

## “Sola Scriptura—Is There Room for Ellen White?”

### God Communicates

Christians believe that God not only exists, but that He communicates with us. In man’s original innocence, God spoke with man directly. After our fall into sin, the Lord continued to communicate in various ways:

- Sometimes audibly (Moses at the burning bush, giving the 10 Commandments to Israel, etc.)
  - Indicated His approval or disapproval through the Urim and Thummim stones
  - Revealed things to people through dreams and visions (Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2 and 4)
  - Literally wrote things down (10 Commandments, handwriting on the wall at Belshazzar’s feast, Jesus—who, of course, is God—writing in the sand)
  - Speaking of Jesus... He was far and away the clearest communication of the Father’s will... He was literally called the “Word” (Hebrews 1:1, 2)
- As spectacular and special as each of those forms of communication was, God’s most consistent method of communicating His will is through the spiritual gift of prophecy. **Amos 3:7**

### What is a prophet?

Prophets are not fortune tellers; nor are they necessarily future tellers. The Bible’s job description for a prophet is simply an inspired spokesperson for God. **Exodus 4:10-16 / Exodus 7:1** (also **Jeremiah 1:5-10**)

### The Mechanics of Prophecy (God moves the man, not the pen)

- **2 Peter 1:16-21** (God inspired the prophet, the prophet chose the words to convey the message)
- **Revelation 1:1-3** (God... Jesus... Angel... Prophet... People)
- **Daniel 7:1** “...Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts”
- **1 Corinthians 14:32, 33** And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

### Only Gift in All Four Lists

As already mentioned, prophecy was God’s primary method of communication in both the Old and New Testaments, thus it should come as little surprise that the gift of prophecy is the only gift to be included in all four spiritual gifts lists (Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 12, 14, Eph. 4). And nowhere does the Bible ever mention any Spiritual Gift having an expiration date!

### Prophecies of End-Time Prophecy

In **Matthew 24:4,11; 24-25** Jesus warned about deception in the last days, specifically mentioning false prophets. Satan only counterfeits true things: no counterfeit \$13 bill! The fact there will be false Christs and false prophets is a strong indication that there is a true Christ and He will have true prophets.

More than deducing that there will be a true prophetic gift because of the promised counterfeits, the Bible also explicitly and repeatedly foretells of the genuine prophetic voice in the last days. **Joel 2:28, 29;**

The history of the Christian church in Revelation 12 points specifically to this fact.

### **Overview of Revelation 12, especially Revelation 12:17** (also **Rev. 19:9, 10; Rev. 22:6-9**)

- Another way of saying “commandment of God” and “testimony of Jesus” is simply “the law and the testimony” “the law and the prophets”
- The work of the prophet was not to add to, take away from, contract or in any way supersede the Bible, but to clarify and apply Scripture truth. Yet, when God’s people knowingly rebel and purposefully disregard God’s commands, He removes the guiding voice of His prophetic messengers.
  - **Proverbs 29:18** “Where [there is] no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy [is] he.
  - **Lamentations 2:9** “... the Law is no more, and her prophets find no vision from the Lord.”
- That was the experience of God’s people in the Old Testament and it was repeated in the history of the New Testament church, as well:

After the death of the apostles, compromise crept into the church until it eventually replaced the seventh-day Sabbath of God's law with Sunday, the first day of the week. Daniel 7 and 8 had predicted this, saying that the medieval church would intend to "change times and law" and cast "truth down to the ground" (Daniel 7:25; 8:12). During this time, while the law of God was disregarded, history reveals no prominent, prophetic voice given by God to guide His church because when "the Law is no more," then "her prophets find no vision from the Lord" (Lamentations 2:9).

Yet both the law and the prophets would eventually be restored. In answer to the question of "how long" the vision of Daniel 8 and its casting down of truth would last, the Bible predicted that it would be for "two thousand three hundred days" (Daniel 8:13-14). As prophesied, the end of this time period was marked by a new discovery that would begin to restore the truth about God's Law and the seventh-day Sabbath. The true meaning of the cleansing of the sanctuary at the close of the 2300-day prophecy revealed the importance of Christ's ministry in heaven's Most Holy Place and awakened many Advent believers to the significance of the Ten Commandments contained there.

