

Ellen G. White Publications

GENERAL CONFERENCE, TAKOMA PARK 12, D.C.

R. L. ODOM
Index Editor

March 15, 1955

Dear Fellow Worker:

Re: Spirit of Prophecy Sabbath

April 9 is Spirit of Prophecy Sabbath--the day when we as the shepherds of the flock unite in leading our members to a deeper appreciation of the place of the gift of prophecy in the remnant church.

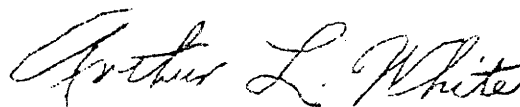
We here in Washington have done all we can through the journals of the denomination to help you make it a successful day. Our aim is to create in each heart a sense of the need for having and studying the Spirit of prophecy counsels, and realizing more fully what they may mean to us.

In building your presentation for Sabbath morning, you will draw from your own rich experience and the materials you have at hand in such volumes as Abiding Gift of Prophecy, Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts, The Spirit of Prophecy in the Advent Movement, and Ellen G. White--Messenger to the Remnant. We are placing in your hands some suggestions for sermon material prepared by a minister and editor of broad experience, Elder Leo R. Odom, just now connected with our office in the capacity of Index Editor. As illustrative material, the three stories--one with special appeal to children and youth--may also serve you.

While the presentation must be deeply spiritual, gripping the hearts of your members, and we must not impair it by anything which would inject the atmosphere of commercialism, yet it will be appropriate to call the attention of our people to the fact that in the endeavor to help them build and fill out the Spirit of prophecy libraries in their homes, the publishers have united in providing the E. G. White books at an attractive discount of 20 per cent, this offer to extend from now through the summer. As our members realize the blessings which these books will bring to them in providing daily counsel, encouragement, and guidance which God in His providence has made available to a people preparing to meet Him, any careful promotion will take on the significance of supplying spiritual food essential to the perfecting of character.

Our churches, perhaps your church, is in great need of the message for which this day, April 9, has been dedicated. May God bless you as you stand before your congregation on Spirit of Prophecy Sabbath.

Sincerely your brother,



Arthur L. White, Secretary
ELLEN G. WHITE PUBLICATIONS

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SPIRIT OF PROPHECY SABBATH

(Suggestive Study Outline for April 9, 1955)

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY THROUGH THE AGES

Objective: To show (1) that all through the centuries God has kept in communication with His people by means of the Spirit of prophecy, (2) that the prophetic gift was never intended to take the place of the Bible, (3) that possession of this gift is one of the identifying marks of the true church in the last days, and (4) that we need to make the most of the instruction which God has given us by this means.

I. Before the Writing of the Holy Scriptures

1. "God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Acts 3:21. (See also Luke 1:70.)

Note: Since the fall of Adam, when open and direct communication between heaven and earth was cut off, the Lord has chosen from time to time some godly person to serve as His prophet, or spokesman, to men.

2. Ask the congregation to name men who received revelations from heaven for men before the writing of the Holy Scriptures was begun.

Note: Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Job, Jacob, Joseph, and others of the patriarchal age received communications from God. "During the first twenty-five hundred years of human history, there was no written revelation. Those who had been taught of God, communicated their knowledge to others, and it was handed down from father to son, through successive generations!"--The Great Controversy, p. v.

II. During the Writing of the Holy Scriptures

1. God has spoken to men "by his prophets in the holy scriptures." Rom. 1:2.

Note: "The preparation of the written Word began in the time of Moses. Inspired revelations were then embodied in an inspired Book. This work continued during the long period of sixteen hundred years,--from Moses, the historian of creation and the law, to John, the recorder of the most sublime truths of the gospel."--The Great Controversy, p. v.

2. During these 1,600 years the ministry of the prophetic office was not limited to the writing of the books of the Bible.

Note: "During the ages while the Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testament were being given, the Holy Spirit did not cease to communicate light to individual minds, apart from the revelations to be embodied in the Sacred Canon. The Bible itself relates how, through the Holy Spirit, men received warning, reproof, counsel, and instruction, in matters in no way relating to the giving of the Scriptures. And mention is made of prophets in different ages, of whose utterances nothing is recorded."--The Great Controversy, p. viii.

3. Ask the congregation to name prophets who spoke for God in Old Testament times and yet did not write any books of the Bible.

Note: Do not overlook the prophetesses Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), and Huldah (2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chron. 34:22). Some of those prophets are specifically said to have written books (1 Chron. 29:29; 2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 30:34; 33:18), which were not embodied in, and were never intended to take the place of the Holy Scriptures.

4. Also ask the congregation to name prophets who spoke for God in New Testament times and yet did not write books of the Bible.

