.

Her message was always attended with the Holy Ghost, and wherever it was received as from the Lord it broke down and melted their hearts like little children, fed, comforted, strengthened the weak, and encouraged them to hold on to the faith, and the 7th month movement; and that our work was done for the nominal church and the world, and what remained to be done was for the household of faith. Those that rejected her message very soon fell into the world and a nominal faith, and those that did receive her testimony as from the Lord and afterward denied it, calling it mesmerism or an unholy thing, are many of them like those that are given over to strong delusion and working of satan—a ship without a helm or anchor and driven by every wind, thus causing the way of truth to be evil spoken of.

This class of persons are her greatest enemies, and have done what they could by calumny, and lies, to destroy her influence and

character. But God has hitherto protected her in a remarkable manner from all harm; raised up benefactors for her wherever she goes notwithstanding the malice of wicked spirits and fallen Adventists: through their influence there has been a number of warrants for her arrest but God has signally protected her; at one time a sheriff and a number of men with him had no power over her person for an hour and an half, although they exerted all their bodily strength to move her, while she or no one else made any resistance.

What I have here written I have a knowledge of and think I can judge correctly. Sister E. has been a resident in my family much of the time for about 8 months.

I have never seen the least impropriety of conduct in her since our first acquaintance. God has blessed our family abundantly with spiritual things as well as temporal since we received her into our family. The spirit of God is with her and has been in a remarkable manner in healing the sick through the answer of her prayers; some cases are as remarkable as any that are recorded in in the New Testament. But prejudiced and unbelieving persons find it just as convenient to call it mesmerism and ascribe the power to the devil, as the unbelieving Pharisees did Mat 10:25 12:24. Is not this sin against the Holy Ghost? See [Mark 3:22, 29, 30](#). That power which is manifested in her, as far exceeds the power of mesmerism as Moses did the magicians of Egypt. The devil has as much power to imitate and counterfeit the work of God as he did in Moses time and the people can be deceived if they will. [55]

Try the spirits whether they are of God, because many *false prophets* are gone out into the world [1 John 4:1](#). To the *law and the testimony*: if they *speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them [Isaiah 8:20](#). If the thing follow not nor come to pass that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken [Deuteronomy 18:22](#) In conclusion the bible has always been a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path for 4 years and is so still, and I desire it should be until Jesus comes the second time to redeem the purchased possession and our vile bodies, which I believe will be very soon....*

Yours, waiting for the return of our Lord from the wedding

Otis Nichols

Dorchester Mass April 20th 1846

[56] **Exhibit 3—Ellen G. White Letter to Joseph Bates**

B-3-1847

Gorham, Maine, July 13, 1847

Dear Brother Bates:

As James is at work and sisters are from home thought I would employ myself in writing a line to you. My health is quite good for me. My faith is still strong that that very same Jesus that ascended up into heaven will so come in like manner as He went up, and that very, very soon.

I have had many trials of late; discouragement at times has laid so fast hold upon me it seemed impossible to shake it off. But thank God, Satan has not got the victory over me yet, and by the grace of God he never shall. I know and feel my weakness, but I have laid hold upon the strong arm of Jehovah, and I can say today I know that my Redeemer liveth, and if He lives I shall live also.

O how good it would be to meet with a few of like precious faith to exhort and comfort one another with words of holy cheer from the Word of God. The sheep are now scattered, but thank God they are about to be gathered to a good pasture.

O how sweet it will be to meet all the blood-washed throng in the city of our God. 'Tis then we'll sing the song of Moses and the Lamb as we march through the gates into the city, bearing the palms of victory and wearing the crowns of glory.

Brother Bates, you write in a letter to James something about the Bridegroom's coming, as stated in the first published visions. By the letter you would like to know whether I had light on the Bridegroom's coming before I saw it in vision. I can readily answer, No. The Lord showed me the travail of the Advent band and midnight cry in December, but He did not show me the Bridegroom's coming until February following.

Perhaps you would like to have me give a statement in relation to both visions. At the time I had the vision of the midnight cry I had given it up in the past and thought it future, as also most of the

band had. I know not what time J. Turner got out his paper. I knew he had one out and one was in the house, but I knew not what was in it, for I did not read a word in it. I had been, and still was very sick. I took no interest in reading, for it injured my head and made me nervous.

[57]

After I had the vision and God gave me light, He bade me deliver it to the band, but I shrank from it. I was young, and I thought they would not receive it from me. I disobeyed the Lord, and instead of remaining at home, where the meeting was to be that night, I got in a sleigh in the morning and rode three or four miles and there I found Joseph Turner. He merely inquired how I was and if I was in the way of my duty. I said nothing, for I knew I was not.

