

A third category of prophetic activity took place in the schools of the prophets founded and run by the prophet Samuel. The young men enrolled in these schools were called the sons of the prophets. Their studies centered on the law of God, instruction given by Moses, sacred history, sacred music, and poetry. In Samuel's day two such schools existed at Ramah and Kirjath-jearim (PP 593).

These schools and the sons of the prophets were in existence during the ministry of Elijah and Elisha, with schools at Bethel and Jericho (2 Kings 2:1–18 ; 4:1–7). A young man from among them was sent to Ahab with an oral message from God (1 Kings 20:35–43). Twice in the narrative he is referred to as a prophet (verses 38 , 41). The 100 prophets that Obadiah hid in a cave from the anger of Jezebel and sustained with bread and water also may have come from among the sons of the prophets (1 Kings 18:3 , 4). Although the Scriptures tell us little about these men, they were recognized as prophets and used by God to carry out His purposes.

B. Written Prophecy

Written prophecy is a message bearing the authority of God and communicated by the Holy Spirit through a chosen messenger in written form to the intended recipient(s). It can be divided into two categories: canonical and noncanonical.

1.Canonical

The canonical books of the Old and New Testaments are the authoritative voice of God speaking through His chosen instruments, the Bible writers. They present the truths that lead to eternal life, and all religious teaching must be tested by them.

2.Noncanonical

The canonical books introduce prophets whose writings were not intended for the canon. Among these in the OT are Nathan and Gad (1 Chron. 29:29) and Ahijah and Id' do (2 Chron. 9:29). Even though these prophets wrote nothing for the canon, they are identified as prophets. As such they were God's representatives and their messages bore His authority. As we will see later, Ellen White fits into this category as an end-time, writing, noncanonical prophet (see XI).

VI.Prophecy in the NT

With the opening chapter of Luke, the prophetic gift is seen in the hymns of Elizabeth, Mary, and Zechariah. All four Gospels record the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist. The prophetic gift remains operative throughout the experience of the apostolic church and manifests itself in the work of John the revelator at the close of the first century.

Twice Paul informs his readers that God has appointed prophets within the church (1 Cor. 12:28 ; Eph. 4:11). He goes a step further and says that the NT church was built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20). These prophets are NT prophets, for Paul says in Ephesians 3:4 , 5 that the Spirit had revealed the mystery of Christ to these apostles and prophets, which had not been made known to previous generations.

The Greek sentence structure of Ephesians 2:20 (*tōn apostolōn kai prophētōn*) and 3:5 (*tois hagiois apostolois autou kai prophētais*) suggests that both apostles and prophets fit into one category or are one and the same, i.e., the apostles are also prophets. However, as has been noted, there are prophets in the NT who were not apostles, for example, Agabus, Judas, Silas, and the four daughters of Philip.

Paul urges the Corinthians to seek spiritual gifts, especially that they might prophesy, because prophecy builds up the congregation by edification, encouragement, and consolation (1Cor. 14:1–3). Only if tongues are interpreted for the benefit of the congregation is the gift of tongues equal to the gift of prophecy. So Paul says, “I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy” (verse 5).

At this point Paul’s rhetorical questions must be remembered, “Are all prophets? ... Do all speak with tongues?” (1 Cor. 12:29 , 30). Again, with the Greek adverbial negative (*mē*) present in the question, the obvious answer is no. Therefore, although Paul wished all were prophets and could prophesy, he knew that not all would receive the gift of prophecy.

On the basis of this understanding, the prophets of 1 Corinthians 14:29–33 fit into the category of oral prophets. They are not church members who, stirred by a sermon or hymn, wished to share a thought or two that happened to be impressed upon them. The words spoken by these prophets were to be weighed and evaluated by other prophets (*hoi alloi*); if accepted they would then be shared so that the message from God might be properly understood and appreciated by all.

VII. Conditional and Unconditional Prophecy

The idea that every prophecy uttered by a true prophet will come to pass, and that unfulfilled prophecy shows a prophet is false, will not stand in the presence of Scripture. The very fact that predictions made by prophets who have been proved to be true have not come to pass forces the consideration of at least two categories of prophecy: conditional and unconditional. (See Apocalyptic II. B.)

A. Unconditional Prophecy

Some prophecies in the Scriptures, by the very nature of their content, will be fulfilled regardless of the response of human beings. These include the great Messianic

prophecies, the predictions of the end of human history as we know it and of the experience of sin, and predictions of the earth made new.

B. Conditional Prophecy

Prophecies that are not fulfilled may be labeled false. After all one must take into account statements such as, “When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you need not be afraid of him” (Deut. 18:22). Jeremiah also wrote, “As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet” (Jer. 28:9).

