

Ellen White and the Gift of Prophecy

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A Brief Sketch of Ellen White's Life

Ellen Gould Harmon was born on November 26, 1827, in Gorham, Maine. The Harmon family included eight children, the youngest of whom were Ellen and her twin sister Elizabeth. At the age of 9, Ellen was hit in the face by a rock thrown by a classmate, a life-threatening accident that ended her formal education at the third-grade level.

Ellen was baptized into the Methodist Church in 1840 when she was 12 years old. In 1842 the entire Harmon family was convicted of the soon Second Coming of Jesus after attending meetings conducted by the American Baptist preacher William Miller in Portland, Maine. For their support of the Millerite movement, however, the family was disfellowshipped from the Methodist Church the next year (1843). Ellen Harmon was not yet 17 when the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844 came and Jesus had not returned as expected. But with several friends, she determined to remain faithful while earnestly searching the Bible and pleading with God for guidance. Then in December 1844, Ellen had her first vision, a vision which gave assurance that if the believers remained steadfast in the hope of the Second Coming, victory would be theirs. Her lifelong prophetic ministry thus began at the age of 17.

On August 30, 1846, Ellen married a young Millerite preacher named James White, and the couple had four children—Henry, Edson, William (called Willie), and John Herbert. Together, she and her husband labored for what became the Seventh-day Adventist movement until his death on August 6, 1881. Ellen remained a widow for the rest of her life, although she continued in her teaching, preaching, and writing ministry for the Lord. She traveled often in the cause of God, including two years in Europe (Fall 1885-Summer 1887) and nearly nine years in Australia (late 1891-1900). She spent the last 15 years of her life at her home called Elmshaven near the small town of St. Helena in northern California.

A broken hipbone caused by a fall in her home confined Ellen White to her bed or wheelchair for the last five months of her life. Finally, on July 16, 1915, Ellen White passed away at the age of 87. She was buried beside her husband James in the Oak Hill Cemetery at Battle Creek, Michigan. Thousands mourned her death, including both those inside and outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Writings of Ellen White

Ellen White received her first vision in December 1844, shortly after the Great Disappointment, and her last vision in March 1915, just four months before her death. During the intervening 70 years of public ministry, it is estimated that she received 2,000 visions and prophetic dreams. On at least two occasions, Ellen White in vision exhibited remarkable phenomena involving a Bible. In one case, she held up a large, heavy, family Bible for almost 30 minutes in her left hand, although when out of vision she could barely hold it in that hand. Then in the other case, she turned the pages of a Bible and correctly pointed and read verses even though she could not see anything in the room during the vision. It was during the earlier years that most of her visions were given in public places before eyewitnesses. Then by the mid-1880s, the public visions diminished and were largely replaced by prophetic dreams during her sleeping hours. The length of her visions varied from about fifteen minutes to as long as nearly four hours.

Ellen White was one of the most prolific writers in world history, having written by hand approximately 25 million words on about 100,000 pages. Literary experts who have examined the claims usually agree that she wrote more books that have been translated into more languages than any woman in history. In fact, today Ellen White appears to be either the second or third most translated writer of all time and the most translated American writer of either gender. Her writings include about 130 books, 4,600 periodical articles, and thousands of pages of sermons, letters, diaries, and other materials.

Evidence from Ellen White's Visions

In the early years of Ellen White's ministry, she often, and without warning, entered into an altered state of consciousness during what she would later describe as a vision from God. Scores of eyewitnesses saw her under these physical circumstances, including several who were critical of her alleged visions at the time. More than once careful examination was made during these occasions. The data thus observed is derived from too many eyewitnesses and from too varied a class of people to be dismissed. In other words, a trained historian would have no justifiable reason to doubt the truthfulness of the physical phenomena that were described.

The following outline provides a brief summary of the physical phenomena observed on numerous occasions during her altered states of consciousness:

- She experienced a loss of natural strength *as she went into* her altered state.
- She often exhibited supernatural strength during her altered state, once holding a large, heavy family Bible in her left hand for nearly 30 minutes, despite the fact that she could barely hold it there at all outside of her altered state.

- Mirrors and lit candles placed immediately in front of her nose and mouth indicated that she did not breathe. Yet her heartbeat and the color in her cheeks remained normal.
- Her eyes were open—not with a vacant stare—but as if she were observing something far away, not in the room in which she was having the vision.
- She was observed to be completely unconscious of her physical surroundings, seeing, hearing, and feeling nothing or no one in the room.
- At the end of her altered state, she would take a deep breath, followed by another one about a minute later, until her breathing returned to normal.
- Her natural strength gradually returned to her within a few minutes of leaving her altered state.

Over the years Ellen White's critics have sometimes charged that her visions were actually a form of epileptic seizures probably caused by her being hit in the face by the rock when she was 9 years old. Below is a ten-point summary of the physical characteristics of epilepsy and a brief description of whether or not Ellen White's phenomena matched any of them, based on eyewitness accounts of her altered state of consciousness:

1. *Entire epileptic episodes usually last no more than two minutes*—Ellen White's experiences varied from 15 minutes to nearly four hours. As far as eyewitness testimony is concerned, none lasted as briefly as two minutes.
2. *Loss of consciousness is possible for a brief time, within the usual two-minute length of the entire episode*—Ellen White was continuously unconscious of her surroundings during her experiences.
3. *A vacant stare is the usual phenomena of the eyes during an episode*—No eyewitness ever recorded that Ellen White's eyes had the appearance of a vacant stare. On the contrary, consistent testimony is that she had a pleasant expression on her face.
4. *A variety of repetitive automatic movements often occurs during an episode, movements which are usually inappropriate*—No eyewitness ever stated that Ellen White's movements during her experiences were odd or repetitive (such as repetitive smacking of the lips, chewing, swallowing, sucking, and so on).
5. *After an episode confusion and amnesia regarding the episode itself are classic features*—Although Ellen White often was amnesiac concerning *part* of the contents of her experiences

immediately afterwards, later she always was able to recall with great clarity and detail her entire experience.

6. *A person often is at least partially conscious of his/her surroundings during an episode, and may have a vague notion of odors or whether the experience was pleasant or frightening; but rarely does he/she have any memory of details*—As stated above, Ellen White was always completely unaware of her surroundings and she could always later recall her entire experience.

7. *Most victims have a vague sense of having experienced the same sensations during previous episodes*—The content of Ellen White’s experiences varied greatly over the years, and she was able to write clearly about that content for many days, and sometimes weeks, afterwards.

8. *Some victims experience hypergraphia (or excessive writing) between episodes, although such writing is almost always repetitive in nature and without any literary merit*—Such hypergraphia almost always results in the repetition of meaningless lists. By contrast, there is no evidence whatsoever that Ellen White ever engaged in such behavior.

