

Infallibility, Inerrancy, and the Prophets:

Does a True Prophet Ever Make a Mistake?

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Introduction:

- A. The SDA Church grew out of William Miller's Advent Movement of 1844. This movement was one of the most authentically ecumenical of all in the 19th century:
 - 1. As prophecy had predicted, they came from "every kindred, . . . nation, . . . tongue, and people"(Rev. 14:6).
 - 2. They came from virtually every Christian denomination.
 - 3. They brought with them all of the varied, peculiar doctrinal beliefs of their respective churches.
 - 4. For the sake of unity, cohesion, and focus, however, most Millerites subordinated their varied beliefs as to what was "true" doctrine to the proclamation of Christ's coming on Oct. 22.

- B. The remnant from Millerism which eventually formed the SDA Church were theologically divided into many splinter factions.
 - 1. During the 22 Sabbath Conferences of 1848-50, when the group's doctrinal framework was hammered out, the conflicting views included the following:
 - a. That Christ had really come in 1844 (spiritually).
 - b. That no Bible prophecy whatever was fulfilled on Oct. 22, 1844.
 - c. That the millennium of Rev. 20 was already in the past.
 - d. That the 144,000 had been raised on Easter Sunday.
 - e. That the New Testament Lord's Supper, like the Old Testament Passover, should be celebrated by Christians only once yearly.
 - 2. At the 2nd Sabbath Conference, Aug. 18, 1848, "about 35 were present 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 Scripture." (LS 110:4)
 - 3. By the end of 1850, however, doctrinal unity had been achieved, in large measure because of much prayer; hard, investigative study of the Word;

exhaustive discussion; much fasting; and the prophetic gift, which God used after the people had gone as far as they could go, or when they were in danger of going off on the wrong track.

- a. Some differences of opinion continued nevertheless.
- b. Doctrinal understandings were improved along the way: A formal statement of our belief concerning the Trinity was published 1980.
- c. However, as late as 1892, EGW continued to warn:
 - (i) “Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed.”
 - (ii) “Long cherished opinions must not be regarded as infallible . . . God and heaven alone are infallible.” (RH, July 26, 1892, in CW 36, 37)

4. Ironically, it is in the area of “infallibility and inerrancy,” as it relates to the prophets, that many SDAs will yet have to correct a wrong viewpoint.

- a. Three questions constantly raised are:
 - (i) Does a true prophet ever err?
 - (ii) Do all of a true prophet’s predictions come to pass, 100% of the time?
 - (iii) Does a true prophet ever have to go back and change something?
- b. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul admonishes all Christians:
 - (i) “Quench not the [Holy] Spirit.”
 - (ii) “Despise not prophesying.”
 - (iii) “Prove all things; [and] hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:19-21).

I. Two Contrasting Theories About the “More-Sureness” of Prophecy:

Peter informs us that the word of the prophet is “more-sure” than the word of the non-prophet (2 Peter 1:19 KJV).

Two theories set forth:

A. The “Strait-Jacket” Theory--“More-Sure,” Because of “Prevention”:

According to this theory, the prophet's words are "more-sure" because the control of the Holy Spirit is so tight, so total, that the prophet is precluded from error--" It is therefore believed that:

1. A true prophet is right in his/her predictions **100%** of the time. If a prophet is not right 100% of the time, he/she is not a true prophet.
2. A true prophet of God does not change his/her mind and never has to change anything that he/she said or wrote.

B. The "Intervention" Theory--"More-Sure" because of "Correction":

According to this theory, the prophet's words are "more-sure" because if, in his/her humanity, a prophet of God errs, and the nature of that error is sufficiently serious that it affects the direction of God's church, the eternal destiny of even one soul, or the purity of even one doctrine, God does for the prophet that which He does not do for the non-prophet: The Holy Spirit moves in usually immediately and through the same prophet who made the error. God then corrects the error so that there is no permanent damage done to the church or its members.