On the other hand, there is in the OT canon an entire book devoted to a prophecy that was not fulfilled, but was still a genuine prophecy. Jonah came to Nineveh and cried, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (Jonah 3:4). Based on the criteria set forth in Deutonomy 18:22 , Jonah would be considered a false prophet, for Nineveh was not destroyed within 40 days. However, Jonah was a true prophet who delivered the exact message that God intended should be given. Jonah’s true prediction was not fulfilled because the people to whom it was addressed responded by repentance, proclaiming a fast and putting on sackcloth (Jonah 3:5).

The experience of Nineveh illustrates the basic principle of conditional prophecy as stated by Jeremiah: “If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will repent of the evil that I intended to do to it. And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will repent of the good which I had intended to do to it” (Jer. 18:7–10).

VIII. The Prophetic Gift and a Closed Canon

A genuine fear exists that if the prophetic gift extends beyond the end of the first century A.D., the authority of God’s Word as it exists in the OT and NT canons will be compromised. Because of this fear many who believe the prophetic gift continues until Jesus comes see this gift as playing a minor role in the church. Some understand 1 Corinthians 14 to say that a message from a “Christian prophet” (1) is to be evaluated by the church; (2) does not bear the authority of God, i.e., it is not the Lord’s command; and (3) can be either accepted or rejected. They further urge that Christian prophecy does not carry as much authority in the church as the gift of teaching, for teaching illuminates the Word of God while Christian prophecy lacks the authority of the canon.

We must be constantly on guard lest Scripture be challenged by placing other documents alongside it. In no way should there be a deemphasis of the Bible or teaching

of doctrines contrary to Scripture. A careful study of the prophetic gift after the close of the canon should help Christians avoid these pitfalls.

A. Written Noncanonical Prophecy and a Closed Canon

Without question, the experience of the apostles is unique in two ways. First, they were eyewitnesses of the incarnate God. John marvels at the privilege that was given to him and his fellow apostles: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we saw it” (1 John 1:1 , 2).

Second, the apostles were given the privilege of recording their experience under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit. “We ... testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you And we are writing this that our joy may be complete” (verses 2–4).

The apostles’ experience is not repeatable, but it is recorded for our benefit. What they heard and saw was the ultimate revelation of God (Heb. 1:1 , 2), and through their record the readers of the NT canon can share in some degree their experience. The writings of the apostles, concluding with the book of Revelation, are a closed canon.

While the warning contained in Revelation 22:18 , 19 prohibits adding to or deleting from the words of the prophecies found in Revelation, an important principle is established by this closing passage in the NT canon. By implication, no alteration of any canonical book is permitted. However, one should not dismiss lightly the possibility of further divine revelation.

When it is understood that written prophecy exists in two forms, canonical and noncanonical, it is possible to see that God may speak with authority to His people through the prophetic gift after the close of the canon and not compromise its position and authority. Ellen G. White, who among Seventh-day Adventists is recognized as chosen by God to receive the gift of prophecy, emphasized this when she pointed out that the Scriptures identify a number of persons who were given the prophetic gift but who had nothing to do with the writing of the Bible: “In like manner, after the close of the canon of Scripture, the Holy Spirit was still to continue its work, to enlighten, warn, and comfort the children of God” (GC viii).

B. Function of the Postcanonical Prophetic Gift

In recognition that God still speaks with authority to His people although the biblical canon is closed, it is necessary to determine the relationship between literary canonical prophecy and literary noncanonical prophecy and the function of the latter in the experience of the church. Perhaps the most forceful way to present this relationship and

function is to examine the attitude toward the Bible on the part of a literary noncanonical prophet and what Ellen White saw as her role in the church.

1.Exalt Scripture

Ellen White relates to the Scriptures in an entirely different manner from Joseph Smith or Mary Baker Eddy. While they hold their writings to be superior to the Bible, Ellen White gives supreme authority to God's Word. The following summarizes her position on the Bible: "In His word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrine, and the test of experience" (GC vii).

The Bible is identified as a chart and guidebook to heaven (1SM 15). Repeatedly in sermons and on the printed page, Ellen White held up the Word before the people with the assurance that it was the only rule of faith and practice. Emphasizing that God's Word was to be cherished and obeyed, she totally rejected the idea that the light given her through the prophetic gift was to take the place of the Bible (3SM 29).

2.Illuminate and Clarify Scripture

Although Ellen White claims inspiration of the Holy Spirit equal to that experienced by the Bible writers—"The Holy Ghost is the author of the Scriptures and of the Spirit of Prophecy" (3SM 30)—she recognizes her position as a literary noncanonical prophet. What she was inspired to write carries the authority of God, but it is (1)to take its place subservient to Scripture: "The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the Word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested" (GC vii); and (2)to illuminate and clarify Scripture: "Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light" (3SM 30).

