

ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE

HERALDS OF NEW LIGHT



ROGER W. COON

Heralds of New Light

Ellen G. White

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About the Author

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

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by Roger W Coon

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Another Prophet to the Remnant?

Many Seventh-day Adventists who arose on Saturday morning, July 17, 1915, felt a foreboding uneasiness as they prepared to worship at their churches. For at 3:40 p.m. the afternoon before, their prophet, Ellen G. White, had died in St. Helena, California, at the age of eighty-seven. For the first time in their history, Adventists had no living prophet in their midst. What would this mean for them as a people?

Seventy years earlier this woman had been called to the prophetic ministry on an unknown day in December 1844, just barely seventeen years of age (her birthday was November 26), and scant weeks after the “Great Disappointment” which followed in the wake of Christ’s failure to return to earth on October 22 as predicted by William Miller and his followers.

A handful of ex-Millerites, accepting the genuineness of Ellen’s gift and call, and also the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, coalesced around the leadership of Mrs. White, her husband, James (an ex-Millerite preacher), and Joseph Bates (a retired sea captain). Sixteen years later, in 1860, they numbered some 3,500 baptized members as they formally organized their Seventh-day Adventist Church. [6]

In the next seventy years Ellen received some 2,000 prophetic dreams and visions, and 25 million words flowed from her pen in dozens of books and thousands of periodical articles (to say nothing of an incredibly voluminous private correspondence). By the time of her death the worldwide church that resulted from her leadership numbered in excess of 130,000 members in North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and the islands of the sea.

And now she was gone! There had not been another prophet in the church during her lifetime, though some had arisen making such claims. Would God now call a new one? These questions were on everyone’s lips as the church pondered its future.

Yet troublesome as they were, the questions were not new. During the final decade of her ministry Mrs. White was asked repeatedly about the possibility of a successor should her life not be spared to see Jesus come.

Invariably she replied with a two-part response: (1) the Lord has not revealed to me whether or not there will be another prophet; but (2) “whether or not my life is spared, my writings will constantly speak, and their work will go forward as long as time shall last.”¹

The Lord revealed to her that what she had already written was sufficient to carry the church through triumphantly to the second coming.

The Rise of False Prophets

But if Ellen White had no light on the question of a possible prophetic successor, she was in no doubt about whether false prophets would arise.

[7] She stated emphatically that many false prophets *would* arise,² and that many people would be deceived thereby.³ She also said that their numbers would continue to increase worldwide,⁴ many claimants would be genuinely sincere though misguided (not all of them would be hoaxes or frauds),⁵ and of these, some would even produce supernatural manifestations in support of their claims.⁶ She specifically warned:

Let none cherish the idea that special providences
or miraculous manifestations are to be the proof of the
genuineness of their work or of the ideas they advocate.
If we keep these things before the people, they will

¹Endnotes Ellen G. White, [Selected Messages 1:55](#) (Washington, D.C., Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958) (hereafter referred to as 1 SM, 2 SM, etc.). For additional 27 background, see Arthur L. White, “Will There Be Another Special Messenger?” (April, 1949), in his *Notes and Papers Concerning Ellen G. White and the Spirit of Prophecy* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, Inc., 1974) 107111.

²[Selected Messages 2:49, 392.](#)

³[Selected Messages 2:72, 392.](#)

⁴Ellen G. White, [Evangelism, 610](#) (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946). (Cited hereafter as Ev.)

⁵[Selected Messages 2:72.](#)

⁶[Selected Messages 2:49.](#)

produce an evil effect, and unhealthful emotion.... Satan will work in a most subtle manner to introduce human inventions clothed with angel garments. But...the Bible will never be superceded by miraculous manifestations.

7

Mrs. White especially emphasized five *results* to the church from these false prophetic manifestations: (1) deception ⁸ (2) confusion, ⁹ (3) rebellion, ¹⁰ (“Rebellion and apostasy are in the very air we breathe.” “I question whether genuine rebellion is ever curable.” ¹¹), (4) doctrinal heresies, ¹² and (5) a discrediting of the legitimate prophetic gifts. ¹³

Ellen White spoke out decidedly on the church’s obligation to test those claiming to be prophets ¹⁴ and the ideas which they advocate. ¹⁵

Testing Those Who Claim the Prophetic Gift

Looking to the future, Mrs. White wrote in 1890:

There will be those who will claim to have visions. When God gives you *clear evidence* that the vision is from Him, you may accept it, but do not accept it on any other evidence; for people are going to be led more and more astray in foreign countries and in America. The Lord wants His people to act like men and women of sense. ¹⁶

[8]

⁷Selected Messages 2:48.