I passed up [to the] chamber and did not see him again for two hours, when he came up, asked if I was to be at meeting that night. I told him, no. He said he wanted to hear my vision and thought it duty for me to go home. I told him I should not. He said no more, but went away.

I thought, and told those around me, if I went I should have to come out against his views, thinking he believed with the rest. I had not told any of them what God had shown me, and I did not tell them in what I should cut across his track.

All that day I suffered much in body and mind. It seemed that God had forsaken me entirely. I prayed the Lord if He would give me strength to ride home that night, the first opportunity I would deliver the message He had given me. He did give me strength and I rode home that night. Meeting had been done some time, and not a word was said by any of the family about the meeting.

Very early next morning Joseph Turner called, said he was in haste going out of the city in a short time, and wanted I should tell him all that God had shown me in vision. It was with fear and trembling I told him all. After I had got through he said he had told out the same last evening. I rejoiced, for I expected he was coming out against me, for all the while I had not heard any one say what he believed. He said the Lord had sent him to hear me talk the evening before, but as I would not, he meant his children should have the light in some way, so he took him.

There were but few out when he talked, so the next meeting I told my vision, and the band, believing my visions from God, received what God bade me to deliver to them.

The view about the Bridegroom's coming I had about the middle of February, 1845.

[58] While in Exeter, Maine, in meeting with Israel Damon, James, and many others, many of them did not believe in a shut door. I suffered much at the commencement of the meeting. Unbelief seemed to be on every hand.

There was one sister there that was called very spiritual. She had traveled and been a powerful preacher the most of the time for two years. She had been truly a mother in Israel. But a division had risen in the band on the shut door. She had great sympathy, and could not believe the door was shut. (I had known nothing of their difference.) Sister Durben got up to talk. I felt very, very sad.

At length my soul seemed to be in an agony, and while she was talking I fell from my chair to the floor. It was then I had a view of Jesus rising from His mediatorial throne and going to the holiest as Bridegroom to receive His kingdom. They were all deeply interested in the view. They all said it was entirely new to them. The Lord worked in mighty power setting the truth home to their hearts.

Sister Durben knew what the power of the Lord was, for she had felt it many times; and a short time after I fell she was struck down, and fell to the floor, crying to God to have mercy on her. When I came out of vision, my ears were saluted with Sister Durben's singing and shouting with a loud voice.

Most of them received the vision, and were settled upon the shut door. Previous to this I had no light on the coming of the Bridegroom, but had expected him to this earth to deliver His people on the tenth day of the seventh month. I did not hear a lecture or a word in any way relating to the Bridegroom's going to the holiest.

I had but very few privileges in 1842, 3, and 4. My sisters both went to the camp meetings in New Hampshire and Maine, while my health prevented me from going to but one, in Maine. I know the light I received came from God, it was not taught me by man. I knew not how to write so that others could read it till God gave me my visions. I went to school but very little on account of my health. I do not think I went to school a day after I was twelve years old, and did

not go then but a few days at a time, when sickness would cause me to take my bed for weeks and sometimes months. The first I wrote anything that could be called writing was after I had been sick the prayer of faith was put up for me, and healing [here the sheet ends, and the remainder of the letter is gone.]—[Letter 3, 1847](#).

[59]

Exhibit 4—The Open and the Shut Door

Sabbath, March 24, 1849, we had a sweet and very interesting meeting with the brethren at Topsham, Maine. The Holy Ghost was poured out upon us, and I was taken off in the Spirit to the city of the living God. Then I was shown that the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ relating to the shut door could not be separated, and that the time for the commandments of God to shine out with all their importance, and for God's people to be tried on the Sabbath truth, was when the door was opened in the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary, where the ark is, in which are contained the ten commandments. This door was not opened until the mediation of Jesus was finished in the holy place of the sanctuary in 1844. Then Jesus rose up and shut the door of the holy place, and opened the door into the most holy, and passed within the second veil, where He now stands by the ark, and where the faith of Israel now reaches.

I saw that Jesus had shut the door of the holy place, and no man can open it; and that He had opened the door into the most holy, and no man can shut it ([Revelation 3:7, 8](#)); ¹ and that since Jesus has opened the door into the most holy place, which contains the ark, the commandments have been shining out to God's people, and they are being tested on the Sabbath question.