II. Paul's Divine "Treasure" in "Earthen Vessels":

A. Paul draws a contrast between the divine "treasure" and the "earthen vessel" in which it is held and conveyed (2 Cor. 4:7):

1. The "**treasure**" is held to be God-given truths: "divine light has been imparted to the world by revelations to His chosen servants." (GC v:1) This is the divine part of the equation.
 - a. The Bible is "an authoritative, infallible revelation of His [God's] will." (GC vi:1)
 - b. "God and heaven alone are infallible." (1SM 37:3)
 - c. "Man is fallible; but God's Word is infallible." (1SM 416:2)
- 2.. The "**earthen vessel**" is held to be the human "packaging" (which holds and conveys the treasure)--the language (words) of men, the **human** part of the equation.
 - a. "**Everything** that is human is imperfect." (1SM 20:2; emphasis supplied)
 - b. ". . . **no man** [including prophets?] is infallible." (TM 376:2, emphasis supplied)

- B. EGW emphasizes that everything that has to do with the process of salvation combines divinity with humanity. She cites two examples:
1. “. . . The Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human.”
 2. “Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man.”
 - a. “Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that ‘the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us’ John 1:14.” (GC vi:0)
 - b. Again, “The union of the divine and the human, manifest in Christ, exists also in the Bible.” (5T 747:1)

- C. One contemporary critic, looking only at the human (EGW) and forgetting the divine (inspiration of the Holy Spirit), alleges that EGW’s writings are not a reliable foundation upon which to base doctrine because of the mistakes/errors in her writings.

It must be noted, however, both reason and consistency demand that if we reject her writings upon this ground, we must also reject the writers of Scripture, for they made **exactly** the same kinds of “mistakes” in their writings that EGW made in hers.

- D. There are three categories of errors/discrepancies in this context:
1. Unfulfilled prophecies
 2. Small matters of minor detail
 3. Major matters of substance

In each instance we shall first examine the Scriptures before proceeding to the writings of EGW, for we want to see EGW in the light of the Bible, not the Bible in the light of EGW.

III. The Category of Unfulfilled Prophecies:

A. Scripture:

1. One of the Biblical tests of a genuine prophet is fulfillment of prediction; an identical test is specified by both Jeremiah and Moses, though each presents the opposite side of the same view.

- a. Jeremiah presents the positive: “When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall [it] . . . be known that the Lord hath truly sent him” (Jer. 28:9).
 - b. Moses presents the negative: “If the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously” (Duet. 18:22).
2. Does this mean that a prophet’s predictions must be fulfilled **100%** of the time, in order for him/her to be considered to be a true prophet? The evidence of Scripture is **no**.
- a. These same two prophets who give us the test of prediction-fulfillment also remind us that a conditional element must be taken into account in some (though not all) prophecies:
 - (i) Jeremiah gives the test in Jer. 28:9; but introduces the conditional element in Jer. 18:6-10; 26:2-6.
 - (ii) Moses gives the test in Deut 18:22, but introduces the conditional element in 4:9, 8:19, and 28:1-15.
 - b. Other Biblical writers mention the conditional element:
 - (i) A prophet speaks to King Asa: “The Lord is with you, **while** ye be with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; **but if** ye forsake Him, He will forsake you” (2 Chron. 15:2, emphasis supplied).
 - (ii) See also Zech. 6:15; Ex. 19, 5, 6; 1 Kings 9:4-7.
3. Biblical examples of conditional and unfulfilled prophecies:
- a. **Jonah and Nineveh:**
 - (i) Jonah’s prophecy (2 Kings 14:25) concerning the restoration of the northern boundary of Israel 150 years after Solomon and the division of his kingdom was fulfilled in the early days of Jereboam II (c. 793-753 BC)
 - (ii) One of the main reasons Jonah did not want to deliver the message to Nineveh was he feared the Lord would not follow through. If Jonah had even one unfulfilled prophecy, people would view him as a false prophet. He was “jealous of his reputation,” caring more for it than for 120,000 lost souls! (PK 271:1)

b. **Predictions of Israel's national honor/glory**, made by seven Old Testament prophets--Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Zephaniah, and Zechariah:

- (i) Worldwide mission of ancient Israel
- (ii) Ingathering of the Gentiles
- (iii) Eternal rest in Canaan
- (iv) Deliverance from their political enemies

- (a) Literal Israel did not meet the conditions specified by the Lord, and so the Lord did not fulfill the promises as prophesied.
- (b) Some of these prophecies have a secondary application to "spiritual Israel today, and thus will find limited fulfillment; but the rest will never be fulfilled, though predicted by a true prophet of the Lord.