⁸Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1946), 152.

⁹Selected Messages 2:72.

¹⁰Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:173 (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948). See also Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, 442 (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1917); *Selected Messages* 2:392-395.

¹¹Selected Messages 2:394, 393

¹²Selected Messages 2:393

¹³Selected Messages 2:77, 78.

¹⁴Evangelism, 360.

¹⁵Evangelism, 610.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, emphasis supplied

Such counsel, though timely, is not new, for it merely echoes the New Testament admonition that we not accept at face value—gullibly and uncritically—everyone that comes along with such claims.

Luke declared that the Berean Christians were “more noble” than their counterparts at Thessalonica in that the former did not tacitly accept even Paul’s teachings (who possessed the two highest gifts of the Holy Spirit: apostleship and prophecy—see [1 Corinthians 12:28](#)). Rather, they insisted on checking out everything first, validating Paul’s doctrine by their Bible, the Old Testament Scriptures.

While the Bereans were genuinely open-minded (“they received the word with all readiness of mind”), they nevertheless “searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” [Acts 17:11](#). Paul would doubtless have been among the first to praise them. Perhaps it is significant that while there is no Epistle to the Bereans extant, there are two epistles to the Thessalonians.

Many Bible scholars believe that 1 Thessalonians was among the very earliest (if not the very first) of the New Testament books to be written. Some date it less than twenty years after Christ’s resurrection and fifteen years before Mark’s Gospel was penned.¹⁷ The epistle known today as 1 John—one of the very last books of the New Testament to be produced was written forty to fifty years later.¹⁸ And from first to last runs a common theme: Anyone arising within the Christian community claiming the prophetic gift must submit to testing by that community.

[9] Said Paul: Don’t quench the Holy Spirit (by neglecting or dishonoring any of His gifts); don’t despise prophecy (one of the most important of them); but, instead, “prove all things.” See [1 Thessalonians 5:19-21](#). Anytime that which is thus tested proves genuine and valuable, hang on to it!

Half a century later John agreed: Beloved Christian friend, don’t gullibly, uncritically believe and accept every “spirit” that comes along. Why? “Because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” [1 John 4:1](#). In addition to the genuine Holy Spirit, Satan, that

¹⁷Raymond Flower, “Historical Introduction” to H. V. Morton’s, *In Search of the Holy Land* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1979), 9. See also [The S.D.A. Bible Commentary 7:225](#)(1980). (Cited hereafter as 1 BC) (2 BC, etc.)

¹⁸7 BC 625

great unholy spirit, is at work. Both can—and do—work miracles. Supernatural phenomena can hardly be a reliable test of validity. Therefore, “try” the spirits—convene an inquiry, hail them into court. And bring evidence to bear. Then—and only then—decide.

Notice what the prophets said:

John: “Try the spirits.” [1 John 4:1](#).

Paul: “Prove all things.” [1 Thessalonians 5:21](#).

Ellen White: Demand “clear evidence.”

One may, therefore, logically inquire at this point, What constitutes “clear evidence”? If, as Mrs. White solemnly declared, false prophets would bring “more danger to His [God’s] disciples than would persecution,”¹⁹ how may they be detected? And how can their teachings be validated, or authenticated?

How Not to Test a Prophet

We must be very careful to use good evidence and not bad in the “testing” or “trial” of a prophet that Paul, John, and Ellen White call for. There are two basic kinds of evidence available to the Christian: (1) that which he sees, hears, and feels in the world around him, and [10] (2) the written Word of God.

Objective evidence is usually thought of as that which makes its primary appeal to the five senses, especially to the eye and the ear. For many, “seeing is believing.” But this is extremely dangerous when it comes to spiritual matters. For the person who is seeking to evaluate spiritual issues, the Word of God must take precedence over the “objective” evidence in the world around him—to the point that Ellen White, speaking of the “objective” miracles that Satan will perform in the last days, once asked, “Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses?”²⁰

It was against just such “objective” evidence that Jesus warned His disciples when, only a few hours before His crucifixion, His

¹⁹[Evangelism, 359](#).

