
BY A PROPHET

I. Introduction

- a. Hosea 12:13 – God led and preserved His people by a prophet
- b. 1 Cor. 10:11 – The experience of ancient Israel is a lesson for modern Israel
- c. The church that is to carry God’s final message to all the world is identified by two particular characteristics (Rev. 12:17). Ironically, or maybe not so ironically, it is these two characteristics that the Bible says Satan is especially angry with. It is for this reason that he exerts all his demonic energy to destroy the influence of these two identifying traits –
 - i.) the commandments of God and
 - ii.) the testimony of Jesus Christ.
 - (a) It is the latter of these two that we are going to be seeking to understand over the next several days.
- d. As Seventh-day Adventists, we have claim the great Protestant principle of “Sola Scriptura.” Some allege that we contradict this principle by our acceptance of the prophetic gift, the “testimony of Jesus,” as manifested through the life and ministry of Ellen G. White. In consideration of this, there are three questions we must ask:
 - i.) Does the Bible support our belief in the gift of prophecy?
 - ii.) Does the Bible support our belief in a last-day manifestation of the gift of prophecy?
 - iii.) Does the Bible support Ellen White in the role of that last-day prophetic messenger?

II. The Prophet as Spokesperson

- a. The prophet is a spokesperson for God (Ex. 4:10f; 7:1; Jer. 1:5, 9; Mt. 1:22).
 - i.) Heb. “nabi” – spokesman, speaker
 - ii.) Gr. “prophetes” – “one who speaks forth” – Vine’s Expository Dictionary
 - (a) A prophet is not just a fortuneteller!
- b. The prophet is God’s modus operandi (Am. 3:7; 1 Sam. 28:6, 15; Heb. 1:1f)
 - i.) God has spoken audibly. He has communicated with some face to face. He communicated to the high priest through the Urim and Thummim. He has revealed Himself to some in dreams and visions. However, by far the most common “modus operandi” has been communication via the prophet.
- c. Hierarchy of prophetic communication (Rev. 1:1-2)
 - i.) God the Father → Jesus Christ → angel messenger → prophet → church at large
 - ii.) Jesus Himself speaks through the prophet? (1 Pet. 1:10f; Rev. 19:10; 22:8f)

- (a) Internet critic Dirk Anderson claims that “Throughout the New Testament we find a pattern of the ‘testimony of Jesus’ referring to the believer’s personal witness about Jesus Christ. Rather than being the prophetic utterances received from Jesus, the testimony of Jesus is the believer’s personal testimony about Jesus.” – <http://www.ellenwhiteexposed.com/egw20.htm>.

d. The prophetic gift was employed in the written Word (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

- i.) “Moved” – Gr. phero, “driven” in Ac. 27:17, 27
 - (a) The Spirit “moved” or “drove”, yet men spoke. Note: The experience of any (i.e., an eyewitness account) is not sufficient to outweigh the words of the prophets.
- ii.) The “Scriptures of the prophets” (Mt. 26:56; Rom. 1:2; 16:26)
- iii.) It is important to note that the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures, and we cannot understand these “Spiritually discerned” thing without His aid (1 Cor. 2:10f); yet He has chosen to aid through the Spiritual gifts, which He distributes as He wills.

e. Types of prophets

- i.) Literary, Canonical (wrote books of the Bible) – Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, etc.
- ii.) Literary, Non-canonical – Iddo, Nathan, Ahijah (2 Chr. 9:29), Shemaiah (2 Chr. 12:5, 15), Elijah (2 Chr. 21:12), etc.
- iii.) Non-literary, Non-canonical – Enoch (Jude 14), Gad (1 Sam. 22:5; 2 Sam. 24:11), Elisha (2 Ki. 6:12), Agabus (Ac. 11:28; 21:10), etc.
- iv.) Further, some prophets were women – Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Jg. 4:4), Isaiah’s wife (Is. 8:3), Philip’s 4 daughters (Ac. 21:9), etc.
- v.) Some were contemporaries – Moses, Miriam; Isaiah and Micah; Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel; Haggai and Zechariah; Ananias, Paul, Silas, Judas, Philip’s four daughters and John.