[60] I saw that the present test on the Sabbath could not come until the mediation of Jesus in the holy place was finished and He had passed within the second veil; therefore Christians who fell asleep before the door was opened into the most holy, when the midnight cry was finished, at the seventh month, 1844, and who had not kept the true Sabbath, now rest in hope; for they had not the light and the

¹ 1. See page 86. See also appendix 2. The view of "The Open and Shut Door," on pages 42-45, was given in 1849. The application of [Revelation 3:7, 8](#), to the heavenly sanctuary and Christ's ministry was entirely new to me. I had never heard the idea advanced by anyone. Now as the subject of the sanctuary is being clearly understood, the application is seen in its force and beauty

test on the Sabbath which we now have since that door was opened. I saw that Satan was tempting some of God's people on this point. Because so many good Christians have fallen asleep in the triumphs of faith and have not kept the true Sabbath, they were doubting about its being a test for us now.

The enemies of the present truth have been trying to open the door of the holy place, that Jesus has shut, and to close the door of the most holy place, which He opened in 1844, where the ark is, containing the two tables of stone on which are written the ten commandments by the finger of Jehovah.

Satan is now using every device in this sealing time to keep the minds of God's people from the present truth and to cause them to waver. I saw a covering that God was drawing over His people to protect them in the time of trouble; and every soul that was decided on the truth and was pure in heart was to be covered with the covering of the Almighty.

Satan knew this; and he was at work in mighty power to keep the minds of as many people as he possibly could wavering and unsettled on the truth. 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.²

I saw that Satan was working through agents in a number of ways. He was at work through ministers who have rejected the truth and are given over to strong delusions to believe a lie that they might be damned. While they were preaching or praying, some would fall prostrate and helpless, not by the power of the Holy Ghost, but by the power of Satan breathed upon these agents, and through them to the people. While preaching, praying, or conversing, some professed Adventists who had rejected present truth used mesmerism to gain adherents, and the people would rejoice in this influence, for they thought it was the Holy Ghost. Some even that used it were so far in the darkness and deception of the devil that they thought it was the power of God, given them to exercise. They had made God

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²See page 86. See also appendix.

altogether such a one as themselves and had valued His power as a thing of nought.

Some of these agents of Satan were affecting the bodies of some of the saints—those whom they could not deceive and draw away from the truth by a Satanic influence. Oh, that all could get a view of it as God revealed it to me, that they might know more of the wiles of Satan and be on their guard! I saw that Satan was at work in these ways to distract, deceive, and draw away God's people, just now in this sealing time. I saw some who were not standing stiffly for present truth. Their knees were trembling, and their feet sliding, because they were not firmly planted on the truth, and the covering of Almighty God could not be drawn over them while they were thus trembling.

Satan was trying his every art to hold them where they were, until the sealing was past, until the covering was drawn over God's people, and they left without a shelter from the burning wrath of God, in the seven last plagues. God has begun to draw this covering over His people, and it will soon be drawn over all who are to have a shelter in the day of slaughter. God will work in power for His People; and Satan will be permitted to work also.

[62] I saw that the mysterious signs and wonders and false reformations would increase and spread. The reformations that were shown me were not reformations from error to truth. My accompanying angel bade me look for the travail of soul for sinners as used to be. I looked, but could not see it; for the time for their salvation is past.³

³The writer of these words did not understand them as teaching that the time for the salvation of all sinners was past. At the very time when these things were written she herself was laboring for the salvation of sinners, as she has been doing ever since. Her understanding of the matter as it has been presented to her is given in the following paragraphs, the first published in 1854, and the second in 1888. "The 'false reformations' here referred to are yet to be more fully seen. The view relates more particularly to those who have heard and rejected the light of the advent doctrine. They are given over to strong delusions. Such will not have 'the travail of soul for sinners' as formerly. Having rejected the advent, and being given over to the delusions of Satan, 'the time for their salvation is past.' This does not, however, relate to those who have not heard and rejected the doctrine of the second advent." "It is a fearful thing to treat lightly the truth which has convinced our understanding and touched our hearts. We cannot with impunity reject the warnings which God in mercy sends us. A message was sent from heaven to the world in Noah's day, and the salvation of men depended upon the manner in which they treated

Exhibit 5—Letter Concerning The Publication Of [63] “Experience And Views”

Ballston Spa, N. Y., July 21, 1851

Dear Brother and Sister Dodge:

I now sit down to address you a few lines. The reason I have not written before is, my time has been improved. I have been writing out the visions for publication and expected them to be out sooner and then you could have them in print; but as the first paper is delayed and you will be anxious to learn something of our calculations, I will wait no longer.