²⁰Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950), 625. (Cited hereafter as GC) 28

disciples asked Him for signs of His second coming. Four times in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew He used the words *deceive* or *deceived* in the context of detecting end-time false christs and false prophets. [Verses 4, 5, 11, 24](#). And He pointedly remarked that these deceivers would seek to win their case by offering “objective” evidence: “great *signs* and *wonders*.” [Verse 24](#).

Ellen White illustrates the wrong use of objective evidence in a remarkably gripping two-page account of an as-yet-future event, “the crowning act in the great drama of deception,” the attempted counterfeiting of the second coming of Jesus Christ.²¹ This counterfeit will especially appeal to the eye and the ear.

[11] *Evidence appealing to the eye.* Satan, whom Paul years ago characterized as “an angel of light” (see [2 Corinthians 11:14](#)), will appear “in different parts of the earth” as “a majestic being of dazzling brightness,”²² strongly bringing to mind John’s description of the risen Christ who visited him on the island of Patmos. See [Revelation 1:13-15](#). The aura of glory surrounding this pseudo-Christ will be “unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld.” Onlookers will see him lifting up his hands and pronouncing a blessing in the manner Christ adopted while on earth. And he then “heals the diseases of the people.”²³ So much for the “objective” evidence which appeals to the eye.

Evidence appealing to the ear. “His voice is *soft* and *subdued*, yet full of melody.” He speaks in “*gentle, compassionate tones*” words spoken by Christ while on earth and recorded in Scripture.²⁴ So much for the “objective” evidence which appeals to the ear.

Then in his assumed guise Satan claims that he really did change the Sabbath to Sunday. Perhaps this change wasn’t as well documented in Scripture as it might have been—but, who cares now? “Christ” is here, the people reason, and the living Lord certainly can supersede the written Word, can He not? Satan commands all to honor the first day of the week, and any who persist in clinging to the seventh-day Sabbath (now that “a greater than the temple” is here—see [Matthew 12:6](#)) are accused of blaspheming his name!

²¹The Great Controversy, 624, 625.

²²The Great Controversy, 624, emphasis supplied.

²³*Ibid.*, emphasis supplied.

²⁴*Ibid.*, emphasis supplied.

How effective will all this “objective” evidence be? “This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion.”²⁵

Now let it be said, clearly, that there is a place for objective evidence in spiritual matters, such as the physical phenomena associated with a prophet in vision: loss of ordinary strength ([Daniel 10:8, 17](#)), unconsciousness of immediate surroundings ([Daniel 10:9](#); [2 Corinthians 12:1, 2](#)), cessation of breathing ([Daniel 10:17](#)), eyes open but in a trancelike state ([Numbers 24:3, 4, 16](#)), the reception of supernatural strength ([Daniel 10:18, 19](#)), and the ability to speak aloud while in vision under certain circumstances ([Daniel 10:15, 16](#)).

[12]

Ellen White *did* demonstrate these characteristics in vision: she talked without breathing, and held a large, heavy Bible above her head for an extended period of time during more than one early vision. These signs *were* impressive—as God doubtless intended them to be.

But the church held then, as it continues to hold today, that these things were evidence, not proof. They were evidence that a supernatural agency was at work, but not proof of which power was at work, whether God’s Holy Spirit or that great *unholy* spirit, Satan. The phenomena themselves did not validate their origin. Ellen White’s authenticity as a true prophet had to be determined by *biblical* evidence.

It is not at all surprising that, after describing the dazzling array of apparently objective evidence which Satan will employ in his counterfeit of the second coming, Ellen White immediately points out that this grand exhibition, when submitted to the evidence of the Word, proves spurious for two reasons. First, “the teachings of this false christ are not in accordance with the Scriptures”²⁶ (he pronounces a blessing on those who have the mark of the beast; he claims that Sunday is sacred and Saturday is not). Second, Satan is not permitted to counterfeit the manner of the second coming. Scripture teaches that Christ will come “with clouds” ([Revelation 1:7](#)) and that at His return those who are saved will be “caught up ... in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air” ([1 Thessalonians](#)

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶[The Great Controversy](#), 625, emphasis supplied.

