

The End-Time Remnant and the Gift of Prophecy

Ekkehardt Mueller

Throughout history God has had faithful followers (Rev 12). By making such a statement we also acknowledge that the Old and New Testaments also recount the apostasy of God's people (Ezek 23; Rev 17; 2 Thess 2:1-4). The faithful followers of God are called remnant.

I. The End Time Remnant in Revelation 12

1. Historical Background

- Rev 12:1-2 The woman in Revelation 12 is a symbol, representing the people of God (Isa 54:5-6; Eph 5:25-32).
- Rev 12:3 The dragon is Satan (Rev 12:9).
- Rev 12:4-5 He tried to destroy the male child, Jesus Christ, who was taken to God.
- Rev 12:6 With only the church left, Satan persecuted the true believers for centuries (see also verses 13-16).
- Rev 12:17 Finally, he turns against the last descendants of the church, the remnant.

2. Major Characteristics of the Remnant

- Rev 12:17 They keep the commandments of God (the Ten Commandments including the Sabbath which were placed in the ark of the covenant—Rev 11:19; the Sabbath commandment is alluded to in Rev 14:7) and have the testimony of Jesus.
- Rev 14:12 They have also patience and faith in/of Jesus. Jesus takes center stage in their lives.

3. What is the testimony of Jesus?

- Rev 1:2, 9 The testimony of Jesus is the prophetic message, which includes the content of the Book of Revelation and the gospel.
- Rev 19:10 The “testimony of Jesus” is also defined as “the Spirit of prophecy.” It is the Holy Spirit that gives the gift of prophecy.
- Rev 22:9 This verse closely parallels Rev 19:10. Here “the brothers who have the testimony of Jesus” are the “prophets.” That means the faithful remnant of God treasures Scripture and accepts prophetic manifestations that accord with Scripture.

II. Prophecy in the Adventist Movement

New movements and philosophies emerged in the beginning of the nineteenth century such as the theory of evolution proposed by Charles Darwin and modern spiritualism. Belief systems were shaken and there arose people who claimed to be prophets of God, but were fanatics instead. In that challenging time, God intervened through the genuine gift of prophecy.

1. William Foy. As a Baptist he was preparing for the ministry. He believed in the soon coming of Jesus. On January 18, 1842 he had his first vision about the reward of the believers and the judgment of the unbelievers. He had a second vision on February 4, 1842. He was asked to proclaim what he had seen. He received a third vision shortly before October 22, 1844, the day of the Great Disappointment. And because he did not understand the vision, he refused to proclaim it.

2. Hazen Foss. Foss had a good education. He also believed in the soon return of Christ. He had his first vision shortly before October 22, 1844. When during his second vision he was asked to proclaim it, he refused. In his third vision he was warned of the consequence but persisted in his refusal. When due to strange feelings he finally called for a meeting to share what he had seen, he was not able to relate it.

Instead of proclaiming God's message he declared himself a lost man. He lived for another forty years but lost his interest in spiritual matters.

3. Ellen Gould White. E. G. Harmon, later White, was quite sick during her childhood. So she managed to have only three years of schooling. At the age of twelve she was baptized. The entire Harmon family was disfellowshipped from the Methodist Church due to their connection with the Millerites and their expectation of the soon coming of Jesus. With the age of seventeen Ellen had her first vision and, in spite of opposition, she proclaimed the messages received. When God requested her to write down the visions, the task was taxing in the beginning but after some time it became easier. Later she experienced relatively good health and died in 1915 at the age of 87. She affirmed biblical doctrines that others had found through intense study. She wrote many books, strengthened individuals and the Adventist Church as a whole. She never held an ecclesiastical office. She claimed having received divine revelations in a supernatural way. Foy still lived when Ellen White related her visions. He declared that he had seen the same scenes. Foy was once in the house of his sister in which some Adventists met to hear Ellen White. Later he confirmed that the visions were taken from him and given to her. Indeed, Foy had already rejected his visions, when Ellen White received her first vision.

III. Phenomena that Occurred to Ellen White During Her Visions

Before a vision, people sensed the specific presence of God. When Ellen White received a vision typically she would exclaim "Glory to God." She lost her strength and fell to the floor. Sometimes she received extra strength. For instance, she was able to hold an eighteen-pounds Bible with outstretched arm for half an hour. She did not breathe; however, heartbeat, pulse, and skin color were normal. With opened eyes she intensely observed events that others could not see. Her eyes were not fixed like in a trance. Physicians investigated her when she was in a vision, and many witnesses testified what happened.

When in vision, she had no awareness of what was going on around her. She was sitting, standing, walking, or laying down during a vision. Her gestures were always graceful. Toward the end of a vision she took a deep breath. Gradually her normal breathing resumed and her normal physical strength returned. After a vision her state of health was improved.

