

Our Firm Foundation

Four Tests of a True Prophet

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

Ellen G. White claimed the gift of prophecy, and thereby declared herself to be a prophet in the church. She, however, preferred the term "messenger." Thus we find her declaring:

"I said that I did not claim to be a prophetess. I have not stood before the people claiming this title, though many called me thus. I have been instructed to say, I am God's messenger, sent to bear a message of reproof to the erring and of encouragement to the meek and lowly." [29]

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

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

The Test of Fulfilled Predictions

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

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

(1) Secret things belong to God. (Deuteronomy 29:29)

(2) God reveals secrets to the prophets. (Amos 3:7.)

(3) Unfulfilled predictions made in the name of the Lord are presumptuous; fulfilled predictions demonstrate that the prophet was sent by the Lord. (Jeremiah 28:9)

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

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

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

Streams of Published Light to Encircle the Globe-In 1848, when our early pioneers were penniless, she was shown that a paper should be printed, and from this small beginning the publishing work would be a stream of light that would go clear round the world." Surely we have seen these words fulfilled as Seventh-day Adventists distribute \$13,000,000 worth of literature each year in 197 languages.

We cite in somewhat more detail one more illustration:

Rochester "Rappings" to Become World-encircling Delusion-These mysterious "rappings" began with the Fox sisters in New York State in 1848. On March 24, 1849, Ellen G. White made the following prediction:

"I saw that the mysterious knocking in New York and other places was the power of Satan, and that such things would be more and more common, clothed in a religious garb so as to lull the deceived to greater security, and to draw the minds of God's people, if possible, to those things, and cause them to doubt the teachings and power of the Holy Ghost." [31]

On August 24, 1850, Ellen G. White again predicted: "I saw that soon ... it [the mysterious rapping] would spread more and more, that Satan's power would increase, and some of his devoted followers would have power to work miracles." [32]

Yet again on January 10, 1854, Mrs. White added these further details: "I saw the rapping delusion-what progress it was making, and if it were possible it would deceive the very elect. Satan will

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have power to bring the appearance of a form before us purporting to be our relatives and friends that now sleep in Jesus. It will be made to appear as though they were present; the words they uttered while here, which we were familiar with, will be spoken, and the same tone of voice, which they had while living, will fall upon the ear. All this is to deceive the saints, and ensnare them into the belief of this delusion.” [33]

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

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

Today all of this is history, which records the fulfillment of another of the E. G. White predictions.

San Francisco Earthquake Predicted-From 1902 and on she warned of coming destruction of San Francisco and Oakland, crying out that “not long hence these cities will suffer under the judgments of God.” [34] Ask any old resident in San Francisco and Oakland and he will tell you how this prediction was fulfilled. [35]

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

“The tempest is coming, and we must get ready for its fury by having repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord will arise to shake terribly the earth. We shall see [1] troubles on all sides. [2] Thousands of ships will be hurled into the depths of the sea. [3] Navies will go down, and [4] human lives will be sacrificed by millions. [5] Fires will break out unexpectedly, and no human effort will be able to quench them. The palaces of earth will be swept away in the fury of the flames. [6] Disasters by rail will become more and more frequent; [7] confusion, collision, and death without a moment’s warning will occur on the great lines of travel.... Oh, let us seek God while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near!” [36]

In 1910 she warned, “Soon strife among the nations will break out with an intensity that we do not now anticipate.” [37] The fulfillment of this prediction made when men everywhere were proclaiming the golden age of peace and safety is too fresh in our memories to need any recital of details.

Divine Guidance in Times of Crisis in the Advent Movement

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

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

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

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

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

The Salamanca Vision-In the night of November 3, 1890, God looked ahead some four months