Jesus told His disciples that when the Holy Spirit should come, He would lead them into a fuller understanding of all truth (John 16:13). Ellen White observes, "Yet the fact that God has revealed His will to men through His word, has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit was promised by our Saviour, to open the word to His servants, to illuminate and apply its teachings. And since it was the Spirit of God that inspired the Bible, it is impossible that the teaching of the Spirit should ever be contrary to that of the word" (GC vii).

3.Apply Scripture

Ellen White points out that the Scriptures abound with principles for proper Christian living, and that her testimonies, both general and personal, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are designed to call attention to these biblical principles. Her testimonies are not new revelations, but set out the plain lessons for life as presented in

Scripture, that (1) errors may be corrected, (2) the right way may be seen more clearly, and (3) every person may be without excuse (3SM 31).

4. Reprove and Warn the Church

Ellen White pointed out that God regarded reproofs and warnings as an important phase of her prophetic work. She (1) continually reproved the church as well as individuals; (2) warned of errors into which they had strayed, both in belief and lifestyle; and (3) called all back to a closer relationship with God and a deeper study of His Word (1SM 46–48).

5. Protect From Doctrinal Error

Inspired by the same Spirit that inspired the Bible writers, and emphasizing the fact that Spirit-inspired writings would not contradict one another but be in perfect harmony, Ellen White further states, “The Bible must be your counselor. Study it and the testimonies God has given; for they never contradict His Word” (3SM 32). If the “*Testimonies* speak not according to this word of God, reject them. Christ and Belial cannot be united” (*ibid.* 32, 33).

Because of this agreement with the Bible, the messages of Ellen White have protected the Seventh-day Adventist Church from accepting doctrinal error and have helped to ground its members in biblical truth.

IX. Testing the Prophetic Gift

The human family has been swept into a great cosmic struggle between two spiritual powers (see III). Within this great controversy the forces of evil employ every means at their disposal to deceive people and misrepresent God, even using false prophets to achieve their goal. Jesus has warned, “false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect” (Matt. 24:24). For this reason John tells the church that claims to the prophetic gift must be tested: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

Four primary tests may be applied to anyone who claims the gift of prophecy. All four must be met before the prophetic gift can be accepted as genuine.

A. “To the Law and the Testimony”

The first test compares the teaching of one who claims the spirit of prophecy with the teaching of the sacred canon. This principle was laid down by Moses as he spoke to Israel: “If a prophet arises among you, ... and if he says, ‘Let us go after other gods,’ ... you shall not listen to the voice of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams.... But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion

against the Lord your God” (Deut. 13:1–5). Isaiah emphasized the same principle many centuries later as he admonished Israel not to consult mediums or wizards; instead the people should go “to the teaching [*tôrāh* or law] and to the testimony!” He insisted that a source of information that did not speak according to these had “no dawn,” no light, in it (Isa. 8:20).

Because the Bible is the source of truth, the authoritative, infallible revelation of God’s will, the revealer of doctrines, the standard of character, and the test of experience, what is set forth under the claim of the prophetic gift must agree with the Word. As Ellen White (GC vii) wrote, “Since it was the Spirit of God that inspired the Bible, it is impossible that the teaching of the Spirit should ever be contrary to that of the word.”

Any doctrine, counsel, or prophecy that is at variance with what is presented in the Bible is to be rejected, for it does not come from the Spirit of God.

B. Prophets Known by Their Fruits

Jesus introduces the second test, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves Thus you will know them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:15–20). The content of a prophet’s message, as well as the effect of his own personal life, will testify to its origin. The lifestyle of one who has the genuine prophetic gift will be in harmony with the teachings of the Bible.

In addition, all must consider the kind of fruit produced in the lives of people who follow the teaching of a person who claims the prophetic gift. If the life of the one claiming to be a prophet and the effect of that person’s teaching are in agreement with the Bible, the second test is passed.

C. Fulfilled Predictions

Although predicting the future is not the major work of a true prophet, attention must be given to predictions made. As already noted, prophecy may be either conditional or unconditional (see VII). God told Israel that when a prophet makes a prediction in the name of the Lord and the prediction does not come to pass, that prophet has spoken presumptuously (Deut. 18:21 , 22). Likewise Jeremiah told King Zedekiah that when a prophet makes a prediction and it comes to pass, that prophet is a true prophet (Jer. 28:9). However, God has made provision for conditional prophecy (18:7–10).

In many prophecies conditions for fulfillment are plainly stated, but in others no conditions exist. On the basis of Jeremiah 18:7–10 , it is clear that God’s promises of blessings or threatenings of punishment rest upon conditions, whether stated or implied. The fulfillment of the prophecy depends upon the response to the prophetic message.

Therefore, predictions must be examined carefully, taking into account the principle of conditionality. In addition, the three other tests must be met by anyone who claims the prophetic gift.

D. Prophet Confesses Christ

As John admonishes Christians to test the spirits that lead people to speak and warns them against false prophets, he adds, "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God" (1 John 4:2 , 3).