[13] 4:17). Thus the “objective” phenomena of Satan’s counterfeit second coming, when tested by the objective Word of God, prove to be spurious.

Immediately after making these strong points, Ellen White says with great force:

Only those who have been *diligent* students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the *powerful delusion* [subjective phenomena] *that takes the world captive*. By the Bible testimony [objective evidence] these will detect the deceiver in his disguise. To all the testing will come.... Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the [subjective] evidence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible and the bible only? ²⁷

Four Bible Tests of a True Prophet

When Ellen White called for “clear evidence” to test those in our time who claim to have dreams and visions from the Lord, she doubtless had in mind four primary objective tests of authenticity given in Scripture: (1) agreement with prior revelation, (2) the “fruits” of the prophet’s life, (3) the fulfillment of the prophet’s predictions, and (4) the prophet’s assessment of Jesus Christ. We will now examine each of these tests more carefully.

Agreement With Prior Revelation

The teachings of the new prophet must not contradict that which was taught by older, established prophets. Each succeeding prophet must agree with the cumulative teachings of preceding prophets. However, there is an important distinction that must be made here: There is a difference between “new light” and contradiction with “old light.” New light is information that goes beyond that which was provided by earlier prophets, but does not contradict it.

[14] Several years ago an Adventist college student who was serving

²⁷ *Ibid.*, emphasis supplied.

as a student missionary in Indonesia became disenchanted with Ellen White and her writings. Eventually he left the church. In a “Here I Stand” manifesto which he sent to his former associates in Southeast Asia, the young man cited as one of his reasons for abandoning Ellen White that she taught things that are not in the Bible.

Of course she does! The New Testament writers provide information not found in the Old. This young man failed to recognize the significant distinction between *extrabiblical* teachings (information not explicitly found in Scripture) and *antibiblical* teachings (those that are contrary to what is taught in Scripture).

A careful examination of the writings of Ellen white on the subject of “new light” suggests two points worth noting: (1) “new light” will continue to come to God’s people who are willing to study and search for truth; and (2) new light never disagrees with old light. If a new prophet never gave us anything beyond that which had already been revealed, then he would simply be restating old truths, and a non-prophet could do that just as well.

Let it be said loud and clear that a number of the ideas that have floated around in Adventism during the past half dozen or so years, highly touted as “new light,” are neither “new” (they have been voiced by others over the years) nor are they “light”—unless, tragically, it was light that had gone out in darkness. See [Matthew 6:23](#).

Ellen White provides a wealth of illuminating extrabiblical material in her writings. It neither disagrees with or contradicts what the Bible teaches, but goes beyond it. And in going beyond, it illuminates and amplifies our understanding of what the Bible says. For example, in four very brief verses of Scripture ([Matthew 27:51-53](#); [Ephesians 4:8](#)) we find eight facts that identify the persons whom Jesus raised to life subsequent to His own resurrection. A careful examination of half a dozen relevant passages in the Ellen White writings reveals *an additional ten facts*, none of which contradict Scripture, but all of which enlarge our understanding of just who those interesting persons really were.

[15]

Indeed, when Mrs. White revised some of her books for presentation to the general public, she deleted certain extrabiblical details so that the reader would not be distracted by seeing unfamiliar material associated with the biblical narrative.

Marian Davis, chief of Mrs. White's literary assistants, wrote about this to Edson White in 1895:

Since these books are sent out without explanation as to the authority by which the author speaks, it was thought best to avoid, as far as we could, statements for which the Bible seems to furnish no proof, or which to the ordinary reader appear to contradict the Bible. Better to give the reader what they will accept and profit by than to excite criticism and questioning that will lead them to discredit the whole.... Sister White says that Christ was twice crowned with thorns, but as the Bible mentions only the second crowning, it was thought best to omit the first, or rather to give the second instead of the first. ²⁸

For the same reason, many statements such as "I saw," "the angel said," etc., which indicate that certain information was provided in a vision, were deleted from works prepared for a wider audience for the same reason: to avoid unnecessary distraction and controversy.

[16] Isaiah taught us how to distinguish between true "new light" and that which is mere counterfeit. "To the law and to the testimony," he said, "if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." [Isaiah 8:20](#).

