The Prophet and the Presidents

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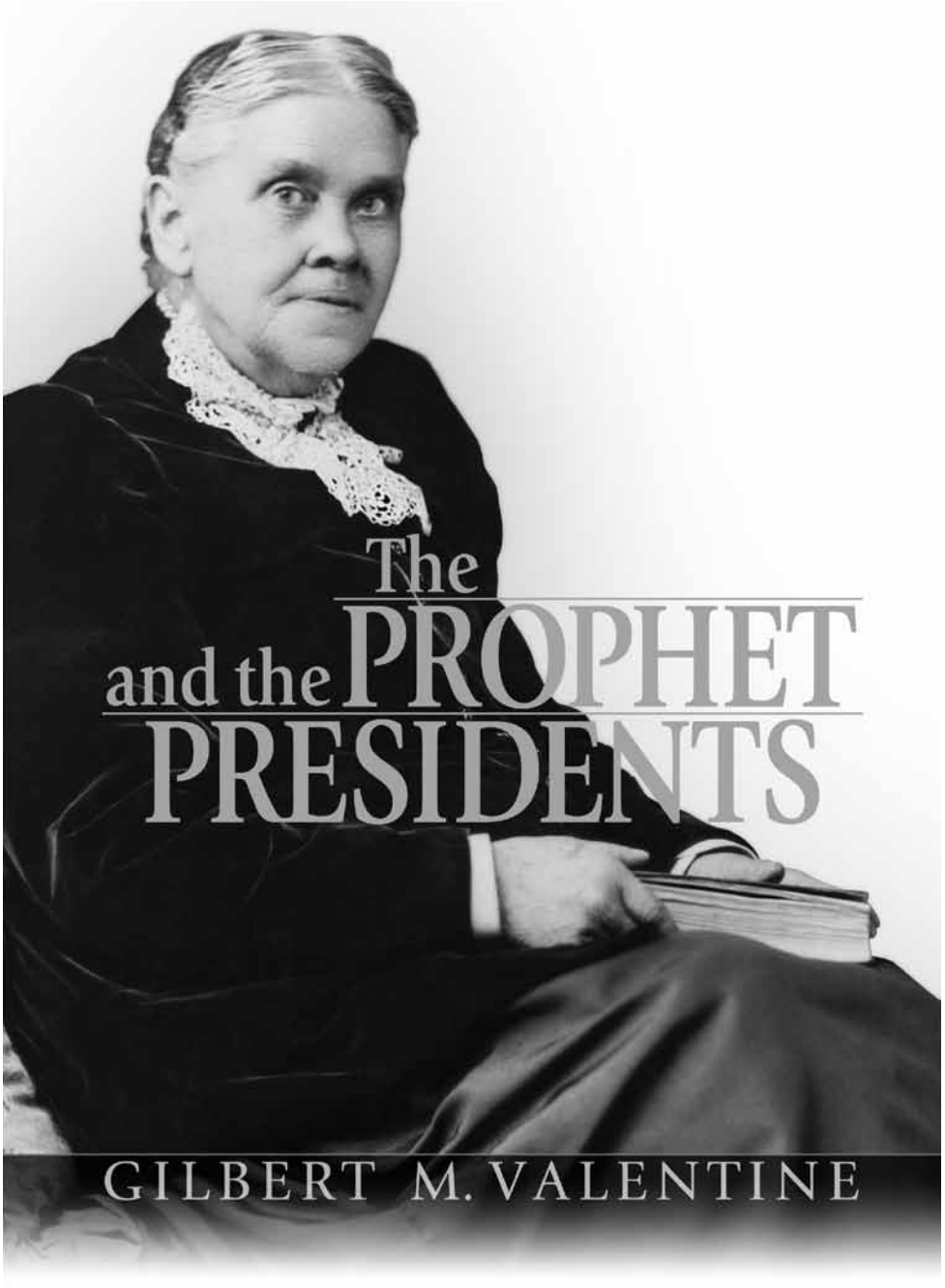

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DEDICATION

To my former parish, the Castle Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sydney, Australia, which continues to demonstrate delightfully and lovingly what it means to be the body of Christ.

