

- 26 In a letter officially approved by Mrs. White, her son wrote: "Mother has never claimed to be an authority on history. The things which she has written out, are descriptions of flash-light pictures and other representations given her regarding the actions of men, and the influence of these actions upon the work of God for the salvation of men, with views of past, present, and future history in its relation to this work. In connection with the writing out of these views, she has made use of good and clear historical statements to help make plain to the reader the things which she is endeavoring to present." (Arthur White, *Ellen G. White as an Historian*, appendix, p. 4.)

The "Spirit of Prophecy"

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While I was a book editor at the Pacific Press, I eliminated from manuscripts the expression *Spirit of Prophecy* as applied to Ellen G. White or to her writings, and I continue to refrain from this usage in all personal discourse. Here are the reasons.

The expression commonly used to mean the writings of Ellen White, as in "We study the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy," is a logical anomaly in that the words for cause or source are used for the result. That is, the Spirit of Prophecy, the Holy Spirit, which inspires prophetic utterance, is not the *books*; it is the cause or source of the books. At times we err in associating the expression with Ellen White as a *person*. Obviously Ellen White was not the Spirit of Prophecy but was inspired by it.

Again, the expression "Bible and writings of the Spirit of Prophecy" is ambiguous and confusing, because the Spirit of Prophecy, the Holy Spirit which inspires the prophet, did not confine this animation to Ellen White alone but included Moses, Malachi, John, and all the rest. Thus, the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy include the Bible *and* the works of Ellen White — in short, the literary products of all inspired writers.

If we are after precision of expression, we must use the term Spirit of Prophecy to refer to the Holy Spirit or, by a sort of metonymy, to the Spirit-

inspired writings — all of them. The only precise and clear way to refer to the writings of Ellen White is simply to say “the writings of Ellen White” — “I read the Bible and the writings of Ellen White” or “My ideas of religion come from the Bible and Ellen White.”

It is true that Ellen White herself applied the term *Spirit of Prophecy* to her writings, that is, to *some* of them — specifically to the four volumes that were an enlargement of the original four volumes of *Spiritual Gifts* and that ultimately became the Conflict of the Ages series. But this title was of editorial origin, the same as were *Messages to Young People* and *The Triumph of God's Love*, book titles that Ellen White never saw. It is now evident that the *Spirit of Prophecy* title was a poor choice. It is fortunate that the volumes, though available in facsimile, are no longer in general circulation. I find no example of Ellen White's use of the term for her writings except as just mentioned.

In addition to the reasons which have been given, there is another, more powerful reason why the title was unfortunate as applied to the old four-volume set, and doubly unfortunate as applied to all the writings of Ellen White. This stronger reason lies in the opening we thus give adversaries for accusation of, at best, verbal trickery and, at worst, theological chicanery.

Consider the following sequence:

Revelation 14:12: “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”

Revelation 12:17: “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the *remnant* of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and *have the testimony of Jesus Christ*.” Here we have a “last event” which ends one of the prophetic cycles of the Book of Revelation and coincides with the similar passage in chapter 14 quoted above. The expression “testimony of Jesus,” coupled with “keep the commandments,” is obviously parallel to “faith of Jesus.” But what does “faith of Jesus” or “testimony of Jesus” mean?

Revelation 19:10: “I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that *have the testimony of Jesus*; . . . for the *testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*.”

How much more clearly could it be said? The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Who, then, are the remnant people of God? Why, those who have the spirit of prophecy. Who have this? The Adventists, of course, in the person of Ellen G. White.

Now let the adversaries have a word.

Again, the Adventists use a specious exegesis to prove themselves the

remnant people of God. By use of the so-called Authorized Version of Revelation (12:17; 14:12; 19:10) they equate the term "remnant" to "have the testimony of Jesus" and the latter term to "spirit of prophecy," claiming not only (1) that their "prophet," Ellen White, is here proved indeed to be a prophet but also, by a question-begging circularity, (2) that here is the proof that the Adventists are *the* remnant people. To crown the trickery, they show how they have long referred to the writings of their revered leader as in verity *the* spirit of prophecy.

How wrong they are can be exposed in a moment by reading the key texts in other, more modern translations.

Revelation 14:12: (New English Bible) "in keeping God's commands and remaining loyal to Jesus."

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Revelation 12:17: (Revised Standard Version) "who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus;" (Phillips) "who keep the commandments of God and bear their witness to Jesus."

Revelation 19:10: (Phillips) "This witness to Jesus inspires all prophecy;" (New English Bible) "Those who bear testimony to Jesus are inspired like the prophets;" (Weymouth) "For the truth revealed by Jesus is the inspiration of all prophecy."

If adversaries were to enunciate such a statement — as far as I know, no one has — they would by no means have a perfect case. But they would have shown the precariousness of a theological argument based on the term "spirit of prophecy."

If the translations of these Revelation passages refer to an attitude toward Jesus and the gospel, no reference to a modern prophet is implied. If the term "spirit of prophecy" refers to the agency of the Holy Spirit in instructing the prophets, no exclusive reference to a modern prophet is implied.

The application of the term "spirit of prophecy" to the writings of Ellen White is an intruding habit that has no bearing whatever on the identification of a "remnant." That is, assuming that the "remnant" *has* the "spirit of prophecy" in the sense of a modern prophet, only our own post facto application of the term "spirit of prophecy" to the writings of Ellen White is available for identification — and that is no reason at all.

Precise use of terms — *Spirit of Prophecy* to mean the Holy Spirit or the prophecies which the Spirit inspires, all of them; *Ellen White* to mean Ellen White; *testimonies* or *writings* of Ellen White to mean any of her writings obviously intended for counsel to the church or its members — would improve communication with Adventists and others alike. College courses might be entitled "Writings of Ellen White" or "Testimonies to

the Church," rather than "Gift of Prophecy" or "Spirit of Prophecy," unless the latter terms referred to courses dealing with the prophetic gift to the church throughout the ages, in some proportional fashion. In conversation and in the pulpit, the speaker should say, "Ellen White says — " or "We read from Ellen White — "

I believe that the terms I recommend come naturally from a realistic assessment of Ellen White's work and place. She received messages from God in the same manner as did the ancient prophets. Presumably God communicated to her, by the prescribed methods, messages as true and as divine as those he communicated to the biblical prophets. As a human being at first quite uneducated, Ellen White wrote out the messages as best she could, but with no more infallibility than that exhibited by the biblical writers. She was a person, a minister, no more nor less perfect or infallible than Elijah or Peter.

We rely on the Holy Spirit to teach us truth from all the sacred writings. We must have a consuming desire for truth and a willingness to forfeit every personal desire in order to find it if we are to read any of the inspired writings accurately.

Book Selections

Food for Everyone: The Mittleider Method: Reporting Dramatic Food-Production Demonstrations in the United States and South Pacific. By Jacob R. Mittleider and Andrew N. Nelson. College Place, Washington: College Press 1970. pp. 608. Illus. \$16.70.

Mr. Mittleider is international agricultural consultant of the extension division at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

Freedom in Two Centuries. By Otis B. Edwards. New York: Pageant Press 1969. pp. 121. \$5.00.

The author is chairman of the division of social sciences at Oakwood College, Huntsville, Alabama.

Die Frühgeschichte der Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten bis zur Gemeindegründung 1863 und ihre Bedeutung für die moderne Irenik. By Konrad F. Mueller. Marburg, Germany: Elwert Verlag 1969. pp. 206.

The author is professor of church history and systematic theology at Marienhoehe Missionary Seminary, Darmstadt, Germany. He has written a well-documented work on the origins and early history of the Seventh-day Adventist church.