f. Roles and Function of the Prophetic Gift

- i.) To lay the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20)
- ii.) To equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:12)
- iii.) To initiate and coordinate the missionary work of the church (Ac. 13:1-2; 16:6-10)
- iv.) To enlighten and give spiritual discernment (1 Sam. 9:9; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Rev. 3:14f; 2 Pet. 1:16-21); “even as” (1 Cor. 1:6)
- v.) To preserve unity of belief and prevent doctrinal confusion, esp. in times of controversy (1 Cor. 1:5-10; Eph. 4:13-14; Ac. 15:32)
- vi.) To provide proper boundaries and guidelines for the church (Prov. 29:18)
- vii.) To warn of future difficulties (Ac. 11:27-30; 20:23; 21:4, 10-14)
- viii.) To encourage and comfort the church (2 Chr. 36:15; Rom. 15:4)

- ix.) To aid in the development of Christian character (growing up into Christ – Eph. 4:15)
- x.) To prosper and preserve God’s people (Hos. 12:13; 1 Sam. 7:13; 3:19-20; 2 Chr. 20:20 w/ Isa. 7:9)

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). The difference between the apostles, pastors, teachers, evangelists and the prophets was that the former received their authority from the latter, and the latter received their authority directly from God.

III. The Prophet and the Formation of Doctrine

- a. The evangelical world has always attacked us on this point. “Prophets,” they say, “should have nothing to do with forming your doctrinal positions. The Bible alone should be your final authority.” And we agree – sort of. Note the following statement published in *Christianity Today*, Feb. 8, 1980.
 - i.) “Traditionally, Seventh-day Adventists acknowledge Holy Scripture to be the final authority for discovering God and His truth. On this basis they vigorously teach the necessity for keeping the seventh-day Sabbath and condemn all bodies that reject this teaching, willfully choosing to worship on Sunday. Yet they also have accepted the teachings of Mrs. Ellen White as the *authoritative* and *infallible interpretation of Scripture.*”
- b. These types of nonsensical arguments (and I’m not just saying that to be mean – they truly are senseless) have promoted a spirit of fear and trepidation among Adventists wanting to appear “orthodox” in the eyes of the evangelical world, so that even in the church today many are claiming that Ellen White was a good Christian woman whose writings are good for inspirational reading, but should have nothing to do with solving doctrinal issues, even so far as to say “Just because Ellen White wrote something doesn’t mean I have to agree with her.”
- c. The question any good Adventist must ask is, “Does the Bible support this viewpoint?” Even a cursory reading of the fifteenth chapter of Acts will demonstrate to the reader that the prophets had an active role in the formation of doctrine.
 - i.) The question was one of circumcision – Should the new Gentile believers be circumcised before their acceptance into the faith? (Ac. 15:1-2).
 - ii.) A counsel was called in Jerusalem to answer the question (v. 3).
 - iii.) Emotions ran high on both sides of the issue. Each side stood their Biblical ground. In the circumcision camp, they likely referred to Scriptures such as Ex. 12:43-48. In the uncircumcision camp, texts like Is. 56:6-8 were used, citing the importance of observing the Ten Commandments, but not of circumcision (cf. 1 Cor. 7:19).
 - iv.) Peter, in stating his position, claimed that “God chose among us that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel...” (v. 7). How and when did God make this “choice”? You may recall Acts 10, where Peter received a vision of unclean beasts, couldn’t understand what it meant, and immediately after was

visited by a group of Gentiles, after which it became clear to Peter “that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Ac. 10:28).

- v.) Afterward Paul and Barnabas gave testimony of how the Lord had worked mightily among the Gentile believers (incidentally, Barnabas also had the gift of prophecy – Ac. 13:1).
- vi.) James, upon hearing all the discussion, makes a decision against requiring circumcision for new believers (v. 19).
 - (a) He bases this decision on Peter’s testimony and vision (v. 14), comparing these with
 - (b) The testimony of Scripture, quoting from Am. 9:11-12 (vs. 15-18)
- vii.) Judas and Silas were then chosen to communicate the decision (vs. 22-23)
- viii.) And they confirmed the faith of the brethren in the decision, themselves being prophets (vs. 30-32).

d. Ellen White, in accordance with Ephesians 4:13-14, was given clear understanding in Scriptural things to aid in the formation of doctrine, not as the basis for the doctrine, but as an expositor of the Scriptures which the doctrines were founded upon.