After many centuries, the truth of God's law and the seventh-day Sabbath was finally being restored. And what twin witness would God restore along with the Sabbath truth? The gift of prophecy! In harmony with the 2,300-day prophecy, God not only restored the truth of His law that was cast down, but He also restored the gift of prophecy when He gave Ellen White her first prophetic vision in December of 1844. The law and the prophets were again working together.

Ellen White herself writes in *Loma Linda Messages*, p. 33, "The law of God and the Spirit of Prophecy go hand in hand to guide and counsel the church, and whenever the church has recognized this by obeying His law, the spirit of prophecy has been sent to guide her in the way of truth. ... As the third angel's message arose in the world, which is to reveal the law of God to the church in its fullness and power, the prophetic gift was also immediately restored. This gift has acted a very prominent part in the development and carrying forward of this message"

**Friends, just as Bible prophecy foretold, God has indeed poured out the gift of prophecy in these last days of earth's history—manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White.** Thus it is equally dangerous to accept the word of alleged prophets at face value, and to reject the word of alleged prophets out of hand. The only safe course is to heed the counsel of the Bible itself when it tells us in **1 Thessalonians 5:20**- "Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good."

But What About Sola Scriptura?

**John 9:28, 29; John 5:45-47 (Deut. 18:18, 19)**

We're not following the Bible if we reject those the Bible tells us to follow! So in answer to the question in our title today, not only is there room for Ellen White—not only does the Bible *allow* for a last day prophetic voice among God's people, it requires it! *anticipates* it!

Does Ellen White Have Doctrinal Authority?

Some say that the writings of Mrs. White should be used devotionally, but not have authority in matters of doctrine... only the Bible has authority in doctrinal matters. Is that the biblical model of the authority of prophets? NO! When David was confronted by the prophet Nathan about his immoral affair with Bathsheba, did he reject the prophetic message because it was not previously written in Scripture? Of course not!

While the Scripture is the standard and nothing could ever take the place of the Bible, what happens when there is a lack of clarity on an issue or a disagreement as to how a biblical principle should be applied in a particular circumstance. Is it possible that sincere Christians can find themselves in disagreement on a matter of biblical doctrine? Consider the early church's contention over the issue of circumcision and new converts.

- Biblical evidence: **Acts 15**

- Common sense: What would be the point of sending a prophet if he or she didn't have authority in matters of doctrine? The resolution for ambiguity, is not just good advice but Godly authority!
- **Ephesians 4:11-16** "unity of the faith... no longer be children, tossed to a fro and carried away by every wind of doctrine" (there are plenty of crazy ideas floating around the Seventh-day Adventist Church today purporting to be present truth. But the Biblical injunction remains: "to the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them!")

### The Spirit of Prophecy is the Testimony of Jesus

But some will say, "I don't want to hear the voice of any person, I want to hear the voice of Jesus in His Word." It was through Moses that Christ foretold His own incarnation and ministry. (see Deuteronomy 18:15; John 5:45-46; 1 Peter 1:10-11) Thus it is that Bible makes a direct equivalence between the Spirit of Prophecy and the Testimony of Jesus—because that's what prophet's do: relate the testimony of Jesus to His people!

That sounds like a very pious sentiment, but just like the "I just want to follow the Bible and the Bible only" objection falls when you realize it is the Bible that commands us to heed God's prophetic messengers in the last days, the "I just want to follow the voice of Jesus" notion crumbles as well—not because its isn't true, but because the claim is misapplied. The implication is that Jesus doesn't speak through prophets when the exact opposite is true!

- **1 Peter 1:10-11** Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.
- **Revelation 1:10-11** I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, 11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last..."

### The Purpose of Prophecy in the Last Days

Ellen G. White, the Messenger of the Lord, was given the gift of prophecy not to give new light but to clarify and apply the light of Scripture in our lives. Just as John the Baptist was a prophet tasked with preparing a people for the first coming of Jesus, the Lord has, in these last days, poured out the gift of prophecy to prepare a people for the second coming of Jesus.

The writings of Ellen G. White are not merely inspiring, they are divinely inspired. Her work is not merely informative but transformative. Her words do not add to Scripture things that are not there, but clarifies the grand truths that are there.

And just as the Lord asks us to do with His Word, we should do with the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy... taste and see that it is good.