9. *Although rare, some victims suffer from perseveration of speech during an episode, which is the repetition of the same answer to a variety of different questions*—Critics often point to her frequent expression of “Glory, glory, glory” when she entered her altered state of consciousness as evidence of perseveration of speech. But if she saw what she claimed to see, then such a statement would be appropriate. This is very different from perseveration, in which the patient unthinkingly repeats the same answer no matter what the question.

10. *If there is any absence of breathing during an episode, it lasts only for a few seconds*—Eyewitness testimony is consistent that Ellen White did not breathe at all during any of her observed experiences. In one case, a skeptic of Ellen White testified that he placed his hand completely over her mouth while pinching her nose shut with his thumb and forefinger for a period of about ten minutes, and that she was unaffected in the least by his actions.

Not only does the above description of the physical phenomena accompanying epileptic episodes demonstrate that Ellen White did not suffer from epilepsy, but they point to the supernatural origin of her experiences. Of course, there are two entities in the world that can produce supernatural phenomena, Satan (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22; II Corinthians 11:14; II Thessalonians 2:9-10; Revelation 13:13-14; 16:13-14) and God. In order to determine which one was the source of Ellen White’s experiences, we must identify the Bible’s tests of a genuine prophet and compare Ellen White to them.

Biblical Tests of a Genuine Prophet

The Bible gives four explicit tests by which God's people should determine if a person's claim to having the gift of prophecy is valid or not. There is also a strong corollary to one of them. Therefore, we will identify five tests of a prophet and see how Ellen White measured up to them.

Agreement with Previous Prophets

According to Isaiah 8:20, *To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.* The Hebrew word for *law* is *Torah* and referred to the writings of Moses in their strictest sense (Deuteronomy 4:44-45; 30:10; 31:9). The *testimony* here are the writings of the prophets who give God's testimony to His people (as the mediator of His Word). Therefore, the expression *the law and the testimony* refers to the written Word of God, which in post-Biblical times is the entire Bible. It is axiomatic that if anyone, whether claiming to have the prophetic gift or not, teaches truths contrary to the Bible, they are not to be believed.

Of course, whether one believes that Ellen White taught what the Bible teaches will depend upon what they believe the Scriptures teach in the first place. But one thing that is clear about Ellen White's writings: If you removed them completely from her denomination, that church would still teach all the major doctrines that it does now. That cannot be said about any other modern Christian group that has claimed to have the prophetic gift in its midst.

A Post-Biblical Prophet's Relationship to the Bible

The Old Testament is a collection of writings from prophets, but there were numerous prophets during that same period in Israel's history who never wrote books or wrote books that were never included in the Hebrew Scriptures. Yet Jesus Himself endorsed that Hebrew canon (Law, Prophets, and Psalms) Scriptures (Luke 24:44-45; cf. v. 27). This implicitly means that Jesus believed the Holy Spirit had superintended the process of collecting the books in those Scriptures so that the ones left out were unnecessary and only the ones He knew were necessary were included. Therefore, we can have confidence that the same thing was true for the New Testament Scriptures. All of this is the reason that the Bible is the ultimate standard of a believer's faith and practice and the reason a post-Biblical prophet must conform to that standard.

In turn, we must draw the conclusion that a post-Biblical prophet is never raised up by Jesus to proclaim new truths but to underscore truths already taught in the Bible. In other words, such a prophet will never be the source of doctrines, and his/her writings will function in a subordinate role in relationship to the Bible. In underscoring Bible truths and in guiding church members and the institutional church in the spiritual direction they should go, a post-Biblical prophet may be expected to give more *details* of Bible truths and stories but never to contradict Scripture. We

might also add another corollary—that a post-Biblical prophet will not do much exegesis of Scripture, for that would tend to discourage members from studying the Bible and to rely on him/her instead, making that prophet the standard by which all things are evaluated.

How did Ellen White measure up to this test? Her words speak for themselves. “The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested” (*The Great Controversy*, p. vii).

“But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 595).

“The testimonies of Sister White should not be carried to the front....Let all prove their positions from the Scriptures and substantiate every point they claim as truth from the revealed Word of God” (Letter 12, 1890, published in *Evangelism*, p. 256).

“Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light” (*The Review and Herald*, Jan. 20, 1903).

“The written testimonies are not to give new light, but impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed....The *Testimonies* are not to belittle the word of God, but to exalt it and attract minds to it... (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 665).

Accuracy of a Prophet’s Predictions

Moses declared that *when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him* (Deuteronomy 18:22; Jeremiah 28:9). According to Deuteronomy 13:1-5, even when a prophet’s prediction comes true, if they speak contrary to God’s previously revealed will, they must be a false prophet. This means that agreement with Scripture is an even more important test than fulfilled predictions. Of course, we must be aware of conditional prophecies, which are always in the context of people facing predictions of good or evil. See Jeremiah 18:7-10 for this principle that states if a nation to whom God predicted judgments repents He will not fulfill His prediction, and if a nation to whom God predicted glorious things turns its back on God He will not fulfill His predictions. Jonah is a perfect example of that, illustrating that conditional prophecies do not have to say they are conditional. Note also that predicting the future was only a small part of most prophets.

Consistent with most Bible prophets, Ellen White made very few predictions outside of those involving the Second Coming of Christ, which cannot yet be tested because that event has not yet

occurred. But two examples will suffice for our purpose here. In *Signs of the Times* magazine, April 21, 1890, also quoted in *Messages to Young People*, pp. 89-90, Ellen White predicted that “thousands of ships will be hurled into the depths of the sea. Navies will go down, and human lives will be sacrificed by millions. Fires will break out unexpectedly....confusion, collision, and death without a moment’s warning will occur on the great lines of travel.” World War I broke out in Europe less than 25 years later, and the entire twentieth century and beyond has unfortunately proven the accuracy of her predictions in terms of both wars and civilian life.

In 1850, just two years after modern spiritualism was born with the mysterious rappings in the Fox home in Hydesville, New York, Ellen White predicted that this power “would spread more and more...” (*Early Writings*, p. 59). This prediction is still being fulfilled all over the so-called Christian parts of the world, as spiritualism boasts huge numbers of followers.

Critics point to a prediction Ellen White made in 1856 that Jesus would come during the lifetime of some of her listeners as proof that she was a false prophet. The statement is found in *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, pages 131-132: “I was shown the company present at the Conference. Said the angel [in vision]: ‘Some food for worms, some subjects of the seven last plagues, some will be alive and remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Jesus.’” Obviously, the prediction was not fulfilled.