4. Some conservative theologians wrongly believing that the credibility of a true prophet depends on every prediction of his coming to pass and failing to recognize the conditional element in some prophecy, have made two hermeneutical blunders, thereby creating the "Secret Rapture" heresy in connection with Christ' second coming:

- a. They cut off the 70th week from the preceding 69 weeks and reposition it far into the future.
- b. They take all of the as-yet unfulfilled prophecies concerning literal Israel and move them into this future 70th week.
- c. They apply these predictions to modern, literal Israel in the creation of this false doctrine.

B. Ellen White:

1. **"Food for Worms" Vision (1856):** Critics of EGW love to point to this vision to prove that EGW was a false prophet, because this prediction has not only totally failed of fulfillment but can never be fulfilled in the future:

- a. Background source: 1T 127-37 (especially pp. 131, 132)
- b. In the vision, given May 27, 1856, EGW was shown the group attending a conference in Battle Creek that preceding weekend (May 23-26).
- c. The angel told her:

- (i) Some of this group would die (thus, “food for worms”) before Jesus returns.
 - (ii) Some would live through the close of probation, being subjects of the seven last plagues.
 - (iii) Some would be alive to witness the second coming, and then be translated without seeing death.
- d. For many years, the pioneers kept various lists of names of those known to have attended this meeting.
- (i) EGW, however, discouraged this practice, for she felt the members would focus more on the list, rather than upon getting the Lord’s work done so that Jesus could return.
 - (ii) She also understood the conditional element in this prediction.
- e. Today, all of those who were in attendance at the 1856 meeting have become “food for worms,” including the youngest person present at that conference, William C. White (1 year 9 months at that time), son of Ellen White. He died in 1937.

2. **Predictions of the Imminent Return of Jesus:**

- a. LeRoy Edwin Froom has compiled 45 EGW statements, from 1850 to 1915, in which she says, If we’d done our work, the Lord would have come before now. (*Movement of Destiny*, pp. 571-88)
- (i) The time of the Second Coming is conditional.
 - (ii) The fact of the Second Coming, however, is not conditional: “What do ye imagine against the Lord? He will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time” (Nahum 1:9).

3. There appears to be remarkably few conditional prophecies found in the body of EGW's writings. Some that today may appear to be conditional (e.g., the prediction of slavery existing in the USA at the time of the Second Coming), may meet a literal fulfillment.

4. Considering the conditional element in some prophecies, EGW today is no more of a false prophet than was Jonah, or the seven Old Testament prophets who prophesied concerning ancient, literal Israel.

IV. Category of Minor Details:

A. Errors/Discrepancies in Scriptures & E.G. White Writings:

These errors are of a very minor nature: not a single one of them affects:

1. The direction of God's church
2. The eternal destiny of any soul
3. The purity of even one doctrine.

B. Reason the Holy Spirit did not prevent these errors from appearing in print:
Because the error/discrepancy was so minor it was inconsequential.