These phenomena remind us of the ones experienced by the prophet Daniel. The content of her visions dealt with the past, the present, and the future like with the prophets of old (see her book *The Great Controversy*).

IV. Was Ellen G. White a Prophet?

An appropriate answer to this question requires the application of the following biblical tests:

1. No materialistic attitude—Micah 3:9-12. She did not prophesy for money.

2. Full agreement with the Holy Scriptures—Isaiah 8:19-20; Deuteronomy 13:1-4. She taught what Scripture teaches (e.g., the Godhead, the Sabbath, the state of the dead, etc.). At times she commented on a detail in a biblical verse or passage, which would require knowledge of the original languages. But she did not know Hebrew or Greek and seldom used academic works dealing with Scripture. This indicates that she was inspired by God.

3. Recognition of Jesus Christ as Son of God and Savior who had become fully human—1 John 4:1-3. She clearly recognizes that one of her purposes was to uplift Jesus as our Savior and Lord. See her crucial books *Steps to Christ* and *The Desire of Ages*.

4. Good fruit, that is, an exemplary conduct of life and an effective ministry—Matthew 7:15-21. Her exemplary Christian life received recognition not only from the vast majority of Adventists but also from public newspapers in the United States. Edith Dean said about E. G. White: "Certainly, she was a spokesman for God. Like the prophets of old, her life was marked by humility, simplicity, austerity, divine learning, and devotion" (*Great Women of the Christian Faith*, 230). Her influence continues today, and her books still lead people to God.

5. Not only proclamation of messages that people like to hear—1 Kings 22:4-8. Her letters and books contain admonition and rebuke. She did not follow rules of political correctness that avoid tricky issues, but she also presented divine promises and comfort.

6. Fulfillment of predictions—Deuteronomy 18:22. She warned against (1) the potential danger of x-rays, (2) the pollution in the cities and the problem that they may become a health hazard, (3) brain damage done by alcohol, (4) animal fat (cholesterol), (5) tobacco as a kind of poison. (6) She also spoke of electric currents in the brain decades before these facts were known. (7) Furthermore, she made some unequivocal predictions: In 1902 she predicted a judgment on San Francisco and Oakland; in 1906, the great earthquake happened. She mentioned the worldwide spread of spiritualism when its modern form had just appeared. She talked about millions of dead people, the destruction of entire fleets twenty-four years before the beginning of World War I. She also addressed issues such as the increase in crime, extremely difficult economic conditions, and disintegration of society.

As a result of the above observations is the inescapable conclusion that Ellen G. White was genuine prophet.

V. The Purpose of Her Ministry

The purpose of her ministry as described by herself was probably fivefold: (1) exalt Scripture and bring people back to the Bible, (2) clarify and apply the biblical principles for daily living, (3) rebuke sin and call people to obey God and his commandments, (4) lead people to Jesus and present to them hope and comfort, (5) prepare people for the final days of earth's history and Christ's Second Coming.

VI. Ellen White and Scripture

Although E. G. White shares in the inspiration of the biblical writers and in this respect is not different from them, her writings do not take the place of Scripture but are subordinate to it. Therefore, we recognize that although her writings are authoritative, the Bible remains supreme. Scripture contains what is needed for salvation and a relationship with God. Nevertheless, the genuine gift of prophecy leads people back to the Scriptures they have neglected or misunderstood.

“The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience. . . . 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” (E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, vii).

The gift of prophecy has been provided by God's grace, and we should be extremely thankful for it, use it, and follow it. This God-given gift does not replace the Bible but remains vital because we need it.

VII. How Should We Interpret Ellen White's Writings?

As the Bible needs to be interpreted (Luke 24:27) E. G. White's writings need interpretation too. Here are some principles: (1) Focus on the most important issues, (2) do not take passages out of context, (3) try to understand the historical situation in order to determine whether her advice is universal or applies to a certain case under certain circumstances only. (4) If you study a topic, investigate it in all of her writings, (5) keep in mind that she oftentimes does not strictly interpret biblical texts but applies them to specific situations, (6) look for the principles that she stresses, (7) discover the theological themes that she highlights and makes a special contribution, (8) if others use or mention her, be sure she has really said what these persons claim.

Conclusion

The end-time church has specific characteristics that are pointed out by Jesus. Among them is the gift of prophecy. This gift is revealed in Scripture and in genuine prophets that God may send. Prophecy is a

gracious gift of God that we treasure and follow. The end time remnant that have this “testimony of Jesus” are committed to Jesus and yet are still struggling believers, looking forward to being united with God and being freed from all traces of sin. In addition to them, there are other faithful people in apostate organizations. They are called to join the faithful remnant of Jesus—Revelation 18:2 and 4—and with them live godly lives and proclaim the last message, waiting for the appearance of their beloved Lord.

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