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FOREWORD

The Prophet and the Presidents—an intriguing title, and a topic largely overlooked in Seventh-day Adventist history. Yet the story of the interaction between the spiritual gifts of prophecy and administration holds many valuable insights for the church in the twenty-first century.

As to the nature of the gifts, that of General Conference president is easier to define than that of prophet. By constitutional mandate the president is elected by a General Conference in session and functions as the denomination's chief executive officer and spiritual leader. That is clear enough. But explaining the role of prophet is much more difficult. Most people think of a prophet as one who foretells the future, but in both the Bible and Ellen White's experience, foretelling is a minor aspect in a prophet's work. Closer to the truth is the concept of "forth-telling." In that sense a prophet serves as a spokesperson for God. In the Old Testament, a "forth-teller" signified one who spoke for God and interpreted God's will.[1] In that sense, Gerhard von Rad points out, the "messenger formula" is the most characteristic form of prophetic speech.[2] Ellen White would have had no problem with that insight—the title she preferred for her calling was "the Lord's messenger,"[3] although she tended to refer to her messages as "testimonies."

But such pedestrian approaches to a definition certainly fail in capturing either the dynamism or the complexity of the prophetic office. Abraham Joshua Heschel helps us a bit when he notes that a "prophet is a man who feels fiercely" about the burden that God has "thrust . . . upon his soul."[4] And John Goldingay is even more helpful in capturing the complexity of the biblical role of prophet when he writes that "a prophet shares God's

nightmares and dreams, speaks like a poet and behaves like an actor, is not afraid to be offensive, confronts the confident with rebuke and the downcast with hope, mostly speaks to the people of God, is independent of the institutional pressures of church and state, is a scary person mediating the activity of a scary God, intercedes with boldness and praises with freedom, ministers in a way that reflects his or her personality and time, [and] is likely to fail" in some of his or her prophetic undertakings. While noting that no prophet manifests all those characteristics, Goldingay points out that individual prophets exhibit most of them.[5]

The biblical prophets, of course, did not perform their role in a vacuum. To the contrary, they were in constant contact with God's people as they presented God's messages. Their purpose in that interaction was to advise, encourage, and confront Israel's administrative leadership. Heschel highlights what he calls "the separation of powers" between the roles of king and prophet. The king "must reign according to the will . . . of God," while the prophet was to advise and confront the ruler with the message of what God's will was.[6]

Thus in the Bible we find Israel's leaders going to the prophets for advice, and the prophets going to them to give counsel from God and even to rebuke them when necessary. Some of that rebuke could be quite pointed, as when Nathan confronted David with the words "thou art the man" in the aftermath of his affair with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:7). The ministries of such prophets as Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah reflect constant interaction with the kings (i.e., the administrators) of their day, often in conflict mode.

We see the same in Adventist history. Ellen White, in her role of God's "messenger," was in regular contact with the denominational leaders as they sought to guide Adventism according to God's will. As in the Bible, at times the relationship was pleasant and harmonious, while at other times it was difficult and confrontational. Ellen White's relationship with George I. Butler during the 1888 era exemplifies just how difficult it could become. Not only did Ellen White refuse to be manipulated by Butler's presidential power plays, but she had to confront him repeatedly in regard to his misguided notions and the poor spirit he displayed.[7] Given the fact that leadership in all of its flavors must of necessity be strong-willed and opinionated, it is only natural that conflicts would arise. When it comes right down to it, in terms of leadership and the prophetic gift, Adventist history has the same basic dynamics as does the history portrayed in the Bible.

It is that picture that Gilbert Valentine helps us see more clearly in his path-breaking

The Prophet and the Presidents—especially during the period extending from 1887 through 1903. Adventist historians have been quite avid in writing about the theological and organizational developments of that era, but they largely have neglected the creative tension that operated between Ellen White and those responsible for administering and leading the organization during those same years. Thus Valentine's book is an important one as the church seeks to understand better the meaning of a modern prophet not only as that prophet influenced its past but also its present.

In closing, I should note that Valentine's book is at the forefront of a new genre of Adventist historiography: serious studies dealing with the complex relationships between Ellen White and her contemporaries. Most Adventist history has treated the topic merely as an aside to biography or the history of the church. Jerry Moon, in his PhD dissertation entitled *W. C. White and Ellen G. White: The Relationship Between the Prophet and Her Son,*[8] signaled the new direction. Similar doctoral studies are currently underway in the United States and Australia regarding her relationship to her husband and to James Edson White, her oldest surviving child.

Valentine's volume is of the same genre, but it is more ambitious in scope. It provides important understandings for a church still undergoing the process of history and the ongoing relationship between prophetic guidance and administrative responsibility in a world that is different than it was in Ellen White's lifetime, yet surprisingly the same in many of its dynamics. Because of both the differences and the likenesses, *The Prophet and the Presidents* is of crucial importance to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in this century.

George R. Knight
Rogue River, Oregon

INTRODUCTION

For seventy years, from the age of seventeen until her death at eighty-seven, Ellen G. White (1827–1915) was actively involved in initiating, shaping, and developing the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Adventist community recognized and accepted her as one manifesting a genuine prophetic gift.[1] The church initially emerged in the late 1840s as an informal charismatic fellowship motivated and characterized by its intense eschatological expectation and distinctive observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. In its early years it had little need of church organization or structure, but beginning in 1863 the group adopted a formal and legal organizational structure that later spawned numerous loosely organized branch organizations, related institutions, and other parachurch entities. At the turn of the century, these entities were integrated more tightly into what became a strongly centralized church structure. The process involved radical organizational adjustment and gave rise to significant leadership tensions resulting in damaging defections and losses and the potential for major schisms.

Church members early accorded Ellen White an important, though informal, leadership role in the movement based on her demonstration of an extraordinary charisma—a giftedness involving insights and understandings that she understood as coming from beyond herself.[2] The failure of William Miller's predictions of an immediate return of Christ in 1844 and the consequent keen disappointment experienced by his followers had led to a splintering of Miller's movement. Numerous visionary experiences at this juncture guided Ellen White into an expanding public ministry that nurtured and unified elements of the disappointed and fragmented Millerite believers into a cohesive and

enduring movement. Over a period of time, the group developed a consensus acknowledging that while some of their biblical interpretations had been mistaken, neither their central conviction nor the reality of their spiritual experience had been ill founded or delusional. During this early period, unusual physical phenomena accompanied many of Ellen White's vision experiences. Some fellow Adventists found these troubling, but many others regarded them as affirming, and thus most Adventists conceded her a pivotal role in the emerging movement. The practical relevance of her public and private counsel, her emphasis on the importance of the ethical life, her gifted preaching, and her "confirmation" of doctrinal understandings verified the genuineness of her charisma manifested through her visionary experiences.[3] And perhaps most important, her messages and ministry gave meaning to the religious experience of her fellow spiritual travelers. Her remarkable personal journey, and the deep and powerful self-perception of a particular calling as a messenger to her chosen community, underscored this ministry. The manifestation of this unique and extraordinarily influential charisma, exercised as it was in a helpful and timely way, provided a foundation for her community to place a continuing confidence in the legitimacy of her giftedness. In turn, such recognition helped the emerging community to develop a deeper understanding of itself and its mission.[4] The charismatic legitimacy extended to Ellen White by her community thus strengthened over time and reinforced and validated her leadership role.

Not everyone who observed Ellen White, of course, was convinced of the legitimacy of her charismatic experiences. Numerous dissenting voices murmured at various times—and not just at the fringes of her ministry. At times, even some of her closest colleagues expressed concern over what they saw as inconsistencies in her statements and perspectives. Such perceived inconsistencies, coupled with her inevitable human foibles, raised questions about the authority of her charisma in the minds of some. Thus her ongoing legitimacy periodically faced challenges and tests.[5] The most significant dissent tended to gather around the exercise of her leadership as she interacted with those in administrative or other leadership roles. Occasionally, conflict occurred at the interface between her function and the personal ambitions of members within institutional or administrative leadership. In this environment, with its intense focus on the immediacy of administrative problems, the scarcity of financial resources, and an inability to see issues in a larger context, tensions escalated between Ellen White and other prominent leaders. Generally, at such times, past experience and the acknowledgment of the overall value of her role as an arbitrator in disputes was sufficient to provide for continued con-

fidence—but not always. Their inability to resolve tensions led some prominent colleagues to reject her gift. In the long term, however, and for the mainstream of the church, the positive value of her role as leader, arbitrator, and guide validated the legitimacy of her distinctive function. She continued to receive affirmation of and confidence in her gift.[6]

During her seventy years of involvement with the Adventist movement, Ellen G. White personally attended the majority of the general meetings (later called General Conference sessions) of the church.[7] Her unique and perceptive insight into spiritual matters, her practical Christian counsel and advice to individuals, her timely intervention in the organizational affairs of the life of the developing church, and the spiritual authority of her extensive writing provided more than sufficient evidence to the church's expanding membership that her gift was not only a genuine prophetic one, but that it was a major boon to the community. Many recognized that her continuing influence and authority in the movement kept it focused on its mission, strengthened it, and enabled it to become the substantial and still expanding community it is today.

Ellen White never accepted an official position or an elected leadership role or administrative office in the church.[8] Although recognized as a significant leader in her community, her employment status with the General Conference was that of a "worker" and she received the equivalent of a minister's salary. By the 1880s, her employment role was defined as that of a "writer" supplemented by general pastoral duties. In 1887, in recognition of her ministerial role, the General Conference voted her credentials as an ordained minister, but the status was accorded without any formal ceremony of ordination.[9] Nor was she attached by way of pastoral assignment to any particular congregation, although she did respond to invitations by the formal organization to locate her labors in specific fields for various periods of time.[10] Mrs. White exercised her influence and authority among the formally elected leaders of the Adventist community in an informal manner. She achieved this through her personal relationships and interactions with the officially appointed leadership of the organization, augmented by her letter writing, counseling, and preaching. Later, her articles and books and other communications enabled her to have a wider influence with the broad membership of the church. This study asks whether Ellen White consciously reflected on the process of how she should exercise this informal, and somewhat tangential, leadership role or whether the exercise of the role occurred intuitively. To what extent did she evaluate and choose or reject various methods that might enhance her influence or make her ministry more effective?

In spite of the fact that Ellen White held no elected office, she was nevertheless intensely interested in the structural and organizational aspects of the community's development. In particular she was concerned with the quality and appropriateness of those chosen to lead the organization. During the fifty-two years of her involvement with the church following its adoption in 1863 of legal status and a formal central organizational structure, she worked closely with the eight men who at different times and for varying periods were elected to serve as the officially appointed leaders of the movement.[11] Although she did not accept election to an official position in the church herself, she was intimately acquainted with most, if not all, of those in the church's highest leadership ranks.

From the earliest period in the denomination, the election process for the position of General Conference president and other senior officials of the organization involved the appointment of a nominating committee at a duly called session of the General Conference. Sessions convened annually at the beginning and then changed to a biennial election pattern in 1889. In 1905, the denomination adopted a four-year term of office. Since 1970 the term has been five years. Of the thirty-eight regular sessions of the General Conference held during her lifetime, Ellen White made special efforts to be present at most, missing the meetings only when she was in Europe or Australia. Her advanced age and uncertain health prevented her from attending the 1913 session, held just two years before her death.[12]

These sessions of the General Conference were essentially meetings of delegates representing the constituent state conference organizations and associated parachurch entities. The nominating committee usually consisted of individuals selected on the basis of a recommendation by the incumbent president, who was called upon to "name" the standing committees of the session early in the proceedings. The nominating committee would meet during the session and would bring a slate of potential officers to the floor for approval by a simple majority of delegates. If delegates were unhappy with the nominations, they could vote to refer the names back for further consideration by the nominating committee. Thus the system avoided extensive personal and potentially embarrassing discussion on the floor of the session and minimized party politicking and campaigning.

Ellen White is recorded as having attended General Conference sessions as an appointed delegate from the earliest period. She thus had a formal right to speak in discussions on the floor during session meetings and to vote on the various motions made. Also

she participated at formal sessions by being invited to present devotionals or to preach at the regular worship services. Often the session would invite her to address specific issues being discussed by delegates. She appears never to have participated formally as an elected member of a nominating committee, although evidence indicates that at times she received specific requests for advice on possible candidates. Clearly she was interested in the outcome of the nomination-election process. But did she ever attempt to influence the process for the purpose of achieving a specific outcome? How involved was the "prophetic gift" in determining who should exercise the "gift of leadership" in the church? Given the extent of her interest in the elected leaders of the Adventist movement and the level of her interaction with them, the question arises: To what extent was she involved in the selection and appointment of those who served as leaders? Did she participate in their removal or replacement? How did her informal, charismatically based authority within the community interact and relate to the usual democratic processes of election and appointment? In what ways—if any—did her informal, charismatically based authority interface with what we might view as the more prosaic exercise of the administrative gift or the apostolic gift? Which of the gifts should take preeminence in matters involving conflict? Exploring these questions is a primary focus of the present study, and answers are suggested through the unfolding narrative and discussion.

In 1913, in a Bible study presentation at the General Conference session of that year, W. C. White, son of Mrs. White, attempted to help his colleagues and his critics understand the interaction among the various spiritual gifts. His attempt at setting out an understanding occurred in the context of the approaching end of his mother's ministry. She would die in 1915. It was an important issue, but it was fraught with inherent tensions. White linked his discussion of the topic with an attempt to inform the delegates more broadly about the way Ellen White produced her books and how her literary assistants helped her. He suggested that the role of spiritual leadership and administration should be understood to be embraced in the gift of apostleship. But he firmly believed that "the sacredness of the apostolic gift can best be taught without any effort to tear down confidence in the gift of prophecy." Nevertheless, some misunderstood and heavily criticized him.[13] Following his unsuccessful attempt to educate the larger community, White commented in a letter to A. G. Daniells, president of the General Conference, that he, White, was "fully in harmony" with "the effort that should be made to emphasize in the minds of our people the sacredness, the authority of the apostolic gifts." He had repeatedly said to his colleagues that he thought the subject "could not be perfectly

understood without a better understanding of all the gifts in the church," and he wished that others would give Bible studies from that perspective. Employing an allusion to the leadership arrangements in the time of Jesus, White commented, "For a long time I have been praying the Lord to take the burden that for years has rested upon Mother and place it upon the seventy elders." In addition, he wished to assure his colleagues that they had his sympathy and his prayers "in their effort to build up and strengthen the apostolic gift, and all the other gifts in the church." W. C. White and those in leadership felt that it was very important for the health of the church that there be a fuller understanding of the role and interaction between the gifts.[14] This study seeks to understand more fully the interaction of the various spiritual gifts of leadership in the life of the church highlighted by the questions raised by W. C. White. It attempts to address and to explain such issues and provide a more adequate understanding of Ellen White's work.

Both the wealth of material and the constraints of space have suggested that the present study focus on the three General Conference presidents who served during the latter years of the nineteenth century and through the turn of the new century, with a particular emphasis on the sixteen-year period between 1887 and 1903. The men involved are Ole A. Olsen (1888–1897), George A. Irwin (1897–1901), and Arthur G. Daniells (1901–1922). These presidents served following the death of Ellen White's husband, James White, in 1881. The early presidencies of John Byington, John Andrews, and the first term of George I. Butler, as well as that of Ellen White's husband, James White, lie outside the focus of this study. The fact that in many of the early years, leadership roles were overlaid by close family relationships makes that period a less clear area for study. Furthermore, an understanding of the most desirable leadership pattern for the denomination took time to evolve, and during the early years the varying concepts and styles advocated often reflected the personalities and temperaments of the various proponents as much as they did clear biblical, theological reflection.

Before James White's death in 1881, for example, he had been elected president of the General Conference more than ten times. It has been well documented that his autocratic management style, strength of personality, and native entrepreneurship achieved a great deal in building up the movement.[15] But, unfortunately, such a leadership style also often strained relationships between White and his colleagues. Even when he wasn't in office, the strongly opinionated James White remained a predominant leadership figure. Between the years 1874 and 1876, when George I. Butler served as General Conference president, tensions over what "leadership" entailed became acute. Butler's resig-

nation in 1876 was a direct result of conflict over the nature of leadership and his difficulty in relating to James White, who, although out of office, still acted in large measure as a de-facto president.

For obvious reasons, Ellen White's interaction with administrative leadership was more tangled when her husband was the president. Complicating the formal relationship was the spousal relationship and the inevitable blurring of roles (at least from James's perspective) that Ellen White exercised as both spouse and prophetic voice. Differentiating between the two roles was not always successful. The closeness of family relationships also complicated the short presidency of J. N. Andrews.[16] After James's death, however, Ellen White's involvement with the appointment and removal of presidents comes into better focus. Her influence in the election processes of the church became more formal and remote and thus more readily analyzed.

A further reason for focusing on the latter period is that although Adventists established the overarching General Conference in 1863, it was not until the mid- to late-1880s that growth of the church led to the development of a more complex structure. Beginning in the mid-1880s, the role of the General Conference president began to take on more the nature of a leader of a team of administrators. His associates were responsible for distinct areas of activity, such as education, home missions, and publishing. The early 1890s saw the creation of major organizational sub-units designated as "districts." These were later organized as "unions" of state conferences with their own financial and legal constitutions. Under this arrangement, supervision of the local, largely state-based, conferences was no longer the direct responsibility of the General Conference. Moral suasion and influence replaced executive action and supervision in this arena. The responsibilities of the General Conference president had, however, become more complex. Now he functioned as a team leader for a broadening array of General Conference associates and union conference presidents. The role continued to evolve yet further. While the radical changes in organizational structure had been largely settled by 1903, the church did not, of course, cease to develop, and it adopted minor adjustments in structure post-1903. During this period, Ellen White continued to interact with church leadership up until the time of her death in 1915. Chapter 10 will extend the discussion beyond the period of particular focus to survey the final years of Ellen White's relationship with General Conference president A. G. Daniells and her involvement in the various issues of his presidency and his re-election to office.

By the mid-1890s, during the presidency of O. A. Olsen, Ellen White began to give

critical attention to the General Conference associates as well as to the president. While she had strongly advocated the development of a broader presidential staff to lessen the demands made on the office of president, she was not reluctant to counsel a president for relying on associates whom she believed were ill-suited to their tasks. Such focus created uncomfortable dilemmas for the presidents, who were often hamstrung by the non-availability of suitably qualified and experienced alternative individuals. They were also constrained by the fact that these associates had been elected through formal democratic procedures. Presidents thus had to follow due process if they were to consider replacing a colleague. They could not simply ignore proper electoral processes. Changes, if needed, could not be effected simply by the counsel they received from Ellen White.

The administrations of O. A. Olsen and G. A. Irwin witnessed a pattern of Ellen White criticizing the elected team of associates. This continued in Daniells's administration, although during this time she communicated her criticism and counsel through her son, W. C. White. He, in turn, maintained the practice with subsequent administrations.[17]

A study of the relationship and engagement between the charismatic authority of Ellen White and the formal administrative authority of the elected leadership is valuable, because it illuminates, and therefore facilitates, a better understanding of the numerous leadership conflicts in the church during the 1890s and into the first decade of the new century. Such conflicts mostly centered on the allocation of resources, which were scarce, and the determination of priorities for investment and development as the church went through a period of rapid expansion. The various parties sought to influence the church leadership and budget managers in the General Conference treasury, seeking funds to pursue their work—each trying to justify that their area of need had higher priority than the others. Sometimes the jousting was fierce. This conflict often manifested itself over the allocation of resources for work in Australia versus that in England or for work in the southern United States versus that in Africa or Europe. The competition involved both monetary resources and skilled personnel.[18]

Ellen White keenly felt the lack of financial resources when she worked in Australia in the 1890s. During this period, she struggled with stress and anxiety that periodically manifested themselves through a number of physical symptoms. These, in turn, would surely have affected her perception of the problems at headquarters as well as her feelings of frustration, exasperation, and anxiety about them. Such circumstances help us understand the frequency of the sometimes strong language that she employed at this time in

her communications with denominational headquarters.

In order to have an adequate grasp of the relationship between the prophet and the presidents, it is necessary to consider some of the difficulties involved in the publishing program of the church around the turn of the century. Therefore, this study also attempts to throw light on the complexities involved in the development of the church's publishing branch during that troubled period. The interaction between Ellen White and the General Conference presidents often concerned issues related to publishing activities. Tensions arose at the intersection where her work as a writer in the church met the actual business of publishing and printing. This was mostly because she sought to establish a unique relationship with her publishers not available to other authors. She felt the need to retain control over both the content and the circulation of her works, yet at the same time wanted free access to the church's marketing networks. The circumstances were unusual to say the least. She assumed the financial responsibility of preparing the printing plates for her books and retained ownership of them, stating that her arrangements needed to be unique because she was concerned about possible constraints being placed on her influence by anyone unfavorable toward her writings. More important, to do otherwise would perhaps make her vulnerable to pressure to dilute the messages that God's people needed to receive.[19] Such constraints, she maintained, would compromise her charismatic influence and authority, as indeed, would also any attempt by her to publish her own work independently. The authority of self-published material could not be as great as that printed by a recognized publishing house. However, this approach created significant management problems for the publishing houses themselves. It disrupted and complicated planning for the release and circulation of other books as conflicts emerged over what products needed to be given priority.

Publishing was an expensive business both for the publishing houses and for Ellen White. It was not always easy to cover basic production costs, let alone generate sufficient surplus funds for a livelihood. Ellen White understood the need to control expenses and ensure surpluses in order to support her charitable and development projects. Therefore, access to marketing networks and enthusiastic distribution by colporteurs (then called "canvassers") were critical. On numerous occasions she was not timid about directing publishing house management regarding which books should or should not be published and at what price. She also indicated what kind of books should be subsidized and what should be done with company surpluses. The publishing house managers, however, felt that *they* needed to be able to decide whether they should subsidize the loss

on one book by the profit on another. It seems clear that some publishing house managers considered that Ellen White's intervention into the decision-making processes made their task difficult. Did such managers perceive her as meddling in their roles?

Sometimes, as she sought to give urgency to the need to resolve problems, she presented her intense concerns about the problems of book marketing and circulation as issues of the highest moral principles. Many of the issues, however, were time and circumstance specific. They included, for example, her vigorous opposition to wage differentials between institutional employees, arguments for specific percentages for book royalties, and concerns about marketing policies. Today, the church may have abandoned these policies for good reason, even though she ardently advocated them at the time and couched her arguments in terms of universal ethical principles. Again, this study attempts to throw light on the perplexing circumstances the publishing program faced at the turn of the century and provide a context for interpreting and understanding Ellen White's involvement in these problematic areas. (Chapter 11 also provides a broader context and interpretive framework for understanding the intensity of feeling over some of these issues.)

In many respects, piecing together the story is like weaving a tapestry. At one level, the story explores the detailed stitching as well as tracing out each colorful thread that forms the warp and woof of the richly textured fabric that is Adventism's past. At the same time, as the story emerges, we need to stand back, to gain perspective, to make sense of the larger patterns that have appeared over time. Both tasks are necessary in the quest for understanding and developing an appreciation of how Providence led and shaped the Adventist movement.

It is important to note that this is a believer's study. It is not an attempt to discredit or demean the function of Ellen White's charisma that contributed so much to the survival and growth of Adventism and to the molding of its distinctive shape. Rather, it is an endeavor to grasp and appreciate the dynamics of the interaction of the "gift of administration" and the charisma of the "gift of prophecy" in the church's formative years. It may even help to provide a basis for understanding how that interaction should function today. This study helps put to rest the "myth of the inflexible prophet" and confirms George Knight's observation that Ellen White's charismatic leadership and approach to problem solving was characterized both by flexibility and pragmatism, while adhering to broad guiding principles. It also confirms Barry Oliver's observation that her flexibility grew out of a central focus on mission.[20]

The interaction between the prophet and the various presidents illustrates the principle that changed circumstances require a modification of approaches and action plans. It also indicates that the urgency of present mission opportunities, the duty of pastoral care, and the duty of meeting human need takes precedence over other competing priorities. Recognizing the principles supporting this pragmatic approach to leadership provides us a way of interpreting problematic particulars. How to explain, for instance, the prophet condemning a certain course of action as unethical ("highway robbery") in one set of circumstances, and then half a decade later seeing no ethical dilemma in advocating and endorsing the condemned practice in a different set of circumstances?[21] It should not surprise us to find that Ellen White, like each of us, experienced a mix of conflicting emotions as she encountered problems and disappointments in her spiritual journey. Nor should it puzzle us that these conflicting emotions would give rise, at times, to conflicting statements of intent or point of view. For example, we should not be shocked that in her frustration and disappointment with the church leadership she could express the view that she would never return to America, and then later state that she would return. She might at one moment resolve in her mind and in her discussions with friends that she would write no more personal letters because they created too much misunderstanding. Instead, she would confine herself to preaching and oral delivery. But then, a short time afterward, she would simply resume writing such letters. Thinking out loud, as it were, in some of her correspondence or expressing how she felt about something at a particular moment might inevitably result in inconsistencies, but that would not be abnormal either. We need a more adequate construct than just concluding that such things consequently invalidate the exercise of her charisma. Standing back from the historical tapestry suggests otherwise. We, therefore, need a larger frame of reference to understand the pattern of Providence at work in the life and ministry of a person who, like anyone else, experienced the usual range of emotional ups and downs, joys, and disappointments. Every person in his or her own way is a bundle of inconsistencies.

The present study and the story it uncovers has reinforced the convictions of this author that we have much yet to learn about the richly textured dimensions in which Providence has led in the development of the Adventist movement. The story unfolded here illustrates this more clearly. The appreciation of these brightly hued patterns underlies the continuing conviction that the Spirit of truth, uniquely manifested in the ministry of Ellen White, still leads the Adventist community. The church's continued growth

through the years since she interacted with its leadership would seem to be a clear evidence of the ongoing blessing of the Spirit. It is hoped that this study will help enrich the understanding of new generations of Adventists and deepen their appreciation of Ellen White's work.

While the pages of this volume tell the story of struggles and of joys as well as pain and sorrow in the development of the church, in a very real sense the pages themselves emerged through the mists of a difficult journey of pain and loss. I am indebted to many friends and colleagues in the church for their encouragement and assistance in bringing this project to completion. Two research grants from Asia-Pacific International University (then Mission College) in Thailand enabled the location, collection, and processing of materials. I gratefully acknowledge this assistance. The university administration also generously provided long-term research and writing time and accommodated some extended absences away from campus at a very difficult time when my late wife Gail needed extensive medical treatment. I will be forever grateful for the generous understanding and support of Warren Shipton, Mack Tennyson, Bill Townend (board chair), and the secretariat personnel at the General Conference. Barry Oliver and Barry Hill of the South Pacific Division have also been gracious in facilitating difficult transitions, and I am deeply grateful to them.

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Because of space limitations, I have tried to keep referencing as brief as possible while at the same time providing the essential information for those who wish to check a source or an interpretation or pursue further inquiry. References in the endnotes generally follow the same order in which they are referred to in the text.

The majority of unpublished sources used in the research for this book can be found in the General Conference Archives, the special Ellen G. White Collections in the Loma Linda University Library and in the Heritage Room at Andrews University or at the offices of the Ellen G. White Estate in Washington, D.C. Space limitations have precluded the providing of specific details about the location of documents. Fortunately, in recent times the catalogue details for both incoming and outgoing correspondence in the Ellen G. White Estate collections are available online through the services of Loma Linda University and can be accessed at http://www.whiteestate.org/search/collections.asp.