C. Four categories of the errors/discrepancies in the Bible.

1. **Historical Uncertainties:**

- a. David's toll in warfare slaughter:
Was it 40,000 **horsemen** (2 Sam. 10:18) or 40,000 **footmen** (1 Chron. 19:18)?
- b. Performing the healing of blind Bartimaeus by Jesus at Jericho:
Was it done **as Christ approached** the city (Luke 18:35) or **as He left** the city (Mark 10:46)? Or was it two blind men as He departed (Matt. 20:29, 30)?
- c. Moses' lineal relationship to Hobab:
Was Hobab Moses' **brother-in-law** (Num. 10:29) or Moses' **father-in-law** (Judges 4:11)?
- d. The cock-crowing at Peter's denial during Christ's trial:
Was it **once** (Matt. 16:34, 69-75) or **twice** (Mark 14: 66-72)?
- e. The point-in-time of Herodias' instruction to Salome:
Was it **after** Herod made his amazing offer (Mark 6:24) or **before** he made the offer (Matt. 14:8)?
- f. The disciples' words spoken to Christ during the storm, en route to Gergesa:
Did they say, "Lord, save us; we perish" (Matt. 8:25), "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" (Mark 4:38), or "Master, Master, we perish" (Luke 8:24)?
- g. The words spoken by the Father at Christ's baptism:
Did He say, "This is My beloved Son" (Matt. 3:17--addressing the crowd, 3rd person singular) or "Thou art My beloved Son"? (Mark 1:11--addressing Jesus Himself, 2nd person singular)?

2. **Numerical/Chronological Uncertainties:**

- a. The number of deaths at Baal-Peor/Shittim:
Did **24,000** (Num. 25:9) or **23,000** (1 Cor. 10:8) die?
- b. How many stalls were prepared for Solomon's horses?
Was it **40,000** (1 Kings 4:26) or only **4,000** (2 Chron. 9:25)?
- c. How old was Jehoachin when he began to reign as king?
Was he **18 years old** (2 Kings 24:8) or **8 years old** (2 Chron. 36:9)?
- d. How old was Ahaziah when he came to the throne?
Was he **22 years of age** (2 Kings 8:26) or **42 years of age** (2 Chron. 22:2)?
- e. What was David's chronological position in the list of Jesse's sons?
Was he Jesse's **8th son** (1 Sam. 16:10, 11) or the **7th son** (1 Chron. 2:15)?
- f. For how long did the Old Testament Judges rule?
Was it for **450 years** (Acts 13:20) or **350 years?** (1 Kings 6:1).
- g. The number in Jacob's family who went down into Egypt:
Was it **70**, as Moses reported (Gen. 46:27) or **75**, as Stephen, "full of the Holy Ghost," reported (Acts 6: 3; 7:14)?
- h. How many demoniacs confronted Christ at Gergesa?
Was it **one man** (Mark 5:2, 3; Luke 8:27, 28) or **two men** (Matt. 8:25)?
- i. For how many years did Israel sojourn in Egypt?
Was it for **430 years**--with them coming out upon the "self-same day" (Ex. 12:40, 41) or only **400 years** (Acts 7:6)?

3. **Inaccurate Citations by New Testament Writers:**

- a. Who wrote the Messianic prophecy about Christ being sold for 30 pieces of silver?
Was it **Jeremiah** (Matt. 27:9) or **Zechariah** (Zech. 11:13)?
- b. The ratification of the First Covenant.
Who was correct? **Paul**, who said Moses took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled the book and the people (Heb. 9:19) or **Moses**, who said he sacrificed oxen, and sprinkled the altar and the people (Ex. 24:3-8)?

4. **The Use of Scripture Out of Context:**

- a. Who was called out of Egypt?
Hosea reports that God called His son, Israel, out of Egypt. (1:11), but Matthew says that Hosea prophesied that the child Jesus would be called out of Egypt (2:15).
- b. What was the sign promised to Ahaz?

That a "young woman" would conceive (Isa. 7:14) or that a "virgin"-- Mary--would conceive (Matt. 1:23)?

B. Ellen G. White:

1. Inaccurate Descriptions of Biblical Events:

- a. The tower of Babel: 3SG places it before the Flood.
- b. John the Baptist: 2SP 183, 184 says he was dead when the events of Matt. 4:18-22 occurred, but DA 245 says that he was "languishing alone in the dungeon" at this time.
- c. The number of Chedorlaomer's allies: PP 134 reports he had four allies, but Gen. 14:1, 9 states he had only three.
- d. The Roman nails at Calvary: 1SG speaks of "the crashing of the nails . . . through the bone and muscle" of His hands and feet, but DA 744 (in harmony with John 19:36) reports of the nails being driven only through His flesh.
- e. The trees in the Garden of Eden: In RH, Aug. 18, 1874, the "tree of life" is mentioned. The immediate context, however, indicates that the references should have been to the "tree of knowledge."