This test is much broader than just claiming to believe that Jesus once lived on earth. In its fullest sense, this test encompasses everything that the Bible teaches about Jesus: that He is truly God and truly man, that He has existed from eternity, and that He is the word of God made audible. Jesus is Creator and Sustainer of heaven and earth, Source of life, and Light of all mankind. He was sinless and born of a virgin. He died an atoning death for sinners, was resurrected bodily, ascended to the right hand of the Father, ministers as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, and is soon to return to earth to destroy sin forever and take His faithful people to heaven. This test is closely related to the first test. A true prophet will speak in agreement with the law and the testimony.

E. Additional Evidence of Prophetic Gift

In addition to the four major tests given above, several additional features help discriminate between the true and the false.

1. Physical Manifestations

Scripture notes at times physical phenomena in connection with revelations given by the Holy Spirit. The phenomena recorded at the time of Daniel's (Dan. 10) and Balaam's (Num. 24) experiences show certain similarities. John mentions some of these in connection with the revelations he received on the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1 ; see IV. C. 1).

2. Timeliness of the Prophetic Message

Although the Bible sets forth sweeping predictions that span long periods of time, the majority of messages given to God's people in the Bible relate to their immediate situation and arrive precisely when needed for their guidance. The same is true in the postcanonical function of the gift of prophecy.

3. Certainty and Fearlessness of the Messenger

The confidence with which the true prophet speaks in the name of God helps to establish assurance among the people that God has indeed spoken. In delivering messages of rebuke, the prophet cannot be intimidated by the displeasure of the people. As God called Jeremiah to his prophetic ministry, He said, "Gird up your loins; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the

people of the land. They will fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you” (Jer. 1:17–19).

4.Elevated Spiritual Nature of the Messages

While the messages of a true prophet may deal with the common issues of life, they will always be of a high, dignified nature and never reflect that which is cheap and vulgar, either in content or in language. Even in messages of rebuke, the prophets will draw the minds of the people to lofty spiritual principles that will build and strengthen their relationship with God.

5.Practical Nature of the Messages

In his Second Letter to Timothy, Paul stresses the practical nature of the messages sent by God and recorded in the Scriptures as “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16 , 17). Likewise, any true prophetic message will not present wild speculations, strange fantasies, or meaningless rambling.

X.End-time Manifestations of the Prophetic Gift

It is clear from the Scriptures that the prophetic gift is to be present among God’s people until the end of time.

A.Evidence From Joel

Joel speaks of an abundant outpouring of God’s Spirit upon His people, of young men seeing visions, old men dreaming dreams, and sons and daughters prophesying (Joel 2:28 , 29). He even sets the time frame for this experience. There will be cosmic phenomena with the sun being darkened and the moon turned into blood. Disasters on earth are described cryptically as “blood and fire and columns of smoke.” All of this is to precede immediately “the great and terrible day of the Lord” (verses 30 , 31).

Along with other Early Christian believers, Peter viewed Christ’s first coming as the last days (Heb. 1:2 ; 9:26 ; 1 Cor. 10:11 ; 1 Peter 1:20) and applied Joel’s prophecy to the Pentecost experience (Acts 2:16–21), linking the gift of prophecy to the gift of tongues.

Joel’s prophecy of the coming prophetic gift is set in the context of the early and latter rains (Joel 2:23–32). The refreshing, life-giving fall rains, which enabled the seed to sprout and take root, are called the early rain. The spring rain, which brought the grain to maturity and readiness for harvest, is called the latter rain. This phenomenon in the Palestinian agricultural cycle is a symbol of the spiritual refreshing that God gives to His people through His Spirit (Hosea 6:3). Peter, fully believing he was living in the last

days, experienced the early rain. The latter rain is yet to come upon God's people at the end of time. (See Remnant/Three Angels V. E.)

B.Evidence From Jesus

Jesus said false prophets would appear, prophesy in His name, and then request admission into His kingdom; on that day He would say, "I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers" (Matt. 7:15–23). These false prophets would be active at the end of time, showing signs and wonders and attempting to deceive the very elect (Matt. 24:24). The fact that these end-time prophets are labeled "false" suggests that the true would also be present.

C.Evidence From Paul

Paul begins 1Corinthians with the assurance that spiritual gifts will be with the followers of Christ until the day He returns. Among these gifts is the "testimony of Christ" (*to martyrion tou Christou* [1 Cor. 1:6–8]). Since Paul is speaking of spiritual gifts, given by the Spirit, the "testimony" spoken of here must also be seen as a gift. Paul says that with the "testimony of Christ" the Corinthians now lack none of the spiritual gifts.

