

The inspiration and authority of the Ellen G. White writings

A statement of present understanding, as revised June 14, 1982.

In response to requests, the following statement on the relationship of the writings of Ellen G. White to the Bible was prepared initially by an ad hoc committee of the General Conference. Several other groups reviewed and revised this statement, and it is now presented to readers of the *Adventist Review and Ministry* for reaction. It is hoped that a document incorporating reader suggestions may be presented to the Annual Council in October. Please note that this is a working draft of the statement, not a final one. Send your comments to: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 6840 Eastern Avenue NW., Washington, D.C. 20012.

In the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists at Dallas in April, 1980, the Preamble states: "Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures." Paragraph one reflects the church's understanding of the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, while paragraph seventeen reflects the church's understanding of the inspiration and authority of the writings of Ellen White in relation to the Scriptures. These paragraphs read as follows:

"1. The Holy Scriptures

"The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.)"

"17. The Gift of Prophecy

"One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10.)"

The following affirmations and denials speak to the issues that have been raised about the inspiration and authority of the Ellen White writings and their relation to the Bible. These clarifications are an attempt to express the present understanding of Seventh-day Adventists. They are not to be construed as a substitute for, or a part of, the two doctrinal statements quoted above.

Affirmations

1. We believe that Scripture is the divinely revealed Word of God and is inspired by the Holy Spirit.
2. We believe that the canon of Scripture is composed only of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments.
3. We believe that Scripture is the foundation of faith

and the final authority in all matters of doctrine and practice.

4. We believe that Scripture is the Word of God in human language.

5. We believe that Scripture teaches that the gift of prophecy will be manifest in the Christian church after New Testament times.

6. We believe that the ministry and writings of Ellen White were a manifestation of the gift of prophecy.

7. We believe that Ellen White was inspired by the Holy Spirit and that her writings, the product of that inspiration, are particularly applicable and authoritative to Seventh-day Adventists.

8. We believe that the purposes of the Ellen White writings include guidance in understanding the teaching of Scripture and application of these teachings with prophetic urgency to the spiritual and moral life.

9. We believe that the acceptance of the prophetic gift of Ellen White, while not a requirement for continuing church membership, is important to the nurture and unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

10. We believe that Ellen White's use of literary sources and assistants finds parallels in some of the writings of the Bible.

Denials

X1. We do not believe that the quality or degree of inspiration in the writings of Ellen White is different from that of Scripture.

2. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White serve the same purpose as does Scripture, which is the sole foundation and final authority of Christian faith.

3. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are an addition to the canon of sacred Scripture.

X4. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White may be used as the basis of doctrine.

5. We do not believe that the study of the writings of Ellen White may be used to replace the study of Scripture.

6. We do not believe that Scripture can be understood only through the writings of Ellen White.

7. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White exhaust the meaning of Scripture.

8. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are essential for the proclamation of the truths of Scripture to society at large.

9. We do not believe that the inspired writings of Ellen White are merely the product of Christian piety.

10. We do not believe that Ellen White's use of literary sources and assistants negates the inspiration of her writings.

We conclude, therefore, that a correct understanding of the inspiration and authority of the writings of Ellen White will avoid two extremes: (1) regarding these writings as functioning on a canonical level identical with Scripture, or (2) considering them as ordinary Christian literature. □