2. Numerical/Chronological Discrepancies:

- a. The duration of Solomon's temple: PK 149 says it stood for more than four centuries (in agreement with Ussher's chronology), but archaeology has since proven that it lasted only 384 years (870-586 B.C.).
- b. The date of William Miller's two lecture tours at Portland, ME: 2SG 12, 14 reports that they took place in 1839 and 1841, but 1T 14, 21 adjusts the date to 1840 and 1842.
 - (i) In the Preface of her first autobiographical account, EGW reports that she had had to work largely from memory in reporting subsequent events, as she had not kept a journal during earlier years (p. iii).
 - (ii) In a postscript to the first printed edition, she made a "special request" of her readers, that if "any find incorrect statements in this book, they will immediately inform me," in order that later editions might be corrected (p. 295). Apparently someone did, for the dates were adjusted in the later account in 1T.
- c. The number of texts on the card held up by the angel: "A card was

held up before me, one which were written in letters of gold the chapter and verse of fifty texts of Scripture.” (EW 22, 23)

- (i) A footnote indicates that “these texts are given at the close of this article.”
- (ii) On pages 24-31, the texts, not otherwise enumerated, are printed; but actually only 41 passages appear (with a grand total of 120 verses of Scripture). But where are the other nine?

d. Wrong date on a document:

- (i) When EGW joined her husband at Wallings Mills, Colorado, she dated the event as “Monday, August 8, 1878.” (LS 235; 4T 297)
- (ii) But Monday of that week fell, instead, upon August 5th.

e. Number of rooms in the Paradise Valley Sanitarium:

- (i) In a letter written to a denominational worker, EGW made incidental reference to the 40 rooms in the Paradise valley Sanitarium.
- (ii) Elder E. S. Ballenger, in writing to Mrs. White in 1909, stated that there were only 38 rooms in this institution--and this error had caused him to lose confidence in her prophetic gift.
- (iii) EGW replied that God had not revealed to her “the exact number of rooms in any of our sanitariums,” and that she was relying for her information upon the report of another who, for convenience’s sake, might have employed a round number. (ISM 38)

3. **Application of Scripture Out of Context:**

In 1 Thess. 1:9, Paul speaks of Christ coming “after the working of Satan.”

- a. In PP 686 EGW uses the word “after’ in a temporal sense, which, clearly, was not Paul’s intent.
- b. In 8T 226, she cites the text in harmony with Paul’s obvious intent.

4. **Erroneous Attribution of Cited Works:**

In 2 Cor. 5:14, the apostle declares that “the love of Christ constraineth

us.”

- a. In RH, Oct. 30, 1913, EGW incorrectly attributes this statement to Peter.
- b. But Paul--not Peter--was the author of 2 Corinthians.

5. **Grammatical Imperfections:**

- a. On Jan. 10 and 11, 1873, EGW lamented in her diary: “I am not a scholar. I cannot prepare my own writings for the press I am not a grammarian.” (3SM 90)
- b. In explaining the limitations placed upon EGW’s literary helpers, EGW’s son, William C. White, wrote to then General Conference President G. A. Irwin, on May 7, 1990: “Mother’s copyists are entrusted with the work of correcting grammatical errors, of eliminating unnecessary repetitions, and of grouping paragraphs and sections in their best order.” (Cited in Robert W. Olson, *One Hundred and One Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White* [White Estate, March, 1981,] p. 88)

6. **Historical Discrepancies in the 1888 and 1911 editions of *Great Controversy*:**

- a. Characterization concerning the Pope:
 - (i) In the 1888 edition, EGW wrote that the Pope “styles himself” as Lord God the Pope.”
 - (ii) In 1911, after discovering there was a question as to the source of the statement, she corrected it to read: “He has been styled ‘Lord God the Pope . . . “ (GC 50).
- b. The Waldensees: were they first to have a translation of the Scriptures?
 - (i) In 1888, EGW wrote that the Waldensees were the first of all of the people of Europe to obtain a translation of the Holy Scriptures.
 - (ii) After learning that at least one other group had the Scriptures prior to the Waldensees, she revised the reference in the 1911 edition to read: “The Waldensees were among the first of the peoples of Europe to obtain a translation of the Holy Scriptures” (GC 65).
- c. The signal to begin the Massacre of St. Bartholomew’s Day (Aug.