- i.) The means of defining truth

Many of our people do not realize how firmly the foundation of our faith has been laid... I met with [founders of the movement], and we studied and prayed earnestly. Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the Word. Again and again these brethren came together to study the Bible, *in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power.* When they came to the point in their study where they said, "We can do nothing more," the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and **a clear explanation of the passages** we had been studying **would be given me**, with instruction as to how we were to labor and teach effectively. **Thus light was given that helped us to understand the scriptures** in regard to Christ, His mission, and His priesthood. A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God was made plain to me, and I gave to others the instruction that the Lord had given me. {1SM 206.4}

- ii.) The means of establishing truth

In the early days of the message, when our numbers were few, we studied diligently to understand the meaning of many Scriptures. At times it seemed as if no explanation could be given. My mind seemed to be locked to an understanding of the Word; but when our brethren who had assembled for study came to a point where they could go no farther, and had recourse to earnest prayer, the Spirit of God would rest upon me, and **I would be taken off in vision, and be instructed in regard to the relation of Scripture to Scripture.** These experiences were *repeated over and over again.* **Thus many truths** of the third angel's message were **established, point by point.** {3SM 38.2}

- iii.) Ellen White expected her writings to be used to solve doctrinal controversy

You say that Anna's visions place the forming of the image of the beast after probation closes. This is not so. **You claim to believe the testimonies; let them set you right on this point.** The Lord has shown me clearly that the image of the beast will be formed before probation closes; for it is to be the great test for the people of God, by which their eternal destiny will be decided. (2SM 80)

Our first general meeting in western New York, beginning August 18, was held at Volney, in Brother David Arnold's barn. About thirty-five were present,--all the friends that could be collected in that part of the State. But of this number there were hardly two agreed. Some were holding serious errors, and **each strenuously urged his own views, declaring that they were according to the Scriptures...** These strange differences of opinion rolled a heavy weight upon me. I saw that many errors were being presented as truth. It seemed to me that God was dishonored... The light of heaven then rested upon me, and I was soon lost to earthly things. My accompanying angel presented before me some of the errors of those present, and also the truth in contrast with their errors. These discordant views, which they claimed were in harmony with the Scriptures, were only according to their opinion of Bible teaching; and **I was bidden to tell them that they should yield their errors,** and unite upon the truths of the third angel's message. Our meeting closed triumphantly. **Truth gained the victory.** Our brethren renounced their errors and united upon the third angel's message, and God greatly blessed them and added many to their numbers. (LS 110-11)

Elder Waggoner has entertained ideas and, without waiting to bring his ideas before a council of brethren, has agitated strange theories. He has brought before some of the people ideas in regard to organization that ought never to have had expression. **I supposed that the question of organization was settled forever with those who believed the testimonies given through Sister White.** Now, **if they believe the testimonies why do they work contrary to them?** Why should not my brethren be prudent enough to place these matters before me, or at least to inquire if I had any light upon these subjects? Why is it that these things start up at this time when we have canvassed the matter in our previous history, and **God has spoken upon these subjects? Should not that be enough?** – Letter 37, 1894 (to A.T. Jones, Jan. 14, 1894). (14MR 202)

e. Perhaps this statement from “ablest man in all our ranks,” J. N. Andrews, says it best. It must be noted that Andrews was an accomplished Bible student and scholar, who read the Bible in seven different languages and claimed the ability to reproduce the entire New Testament from memory. If it could be said of anyone that he knew his Bible “well enough” to be exempt from prophetic direction, it could be said of Andrews. Yet speaking of the importance, yea, the absolute necessity, of the prophetic gift, he wrote:

“[The spiritual gifts] constitute the means whereby God preserves His people from confusion by pointing out errors, by correcting false interpretations of the Scriptures, and causing light to shine out upon that *which is in danger of being wrongly understood* and therefore of being the cause of evil and division to the people of God. In short, **their work is to unite the people of God** in the same mind and in the same judgment **upon the meaning of the Scriptures.** Mere human judgment, with no direct instruction from heaven, can never search out hidden iniquity, nor adjust dark and complicated church difficulties, nor prevent different and conflicting interpretations of the Scriptures. It would be sad indeed if God could not still converse with His people.” -RH, 2/15/1870.