After you left us we began to enquire of the Lord what He would have us to do, or where we should publish, and it was shown me in vision that James must lay his hand to the work and strive to open the way, and if the way should bend before him, he must remain; but if it was shut up and did not open, we must go elsewhere. James has been doing as God showed me he must do, and the way has opened before him so that the first paper will be off today, and will be folded and in the office tomorrow morning. He does his publishing at Saratoga, nine miles from here. We have not yet got a house. We shall get one as soon as possible near the Springs where it will be only a few miles from the printing office. We expect our friends this week from Maine, and in about three weeks shall be entirely settled, if not before.

that message. Because they rejected the warning, the Spirit of God was withdrawn from the sinful race, and they perished in the waters of the flood. In the time of Abraham, mercy ceased to plead with the guilty inhabitants of Sodom, and all but Lot with his wife and two daughters were consumed by the fire sent down from heaven. So in the days of Christ. The son of God declared to the unbelieving Jews of that generation, ‘Your house is left unto you desolate.’ Looking down to the last days, the same infinite power declares, concerning those who ‘received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,’ ‘For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.’ As they reject the teachings of His Word, God withdraws His Spirit, and leaves them to the deceptions which they love.

After we parted with you and came to Brother Thompson's, we felt a great interest for this family especially the children; and Tuesday morning we felt agony of soul for them, and our earnest, united prayers ascended within the second veil; we claimed the promises for them, and for the first time their voices were heard in prayer. They had a good time that morn, and now they generally pray morning and evening. God is at work for them; praise His holy name.

[64] There is a stir all around here since the conference reports are being carried. (Evil of course). Some are anxious to hear for themselves and will come to the meetings. The visions trouble many. They [know] not what to make of them. ¹ We shall have the visions published in pamphlet form and if all the particulars are not published in the pamphlet, that I saw at Brother Cushman's, and if you

¹Note: From the outset there had been opposition to the visions. This was not because of the way they were being handled by James and Ellen White or plans that they had for their publication in a pamphlet limited to 64 pages, the type for which, except for a few pages, had not yet been set. The opposition was from outside the ranks of the Sabbath-keeping Adventists. This opposition was caused by: a. The claims and work of Joseph Smith and the Mormons. b. A few outbreaks of fanaticism in the Millerite movement repudiated by the Millerite leaders who at the same time disavowed any possibility of a genuine manifestation of the prophetic gift in their time. James White referred to this opposition back in May, 1847, in his first discussion of the appearance of the prophetic gift in their midst in his "Word to the Little Flock" published on May 30. "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." (James White was to refer to this opposition on other occasions in the next few years.)—Word to the Little Flock, p. 13 In a postscript to the letter to Brother and Sister Dodge, James White wrote: "Dear Brother: I think Ellen has set the time too soon for the vision pamphlet to come out. I will get it out as soon as possible. Perhaps it will be completed in eight weeks. The brethren in Jackson will want to help some on it. If they can send a trifle it may be well, as I shall have to pay out \$170 tomorrow for paper which will take all I have. An edition of 2,000 copies 64 pages will probably cost—printer's bill 60, others expenses from 25 to 40 dollars. I should say, the expense of writing, printing, paper, pressing, folding, stitching, covering and binding would not exceed \$100, for 2,000 copies or \$5 per hundred. In haste."

desire it I can write it off for you. As it was coming out so soon in the pamphlet, I thought that you would not wish me to write them all off for you. We now think that you can have the book in about four weeks.

You must write us upon the reception of this. Do not delay. We want much to hear from you. My health has been quite poor for a short time; the heat effects me, and I have had a very distressing turn of losing my breath. I am weak still; but better than I have been. James' health is the same as when you saw him. We are longing to be delivered from this body of suffering, and put on a glorious immortality. Be strong in the Lord, dear friends. Hold fast whereunto you have attained. Much love to those dear friends I saw at Camden, and all the saints that I have not seen. Tell them to exercise strong and living faith in God, and be united strongly with each other, and not be easily tried. Where there is union there is strength. Be firm and valiant for God and His cause. I should love to see you all, and perhaps we may before Jesus comes. The truth is triumphing, and will still triumph, more and more. Be sure and write us all of you, and we will try to answer your letters.

Your sister in much love and great haste.

E. G. White

([Letter 4, 1851](#))

patience after we have done the will of God, that we may receive the promise.”