But there is a Biblical example that helps us understand Ellen White’s prediction here to be a conditional prophecy. According to Exodus 3:8, 16-17, no less than God Himself predicted that He would lead the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery and into the promised land of Canaan. But after 10 of the 12 Israelite spies that Moses sent into Canaan returned with a negative report, the Lord declared that except for Joshua and Caleb, the Israelites “shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in” (Numbers 14:30). Not until that generation had died were the Israelites allowed to enter Canaan. The Lord’s own prediction, then, proved to be a conditional prophecy. Thus, if God’s own prediction concerning earthly Canaan could be conditional, then Ellen White’s prediction about some of her contemporaries being alive when Jesus returns can also be conditional. For this to be so, a lack of trusting faithfulness to God’s Word which had caused one generation of Israelites to miss the earthly Canaan must also be the reason that Jesus did not return in the nineteenth century. Given the numerous spiritual problems among God’s professed remnant church in the late nineteenth century, our conclusion seems quite reasonable.

The Character Test

In Matthew 7:15-20 Jesus described false prophets as those who bear bad fruit, obviously implying that a genuine prophet will bear good fruit. A genuine Christian’s fruit is produced by the Holy Spirit and is called *the fruit of the Spirit*, which Paul then lists as qualities of a good character

(Galatians 5:22). This does not mean that prophets are perfect individuals or even morally superior to others, for all are to have good characters. But the character reflects the spiritual direction of a person, and no one claiming the prophetic gift will live a life of habitual sin or mean-spirited behavior.

Ellen White had her imperfections like everyone has. However, even some of her worst critics admitted after her death that she had lived an exemplary Christian life, being kind even to her critics and giving neighbors a helping hand despite her very busy prophetic ministry. No one who has studied her life has come away with any different conclusion.

Some of her critics have called her a false prophet because it has been demonstrated that she often copied whole paragraphs and even paraphrased whole pages from other authors. For this, some of her critics have charged her with plagiarism. However, the copyright laws *and* ethical standards required of authors was very different in her lifetime from what they are today. Many authors frequently borrowed from each other without giving them written credit. In fact, not only was that not illegal, it was considered a high honor to have someone borrow parts of your writings even when they did not give written credit. It is not right to judge someone on the basis of laws *and* ethical standards that did not exist in his or her day. In the 1980s a non-Adventist attorney who was an expert in copyright law studied her writings and the history of legal and ethical standards in her day and concluded emphatically that she had done nothing wrong or even out of the ordinary for her day.

Some of Ellen White's critics will concede that she did not violate any copyright laws in her day. However, they assert that her heavy borrowing from the works of others indicates that when she did so she was not inspired. Therefore, information from borrowed authors is not reliably accurate unless one alleges that the borrowed authors were also inspired prophets. First, surely the same Holy Spirit who inspired her through visions and dreams was just as capable of directing her to the best human sources. If one does not believe that, it implies a lack of trust in God's power and integrity. After all, a prophet is called for the purpose of speaking officially for God, so that even if the prophet goes to a wrong human source or collects from it what is definitely wrong on an important matter, He will correct the prophet and refocus him or her in the right direction.

Second, the fact that Ellen White only had a third-grade education probably accounts for her heavy borrowing from other human sources. When she received a vision or a prophetic dream, and then went to a human source to get the historical dates and other details of history, she often found the words of others to be more eloquent than her own. That is understandable. And, of course, that does *not* make the author of that source a prophet too. Given these facts, it is totally unwarranted to assume that her borrowing from others, which at times was heavier than usual, meant that she was not inspired to do so and that her information thus obtained is suspect.

Surely, she met this character test with flying colors.

Upholds the Nature of Christ

In I John 4:1-2 the apostle John tells believers to “test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God.” Note that this passage was written in the context of testing whether prophets are false or not. One of the earliest heresies to affect the early Church was the idea that Jesus was not fully human but only appeared to be so. This was based on the idea of Gnosticism, a pagan Greek philosophy that taught that matter was inherently evil; therefore, the Christian notion of Gnosticism was that Jesus could not actually be human if He was God. Since that was the heretical context of John’s message here, we can conclude that this test of a prophet includes all that Scripture reveals about the nature of Christ—that He is fully human, fully God, and that these two natures exist distinctly in one Person.

Ellen White consistently taught that Jesus was fully man and fully God, even in the early days of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, when some of its leaders (including Ellen’s own husband James) believed that Jesus was a created albeit supreme being, but not equal with the Father. She always lifted up Jesus as the Divine Savior who lived for us but also as our human Example to follow. She definitely passed this test of a genuine prophet as well. [Note: In doing this, Ellen White also believed in the doctrine of the Trinity. Some have stumbled over the fact that she did not use the word *Trinity* in her writings. But in her day many Protestants, including many Adventists, would not use that word because they regarded it as a uniquely Roman Catholic word, including many who actually believed the same doctrine that the Catholic Church teaches. First, the fact that the Catholic Church teaches something does not make it wrong, for even that church is not wrong about everything it teaches. Second, the word *Trinity* simply is derived from two words, *tri* (three) and *unity*. Therefore, there is nothing uniquely Catholic about either the word or the doctrine.]

Having passed all five Biblical tests of a prophet and shown that the physical phenomena associated with her visions must have come from a supernatural source, we conclude that Ellen White did indeed possess the genuine gift of prophecy.

Alleged Errors and Discrepancies in Ellen White’s Writings

Critics of Ellen White and others who simply have a wrong or incomplete understanding of inspiration and how it works have often cited four different types of errors or discrepancies in her writings. These four areas are: (1) alleged historical errors, especially in the book *The Great Controversy*; (2) errors in retelling some Biblical narratives; (3) errors in understanding certain

Bible passages; and (4) errors in the fact that she changed her mind about certain issues. We will briefly discuss each of these areas in that order in the subsections below.

Alleged Historical Errors

The critics especially accuse her of including historical errors in *The Great Controversy*, although some have also made this accusation regarding *Patriarchs and Prophets* and *Acts of the Apostles*. In the “Introduction” to *The Great Controversy* Ellen White acknowledged up front that after the Lord showed her a panorama of history in vision that she took much of her historical details from “facts” that were “well known and universally acknowledged by the Protestant world” (“Introduction” p. xi). In addition to this statement, her son W. C. White, who knew her practice better than most people during most of her prophetic ministry, made several statements that shed light on how she gathered certain historical and geographical facts and specific historical dates. Note the three statements by W. C. White below:

In some of the historical matters such as are brought out in *Patriarchs and Prophets* and in *Acts of the Apostles*, and in *Great Controversy*, the main outlines were made very clear and plain to her, and when she came to write up these topics, she was left to study the Bible and history to get dates and geographical relations and to perfect her description of details. [W. C. White letter to L. E. Froom, then secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association, Dec. 13, 1934, quoted in *Selected Messages*, Book 3, p. 462.]