### EGW Survey

*Who reads Ellen White? by Roger Dudley , Des Cummings. Jr.*

*Several years back... "the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University (ICM) conducted a study of church growth in North America. As part of this research, ICM surveyed more than 8,200 Seventh-day Adventists attending 193 different churches through out the North American Division.*

*One of the survey questions dealt with the degree of involvement in regular study of Ellen White's books. Recently a secondary analysis was conducted on this question. All those who answered "doesn't apply," "never," or "sometimes" were combined into one group, hereafter referred to as "nonreaders." Those choosing "usually" or "always" were combined into a second group, referred to as "readers." There were 2,848 readers and 5,375 nonreaders. This article compares profiles of readers and nonreaders in relation to how each group responded to the other items on the survey.*

*It is important to note that the survey was administered in the 193 churches during the Sabbath worship services. Therefore it reflects the attitudes and behaviors of church-attending Adventists and does not attempt to describe those who have become inactive. It is a portrait of those members who compose the core of the local congregation.*

#### *Relationship with Jesus Christ.*

*Here is a striking difference, for 85 percent of the readers chose one of the two strongest possible responses to indicate that their relationship with Jesus Christ was intimate. Only 59 percent of the nonreaders did so, a difference of 26 percent. Certainly readers see their relationship with Christ as closer and more intimate than do nonreaders.*

#### *Assurance with God.*

*There is almost the same difference on having assurance of being right with God. It was revealed that 82 percent of the readers, compared with 59 percent of the nonreaders, are very certain of their standing a spread of 23 percentage points. Readers apparently do have more assurance of salvation.*

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#### *Prepared for witnessing.*

*There is a highly significant difference between the two groups in how well prepared for witnessing they see themselves. Using the two top responses, 49 percent of the readers feel well prepared. Only 24 percent of the nonreaders do—a 25 percent difference. Readers definitely feel better prepared to witness than do nonreaders.*

#### *Christian activities.*

*The survey contained a series of seven yes or no questions. On every one of these items, Ellen White readers hold a distinct advantage over nonreaders. To be specific, 24 percent more had been engaged in some type of witnessing program over the previous year, 13 percent more were holding a church office or other service position, 15 percent more had set a personal soul-winning goal for the current year, 19 percent more had been working to win non-Adventist relatives, 15 percent more had been involved in community outreach services, 19 percent more had held Bible studies with a non-Adventist during the past year, and 14 percent more had recently attended a witnessing training program. Ellen White readers seem definitely more likely to be active in service and in witnessing than nonreaders.*

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#### *Personal Bible study.*

*Several questions dealt with areas of everyday Christian living, and it is in these areas that some of the strongest differences between readers and nonreaders are found. For example, 82 percent of the readers usually or always have daily personal Bible study, while only 47 percent of the nonreaders do. This is a 35 percent difference the strongest of any item in the study. Readers are much more likely to be Bible students than are nonreaders.*

#### *Prayer for souls.*

*Here is another strong difference. It was discovered that 81 percent of the readers usually or always pray daily for the conversion of specific people, compared with 51 percent of the nonreaders a difference of 30 percent. Readers are more likely to bear the burden for souls on their heart and seek the Lord daily for their salvation.*

#### *Financial support for local soul winning.*

*The contrast continues, as 30 percent more (76 percent versus 46 percent) readers than nonreaders are usually or always involved in regular financial support for local soul winning. Readers tend to give more often and more generously to programs designed to reach the lost within their own communities.*

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### *Daily family worship.*

*Daily family worship is an important part of the life of a Christian family. It is usually or always held by 70 percent of the readers, but by only 42 percent of the nonreaders a difference of 28 percent. There is more likely to be daily worship in homes where Ellen White's books are read regularly.*

### *Witnessing in everyday activities.*

*It was found that 76 percent of the readers and 48 percent of the nonreaders are usually or always involved in witnessing in their everyday activities a difference of 28 percent. Readers are more likely to share their faith on an informal basis, as well as in organized witnessing activities, than nonreaders.*

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### *Length of time as an Adventist.*

*Those who have been in the church longer are more likely to be readers of Ellen White's writings. While 68 percent of the readers have been members more than ten years, only 53 percent of the nonreaders have been a part of the church for that long. On the other end of the scale, 22 percent of the readers have been members for fewer than five years, while 33 percent of the nonreaders are in this category. This suggests that the church may be having difficulty introducing new converts to a regular study of Spirit of Prophecy writings. Or it may suggest that the apostasy rate is greater among nonreaders, leaving fewer of them around after ten years.*