The expression "testimony of Christ" may be understood in two ways. First, witness "to" Christ had been given among the Corinthians through the preaching of the apostle Paul. On the other hand, Christ was the source "of" the witness they had received. *Tou Christou* may be understood either as an objective genitive ("to Christ" or "about Christ" [RSV]), or as a subjective genitive ("of" or "from Christ" [KJV]). If a subjective genitive, it would parallel what John presents in Revelation. Having the gift of the "testimony of Jesus," the Corinthian Christians lacked none of the spiritual gifts.

Paul emphasizes what he says to the Corinthians by his instruction to the Ephesian church (Eph. 4:11–13). God has given to His church the gift of spiritual ministries that include apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These gifts are given to equip Christ's followers for the work of the ministry that has been given to them. This equipping continues until all have come into (1)the unity of the faith, (2)the knowledge of the Son of God, (3)full maturity, and (4)the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Obviously Paul has his sights set on the day when Jesus returns, when His desire for the church will be finally realized.

D.Evidence From John

In Revelation, John confirms the biblical teaching that the prophetic gift will not only extend beyond his day, but will be manifested in the church at the end of time. Presenting a prophetic picture of the spiritual battle that already has been identified as the great controversy (see III), John links God's people with the prophetic symbol of a comely woman (Rev. 12:1 , 2). The forces of evil, represented by a great red dragon, poised

themselves to destroy her Child at birth, but He is caught up to the throne of God (verses 3–5).

Failing to destroy the Child, the dragon turns on the woman, attempting to destroy her throughout the centuries following the ascension of Jesus. Finally he attempts to destroy the remnant of her seed at the end of time (verses 13–17). The remnant of this woman has the testimony of Jesus (verse 17). Here, as in 1 Corinthians 1:6, the genitive is subjective, i.e., the testimony originates with Jesus. This is exactly the way “the testimony of Jesus Christ” (in referring to the Book of Revelation itself) and “testimony of Jesus” (in referring to OT Scriptures) are understood in Revelation 1:2, 9.

In Revelation 19:10 the meaning of *tēn martyrian Iēsou* is made clear. The angel says, “I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus [*tēn martyrian Iēsou*]. Worship God.” And John interprets, “For the testimony of Jesus [*tēn martyrian Iēsou*] is the spirit of prophecy.” John’s attending angel identifies himself as a “fellow servant” with him and others “who hold the testimony of Jesus,” which is “the spirit of prophecy.” The fact that the terms “testimony of Jesus” and “spirit of prophecy” are synonymous with “prophet” is seen in Revelation 22:9, where the attending angel repeats his earlier statement but substitutes “prophet” for “testimony of Jesus”: “I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren the prophets.”

John makes it clear that the remnant that has the testimony of Jesus also has the prophetic gift.

XI. Role and Function of Ellen G. White in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

From its beginning the Seventh-day Adventist Church has accepted the biblical teaching of spiritual gifts (see XIII. E). Miracles of physical healing through prayer and the anointing of oil have been present from the very beginning of the church’s existence. The gifts of teaching and administration have been apparent not only in the work of Ellen White, but in the ministries of her husband, James, and other prominent figures throughout the church’s history. All of the other gifts have had an impact on the growth and development of the church in one way or another.

Emphasis here is on the prophetic gift as seen in the experience of Ellen G. White, and on the fruits of this gift as they are seen in her life and ministry, because this gift surpasses all other experiences of spiritual gifts in the church.

A. Ellen G. White

Ellen and her twin sister, Elizabeth, were born on November 26, 1827. Two of eight children, they lived on a small farm with their parents, Robert and Eunice Harmon, in Gorham, Maine. Shortly after the birth of the twins, the Harmon family moved about 12 miles east to Portland. At the age of 9 Ellen suffered a severe injury to the face by a stone

thrown by a classmate. Unconscious for three weeks and not expected to live, Ellen made a slow and painful recovery. Her formal education came to an end.

In 1840, at the age of 12, Ellen gave her heart to God during a Methodist camp meeting. Two years later she was baptized by immersion in Casco Bay, Portland, Maine. In 1840 and 1842 the Harmon family attended Adventist meetings and accepted William Miller's teaching on the imminent return of Jesus. When Jesus did not return on October 22, 1844, Ellen and other Advent believers studied the Bible and prayed for light and guidance to take them through the difficult days ahead.

On one of these occasions, in December 1844, 17-year-old Ellen joined four other women for study and prayer. The Spirit of God rested upon her and she was given the first of approximately 2,000 visions that she was to receive during the next 70 years. In response to a vision shortly afterward, she began to travel from place to place with friends and relatives to share with fellow believers what had been revealed to her in the first and succeeding revelations.

In August 1846 Ellen married James White, a young Adventist preacher. A few weeks after their marriage the Whites began studying a 48-page pamphlet prepared by Joseph Bates in which the Bible teaching on the seventh-day Sabbath was set forth. Convinced by the biblical evidence, they accepted the Sabbath of the Scriptures. Six months later, on April 3, 1847, Ellen was shown in vision the law of God in the heavenly sanctuary with light around the fourth commandment.