When *Controversy* was written, Mother never thought that the readers would take it as authority on historical dates or use it to settle controversy regarding details of history, and she does not now feel that it should be used in that way. Mother regards with great respect the work of those faithful historians who devoted years of time to the study of God’s great plan as presented in the prophecy, and the outworking of that plan as recorded in history. [W. C. White letter to W. W. Eastman, publishing department secretary for the Southwestern Union Conference, Nov. 4, 1912, quoted in *Selected Messages*, Book 3, p. 447.]

We will make a great mistake if we lay aside historical research and endeavor to settle historical questions by the use of Mother’s books as an authority when she herself does not wish them to be used in any such way. [W. C. White statement to S. N. Haskell, evangelist, missionary, and church administrator, Oct. 31, 1912, quoted in *One Hundred and One Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White* (1981 edition, published by the Ellen G. White Estate), p. 49.]

Errors in Retelling Biblical Narratives

Critics who criticize Ellen White for mistakes in incidental details of history or other Biblical narratives either (1) do not know what she said about her use of historical sources, (2) know what she said about her use of historical sources and choose to ignore that, or (3) insist that the use of outside sources means that she was not inspired of God when she did so. Regarding the last group of critics, if incidental details are going to cause someone to doubt the inspiration of a prophet, an honest reading of the Scriptures will reveal a similar occasional error as well. For example, Numbers 10:29 calls Hobab the brother-in-law of Moses, while Judges 4:11 calls him his father-in-law. I Samuel 16:10-11 says that David was Jesse's eighth son, while I Chronicles 2:15 calls him his seventh son. Luke 3:36 adds the name of Cainan to his genealogy who is not included in Genesis 11:12. And the apostle Paul's account of the ratification of the old covenant in Hebrews 9:19 is not in agreement in every respect with the record in Exodus 24:3-8. In none of these examples is the discrepancy likely to be the result of a copyist error. Yet those who want to doubt the complete inspiration of Ellen White usually do not express any doubts about any of the Bible writers who made similar mistakes. That is simply a double standard.

Alleged Errors in Understanding Scriptures

Three of the most common allegations of erroneous understandings of Scriptures are (1) Revelation 9's prophecy; (2) Revelation 11's prophecy with regard to the French Revolution; and (3) Daniel 8's 2300-day prophecy along with Hebrews 9. We will briefly examine each one in that same order in the subsections below.

Revelation 9

An early Millerite preacher named Josiah Litch predicted an event on the basis of his interpretation of the prophecy in Revelation 9 (the 6th Trumpet). When an event occurred on the very day that Litch predicted it would, and it seemed to fit the kind of event he predicted, Ellen White is said to have endorsed Litch's interpretation in *The Great Controversy*, pages 334-335. Critics argue that Litch's, and thus Ellen White's, interpretation of the prophecy was incorrect. But they are too quick to jump to a conclusion, for even the Ellen G. White Estate has stated that her comments were made not from an exegetical study of Revelation 9 but as part of a chapter recalling the impact of the Millerite movement. In its *One Hundred and One Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White* (1981 edition) page 50, the Ellen White Estate says that if she meant that the apostle John's prophecy was fulfilled on Litch's date, "she would be giving support to Litch's interpretation of Revelation 9:15. If she simply means that Josiah Litch's prediction was fulfilled, then she is not necessarily supporting Litch's interpretation of the text."

His prediction of the time element was the crucial piece in his interpretation, interpreting the expression *the hour and day and month and year* as a period of time on the year-day principle. We believe that this refers instead to an unspecified *point* in time rather than to a *period* of time and that the fifth and sixth trumpets do not pertain to Islamic powers (as Litch said) but to demonic powers who were unleashed to work in different intensities after the spiritual darkness of the Age of Enlightenment had prepared the world to accept the influence and teachings of demons (the 4th Trumpet). Those who subscribe to our view do not diminish the importance that the Litch prediction had on gaining acceptance for the Millerite movement. We acknowledge that the Lord used his prediction to confirm faith in the movement. But we simply have a different interpretation of the actual prophecy.

Among those who hold our position one of two different positions regarding Ellen White's statement are taken. Some hold that her statement was only stating the positive impact Litch's prediction had on the Millerite movement without endorsing his interpretation of the prophecy. Others believe she may well have believed in Litch's interpretation but that she was wrong, and the Lord did not correct her because He apparently did not think it was of any significant consequence. [Some cite the example of the prophet Nathan, who initially told David to go ahead and build a Temple for God (II Samuel 7; I Chronicles 17). But then God corrected Nathan, who had to go back to David and tell him that God did not want him to build a Temple, but He would allow his son Solomon to do so because David was a great man of war with much blood on his hands (see also I Kings 5:3; I Chronicles 22:8-10). This, they say, indicates that God does not put His prophets in a straightjacket but will correct them if the matter is of any serious consequence, which implies that there may be instances where the Lord does not correct the prophet.]

Revelation 11

There is no doubt in anyone's mind that Ellen White believed that Revelation 11:4-14 is a prophecy that concerns the French Revolution and its persecution of Christians, Christianity, and the Bible. See chapter 15, "The Bible and the French Revolution," in *The Great Controversy*. Her discussion of this prophecy here is in sufficient detail and without any other clear motive for her views (like with Revelation 9) and thus reads naturally as that which she believed. Therefore, one has three choices. Either (1) this is an example of a mistaken view that the Lord did not see fit to correct, (2) her interpretation is wrong and makes her a false prophet (or at least that this portion was not inspired), or (3) her interpretation is essentially correct. Our study of Revelation 11 indicates that she was correct in her understanding. It may be a bit broader than just the French Revolution, but there is no doubt that it is the core of what the prophecy is talking about.

Daniel 8 and Hebrews 9

Critics of Ellen White's understanding of these chapters say that she was incorrect. Instead of Jesus beginning His work in the Pre-Advent Investigative Judgment in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary, they teach that it either refers to Antiochus IV's defilement of the Jerusalem Temple in the second century B.C. or to the little horn's defilement of the heavenly sanctuary to which the 2300 days corrects by restoring the truth about Jesus' work in that sanctuary (but no judgment is implied as per the "cleansing of the sanctuary" language). As for Hebrews 9, the critics allege that it teaches that Jesus entered the Most Holy Place (or its equivalent, the very presence of God) at His ascension rather than in 1844. Since Ellen White was wrong about this major doctrine of the church, she was either not inspired when she supported this doctrine, or her doctrinal error makes her a false prophet.