Note: Such were Simeon, John the Baptist, Agabus, and Silas (Luke 2:25-35; 1:76; Matt. 11:9; Acts 11:27, 28; 21:10, 11; 15:32). To these must be added the prophetess Anna (Luke 2:36-38) and Philip's "four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy" (Acts 21:8, 9).

5. "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." 1 Cor. 12:28.

Note: The word "prophet" is used in the plural form in this text. In Ephesians 4:11 Paul speaks of the spiritual gifts in the church, and again lists among them the "prophets". And the ministry of "prophets" at Jerusalem and Antioch is noted by Luke (Acts 11:27, 28; 13:1; 15:32). In still another listing of the spiritual gifts in the church, Paul places "prophecy" (1 Cor. 12:10). And he cautions God's people not to harbor a hostile attitude toward this gift, saying: "Despise not prophesyings." 1 Thess. 5:20.

III. After the Writing of the Holy Scriptures

1. "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." Rev. 12:17. "The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy." Rev. 19:10.

Note: Thus the Bible itself has definitely foretold that one of the indentifying marks of God's remnant church--His true people in the last days--would be the Spirit of prophecy in their midst. Hence this statement: "In like manner, after the close of the canon of Scripture, the Holy Spirit was still to continue its work, to enlighten, warn, and comfort the children of God."--The Great Controversy, p. viii.

2. As the honest in heart, a few here and a few there, earnestly prayed to God for light during the dismal days of disappointment and confusion that prevailed in the religious world after October 22, 1844, He sent them solace and instruction by means of the gift of prophecy.

Note: After two other persons had failed to do His bidding in the matter, God laid the burden of the prophetic office upon Ellen Gould Harmon, a young woman only seventeen years old, in December of 1844. She was married to Elder James White on August 30, 1846, and in the years that followed became the mother of four boys. Her death occurred at her home near St. Helena, California, on July 16, 1915.

The work which was done by Sister White was broad in its scope, much like that of Moses. Some are inclined to limit the work of a prophet to foretelling

future events. To this we should add the broader picture set forth in Hosea 12: 13: "By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved."

At the very outset of the remnant church God sent messages to sustain the confidence of the believers, and then He led His people on step by step. From the first the great adversary brought in his attacks through fanaticism and misleading teachings, but God sent messages through His chosen servant to guard and protect the church which was coming into being.

Then as the little group of Sabbath-keeping Adventists were drawn together in united Bible study, God placed His confirming message upon their work. We were led into church organization through the special message God sent to us. We were guided into our publishing work, educational work, and our medical work by this same gift. How necessary it was that this new remnant church should have a clear view of coming events and how they would fit into the fulfillment of the plan of salvation! In early visions given to Ellen White, the future was clearly depicted, and this she presented in her books. The growing church was ever in danger of self-satisfaction and lowered standards, and through His chosen means of communication, the messages of rebuke and reproof which God sent to His children ever led to higher standards.

And so through the years with this gift among us, we were led, guided, reproved, corrected, informed, and instructed, for God is "perfecting" a people, preparing them to meet Him.

During her seventy years of prophetic ministry, Sister White faithfully performed the duties of a wife and mother, traveled far and wide, preached and lectured frequently, and wrote extensively. She spent two years (from 1885 to 1887) traveling and helping in our work in various countries of Europe. In 1891, when sixty-four years old and at the age when many gospel workers retire from active service, she sailed for Australia, where she labored nine years in pioneer missionary work.

During her many years of service, Sister White received approximately 2,000 communications from the Lord in visions by day and by night. The last of these was given to her in March of 1915, a few months before her death. She wrote no less than 23,900 pages of matter which has appeared in book form, besides 4,500 articles published in several of our denominational periodicals. Her little book Steps to Christ has had a circulation of approximately 8,000,000 copies in 73 languages. The Great Controversy, containing more than 700 pages, has been issued in thirty tongues with a circulation of approximately 1,500,000.

3. "Prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe." 1 Cor. 14:22.

Note: Our evangelists and other gospel workers, in their labors for the salvation of unbelievers, present from the Holy Bible the proof supporting the great fundamentals of Christian faith for this time. The people who accept fully the teachings of the Sacred Scriptures, and are willing faithfully to obey God's Word, appreciate the messages given us through the Spirit of prophecy. But as for people not acquainted as yet with the truth, we have this word of caution:

"Some have taken an injudicious course; when they have talked their faith to unbelievers, and the proof has been asked for, they have read a vision, instead of going to the Bible for proof. I saw that this course was inconsistent, and prejudiced unbelievers against the truth. The visions can have no weight with

those who have never seen them and know nothing of their spirit. They should not be referred to in such cases."--Testimonies, Vol. 1, pp. 119, 120.

4. Like the messages of so many prophets of old, the testimonies borne by Sister White were never intended to take the place of the Holy Scriptures among God's people.