Of the four sons born to the Whites—Henry, Edson, William, and John—only Edson and William lived to adulthood.

Through the study of the Scriptures and with guidance given through the prophetic gift, a growing, thriving body of Advent believers began to emerge out of the disappointment of October 1844. This little band of former Millerites adopted the name Seventh-day Adventist at a general meeting in 1860. On August 6, 1881, James White died in Battle Creek, Michigan. Ellen carried on her work in the United States, Europe, and Australia for 34 more years. She died at her home, Elmshaven, in St. Helena, California, on July 16, 1915, at the age of 87.

B. Ellen White's Self-understanding

As Ellen White looked back over her work, she felt that the word "prophet" did not adequately define her ministry. She preferred to be thought of as God's "messenger" for His people in the last days. Although others often referred to her as a prophet, she realized that her work embraced more than what was generally understood by that term; yet she did not seek personal honor and rewards. In addition to this, she was sensitive to the reproach brought upon the cause of Christ in her day by others who had boldly claimed the title of prophet (3SM 74).

Having been given the prophetic gift, Ellen White recognized the authority invested in her ministry as a literary, noncanonical prophet. On countless occasions, through voice and pen, she addressed leaders and laity alike with the realization that her words bore an authority from God. She was constantly aware that this authority did not rest within herself, but in the messages that God had given her to deliver. With this recognition came a sense of awe and unworthiness. (Regarding the relationship between Ellen White's writings and the sacred canon, see VIII. B.)

She saw her role as a spokesperson for God, a guide for the developing work of a church that would soon encircle the globe, and as a counselor to God's people preparing for the return of Jesus. Although she had no formal training in theology, her writings contain penetrating theological insights that unfold the meaning of Scripture passages that could otherwise be missed. This is especially true of the five books that make up the Conflict of the Ages series, which deal with the biblical record from Creation to the final destruction of sin: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Prophets and Kings*, *The Desire of Ages*, *The Acts of the Apostles*, and *The Great Controversy*.

In her role as God's messenger and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, she saw her responsibility to take the lead in establishing: (1) church organization; (2) a global view of the total mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; (3) a foreign mission thrust that would carry the gospel to all the world; (4) hospitals, clinics, and medical schools; (5) health and temperance programs for both the church and the community; (6) an educational system that goes from the earliest training through graduate studies; and (7) publishing and printing establishments to put Christian literature into the hands of people.

C. The Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Role of Ellen White

One of the earliest statements in print that reflects growing recognition and support for the prophetic role given to Ellen White comes from the pen of Joseph Bates (1792–1872), one of the founders and early leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Bates had several opportunities to hear Ellen White relate the content of various visions she had received. Although he could find nothing in what he heard that was contrary to the Scriptures, he was alarmed by her claim of having received revelations from God. For some time he was unwilling to accept what he saw and heard as more than the result of her injury in childhood.

In 1847, after talking with other people who had seen Ellen White in vision and who had listened to her reports of what she saw, after witnessing for himself several occasions when she was in vision, and after conversing with Ellen herself, Bates concluded that he had seen and heard enough evidence for a decision. "I can now confidently speak for myself. I believe the work is of God, and is given to comfort and strengthen His 'scattered,' 'torn,' and 'pealed [*sic*] people,' since the closing up of our work for the world in October 1844" (21). Since Bates's early statement, administrators, ministers, and teachers have repeatedly expressed his thought in print.

The first published statement to come out of a general meeting of the church body appeared in the church paper, the *Review and Herald*, December 4, 1855. Joseph Bates, J. H. Waggoner, and M. E. Cornell were appointed during a business session to prepare a statement to be addressed to “the dear saints” on behalf of the conference regarding the “gifts” that had been given to the church. In a signed article, “Address of the Conference Assembled at Battle Creek, Mich., Nov. 16, 1855,” Bates, Waggoner, and Cornell confessed on behalf of the whole body that the church had not fully appreciated or supported the spiritual gifts that God had given to the Sabbathkeeping Adventists. Special reference was made to “the visions.” All the “saints” were called upon to render thanks to God for the spiritual gifts He had placed in the church, but especially for the gift of prophecy. In addition, all were admonished to read what had been printed from “the visions” and to be willing to submit their lives to the counsel given by God.

From 1867 on, reaffirmation of belief in spiritual gifts, and especially the gift of prophecy, has been a regular action of the world church in business session. The 1867 resolution reads as follows:

“Resolved, That we express our continued faith in the perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts during the gospel dispensation, and our gratitude to God that He has intimately connected the spirit of prophecy with the proclamation of the third angel’s message” (RH May 28, 1867).