In another letter published in the *Advent Herald*, he says: “I did believe, and must confess that I do now, that I have done my work in warning sinners, and that in the seventh month.” George Needham, another prominent Adventist minister, says in the *Voice of Truth*, March 19, 1845: “I am and have been convinced since the tenth day of the seventh month that our work for the world and the foolish virgins is done. I must deny that glorious movement as being the work of God, or I can come to no other conclusion. That I can never do. The foolish virgins have gone to the old establishments where they sell oil, and are crying to us to come after them, and the world are with them to buy a little oil, and shall we go to them with the hope of doing them any good? *Not lest we die.*”

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J. B. Cook, another prominent Adventist, says in “Advent Testimony“: “If the Advent cause and people be worthy of divine interposition, or this the era to expect the Lord, then we are down through the shut door in that representation of Advent history. My language to many has been, I believe in the shut door just as you have *experienced it.*”

We have given these extracts from prominent Adventists, none of whom were in what we call the Third Angel’s Message. We could quote many others who taught similar sentiments, and who acted a leading part in the ‘44 movement. ¹ There can be no question that for months after the time it was the general sentiment that their work of warning the world was over. They felt so because, 1. They believed the proclamation in the past was a fulfillment of prophecy, a solemn announcement that “the hour of God’s Judgment is come;” the Lord having signally blessed the movement and those who were connected with it. They could not question the truthfulness of this without denying their faith. 2. The attitude assumed by those who rejected the message was bitter and wicked, like those who rejected

¹Note: One much later writer [1973] has singled out Joseph Turner as teaching the extreme shut door views and has implied that he had a large influence over James and Ellen White and Joseph Bates. He has referred to his views as the “Turnerian” position. While Turner did for a time hold such views, he figures but lightly. As seen above, the records show the shut door positions arrived at in late 1844 were deeply seated in the teachings and work of William Miller and his associates.

Christ; which was clear evidence to them that they had rejected the important light and truth. They felt therefore that God had rejected them. 3. Their own position and feelings made the matter still more clear. They had an intense burden of soul before for all classes, and labored incessantly to warn them and save them, pouring out their means lavishly and willing to make any sacrifice to do so. They felt in their souls that it was the Spirit of God that impelled them to do this. Now they felt entirely different. Their burden was gone, and they thought their work was done. Besides, there were none who desired their labor. Under these circumstances, was it strange that they should feel that “the door was shut” as God’s Word said it would be at a certain point? How could they have felt otherwise unless they threw away all their wonderful experience?—[The Review and Herald, March 3, 1885.](#)

Exhibit 7—James White’s Answer To A Man Seeking Light In April 1851

[68]

Letter from Brother Truesdell

Millford, March 17, 1851

Brother White: A few weeks ago I had my attention called to the Sabbath by reading a pamphlet, title, “Seventh-day Sabbath not abolished,” a review of Brother Marsh’s article, and was surprised to find Brother Marsh’s position so feebly supported by Scripture. Soon after this, I saw your pamphlet, called the “Present Truth,” which I carefully read, and after a prayerful investigation of the subject, I am convinced it is truth. Yes, a great and important truth. My prayer is Lord show all Thy children this important truth. I believe the sanctuary to be cleansed at the end of the 2300 days, is in heaven.

I am not ready to endorse your view of the shut door, but if it is truth I hope I shall see it. I would like to have you answer one question through your paper. Does the shut door exclude all conversions? I have received a few numbers of your paper, and I wish you to continue to send them. Brethren Holt and Edson have been preaching through this section of country, and a number have believed the truth.

Yours waiting for Jesus.

Marshall M. Truesdell

Reply From James White

Conversion, in the strictest sense, signifies a change from sin to holiness. In this sense we readily answer that it does not “exclude all conversions,” but we believe that those who heard the “everlasting gospel” message and rejected it, or refused to hear it, are excluded by it. We have no message to such. They have no ears to hear us, unless we lower the standard of truth so low that there would be no salvation in it. But there are those who may be converted.

[69] 1. Erring brethren. We believe there are many in the Laodicean church, who will yet be converted as the Apostle directs in his epistle to the waiting brethren. “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one CONVERT him; let him know, that he which converteth the SINNER from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sins.”—James v, 19, 20.

2. Children, who were not old enough to understandingly receive or reject the truth, when our Great High Priest closed His mediation in the Holy Place at the end of the 2300 days, are subjects of conversion from sin to holiness. Their names were borne in upon the breastplate of judgment, and they are subjects of the mediation of Jesus. God’s ways are equal. He will give every intelligent being a chance to be saved.

3. When Elijah thought that he was alone, God said to him, “I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed to the image of Baal.” We believe that God has reserved to Himself a multitude of precious souls, some even in the churches. These He will manifest in His own time. They were living up to what light they had when Jesus closed His mediation for the world, and when they hear the voice of the Shepherd in the message of the third angel they will gladly receive the whole truth. Such will be converted to the truth, and from their errors. But we think we have no message to such now, still “he that hath an ear to hear let him hear.” Our message is to the Laodiceans, yet some of these hidden souls are being manifested.—[The Review and Herald, April 7, 1851.](#)

Ellen G. White Estate

Washington, D. C.

May 9, 1982.