

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
UNDERSTANDING OF ELLEN G. WHITE'S
PROPHETIC GIFT, 1844-1889**

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Topic

This study is a historical investigation examining the development of the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of Ellen G. White's prophetic gift between 1844 and 1889.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to evaluate and analyze the stages of the development of the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of White's prophetic gift from 1844 through 1889 from a historical perspective. This research is not a theological study, and therefore it is beyond its scope to judge, to prove, or to disprove White's prophetic gift. It starts with 1844, when White claimed to have received her first vision, and finishes with 1889, when the major essential arguments for and against her prophetic gift were in place.

Sources

This research examined published and unpublished primary sources and documents related to White's prophetic gift from 1844 to 1889. Secondary sources were used only for background or historical context. The primary documents included periodicals, books, tracts, letters, and manuscripts written against or in defense of White. The majority of the sources were found in the General Conference Archives, the Ellen White Estate Office in Silver Spring, Maryland, and the Center for Adventist Research at Andrews University.

Conclusions

The study identified four general stages in the development of the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of White's prophetic gift. Stage one covered the period from 1844 to 1850, during which the Sabbatarian group established some initial arguments for its acceptance of White's claim of having the gift of prophecy. Stage two examined the years from 1851 to 1862, during which the movement developed a more systematic biblical reasoning for the validity of the modern display of the gift of prophecy and saw it as one of the identifying marks of God's true people. In stage three, from 1863 to 1881, White's prophetic gift became a part of the Seventh-day Adventist statement of beliefs. The denomination also clarified questions related to the relationship between White's writings and the Bible. Stage four, from 1882 to 1889, refined Adventism's understanding of White's prophetic gift in relation

to the doctrine of inspiration and questions of suppression and plagiarism. By the end of 1889, Seventh-day Adventists had developed their major arguments for their belief in White and were convinced that she possessed the genuine gift of prophecy.