24, 1571):

- (i) In the 1888 edition, the ringing of the palace bell was reported to be the signal to begin this slaughter.
- (ii) Upon subsequently learning that historians were divided on the fine point as to whether it was the palace bell, the bell of the Church of St. Germain, or the bell in the Palace of Justice, the 1911 edition was revised to read simply: “A bell, tolling at dead of night, was a signal for the slaughter”

7. **Other Mistakes:**

a. **Sending a Wrong Document:** In 1906, a colporteur named Walter Harper wrote to EGW to ask for a copy of a testimony that had originally been directed to another member.

- (i) In responding to the request, Mrs. White sent the colporteur a different and highly sensitive, confidential testimony which had not previously been made public.
- (ii) Upon discovering her mistake, EGW wrote to Harper, requesting him to return this document immediately, and to make neither a copy of it, nor yet share it with anyone else. (Letter 353, 1906)

b. **A Misprint in a Periodical Article:**

In “Words to Students. Health,” EGW wrote: “A meat diet is not the most wholesome of diets, and yet I would take the position that meat should not be discarded by every one.” (*Youth’s Instructor*, May 31, 1894, p. 174)

Her attention was drawn to the statement which, as printed, reflected the exact opposite position of the prophet (it should have read: “Yet I would **not** take the position . . .), and in a letter to Elder Asa Oscar Tait, she explained: “Sr. Davis [one of her principal literary assistants] has called my attention to [this] . . . article . . . [And] the question is asked: Did I design to have this sentence [read] just as it appears in the *Instructor*? I am surprised to see it just as it appears. . . . I cannot explain why this appears just as it does. [For since the Brighton camp meeting “I have absolutely banished meat from my table.”] (Letter 76, 1895, p. 7)

V. **The Category of Major Matters of Substance:**

More disturbing to many Christians, however, is the fact that there are not only small errors and discrepancies of minor consequence to be found in the inspired Scriptures as well as the writings of EGW, but evidence also exists of errors involving major matters of substance.

A. Scripture:

1. In 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17 the story is told of King David and Nathan, a literary but non-canonical prophet:

When David informed Nathan of his intentions to build a temple for God, he gave him his blessing without first checking it out with God. Later, Nathan was instructed to return to David to inform him that because he had been a man of war, God had chosen his son Solomon rather than him to build the temple.

This narrative and the “Strait-Jacket” theory of “more-sureness” cannot be harmonized in any way.

- a. Only the “Intervention” theory can account adequately for what happened in this incident.
 - b. The prophet made a mistake--a serious mistake--which God could not overlook.
 - (i) It was a major error which affected the direction of God’s church, the eternal destiny of a soul, or the purity of a doctrine.
 - (ii) And God moved in immediately, through the same prophet who had made the error, to correct the error, so that no permanent damage would be done.
 - (iii) God did not prevent the prophet’s error in advance (through “Strait-Jacket” control) though He certainly could have done so through any one of several different expedients.
2. God does intervene, not to prevent the prophet’s problem, but to prevent permanent damage to His church.

B. Ellen G. White:

1. The number of major errors/discrepancies made by the Biblical prophets, requiring “intervention” by God, is comparatively few. Similarly, the number of instances in the ministry of EGW was quite limited.