There really is no wiggle room on this issue. Because the church's understanding is one of the pillars of our faith, if she was wrong on this doctrine then she would have to be a false prophet. But our own study of this wonderful prophecy and also of Hebrews 9 demonstrates to our satisfaction that the interpretation that the Pre-Advent Investigative Judgment began in 1844 and that Jesus did not enter the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary until that year is absolutely correct. The sad part of the critics is that the reason most of them give for disbelieving our view of this doctrine is that such a judgment violates the principles of the gospel. But our study reveals that it actually upholds the gospel. Unfortunately, we do not have sufficient space here to detail the reasons for our position. But we have done that in chapter 32 of this book and answer objections to it in Appendix I.

Ellen White Changed Some of Her Positions

Ellen White's critics charge that she changed numerous doctrinal positions over the years, implying that she either was a false prophet or that she was inspired only when she received a specific supernaturally revealed vision from the Lord. We will discuss the five most common issues that critics seem to cite: (1) the shut door controversy; (2) the time to mark the beginning and end of the Sabbath; (3) the eating of pork; (4) the law in Galatians 3; and (5) the tithe.

The Shut Door

The idea of the shut door is based on Jesus' Parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. Jesus is the Bridegroom in the parable and the ten virgins are potential wedding guests waiting for Him to arrive at His own house with His bride and celebrate the wedding feast. [Note: In the Jewish custom this wedding or wedding feast was the final phase of a marriage.] When five of the virgins were running out of olive oil for their handheld lamps, they left to go buy more oil. While they

were gone the Bridegroom arrived, and after His guests entered into His house, verse 10 says *the door was shut*.

After the Great Disappointment in late October 1844, when Jesus did not return in glory as expected, some of the Millerite believers came to understand that the door had shut as far as anyone else being able to be converted and saved. Ellen Harmon (later White) was one of those believers until she changed her mind in November. Then in December she received her first vision, which reassured her that the October 22 date was significant, albeit not as the date for the Second Coming. Unfortunately, she misunderstood this vision and returned to her earlier view that the door had shut for the unbelieving world.

In November 1848 and January 1849 she received two more visions, which led her to the view she would adhere to the rest of her life—that the door had only shut for those who had rejected the 1844 movement, and that most of the world’s population still had the opportunity to be saved. Her later comments gave an explanation for her earlier view:

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. [*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 74]

Often representations are given me which at first I do not understand, but after a time they are made plain by a repeated presentation of those things that I did not at first comprehend, and in ways that make their meaning clear and unmistakable. [*Selected Messages*, Book 3, p. 56]

Clearly Ellen White grew in her understanding of the shut door. Just as plainly, she never had a vision telling her that her first view was correct.

When to Begin the Sabbath

When Ellen White first began to keep the seventh-day Sabbath she did so from sunrise on Saturday until sunrise on Sunday. In 1847 she received a vision informing her that the sunrise to sunrise calculation for the Sabbath was incorrect; an angel in that vision quoted Leviticus 23:32, *from even to even shall ye celebrate your Sabbaths*. An early Sabbath-keeper, Joseph Bates, convinced the group she was with at the time of her vision that even to even meant 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. So she then began to keep the Sabbath according to that understanding. But after studying a paper given her by John N. Andrews in the fall of 1855, which advocated a sunset to sunset reckoning of the Sabbath, she received her second vision about the Sabbath. This vision confirmed the sunset to sunset reckoning, and she and the group of believers with her kept the Sabbath for the rest of their lives from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday.

Again, she grew in her understanding, and again she never had a vision which told her to reckon the Sabbath hours in any way other than from sunset to sunset.

The Eating of Pork

Some of Ellen White's critics charge her with first teaching that prohibiting pork was a wrong position and then later changed her mind. Actually, she never said that prohibiting pork was a wrong position, only that the few Advent believers who were pushing that view should keep it to themselves until the Lord revealed it to the church as a whole. She wrote in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 1, page 207: "If it is the duty of the church to abstain from swine's flesh, God will discover it to more than two or three. He will teach His *church* their duty." In June 1863 the Lord gave Ellen White her major health vision, which in part she was told that "God never designed the swine to be eaten under any circumstances" (*Spiritual Gifts*, volume IV-a, p. 124).

She did grow in her understanding, although before the health vision she never took the position that it was wrong to forbid the eating of pork.

The Law in Galatians

A controversy arose among the early Advent believers in the 1850s concerning what law was referred to by Paul in Galatians 3, where the law is said to be our tutor to bring a person to Jesus to be justified by faith. Then when *faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor* (v. 25). Some, like J. H. Waggoner, an Advent preacher, taught that it was only the moral law, while others (like Uriah Smith and George I. Butler) argued that it was the ceremonial law. Ellen White received a vision in 1856 telling her that Waggoner was wrong but not identifying exactly what that law was. Several years later the Lord informed her that the law in Galatians was primarily the moral law but that it also included the ceremonial law.

Ellen White never held the position that the law in Galatians was only one or only the other law. In fact, she did not take a public position on the issue until the Lord made it plain to her. Our own study of Galatians, made before we knew the issue in Ellen White's day, was that the law in Galatians probably included both, but that it was especially the moral law.

The Tithe

Although Ellen White and the early Advent believers accepted the principle of the tithe at an early date, the church's view of how to calculate the tithe did change. Originally, the church calculated the tithe on the basis of an annual tithe of 1 percent of a church member's property value. This was based on the theoretical 10 percent interest income generated by the property. In 1876 the church adopted the returning of tithe based on 10 percent of one's income. The shift in policy

actually only represented a difference in how the tithe was calculated and not a change in the doctrine of tithing as Ellen White's critics allege.

Conclusion on Alleged Errors

Many of the errors alleged by Ellen White's critics are really not errors at all but demonstrate a growth in understanding. But this was true of Bible writers as well. They did not always understand their visions, sometimes (as we showed above) they were mistaken in incidental details, and sometimes God had to correct their views or counsel (like the Nathan example above). The apostles were particularly erroneous in some of their basic concepts until the Lord corrected them. This included the central truth of the gospel that the Messiah would have to die as man's Substitute (Matthew 16:21-23). If (1) mistakes in incidental matters, (2) failure to immediately understand some visions (Daniel 8:27; 9:22-23; Acts 10:9-17), (3) the need to correct some positions (Nathan), and (4) growth in understanding of truth are all grounds to either doubt Ellen White's prophetic gift or to restrict her inspiration only to the truths she was told through supernatural means (visions and dreams) rather than to include strong impressions, then consistency demands the same conclusion for some of the Bible writers.

In fact, the New Testament books of Luke and Acts were written by Luke after he did research by interviewing eyewitnesses to the Jesus events (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-3). Some have said that Luke is different because he interviewed eyewitnesses, whereas Ellen White borrowed from historians who were obviously not eyewitnesses of what they wrote. But this is arbitrary reasoning; a human source is a human source. If the critics were consistent they would declare that the books of Luke and Acts were therefore not reliably accurate or even inspired books. The fact that Ellen White's critics usually do not do this is a testimony to the fact that they simply do not agree with her on some important matters of doctrine and want an excuse to continue in their views.

The logical truth is that if God has chosen a person to be an official spokesperson for Him, which is what a prophet is, then He can guide them into truth just as effectively by giving them strong impressions or directing them to the right human source as He can by giving them visions and dreams. Failure to understand that is to deny the power of God and not trusting Him in some of the methods He uses. Therefore, there is no need whatsoever for one to hold the position that either (1) some subjects (like history or science) a prophet speaks about may be suspect as to their validity, or (2) that a prophet is only to be believed as inspired if the information he or she gives was obtained from a supernatural method like visions, dreams, or an epiphany (voice of God or angels and/or an actual appearance of an angel).

One More Category

There is one more category where errors might occur. Ellen White conceded that we might have to correct some of our interpretations of the Bible if further study reveals that it is necessary.

However, she was adamant in stating that any corrections should never contradict the pillars of our faith, our basic doctrines. Note her own words on these two points:

In closely investigating every jot and tittle which we think is established truth, in comparing Scripture with Scripture, we may discover errors in our interpretations of Scripture. Christ would have the searcher of His Word sink the shaft deeper into the mines of truth. If the search is properly conducted, jewels of inestimable value will be found. [*Review and Herald*, July 12, 1898]

One will arise, and still another, with new light, which contradicts the light that God has given under the demonstration of His Holy Spirit...We are not to receive the words of those who come with a message that contradicts the special points of our faith. [*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 161]

Evidently, the “we” in the first statement above who “may discover errors in our interpretations of Scripture” includes Ellen White. But note that these errors will never contradict our fundamental doctrines. Moreover, it is only logical to believe that if there existed any errors that absolutely need to be corrected immediately or within a short period of time, the Lord would have instructed Ellen White to correct His church. Therefore, there should be no alarm that we cannot trust Ellen White’s prophetic gift even if we discover from deeper Bible study that we need to alter our understanding of some Biblical passages.

Ellen White’s Use of Literary Assistants

Some critics of Ellen White allege that her frequent use of literary assistants opened the door for some of them to insert whole paragraphs and even chapters into some of her books. Therefore, the allegation is that we cannot be certain what is inspired from the pen of Ellen White and what is only the opinion of one of her literary assistants.

In the book *One Hundred and One Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White* (1981 edition) page 87, the Ellen White Estate lists 19 different literary assistants that she used at various times throughout her prophetic ministry. Because of her limited third-grade education, Ellen White naturally felt inadequate in her writing skills such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar. W. C. White, her son, knew her practices better than most and is a reliable source of information about the processes Ellen White used to get her books ready for publication. Note his testimony below:

Mother’s copyists are entrusted with the work of correcting grammatical errors, of eliminating unnecessary repetitions, and of grouping paragraphs and sections in their best order...

Mother's workers of experience...are very familiar with her writings, are authorized to take a sentence, paragraph, or section from one manuscript and incorporate it with another manuscript where the same thought was expressed but not so clearly. But none of Mother's workers are authorized to add to the manuscripts by introducing thoughts of their own. [W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, May 7, 1900]

Ellen White entrusted Marian Davis with greater authority than any of her other literary assistants and even called her "my bookmaker." She was authorized to take Ellen White's articles and paste them onto blank pages and was generally trusted more to put together entire documents that way. However, Ellen White was emphatically clear that even these books were her own writings:

The books are not Marian's productions, but my own, gathered from all my writings. Marian has a large field from which to draw, and her ability to arrange the matter is of great value to me. It saves my poring over a mass of matter, which I have no time to do. [*Selected Messages*, Book 3, p. 91]

With all the work that her literary assistants did, including Marian Davis, Ellen White testified that she always read and checked a manuscript before it is sent to the publisher. "I read over all that is copied, to see that everything is as it should be. I read all the book manuscript before it is sent to the printer." [Ellen White, Letter 133, 1902] There is therefore no need to doubt that when Ellen White's name was on a book or in a magazine article it was indeed her work.

It is interesting to note that some Bible prophets also used literary assistants. We know that Jeremiah had an assistant named Baruch (Jeremiah 36:4-8). The apostle Paul indicates that he at least sometimes used one because in Galatians 6:11 he tells his readers that he wrote *large letters...with my own hand!* This suggests that Paul had an eye problem, perhaps left over from the temporary blindness he suffered on the road to Damascus. In turn, it implies that it may have been his ordinary practice to use a literary assistant called an amanuensis. I and II Peter are so different in style and grammatical skill that some have considered one of them to be a fraud. However, Peter may have written II Peter, which is very poor in grammar and style in contrast to I Peter. And I Peter may well have been written by an amanuensis. Also, the book of Revelation contains many examples of poor grammar and style in contrast to the apostle John's other books. He certainly would not have had an amanuensis on the island of Patmos, where he was a prisoner and where he wrote Revelation, whereas he could have had in Ephesus, where it is believed he wrote his gospel and three letters.

We must also note that the first-century Christians would not accept a book or letter as inspired Scripture unless they were convinced it had been written by an apostle or a close associate of an apostle. It was assumed that a close associate of an apostle would have what he wrote checked by

the apostle he was associated with. Mark, a close associate of Peter, and Luke, a close associate of Paul, were such writers of the New Testament. Therefore, some of the Bible writers provide a precedent for what Ellen White did with her literary assistants.

Degrees of Revelation?

Occasionally, a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church will come to disagree with something Ellen White taught. Then in order to maintain his belief in her inspiration as a prophet, he will hypothesize the idea that there are degrees of revelation. Such members usually agree that inspiration is inspiration—that you are either inspired by the Holy Spirit or you are not. So while they agree that there cannot be different degrees of inspiration, they assert that there are degrees of *revelation*. That is to say, the Holy Spirit does not supervise the non-canonical prophets as closely as He did the Biblical prophets because He knew the latter were writing what would be placed in the Holy Scriptures. Because the Bible was going to be the standard of all faith and practice, He knew He had to very carefully supervise the authors of Scripture. However, non-canonical prophets may occasionally teach errors.

Before examining two New Testament Scriptures that are used to defend this concept of degrees of revelation, we employ sanctified reason to refute it. If the Holy Spirit inspires a person, then it is only reasonable to believe that He would also provide the correct understanding of the contents of His inspiration—even if He has to correct the prophet in a later epiphany, vision, or dream. Therefore, the revelation based on inspiration will be accurate. To believe otherwise contradicts the purpose for inspiration in the first place. After all, it is designed to reveal something of importance to God's people.