Note: In her first book, issued in 1851, Mrs. White said of the Bible: "I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that Word we are to be judged. God has, in that Word, promised to give visions in the 'last days'; not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and to correct those who err from Bible truth."--Early Writings, p. 78.

And when she stood for the last time before the delegates assembled from all parts of the world during the General Conference Session of 1909, at Washington, D.C., Sister White seemed to sense that she would never again attend such a meeting. After speaking a few words of cheer and farewell, she turned to the Bible that lay on the pulpit, opened it, held it out with hands trembling with age, and said to all: "Brethren and sisters, I commend unto you this Book." Saying no more, she closed the Book, and left the platform. A veteran worker who witnessed the scene has aptly remarked: "It was her last spoken word in the world assembly of the remnant church. Well was it symbolic of the lifelong ministry through this gift, ever exalting high, supreme above all, the Holy Scriptures as the foundation of the faith of the people of the advent movement."--William A. Spicer, The Spirit of Prophecy in the Advent Movement, p. 30.

IV. Conclusion

1. "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper." 2 Chron. 20:20.

Note: The brightest and happiest eras in the history of the people of God have been those when they diligently heeded the messages which He sent to them through His prophets. The darkest, saddest periods have been those when the divinely inspired testimonies of His messengers were spurned or neglected.

2. Here relate an appropriate story or two, illustrating what the Spirit of prophecy writings mean to us and what it means to respond to the testimony of instruction and reproof, even though it may cut across our pathway. Attention of the congregation may be called to the story of "Mr. Faulkhead and the Secret Sign," as told by Arthur L. White and featured in the Review and Herald of March 31, and to Elder George Vandeman's two articles, "Why I Believe in the Writings of Mrs. E. G. White," in the Youth's Instructor of April 5 and 12.

3. Appeal to the brethren and sisters to diligently read the messages which the Lord has given His remnant people to prepare them for the time of trouble that is even now coming upon all the world. Urge them lest, while never thinking of spurning the testimonies of His servant, they be guilty of neglecting them, and the end of all things come and find them unprepared.

Suggestion: Relate some experience of your personal knowledge illustrating the blessing of reading and faithfully putting into practice the instruction given us by the Spirit of prophecy. Refer to the check lists of Sister White's books appearing in the union papers, and encourage members to build up a personal library of these wonderful books.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL -- STORY ILLUSTRATIONS

A Message for a Troubled Little Girl

The messages which the Lord sent through His servant show clearly that He is interested in every one, even the little children. He sees the children at their play or at their household tasks, and sometimes He sent messages just for them.

One evening when Sister White's granddaughter Ella knelt by her bedside for her evening prayer, she was feeling very unhappy. Though she had given her heart to her Saviour when only five years old, she felt tonight that God was very far away. She knew that of late she had not been so careful to do her Saviour's will. She earnestly asked God to show her what was wrong with her life.

The very next day Grandma White's carriage drove up to their door. Ella and her sister Mabel, who was ten, ran to meet her. After she had greeted them and admired their twin baby brothers, she told their mother to ask their father to call the family together. When all were seated she took several sheets of paper from her satchel and began to read.

"I was unable to sleep after eleven o'clock," she read. "In the night season I was instructed of God. One stood by me and spoke."

Everyone in the room felt very solemn. Ella and her sister listened closely. They knew that an angel had given their grandma a message. She read that the angel was interested in that home, and had bidden her tell the children that they must take more time to read and study the Bible. They should perform their little duties about the home so well that they would stand examination at any time.

"The girls must improve in forming orderly habits and keeping their garments clean and mended," she read. If there was anything Ella and Mabel disliked, it was to sit and darn stockings and mend their dresses. "God has noticed that I dislike to do these things," thought Ella.

"His angels are watching to see how they can minister to your family," Mrs. White continued reading, "how they can work with your children, that they shall reflect the likeness of Christ in character."

Then Mrs. White looked right at the girls as she read: "In the performance of household duties, careless, neglectful habits are being formed. The habits of disorder now indulged in, unless corrected, will be carried into every phase of life, and the life will be spoiled for true missionary work.

"Let your first work be to see that everything in your own room is put in order, the dirt and dust carefully removed. God is displeased with habits you are forming. Form correct habits even in dress, let your appearance be neat and attractive; for the angels of heaven are taking notice to these things.

"Books are to be laid aside for their proper season, and no more study should occupy the mind than can be attended to without neglecting the household duties.

"In doing your daily duties promptly, neatly, faithfully, you are missionaries. You are bearing witness for Christ. You are showing that the religion of Christ does not make you untidy, coarse, or disrespectful to your parents by failing to heed their counsel and instruction.

"Bible religion will make you kind, thoughtful, faithful. You will not neglect the little things to be done to give a neat, wholesome appearance, even to the kitchen. 'He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.'"