The fifty-fifth General Conference session, held in Indianapolis, Indiana, in July 1990, was no exception. On July 13 a resolution on the Spirit of Prophecy was introduced to the delegates and accepted by vote. It reads, in part:

“We are grateful to God not only for giving us the Holy Scriptures but also for giving us the last-day manifestation of the gift of prophecy in the life and work of Ellen G. White. Her inspired writings have been invaluable to the church throughout the world in countless ways” (AR July 26-Aug. 2, 1990).

A standing affirmation is found in the 27 fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Belief No. 16 is a statement on spiritual gifts and ministries while No. 17 addresses “The Gift of Prophecy,” and reads as follows:

“One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord’s messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested (Joel 2:28 , 29 ; Acts 2:14–21 ; Heb. 1:1–3 ; Rev. 12:17 ; 19:10)” (*SDA Yearbook* 1981, 7).

D.Sources and Literary Helpers

During the 1980s attention was focused on Ellen White's use of sources, and widespread discussion followed. The fact that Ellen White quoted and paraphrased other authors in no way lessens her inspiration, nor has the Ellen G. White Estate attempted to cover up Mrs. White's practice. Indeed, in 1933 W. C. White (Ellen White's son) and D. E. Robinson (one of Ellen White's secretaries) prepared a 27-page pamphlet titled *Brief Statements Regarding the Writings of Ellen G. White*, which dealt openly with the issue of sources and literary helpers.

1.Sources

The authors noted that in the early years Ellen White was distressed over her difficulty in expressing in human language the content of the visions she received. However, she was given assurance by God that He would bestow grace upon her and give her the guidance that she needed to fulfill the responsibilities placed upon her.

“She was told that in the reading of religious books and journals, she would find precious gems of truth expressed in acceptable language, and that she would be given help from heaven to recognize these and to separate them from the rubbish of error with which she would sometimes find them associated” (White and Robinson; reprinted as a supplement to AR June 4, 1981).

In the introduction to the 1888 edition of *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White herself addressed the issue of sources: “In some cases where a historian has so grouped together events as to afford, in brief, a comprehensive view of the subject, or has summarized details in a convenient manner, his words have been quoted; but except in a few instances no specific credit has been given, since they are not quoted for the purpose of citing that writer as authority, but because his statement affords a ready and forcible presentation of the subject.”

This statement has been reproduced in the introduction to the 1911 edition (xii) with two minor adjustments in wording.

It has long been known that canonical writers used both inspired and uninspired sources in their writings. As was noted earlier, Luke informs his readers about his sources of information on the life and ministry of Jesus. He clearly states that they came not from dreams and visions but from interviews with eyewitnesses and ministers of the word (Luke 1:1–4 ; see IV. C. 4).

The extent to which Ellen White's voluminous reading was reflected in her writings has come to be understood only in recent years. Although some have questioned her prophetic gift as a result of this knowledge, her use of sources does not present a problem to those who are aware of and understand the research model of inspiration (see IV. C. 4). In fact, the discussion over Ellen White's use of sources has enriched and broadened our understanding of inspiration. A recent study to isolate the literary sources behind *The Desire of Ages* is worthy of the attention of anyone wishing to examine this topic further. (See Veltman.)

2.Literary Helpers

Like Jeremiah and Paul (see IV. C. 5), Ellen White used literary assistants. In the early years her husband, James White, assisted her in getting letters ready to send and preparing manuscripts for publication. After James's death in 1881, W. C. White assumed this role. During those years when her literary production was the highest, her staff included several assistants. Their responsibilities ranged from typing manuscripts and letters to helping with grammar and spelling corrections. After typing Ellen White's handwritten material and making corrections in grammar and spelling, assistants would return it to Ellen White for careful reading. At this point she might add or subtract, and the material would be retyped. Only after another reading would it be ready for the press or the mail. None of the assistants was permitted to interject his or her own thoughts or concepts, as indicated in the following paragraph.

Ellen White's most trusted assistant, Marian Davis, was given responsibility for helping in book preparation. In comparing the work of her regular assistants and that of Marian Davis, Ellen White (MR 926) wrote: "My copyists you have seen. They do not change my language. It stands as I write it. Marian's work is of a different order altogether. She is my book-maker She does her work in this way. She takes my articles which are published in the papers, and pastes them in blank books. She also has a copy of all the letters I write. In preparing a chapter for a book, Marian remembers that I have written something on that special point, which may make the matter more forcible. She begins to search for this, and if when she finds it, she sees that it will make the chapter more clear, she adds it."

E. Fruit of a Life's Work

At her death in 1915 Ellen White had written more than 100,000 pages of material that appeared in the following forms: 24 books in circulation, two book manuscripts ready for publication, periodical articles exceeding 5,000, and approximately 200 tracts and pamphlets. In addition there were 6,000 typewritten letters and general manuscripts totaling approximately 35,000 pages and 2,000 handwritten letters, documents, diaries, journals, etc., which, when typed, comprise an additional 15,000 pages.