The Hebrews divided the Old Testament into three divisions: (1) the Law (the first five books of Moses), (2) the Prophets ("testimony"), and (3) the sacred writings. Isaiah meant that if a new prophet teaches something that disagrees with the old established prophets, it is not new light; indeed it is no light.

Jesus added the final postscript when He told Nicodemus that the ultimate condemnation was not that men were in moral and spiritual darkness. The condemnation was, rather, that when genuine light came along, men chose to remain in darkness rather than follow the light to truth and salvation. See [John 3:19-21](#).

²⁸Letter, Marian Davis to James Edson White, December 22, 1894, in Robert W. Olson's, "How the Desire of Ages Was Written," unpublished monograph (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, Inc., May 23, 1979), 30, 31.

Fruits of the Prophet's Life

A second biblical test of a prophet is the witness of his life. Twice in His Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” [Matthew 7:20](#); see [verse 16](#).

This test applies in two ways: (1) in the prophet's own life, and (2) in the lives of those who follow him. Both are legitimate areas of investigation, and both are necessary.

There is, however, one pitfall into which the unwary “fruit inspector” may fall: He may look for sinless perfection, either in the life of the prophet or in the lives of those who follow him. The truth is that those who look for perfection in a prophet will not find it, for “all have sinned.” [Romans 3:23](#). All of the prophets in Bible times were sinners—some of them, such as David, rather lurid ones. The only Prophet who never sinned was Jesus of Nazareth. All the others sinned repeatedly, including Ellen white—a fact that she often affirmed. [17]

If this is true, how may the fruit of a prophet's life be a test of his authenticity? Ellen white gives the key, in an oft-quoted statement in her classic book on the Christian life, *Steps to Christ*. “The character [which is the fruit of a person's life] is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts.” ²⁹

It is the *trend* of the life, the direction in which one is going, that we must measure by the fruit of a prophet's life. All good people occasionally do bad things, and all bad people occasionally do good things. Every life has a trend—a very sobering thought, once you come to think about it. My life has a trend. So does yours. What is the nature of that trend? It is this *trend of the life* that the test of “fruits” seeks to measure.

Predictions Fulfilled

A third biblical test of a prophet's genuineness is stated twice in the Old Testament. Jeremiah phrases it from a positive perspective: “The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the

²⁹Ellen G. White, [Steps to Christ](#), 57, 58 (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1956).

prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.” [Jeremiah 28:9](#). Moses phrased this test from a negative perspective: “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.” [Deuteronomy 18:22](#).

[18] Jeremiah and Moses both mean that a true prophet’s predictions will come to pass. *Generally*. But—and this is most crucial to an understanding of this biblical test—the *element of conditionality must be considered in connection with this test*. And it is interesting to note that not only do both Jeremiah and Moses introduce the matter of conditionality, but both introduce it before they define the test of fulfillment!

Jeremiah gives his test of fulfillment in [Jeremiah 28:9](#), but he introduces the issue of conditionality a full ten chapters earlier. See chapters [18:6-10](#); [26:2-6](#). Moses prescribes the test of fulfillment in [Deuteronomy 18:22](#); but he discusses conditionality as early as [Deuteronomy 8:19](#). See also [chapter 28:1, 2, 13-15](#).³⁰

One of the best biblical examples of conditionality affecting the fulfillment of a prophet’s prediction is Jonah’s experience in the Old Testament. It is particularly significant that Jonah did not state the conditional element anywhere in his oral, public messages, yet later developments in the story make this point quite clear. And despite the apparent failure of Jonah’s prophecy, Jesus considered him to be a genuine prophet (see [Matthew 12:39](#); [Luke 11:29](#)), and so may we.

One other factor that needs to be considered as we evaluate the fulfillment of a prophet’s predictions: Satan has the ability to make limited predictions concerning the future which do, in fact, come to pass! Satan has a degree of control over the affairs, and even the bodies, of righteous men and women. When God laid down the ground rules for Satan’s test of Job’s faithfulness He said, “Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand” to take his life. [Job 1:12](#). Satan was able to torment Job with

³⁰See [Zechariah 6:15](#); [2 Chronicles 15:2](#); “The Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy,” 4 BC, 25-38.

painful boils, but he was limited in that he could not take Job's life.