### *Conclusions.*

*Seldom does a research study find the evidence so heavily weighted toward one conclusion. In the church growth survey, on every single item that deals with personal attitudes or practices, the member who regularly studies Ellen White's books tends to rank higher than does the member who reads them only occasionally or never. On a few items the difference is small only 3 or 4 percentage points. But on most items the spread is large in the tens, twenties, or thirties.*

*And these differences are found not only in the total profile but in each of the ethnic components. White, black, and Hispanic readers, as groups, are each superior to nonreaders. On no item do nonreaders rank higher than readers.*

*The study indicates that readers have a closer relationship with Christ, more certainty of their standing with God, and are more likely to have identified their spiritual gifts. They are more in favor of spending for public evangelism and contribute more heavily to local missionary projects. They feel more prepared for witnessing and actually engage in more witnessing and outreach programs. They are more likely to study the Bible daily, to pray for specific people, to meet in fellowship groups, and to have daily family worship. They view their church more positively. They actually bring more people into the church.*

*Of course, it should be carefully noted that this study does not determine that the reading of Ellen White's books actually causes people to have all of these spiritual benefits. The study only shows that there is a direct correlation between the various items and the study of Ellen White's works. But it is amazing that the contrasts between these two profiles are so numerous and so great. Certainly the implication is that the regular reading of Ellen White's material does make a positive difference in Christian life and witness.*

### Conclusion

The Spirit of Prophecy as manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White is one of the greatest gifts with which God has blessed His people in these last days. It is absolutely no contradiction whatsoever to hold firmly to the great Protestant axiom "Sola Scriptura" and at the same time heed the voice of God's prophetic messenger as it is the Bible itself that repeatedly foretells that the prophetic gift would be evidenced among God's people prior to Christ's return.

The words of Jehoshaphat to God's people in **2 Chronicles 20:20** still speak powerful to us today, "Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper."

## The Chronology of The Prophetic Gift

God communicated through prophetic messengers before the Bible was written, during the time the Bible was being written (both to the authors and to other non-canonical prophets), and He also foretold that prophets would continue to be employed as His messengers even to the last days of earth's history.

The first person the Bible tells us prophesied was Enoch, the seventh from Adam. (Jude 14) Even while Adam was still living, God was already speaking to humanity through the gift of prophecy.

Moses was the first canonical prophet, in that God inspired Him to chronicle the history of His people from creation to the establishment of the nation of Israel. Those first five books of the Bible, which set the foundation for all of God's dealings with humanity, were so highly regarded that they were later became known to simply as "the law," with all subsequent canonical writings called "the prophets." Thus the Apostle Paul, Jesus Himself, and others in the New Testament would refer to the entire canon of Scripture as "The Law and the Prophets."

But even during the more than 1500 years between the first canonical books of Moses to the closing book of the Bible, John's Revelation of Jesus Christ, there were a great many prophets that spoke for God to His people whose writings were not included in the canon or who did not write at all.

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My point of all this is to highlight the basic truth that God has guided His people through prophetic messengers before the Bible was written, during the time the Bible was being written, and since the Bible has been written. The Bible itself, in reality, is merely a special collection of prophetic writings which God, in His wisdom, established "to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

When David was confronted by the prophet Nathan about his immoral affair with Bathsheba, did he reject the prophetic message because it was not previously written in Scripture? Of course not! The message was given not to contradict or supersede the written testimony but rather to clarify and apply Bible truth

## What Is A Prophet?

"The Testimony of Jesus"

- Revelation 12:17
- Revelation 19:9-10
- Revelation 22:8-9

The original title of The Great Controversy was "The Great Controversy Between Christ and His Angels, and Satan and His Angels," later it became known as simply "The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan," until finally we know simply refer to it as "The Great Controversy."

Similarly, the last book of the Bible has a much longer title than the one with which we usually refer to it. Instead of merely saying "The Book of Revelation," the opening lines reveal the true title: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place." Who wrote the Bible... Jesus or the Holy Spirit? Yes.

There is a notion being recycled these days that the Holy Spirit is not a distinct person or being who IS God, but is instead is merely a power or force FROM God.

- **Manuscript Release, vol. 20, p. 324** The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, in Christ's name. He personifies Christ, yet is a distinct personality.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead who represents the second person of the Godhead, who in turn represents the first person of the Godhead.