Two New Testament passages are most often used to argue for the idea of degrees of revelation: (1) I Corinthians 14:29 and (2) I Thessalonians 5:19-22. We will discuss them each below.

I Corinthians 14:29

This text reads as follows, *Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge*. This text has been interpreted to mean that (1) there were genuine prophets in the New Testament Church; (2) their statements should be judged by the rest of the church to see if they are accurate, implying that (3) non-canonical prophets were sometimes wrong in their pronouncements and were therefore less reliable than Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles.

First, we agree with the advocates of degrees of revelation that these are genuine prophets that Paul wrote about. In contrast to this, some scholars maintain that these New Testament prophets were simply ordinary church members who were prophets only in the sense that they spoke for God without having the gift of prophecy. The major argument for this view is that verse 31

envisions the possibility of every member prophesying: *For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.* To this evidence is added the apostle's statement in verse 39 that *therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy.*

We reject this view as untenable and unnecessary for several reasons. First, the word *prophets* in verse 29 is nowhere else used in the New Testament of the ordinary believer. Every believer is a saint, but never are all members called *prophets*, unless this passage is the exception. Second, all scholars recognize that I Corinthians 12-14 form a unit, and chapter 12 makes it very clear that Paul is speaking about the spiritual gift of prophecy. Third, by his rhetorical question in verse 29, *Are all prophets?* he emphatically declares that not all believers are prophets. Therefore, when Paul says that *you can all prophesy* he is particularly talking to the prophets in the church. Thus, in keeping with the majority of expositors we hold that the prophets in the church at Corinth were genuine prophets.

The word for *judge* in verse 29 is a strong verb that is related to the word for *discerning*, a word that occurs in I Corinthians 12:10. In 12:10 one of the spiritual gifts is the gift of *discerning of spirits*. It is significant that this gift immediately follows the reference to the gift of prophecy just as the gift of *interpretation of tongues* follows reference to the *gift of tongues*. This strongly suggests, along with a reference to a different form of the same word (*judge*) that when Paul told the members to judge, or discern, what a prophet says, he was telling them to identify whether that prophet was a true or false prophet. This understanding fits quite well with the warnings against false prophets in the church given elsewhere in the New Testament (Matthew 7:15; 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22; II Peter 2:1; I John 4:1). Therefore, this passage does not teach that non-canonical genuine prophets can teach error and that church members have the right to decide whether what a genuine prophet teaches is an error or not.

I Thessalonians 5:19-22

Do not quench the Spirit

Do not despise prophecies

Test all things; hold fast what is good

Abstain from every form of evil

The presence of the definite article *the* with the word for *Spirit* supports the common view that it refers to the Holy Spirit. Just as a person can *grieve* the Holy Spirit, one can also *quench* His fire (Ephesians 4:30). Some scholars understand the word *prophecies* as expositions from Scripture. But it seems better to view the word as messages given by those who possess, or claim to possess, the gift of prophecy, especially because *prophecies* is tied to *the Spirit* in the parallel statement. The command to *Test all things*, in this context, must mean to test the *prophecies*. In that same connection, after one has tested a prophecy, believers are told to *hold fast what is good and Abstain*

from every form of evil. The Greek word for *good* here refers to something that is intrinsically good in contrast to that which has a good effect on others. Furthermore, the verbs *hold fast* and *Abstain* are linguistically related to each other. Finally, the word for *evil* is in sharp contrast to that which is *good*. Thus, all these verses are connected together as a single unit. Therefore, if this passage taught that a genuine prophet sometimes teaches error, then we would have to also conclude that sometimes he or she might teach *evil*. Surely, such an interpretation goes too far. Even acknowledging that a genuine prophet is not infallible, it is inconceivable that he would ever teach evil. Therefore, we conclude that this passage does not support that non-canonical or post-Biblical prophets sometimes teach error so that there must be degrees of revelation.

Ellen White and the Bible

Critics often accuse Seventh-day Adventists of placing Ellen White's writings above the Scriptures despite our official statements to the contrary. The accusation is made because many of our members view her writings as an inspired commentary on the Bible. Others with a different view sometimes feel pressured that they must agree with Ellen White before they publish their own understandings of Scripture. For these reasons, the allegation is made that if everyone must agree with her writings, and they are an inspired commentary on the Bible, then in reality she has the last word on what the Bible means. Thus, we are accused of substituting Ellen White in place of the Pope for who has the final say on what the Bible teaches and are not truly Protestants. Also, for this reason, for those who do not outright reject her prophetic gift, they advocate that Ellen White's writings should only be used for devotional and homiletical purposes and not for exegetical or doctrinal purposes.

If that were the official position of the church, we would agree that this is not a Protestant understanding of the Bible as the last word on what it means itself—that the Bible is its own best interpreter and does not need a final arbiter of what it means, whether that arbiter is the church or a prophet within the church. But let us make four fundamental points in response to the allegation.

First, in the formation of the denomination's doctrinal understandings, serious persistent Bible study always preceded any pronouncements by Ellen White. After the denominational scholars and pastors studied a topic carefully and arrived at a consensus, the Lord would give Ellen White a vision to confirm their conclusion. In other circumstances they would reach an impasse, and the Lord would send her a vision to instruct as to which position was the correct one. But the point is that persistent Bible study, which she usually was not a part of because of her lack of natural understanding, always preceded her testimony on the subject being discussed.

Second, not a single doctrine of the church is dependent upon Ellen White for support. If the Lord had never called a prophet within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we would still teach all of the doctrines that we now do because every one of them is supported by Scripture. That is not true

for any other church which claims to have had a prophet. If Joseph Smith were removed from the equation, the Church of Latter-Day Saints could not even exist. The same is true for the Christian Scientists if Mary Baker Eddy had not lived among them.

Third, as we quoted earlier in this chapter, Ellen White made repeated and consistent statements that the Bible was the ultimate authority for all doctrines and faith and practice within our church. She constantly pointed members to the Bible.

Finally, as already noted, Ellen White acknowledged that we might have to correct some of our understandings of the Bible passages, although none of the necessary corrections will ever affect the purity of any of our doctrines or pillars of our faith.

The fact that many of our people use Ellen White as the last word on what the Bible means and that some of our people, including some of our leaders, have stated that her writings are an inspired commentary on the Bible does not make her a false prophet. It only means that there is much work to do to educate our members about the nature of inspiration and the work of prophets, and particularly her relationship to the Bible in more than just platitudes about her writings being the lesser light to point people to the greater light. We must make practical applications of these truths to make them real and effective for our members.