In another tragic example, King Saul departed so far from God that Satan had total control of him and could predict his death twenty-four hours in advance. See [1 Samuel 28:19](#).

In the 1880s there was a young woman in Battle Creek named Anna Garmire who claimed to have the gift of prophetic dreams and visions. The strong, dominating influence of her father was a significant factor in her experience. In writing to Mr. J. M. Garmire, Ellen white spoke three times of instances in which persons whose visions were inspired by Satan forecast events which subsequently came to pass.

During the past forty-five years [1845-90], I have had to meet persons claiming to have from God messages of reproof to others. This phase of religious fanaticism has sprung up again and again since 1844. Satan has worked in many ways to establish error. *Some things spoken in these visions came to pass*; but many things... proved utterly false, as your prophesyings and Anna's have done. Yet they would try to excuse the blunders by twisting the statements about, and giving them another meaning, and go on in the same way, deceiving and being deceived. ³¹

Again:

In one place, four in one family professed to have communications from the Lord, reproofing wrong, and they predicted things that actually did take place. This inspired confidence in them. But the things that did not take place were kept in the dark, or were treated as something mysterious, which would be understood later. Whence did these receive their inspiration?— From satanic agencies, which are many. ³²

And, finally, referring to more recent experience, Mrs. White [20] added:

³¹Selected Messages 2:75, 76, emphasis supplied.

³²Selected Messages 2:76, 77, emphasis supplied.

It was all a farce, a deception. Yet many things they told came to pass as they predicted. ³³

Ellen White then went on to answer the expected questions:

I was asked how this could be if the visions were all false. I told them that it was Satan's purpose to mingle truth with error, that through these deceptive exercises he might make of none effect the genuine work of God. ³⁴

Taking into account the element of conditionality and the limited power of Satan, fulfillment of prediction remains a legitimate test of a professed prophet.

Attitude Toward Jesus Christ

A fourth biblical test of one who claims to be a prophet is to be found in an examination of his or her attitude toward Jesus Christ. Said the apostle John:

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. [1 John 4:2, 3](#).

Satan hates the biblical teaching about the incarnation of Jesus Christ, because he refuses to accede the divinity of Christ. A true prophet will declare and not deny the divine/human nature of Jesus Christ.

[21] Satan hates Jesus. He hates the fact that God became man in Jesus, and especially that Christ defeated him (Satan) at Calvary, coming forth from the tomb triumphant on the first day of the week. Satan is so possessed by his hatred of Christ that he cannot keep it

³³Selected Messages 2:77, emphasis supplied.

³⁴Selected Messages 2:77, 78.

in check, and in “prophets” who are actuated by Satan’s spirit this hatred cannot be kept hidden very long either.

In the 1970s the psychic Jane Roberts (who died in 1984) created no small sensation by publishing messages from a “spirit guide” named Seth, who, by means of automatic writing, literally dictated messages. In automatic writing, the human medium places his/her hands limply on a typewriter keyboard and engages the mind in a contemplative stance. The medium’s fingers “walk” all over the keyboard, and coherent messages come out of the machine.

In one of Jane Robert’s books, after more than 6,000 typewritten pages of messages, “Seth” declared that:

Christ, the historical Christ, was not crucified... .

He had no intention of dying in that manner; but others felt that to fulfill the prophecies in all ways, a crucifixion was a necessity.

Christ did not take part in it. There was a conspiracy in which Judas played a role, an attempt to make a martyr out of Christ. The man chosen was drugged hence the necessity of helping him carry the cross (see [Luke 23](#))—and he was told that he was the Christ.

He believed that he was....

The tomb was empty because this same group carted the body away....

Peter three times denied the Lord ([Matthew 26](#)), saying he did not know Him because he recognized that that person was not Christ. ³⁵

Modern Claims to the Prophetic Gift

[22]

A number of persons in the Adventist Church have come forth over the years claiming to have the prophetic gift. Three of these are worthy of comment here. All three were women. Two of them made their claims during Ellen White’s lifetime, and one of them made herself known shortly after Ellen White died.

³⁵Jane Roberts, *Seth Speaks: The Eternal Validity of the Soul* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), 435, 436.