When Mrs. White had finished reading the long letter, she handed it to her son and said, "This is the message I have been bidden to give you. I counsel you all to take heed to it."

She talked a little while with the family, telling them not to be discouraged, that God loved them and had noticed how self-sacrificing they were. Heavenly angels would be with the children to help them correct their wrong habits.

When her grandmother had gone, Ella sat very still, thinking. She had asked God to help her and to show her what was wrong with her life, and that very night His angel had stood by the side of God's messenger, giving counsel and advice. He had even mentioned Ella and Mabel by name.

Ella arose from her chair determined to do her work the very best she could. "Come on, Mabel," she said. The girls went to their own room and began dusting and cleaning. Soon the room was as neat and orderly as any room could be. The books stood straight and even on the bookshelves; clothes closet, bureau drawers, and every corner of the room were thoroughly cleaned.

"The angels saw it all," Ella told Mabel, "but if they noticed when we slighted the work, they will notice, too, when it is well done."

--Ruth Wheeler in His Messenger, pp. 169-175.
Abridged and adapted.

Response to a Heart-Searching Message

As Related by Willard H. Saxby in 1916

Several years ago, while attending the Ohio camp meeting as a conference laborer, I received a Testimony from the servant of the Lord. It had been sent to one of our leading brethren, to be read to me. At the close of an evening meeting we retired to his tent. Elder A. (for so I shall call him) said, "You believe in the Testimonies?" I replied, "Certainly I do." We united in prayer, after which he slowly read the manuscript (it was in Sister White's own handwriting). The first five pages pertained to me personally; the next six were counsels more general in character, applying specially to anyone in charge of a city mission, etc.

After Elder A. had read a few paragraphs, he read a personal statement to which I objected, saying with emphasis, "That is not so!" He stopped, and said, "Brother Saxby, you say it is so, and the Lord will help you to see that it is so." "But how can I say a thing is so when I know it is not so?" He repeated, slowly, substantially what he had said, and continued reading. After a page or more, I said again, concerning another statement, "That is not so!" He repeated what he had said before, talked a while, and then resumed his reading.

I objected four times in all; but it was on the first point that I was especially positive.

At my request, Elder A. lent me the Testimony until the next day. I returned rather late to my room, and Mrs. Saxby was anxious to know why I was so late. When I told her my experience, she asked me to read the Testimony. I said, "No, it will take too much time tonight; but here is one paragraph I will read. I told Elder A. it was not so." It was a matter between my wife and me; and I shall never forget how, after I had read this paragraph, she rose up in bed and said, with all the earnestness of her being, pointing to me with her index finger, "Willard, that is so!"

I began to reason very seriously, like this: My wife says it is so; and Elder A., because of his confidence in the Spirit of prophecy, says it is so; and above all, the Lord through His servant says it is so; it must be so--three against one. As I sought the Lord by fasting and prayer, I soon saw things in the true light. The Testimony was a photograph of my inner life, and I could see that it was.

It is comparatively easy to believe a Testimony in reproof of someone else; but to one's own self it is altogether a different proposition; at least I found it so.

This scripture came with force to my mind: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10:12. When we are sure that we are all right, we may be all wrong. In our shortsightedness it is very becoming to us to walk in all humility before the Lord. "Believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." 2 Chron. 20:20. I praise God for the gift of the Spirit of prophecy.

--Review and Herald, May 18, 1916.

A Good Place to Live

It happened in New Zealand years ago. At the conference office we received from a dear old sister who for years had been an isolated Sabbath keeper a very brief note. She had been ill, and she felt that she had not much longer to live. She made, however, no plea for anyone to visit her to comfort or encourage her. The blessed hope to her was something real and substantial. What she asked was that for the sake of her neighbors and friends we would be sure when she died to send one of our ministers up to conduct the funeral service. She would see to it, she said, that when the end drew near one of the neighbors would send us word in time.

A few months later the telegram came. The sister lay dying. We asked Pastor J. Hookings, who was then the conference Missionary Volunteer secretary--a man over seventy years of age, but young in spirit and devoted to the Master's service--to take the train and go up to the little town where the sister had lived so long in isolation from others of like precious faith.

Upon his arrival Brother Hookings found that the dear sister had already lapsed into unconsciousness. He was introduced to her physician, an Italian gentleman, and as they sat quietly in a dimly lighted adjoining room awaiting the silent approach of the Grim Reaper, the doctor, who was quietly turning the pages of a book he had taken from the table, said in an undertone to Brother Hookings, "These are wonderful books, Mr. Hookings." Brother Hookings assented to the remark, but was inclined to think that the doctor had perhaps mistaken the volume of the Testimonies for the Church for some other similarly bound volume. After a brief interval the doctor said again, "Mr. Hookings, I think these are very