Since her death Ellen White's major books have been translated into more than 100 languages and dialects— *Steps to Christ* alone into approximately 150 languages. Additional translations of various books are constantly in preparation.

However impressive the volume of the literary production, of greater significance is the spiritual impact her writings have upon people's lives. The content of these writings—God's love expressed in the gift of His precious Son, the great controversy, the call to prepare for Jesus' return, the power of God's grace that enables victorious living, and other biblical themes exalted before the reader—has had an impact fully measured only when Jesus returns.

F. Custody of Ellen White's Writings

In 1912, at 85 years of age, Ellen White drew up a will that made provision for the care of her writings. Five men were named to act as trustees: W. C. White, her son; Clarence C. Crisler, one of her secretaries; Charles H. Jones, manager of the Pacific Press Publishing Association; Arthur G. Daniells, General Conference president; and F. M. Wilcox, editor of the church paper, the *Review and Herald*.

The will placed in their trust all copyrights, book plates in all languages, the general manuscript file, and all indexes relating to the file. She charged the trustees with the responsibility of (1) caring for all her published works and unpublished manuscripts, (2) improving the books and manuscripts, (3) securing and printing new translations, and (4) printing compilations from the letters, documents, articles, and manuscripts in the files.

The will also stipulated that the board of trustees would be both independent and self-perpetuating. Later the board was expanded to 15: seven members who serve for life and eight who hold five-year terms.

Serving under the direction of the board of trustees is a staff who carry on the daily work at the White Estate office at General Conference headquarters. These individuals research Mrs. White's writings on issues of current interest to the church and publish the results in articles for church journals, books, and documents filed at the White Estate office for the benefit of church leaders, laity, and other researchers. Staff personnel travel throughout the world field holding seminars on spiritual gifts, the Spirit of Prophecy as revealed in the life and work of Ellen White, and on topics of current interest that she addressed. Research centers are located at several sites around the world.

Utilizing modern technology, the White Estate has made available all of Ellen White's published, unpublished, and manuscript materials on CD-ROM disk.

XII. Impact of Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual gifts are the provision Jesus made for the advancement of the work that He commissioned His disciples to do after His ascension. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, would come in Jesus' name to teach His followers by guiding them into further truth, to bring to remembrance the instruction given by Jesus, to empower them for their task, and to bestow gifts according to His will.

The followers of Jesus today are to seek these gifts just as earnestly as the Corinthians sought for them at Paul's urging (1 Cor. 14:1). These gifts, under the ministry of the Holy Spirit, will (1) equip church members for the work of ministry including winning people to Jesus, (2) build up the body of Christ, (3) lead into the unity of faith and

knowledge of the Son in of God, (4)develop spiritual maturity in Jesus, and (5)sustain spiritual growth toward the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:11-13).

The end product of true spiritual gifts is a healthy and energetic church. Christians among whom these gifts function properly will “no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles” (Eph. 4:14).

XIII. Historical Overview

At its very inception the Christian church was a charismatic community. Having called the 12 apostles to be the nucleus of the new church, Jesus “gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases” (Luke 9:1). As He sent them out two by two for their field experience, He said, “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons” (Matt. 10:8). Fortified by the Spirit’s power (John 20:22 ; Acts 2:1–4 ; 4:31), the apostolic church was a dynamic, Spirit-filled community in which *charismata* (spiritual gifts) enabled the early Christians to carry out the commission of their Lord (Matt. 28:19 , 20). In this sense the early church was a charismatic community.

The attitude of the Christian church toward spiritual gifts has varied over the centuries, however, as has the attitude of various groups within Christianity. The first part of this historical overview looks at an early attempt to regain the gifts that were once operative in the apostolic church. In the second part, the current attitude toward spiritual gifts among several Christian bodies is examined.

A. Montanism

During the last half of the second century A.D. a small group of Christians in the Roman province of Phrygia in Asia Minor focused their attention on reclaiming the gifts of the Spirit. In 172 Montanus, a recent convert from paganism, claimed the gift of prophecy. Within a short time he was joined by two women, Priscilla and Maximilla, who also claimed the gift. They identified their movement as “the New Prophecy,” but their opponents referred to it as “the Phrygian heresy.” By the fourth century the movement was known as “Montanism,” after its founder. This was the church’s first neo-Pentecostal movement.

1. View on Spiritual Gifts

Montanists believed that spiritual gifts were not restricted to the Apostolic Era, but were intended for all who believe. Evidence for this was found in the promise that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit, and “your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions” (Joel 2:28 ; Acts 2:17). The prophetic gift, of course, received the greatest emphasis because of the experiences of Montanus, Priscilla, and Maximilla.