Claims during Ellen White's lifetime. In the 1880s and 1890s two counterfeit prophets arose, creating no small stir in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. To be effective, a counterfeit must resemble the original as closely as possible. Since there was a genuine female prophet in the church at that time, it is not surprising that Satan chose women as pretenders. That he also chose women with the given name Anna is even more interesting, since one of the female prophets in the New Testament also bore that name. See [Luke 2:36-38](#).

The true story of Anna Garmire, who made her claims in the 1880s, can be easily reconstructed from the Ellen White testimonies published in [Selected Messages 2:64-84](#). Anna Garmire's claim to the prophetic gift had to be tested, just as Ellen White's gift had to be tested when she received her first vision in late 1844.

Anna Garmire failed to pass the test on several counts. She made false predictions. On one occasion she said that the mark of the beast would be given after the close of probation, whereas Mrs. White had declared that since it would be a last-day test it must come before probation's close. She also said that the second coming would take place in 1884—a conclusion she based on Israel's forty-year wandering in the desert because of unbelief. Of course, Christ did not come in 1884.

[23] On the test of her fruits, she measured poorly, as well. Ellen white called her “corrupt,” because of a disappearing act and subsequent out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Also, when Uriah Smith, the editor of the Review and Herald, failed to publish Anna's “testimonies,” the Garmires conspired with a young man who worked in the Review office and who believed in Anna as a true prophetess, to steal the mailing list to this periodical so the message could be mailed directly. It was a felony crime. When Christ did not come in 1884, the disillusioned young man came forward and confessed to his theft. He was disfellowshipped and subsequently reinstated in membership in the Battle Creek church. ³⁶

In the 1890s Anna Rice-Phillips claimed that she was to join Ellen white in the prophetic office. Her cause was championed by none other than Alonzo T. Jones, a leading minister in Battle

³⁶[Selected Messages 2:65](#).

Creek. However, her testimonies consisted largely of spiritual trivia. Speaking of Anna Phillips, Ellen White said:

Childish figures and illustrations are employed in describing sacred, heavenly things, and there is a mingling of the sublime and the ridiculous. While the work has an appearance of great sanctity, it is calculated to ensnare and mislead souls. ³⁷

Incredibly, one of the main reasons advanced for the acceptance of Anna Phillips was the so-called argument from silence: “our brethren...could see nothing objectionable in them.” ³⁸

Fortunately, Ellen white was able to work quietly and kindly with this young woman. She eventually renounced her earlier spiritual experience and became a “trusted fruitful Bible instructor in the work of the church.” ³⁹

After Ellen White’s Death. The most dramatic case of a party claiming to be Ellen White’s successor was that of Margaret Rowen, ⁴⁰ a convert to Adventism from the Methodist Church in 1912, at about age thirty-one. Mrs. Rowen had a particular burden for small-group fellowship, and she formed a women’s prayer band the year after her baptism. Three years later, on June 22, 1916, during a meeting of this women’s prayer fellowship, she claimed to have received a first vision. Ellen White had now been dead eleven months. [24]

Again, Satan’s counterfeit was cleverly crafted in at least five respects: (1) Like Ellen White, Margaret Rowen was a woman the third such woman in three decades to arise claiming the prophetic gift. (2) Mrs. Rowen’s first vision, like that of Ellen White, was in connection with a ladies’ prayer fellowship. (3) While in vision Mrs. Rowen exhibited supernatural physical phenomena similar to that of Ellen White and the biblical prophets. (4) Like Ellen White, Margaret Rowen was small of stature, and (5) she also had a limited formal education.

³⁷Selected Messages 2:89; see also 85-95.

³⁸Selected Messages 2:94.

³⁹Selected Messages 2:85.

⁴⁰“Reformed Seventh-day Adventists Rowenite,” SDA Encyclopedia (1976):1190.

Mrs. Rowen fabricated a bizarre story in which she claimed that she was shown by supernatural revelation that she was not the daughter of Alfred and Matilda Wright of Los Angeles, but the illegitimate offspring of her father and a wealthy Philadelphia debutante! Her father allegedly discovered her abandoned at the city wharf, and he and Mrs. Wright informally adopted the foundling as their own!

She claimed that God providentially led her to a reunion with her “real” mother in Pennsylvania—a perfect cover to explain new-found wealth coming to her from a growing band of followers who had implicit faith in her visions.