2. However, there were a few times when she erred--and the nature of that error was sufficiently significant as to require God to step in--instances where the prophet had to “go back and change something:”

a. The Time to Begin the Sabbath (1846-55):

In 1855, the church was called to decide at what hour the observance of the Sabbath should properly begin, since four contemporary positions were taken:

- (i) Legal time: 12:01 a.m. Saturday morning
- (ii) Sunset Friday evening.
- (iii) “Equatorial Time” (6 p.m. Friday evening)
- (iv) Sunrise Saturday morning

In an attempt to resolve the problem once and for all, the church appointed J. N. Andrews to prepare a scholarly paper, deciding the question from Scripture alone.

At a general meeting in Battle Creek in November, 1855, he read his paper, in which he conclusively demonstrated (on the basis of 9 OT and 2 NT texts) that the Sabbath begins at sunset Friday evening.

Although those present were ready to accept this position, Joseph Bates continued to hold out for “equatorial time.” Some wavered because Bates was co-founder of the SDA Church. Moreover, EGW sided with Bates, and the meeting broke up in confusion, without any resolution of the problem. After the closing session, a number of ministers and other interested laymen met for a special season of prayer. Mrs. EGW was taken off in vision and told that she and Bates had taken the wrong position. Both quickly corrected their views; harmony and unity prevailed, and the church was saved from potential catastrophe.

b. The Proposed closing of the Southern Publishing Association (1901, 1902):

The Southern Publishing Association was established by the church at the urging of J. Edson White, son of EGW. For several years it annually continued to lose enormous sums of money. Efforts at financial reform were attempted, but all proved fruitless in the end.

A committee met with EGW at Elmshaven in an effort to resolve the problem once and for all. She was both disappointed and embarrassed with the financial situation because of her connection with Edson and her general counsel to “shun debt like leprosy.” Assured that the brethren had already taken all possible steps to correct the situation, she reluctantly agreed to the closing of the publishing house. That night, after the brethren had taken the train back to Battle Creek to implement the decision, EGW was told by the Lord in a dream that she had given wrong counsel. She rose early and wrote a letter to leadership at General Conference headquarters, correcting her mistake. Thus the church was spared unnecessary loss at a critical time in its history and development.

Conclusion:

1. The “Strait-Jacket” theory that the prophet’s word is “more-sure” in that the stringent control of the Holy Spirit over the prophet precludes the possibility of his/her making an error cannot be sustained in the face of the evidence in the Bible and denominational history. Only the “Intervention” theory adequately explains all of the Biblical and historical evidence.
2. In EGW’s day, the question was raised: “Do SDAs regard Ellen G. White as infallible?” W. H. Littlejohn, president of Battle Creek college, responded in 1883: “No. Neither do they believe that Peter or Paul was infallible. They believe that the Holy Spirit which inspired Peter and Paul was infallible. They believe also that Mrs. White has from time to time received revelations from the Spirit of God, and that revelations made to her by the Spirit of God are just as reliable as revelations made by the same Spirit to others persons.” (RH, Dec. 11, 1883)

The revelations to the prophets (“this treasure”) came directly from an infallible God, who permitted imperfect human language (“earthen vessel”) to be used as the medium of that communication--with all the attendant potential risks that this might entail.

3. SDAs today continue to hold that EGW was and still is reliable, trustworthy, authoritative, possessing all of the same prophetic authority invested in every other prophet of earlier times, inspired in the same manner and to the same degree as the Biblical prophets. Yet they do not make of her writings another Bible or an extension to the sacred canon of Scripture.
4. Speaking of herself, EGW wrote:
 - a. “We have many lessons to learn, and many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible.” (RH, July 26, 1892, in 1 SM 37)

- b. “In regard to infallibility, I never claimed it; God alone is infallible. His word is true, and in Him is no variableness, or shadow of turning.” (Letter 10, 1895, in 1SM 37)
 - c. “Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed.” (RH, July 26, 1892, in CW 36, 37)
5. Truly, as Peter declared, “We have a more sure word of prophecy.” But let us be exceedingly careful in determining just the exact point at which that “more-sureness” resides. The “Strait-Jacket” theory is an insufficient guide, creating far more problems than it ever is able to resolve. Pragmatically, the “Intervention” theory is the only one which adequately meets the data of Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy.