



BIBLICAL FOOTPRINT 5 —

SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

When asked, “what is the spirit of prophecy,” invariably the answer is given, “the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy,” as cited in **Revelation 19:10**. Do we really understand what that phrase means, or carries with it in substance? The answer, unfortunately, is a resounding no.

In order to understand the full scope of this phrase and all that it entails, we must first establish what the testimony of Jesus really involves. He provides us with an answer in several Scriptures that we will quote here, beginning with **John 5:19**. Here the Bible affirmatively states: “Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **The Son can do nothing of Himself**, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” Jesus goes on to say **in verse 30 of the same chapter**, “**I can of Mine own self do nothing**: as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; **because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me.**” This verse tells us why He can do nothing of Himself, and that is because His own will has been set aside, it has been buried in preference to doing only the Father’s will, and what He hears His Father speak to Him, that is what He says or does.

Another aspect of this is that one’s testimony, whatever it happens to be, must be affirmed as a true testimony, and that requires two or three witnesses. This principle is plainly set forth in **Deuteronomy 19:15** where God, in instructing Moses, told him, “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or **at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.**” This is affirmed by Jesus in **Matthew 18:15, 16** where He says, “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee,

then take with thee one or two more, **that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.**”

Jesus indicates that He has such to affirm His testimony as true. First, **in John 5:31**, He states “If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true.” He then goes on to state **in verse 33** that He had the witness of John the Baptist. But He had indicated in **verse 32** that He had another witness, **in verse 36** says that this witness is ever greater than that of John, and **in verse 37** He identifies that witness as the Father. Jesus also indicated in **John 10:25** that His own works bore witness of Him.

Jesus sums up the matter in **John 8:28, 29** which asserts, “Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things. And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; **for I do always those things that please Him.**” That is the testimony of Jesus.

Next, we must identify how it is that He does only those, or always those things that pleases His Father. The natural assumption would be that since He is God in the flesh, He could not have done anything but what pleases His Father. But that thinking or assumption is incorrect because it is based on the wrong premise. Jesus is not only fully God, He is fully man. When Jesus was on earth, He was completely like us except for one thing, and that is He did not have the *propensity* to sin. However, He did have the *capacity* to sin, for He had free will—He could choose to do right, or choose to do wrong—He had the heredity of sin from Mary and all of His forebears, including some like Rahab, the harlot, and Manasseh, the king of Judah, who was into idol worship, witchcraft, murder, etc. In fact, He emptied Himself, to the same point we are to empty ourselves of self, so that there was nothing left of His own will to exercise.

“The following statement concerning the Saviour is worthy of notice in beginning—

*“To our understanding, the Scriptures show that in order to ransom man, the Son surrendered forever the spirit nature and life which He had, and became a man pure and simple, though a perfect man.”—“**Millennial Hopes and Prospects**,” page 4*

I quote again from a work written by Mr. Russell, the leading exponent of this doctrine:

“Neither was Jesus a combination of two natures, human and spiritual...When Jesus was in the flesh He was a perfect human being; previous to that time He was a perfect spiritual being; and since His resurrection He is a perfect spiritual being of the highest order.

“Thus we see that in Jesus there was no mixtures of nature, but that twice He experienced a change of nature; first, from spiritual to human; afterward from human to the highest order of spiritual nature, the divine: and in each case, one was given up for the other.”—Plan of the Ages, Vol. 1, pages 179, 180.

“We do not see how language could more clearly express the idea that Jesus, when on earth, was merely a human being, with no spiritual or divine nature. This is the redeemer of this system of teaching, but it is not the Christ of the Bible. Were the above true, we would only have a human sacrifice, which can save no one.

*“God forbid that we should ever consider Jesus as a man only! It is true that He was a man, a perfect man. Again and again He is called the ‘Son of man.’ ‘There is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.’ **1Timothy 2:5**. But it is equally true that He was at the same time, ‘the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.’ **John 1:18, 14**. The Millennial Dawn idea of our Redeemer is dishonoring to Him. It takes away from us a divine Saviour, and gives us only a man.*

*While Jesus was a man He was also God. He was as much the Son of God when on earth as He ever was or will be. ‘And when He again bringeth the firstborn into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him.’ **Hebrews 1:6**. Angels have never been bidden to worship one who was only ‘a man, pure and simple.’ He had power when on earth to forgive the sins of the transgressors of the divine law, and none can ‘forgive sins, but God alone.’ **Luke 5:21**. He was the Son of the eternal God clothed in flesh. His majesty and divinity were veiled in humanity. We cannot, perhaps, understand how this is, for it is ‘the mystery of godliness.’ It is beyond the comprehension of mortals, but it is the truth nevertheless.” **The Banner, pg. 8, 7. J. W. Manns, Editor, January 1924***

So then, how did He do the will of His Father without exception? The answer lies in His being an example to us that we should follow in His footsteps. **1Peter 2:21**. He made it a point to be utterly, completely, without reservation, submitted and surrendered to His Father through the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit conceived Him in Mary’s womb. **Luke 1:35**. The Holy Spirit anointed Him for His ministry. **Matthew 3:16**. It is the Holy Spirit that drove Him into the wilderness to be tempted. **Mark 1:12**. It is the Holy Spirit Who was to be His Representative here on earth after He was ascended. **John 14:16-18**. It is the Holy Spirit who inspired men of God, such as John, to write **Revelation 19:10**. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” **2Peter 1:21**. You see, the Holy

Spirit is the Spirit of Prophecy, and the testimony of Jesus fully attests to this fact.

*“The last message of the Gospel is preeminently a prophetic message. **It is given by the power of the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of prophecy.**” E. J. Waggoner, Present Truth, UK August 17, 1899*

“The point is this: The Spirit, The Holy Spirit, is the spirit of prophecy. It is the spirit by which the prophecy was given. It is the spirit which enlightens and quickens the mind of every student of God's word who comes prayerfully, to be taught of God, and submits his mind to the guidance of the Spirit. It is the Spirit through which all the gifts are manifested in the church.” W.W. Prescott, General Conference Daily Bulletin, February 25, 1895

Having established that fact, we now turn to the spirit of prophecy carried forward to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is unfortunate that the writings of Ellen G. White are usually referred to as the Spirit of Prophecy because they are not. We have already established that the Holy Spirit is that Spirit. See the following quotes where the servant of the Lord identified the Spirit of Prophecy as being other than herself or her writings:—

*“The Lord opened more fully to Enoch the plan of salvation, **and by the spirit of prophecy** carried him down through the generations which should live after the flood, and showed him the great events connected with the second coming of Christ and the end of the world.” Ellen G White, Spirit of Prophecy, Vol. 1 pg. 61*

*“God, **by the spirit of prophecy**, elevated the mind of Jacob above his natural feelings.” Ellen G White, Spirit of Prophecy, Vol. 1 pg. 156*

However, that does not diminish her from what she was called to be, a prophet, the office given to her by the Holy Spirit—the true Spirit of Prophecy. Bear in mind, that the office of a prophet is not the same as having the gift of prophecy. The office is appointed by the Lord, as indicated in **Ephesians 4:10-13**, while the gift is given at the discretion of the Holy Spirit as Paul sets it forth in **1Corinthians 12:10, 11**. There are numerous incidents of persons being given the gift of prophecy, yet never occupying the office of the prophet. For example, Saul, the son of Kish, was told he would prophesy at a specific time by the person who held the office of prophet in that day, Samuel. The direction was given in **1Samuel 10:6, 7** and fulfilled in **verses 10 and 11** of that same chapter. Saul never held the office of prophet, yet he received the gift on this occasion.

Sister White met every test of a true prophet. Her testimony and character maintained that of her Saviour, and thus her writings, as inspired of the Holy

Spirit, are the testimony of Jesus to His Church in these last days—exhorting us to overcome as Christ overcame and develop His character within so that we may be accounted worthy of eternity—doing always those things that please our Father. We believe her to be inspired of God, just as surely as were Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel.

The fact that Ellen White occupied the office of the prophet does not exclude others from receiving the gift of prophecy as it suits the Lord's purpose in accomplishing His work amongst His people, as in the case of certain named pioneers, who were blessed with the gift of understanding and interpreting prophecy. As someone who holds the office of a prophet, Mrs. White's responsibilities were to serve as God's mouthpiece, bear the testimony of Jesus to His people, correct errors in the church, and confirm the testimony (writings) of the other SDA pioneers—which were inspired and accorded by the prophet to be considered as God's Present Truth for today.

*"God has given me my work, and I must meet it at the judgment. Those who have chosen their own way, who have risen up against the plain testimonies given them, and have sought to shake the faith of others in them, must settle the matter with God. **I take back nothing. I soften nothing to suit their ideas or to excuse their defects of character.** I have not spoken as plainly as the case required. **Those who would in any way lessen the force of the sharp reproofs which God has given me to speak, must meet their work at the judgment.**" *Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 5 pg. 19**

*"The standard bearers (**other pioneers**) who have fallen in death, **are to speak through the reprinting of their writings. I am instructed that thus their voices are to be heard. They are to bear their testimony as to what constitutes the truth for this time.**" *Ellen G White, Notebook Leaflets, Vol. 2, pg. 157**

We further believe that there is no degree of inspiration. Either you are inspired of God or not. Therefore, Ellen G. White's words carry the same authority as those in the Bible and should be listened to with care and put into practice—where applicable—in our daily lives. Failure to do so is to reject the One Who inspired her to write and speak which puts the life many steps closer to eternal death. Failure to listen to her, like the sin of Israel in failing to listen to the prophets God sent them, will result in similar consequences. The same is true for those pioneers who were blessed with the gift of prophecy whose writings Mrs. White declared to be present truth for this time.

Inspiration and level of importance are two separate matters. The writings of Ellen G. White are a supporting light designed by God to bring

us back to and in harmony with the Holy Bible. So though inspired, and important, they are not as important as the Bible itself. In that sense, **her writings are a lesser light towards the greater light which is the Word of God.** The pioneers (addressed in next footprint), were those men who were moved of God to search the Scriptures diligently for truth. They included such men as James White, Joseph Bates, Stephen N. Haskell, John Loughborough, J. N. Andrews, A. T. Jones, E. J. Waggoner, etc. Ellen G. White was used of God to confirm the truth as discovered by these men, whose inspired writings became designated as present truth. She was a significant part of the cognitive whole in the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist movement. **She was indeed a lesser light, pointing to the greater light of the Bible,** as did the pioneers, **that being Jesus Himself** and none other. Although she occupied that key and critical office of the prophet, that does not place her at the head or foundation of the movement of Seventh-day Adventism—only Jesus occupies those places—like the other pioneers, she was a vessel used of God to form His end-time church.

“The truth of God upon this subject is consistent and harmonious with itself, and with all divine truth. The spirit of prophecy, in consequence of the fall and man's separation from the visible presence of God, became a necessity. This necessity has not been obviated by any past change of dispensation. No dispensation needs the gifts of the Holy Spirit more than the Christian age; and at no time in the long period of man's separation from God's visible presence have they been so much needed as amid the perils of the raging tempests of the last days. But when the Redeemer shall come, the controversy be ended, the saints' rest given, and they, all immortal, meet around the throne with angels, and face to face behold the glory of God and the Lamb, the spirit of prophecy will be numbered among Heaven's choicest blessings of the past.” James White, *Life Sketches*, pg. 341 (1880)