[25] Margaret Rowen prophesied that probation for all living would close on February 6, 1924, and that Jesus would return to earth exactly one year later. She forged at least two Ellen White letters, complete with signature (though the first was a most clumsy and transparently obvious counterfeit), and adroitly succeed in getting one of them smuggled into the vault of the Ellen G. White Estate, where she subsequently arranged for its “discovery.”

Mrs. Rowen embezzled thousands of dollars from her own movement, a loss that was discovered by Dr. and Mrs. Burt Fullmer, co-leaders of her “Reformed Seventh-day Adventist Church.” Dr. Fullmer was her publications director, Mrs. Fullmer her treasurer, and they shared a duplex with the Rowens in Hollywood.

Disillusioned by this discovery and perplexed by numerous failed predictions, Dr. Fullmer confessed to being the party who smuggled the first forgery into the White Estate vault in 1919. Angered at this exposure, Margaret Rowen vowed vengeance. Late on the night of February 27, 1927, she arranged for Dr. Fullmer to be summoned to a motel cabin in a suburb of Los Angeles, where he was ambushed and nearly murdered. The occupants of an adjoining cabin, upset at what they perceived as a drunken brawl despoiling the peace of the night, summoned the police, who arrived just in time to save the doctor’s life and apprehend some of the conspirators.

Mrs. Rowen and others were tried for attempted murder in a Los Angeles superior court and served their sentences for approximately one year at San Quentin near San Francisco, after which they disappeared.

[26] The failed prediction on the second coming, which had been

widely heralded by the press across America, and the sensational trial for attempted murder brought great embarrassment to the Rowenite movement. The Reformed Seventh-day Adventist Church disintegrated soon after that, thus ending the strange case of “The Woman Who Would Be Prophet.”⁴¹

Other claims to the prophetic gift—some by doubtlessly sincere though misguided zealots, and some by charlatans with ulterior motivation have continued to be made from Ellen White’s day to our own. What are we to make of all this?

Conclusion

Will there be another genuine prophet of the Lord for the Seventh-day Adventist Church before the return of Jesus? Certainly, on the basis of [Joel 2:28-32](#), we must say that the possibility exists. Informed Seventh-day Adventists speak of Ellen White as a “further” fulfillment of that prophecy following the experiences of William Ellis Foy and Hazen Foss in the middle 1840s not as the final fulfillment.

If God sees fit to bestow the prophetic gift again on one of His remnant people before the end of time, such a person might have a role quite different from that of Ellen White, even as the role of John the Baptist was quite different from that of Moses.

In any event, if someone comes along today and says, “I am a prophet,” the church has an obligation to test this claim, even as the community of faith has had to test every prophet from the very beginning. All of the tests must be applied. The body of testing material (authenticated inspired writings from the prophets of the past) has grown to enormous size today—a formidable standard to be met by any person who claims the gift of prophecy.

[27]

The church has already been informed that it should expect counterfeit prophets just before Jesus returns. See [Matthew 24:24](#). Thus it is particularly imperative that the church today demand clear evidence before accepting the testimony of any would-be prophet as divinely inspired. Furthermore, Satan’s counterfeits will contain

⁴¹Roger W. Coon, “The ‘Tangled Web’ of Margaret Rowen The Woman Who Would Be Prophet,” unpublished monograph (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, Inc. 1987).

some truth (in certain instances, perhaps even much truth), which makes them all the more dangerous to the body of genuine believers.⁴² The predictions of some false prophets may, in a limited degree, even come to pass.

Satan works on the “wedge” principle with his human counterfeit prophets:

Many things in these visions and dreams seem to be all straight, a repetition of that which has been in the field for many years; but soon they introduce a jot here, a tittle of error there, just a little seed which takes root and flourishes, and many are defiled therewith.⁴³

Therefore the fact that there is “nothing objectionable” in the utterances of a person who claims to have received the gift of prophecy does not of itself provide the clear evidence which Ellen White declared the church must possess before it accepts such a claim.

Let all move with caution and care, lest Satan come in and wreak havoc in the church, as he has done before, with tragic consequences for all.

⁴²Selected Messages 2:86-88.

⁴³Selected Messages 2:87.29