We agree that the statement that her writings are an inspired commentary on the Bible is a misleading statement and has undoubtedly created confusion among us. First, a commentary on a book of the Bible is a scholarly exegesis of key word studies, grammar of the original language, contextual studies, and historical data to derive the precise meaning of the text as far as is humanly possible. Ellen White almost never did that and said that she was incapable of doing it with her level of education. Second, if a “commentary” then is regarded as inspired, then it is difficult to see how that commentary is not the final word on what the Bible means. Now if by this language a person simply means that Ellen White’s writings were inspired by God and that she commented on Scripture, then we have no opposition to that. And that may be what some people mean when they use that language. Nevertheless, it is misleading and the cause of a great deal of confusion to say that her writings are an inspired commentary on the Bible. Furthermore, it needlessly gives her critics ammunition to use against us.

Below is the official denominational statement on the gift of prophecy taken from the Seventh-day Adventist World Church’s web site:

The Scriptures testify that one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and we believe it was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. Her writings speak with prophetic authority and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church. They also

make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Num. 12:6; II Chron. 20:20; Amos 3:7; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:14-21; II Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10; 22:8-9.)

There is nothing in that statement that is not thoroughly Protestant. The Ellen G. White Estate also agrees with Ellen White herself that acceptance of her prophetic gift is not a prerequisite for church membership (*One Hundred and One Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White*, 1981 edition, p. 41). However, those members who have not accepted her gift are not free to express their doubts or to otherwise undermine her ministry through her writings. And the fact that her writings are believed to “speak with prophetic authority” does not mean that her writings are equal to or above the Bible.

The fact that church membership does not require one to accept her prophetic gift—just that the gift of prophecy is expected to be in the church at some point—does not mean that those who officially represent the church as pastors, evangelists, educators, Bible workers, literature evangelists, and church administrators should be free to not accept her gift. The church as a corporate body does officially recognize her prophetic gift to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, so it is only proper that its official representatives believe that also.

Unfortunately, there are a few such official representatives who do not support her prophetic gift or who have reinterpreted it in one of the false ways we have talked about in this chapter. For that matter, we also have a few pastors and educators that violate other key pillars of our faith. We do not believe in conspiracy theories or see plotters behind every pulpit or lectern. The vast majority of our leaders are hard-working honest souls who are laboring for little pay in order to be a part of the Three Angels’ Message in a tangible day-to-day way. But there are a few who should be counseled with, and if they cannot conscientiously come to accept the truth, then they should have their ministerial and/or denominational educational credentials revoked. Even if church administrators have no authority to actually fire educators, the least we should do is not to give them the sanction of the church by continuing to allow them to hold valid denominational credentials. Some problem areas in the church in a few of our institutions or conferences are the following:

- A few of our educators actually believe in a theory of evolution.
- Some of our pastors teach the Moral Influence Theory of the Atonement and deny the Substitutionary Atonement.
- Some deny or are skeptical of the Pre-Advent Investigative Judgment doctrine.
- Too many believe that Ellen White’s writings should only be used for devotional or homiletical purposes and that they carry no actual authority.
- Too many believe that canonical and/or non-canonical prophets can only be trusted to teach truth only (1) if they are teaching on spiritual/theological matters (and not on history,

science, or health) or (2) if they are speaking about matters obtained by supernatural means (like visions, dreams, or epiphanies) and not by using other human sources or from strong impressions.

We cannot help but strongly believe that if Ellen White were still with us today that she would have strong feelings that such leaders should not work as official representatives for the remnant church.

Conclusion

We can summarize our findings in the following bulleted outline:

- Ellen White's visions were demonstrably not the result of epilepsy or other brain disorders.
- Ellen White's visions demonstrated that they are of a supernatural origin.
- Ellen White successfully met the five Biblical criteria of a true prophet of God and should thus be reckoned as God's prophetic voice to the remnant church.
- Ellen White's borrowing from other authors, even when she did not give them written credit, did not violate either the legal or ethical standards of her day, and did not represent anything out of the ordinary for her day. The Holy Spirit led her to the best authors to derive details and more eloquent language that reflected the accuracy of the topic.
- Any errors of history in Ellen White's writings are of an incidental nature and do not negate the main thrust of her use of that history. Moreover, they are of the same nature as the few historical errors in Scripture.
- The fact that she grew in her understanding of the Bible is not uniquely different from the Bible writers and does not therefore subtract from her inspiration as God's messenger.
- Inspiration meant that the Holy Spirit guided her to the truth regardless of the means used to obtain that truth and would have corrected her if the issue were sufficiently important to do so.
- Ellen White said that we may have a wrong interpretation of some Scriptures that diligent Bible study may require us to correct. But any such corrections will never affect the purity of a doctrine or one of the pillars of our faith.

- Ellen White's use of literary assistants was not qualitatively different from the use of an amanuensis by various Bible writers. And she always read and approved all her materials before sending them off to the publisher.
- There are no degrees of revelation. The same Holy Spirit who superintended the Bible writers also superintended Ellen White to prevent her from teaching any substantive errors.
- Ellen White did not create any of our Bible doctrines. All of them can be defended from Scripture alone.
- Strictly speaking, Ellen White's writings are not an inspired commentary on the Bible. First, she rarely if ever did the exegetical work that Bible commentators do. Second, she argued that our people should go directly to the Scriptures and study them in order to understand them.
- Our church is thoroughly Protestant in our understanding of Ellen White's prophetic gift and relationship to the Bible. Despite that fact, too many of our members still do not understand what they should about inspiration and how it works or what it means practically speaking that her writings constitute a lesser light to lead us to the greater light.
- Church membership does not require belief in Ellen White's prophetic gift, although members may not properly express doubts or otherwise undermine others' confidence in her writings.
- Church pastors, evangelists, educators, Bible workers, literature evangelists, and church administrators should be fully supportive of Ellen White's gift and have a balanced and correct view of inspiration and how it works.

Having concluded that Ellen White had the genuine gift of prophecy, and that there are no degrees of revelation, we can safely infer that her writings are reliable conveyors of Christ's messages to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We therefore cannot pick and choose among those writings that which we may safely agree with and that which we may disagree with. At the same time, most of our study should be in the Bible as the great standard of faith and practice for the Christian. Ellen White's prophetic writings are a great source of greater details not given in the Bible, but they must remain subordinate to the Bible, just as she herself taught. Nevertheless, we must recognize that her counsels to the church have resulted and continue to result in a great blessing to the church and its global mission. Therefore, as both individual members and as part of the great Advent Movement, we echo the words of Scripture, *Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper* (II Chronicles 20:20).