

The Story of the Spirit of Prophecy

Understanding God's Special Gift: 05

Counterfeit and True

We have seen that the largest Spiritualistic organizations of the world today find their modern resurgence in a small cabin in upstate New York in 1848.

The very same year, the largest atheistic political organizations in the world—world communism, find their origin also, for in that year Karl Marx co-authored with Friedrich Engels the book, “Communist Manifesto,” in a small room in Brussels, Belgium. Thoughtful Christians recognize that the followers of both Spiritualism, and atheistic Communism, serve the same master.

Eleven years later, November 24, 1859, the third major anti-God religion of modern times came into existence: Charles Darwin wrote his book, “On the Origin of Species”. There is a reason why all three started at about the same time.

Thinking men today recognize that we are on the edge of what may be the end of the world. Careful students of Scripture a century and a half earlier had already discovered the same truth. Certain Bible prophecies revealed that our planet was nearing its end times. But what many did not know was that God was to send a prophet to give His people guidance through the hectic final days before the climax of the ages came. But Satan knew, and he began to raise up counterfeit prophets just before and soon after; for the first vision of the true prophet came in the year 1844.

Ellen Harmon: Twin girls arrived at the home of Robert and Eunice Harmon on November 26, 1827. They were named Ellen and Elizabeth. The little farm was near the village of Gorham, Maine, about twelve miles west of Portland, Maine, in the northeastern part of the United States.

During her childhood, the active and helpful Ellen tried cheerfully to assist in the home. She was bright and alert, but at the age of nine, while returning home from school, she was injured by a stone thrown by a classmate. The accident, which nearly cost her life, stopped her formal schooling with about three grades of education. It was expected that she would soon die.

In the year 1840, at the age of twelve, Ellen gave her heart to God. At her insistence, she was baptized that same day in the foaming surf of the Atlantic Ocean. During the next several years, she found enough strength to knit stockings to be sold to help support missionaries. Her parents, both faithful Christians, were glad that she could be so occupied, for they knew she did not have long to live.

But there was one thing that she could not bring herself to do for her Lord, and that was to publicly witness to her faith in prayer before others. She felt she could not do it, and resisted the duty for several weeks. Here is how she describes what came next:

“I returned home and again went before the Lord, and promised that I would do and suffer anything if I could have the smiles of Jesus. The same duty was presented. There was a prayer meeting that evening, which I attended, and when others knelt to pray, I bowed with them trembling, and after two or three had prayed, I opened my mouth in prayer before, was aware

of it, and the promises of God looked to me like so many precious pearls that were to be received by only asking for them. As I prayed, the burden and agony of soul that I had so long felt left me; and the blessing of God came upon me like the gentle dew, I gave glory to God for what I felt, but I longed for more. I could not be satisfied till I was filled with the fullness of God. Inexpressible love for Jesus filled my soul. Everything looked glorious and new, as if smiling and praising God. I was then willing to confess Jesus everywhere.” Early Writings, 12-13.

Ellen took spiritual things very seriously. Freed from her fears about speaking, and anxious that her teenage acquaintances might come to know the Lord, she immediately began praying for and pleading with them individually.

“I arranged meetings with my young friends, some of whom were considerably older than myself, and a few were married persons, A number of them were vain and thoughtless; my experience sounded to them like an idle tale, and they did not heed my entreaties. But I determined that my efforts should never cease till these dear souls, for whom I had so great an interest, yielded to God. Several entire nights were spent by me in earnest prayer for those whom I had sought out and brought together for the purpose of laboring and praying with them.

“Some of these had met with us from curiosity to hear what I had to say; others thought me beside myself to be so persistent in my efforts, especially when they manifested no concern on their own part. But at every one of our little meetings, I continued to exhort and pray for each one separately, until everyone had yielded to Jesus, acknowledging the merits of His pardoning love.. Everyone was converted to God.

“Night after night in my dreams I seemed to be laboring for the salvation of souls. At such times special cases were presented to my mind; these I afterward sought out and prayed with. In every instance but one these person yielded themselves to the Lord. Some of our more formal brethren feared that I was too zealous for the conversion of souls; but time seemed to me so short that it behooved all who had a hope of a blessed immortality and looked for the soon coming of Christ, to labor without ceasing for those who were still in their sins and standing on the awful brink of ruin.” Life Sketches, page, 41, 42.

One morning in late December of 1844, Ellen Harmon went to the home of a fellow believer in South Portland, Maine. There, together with four Christian ladies, she bowed in prayer that souls would be helped to know Jesus better. Poor little Ellen: so frail, so physically weak. And yet the God of heaven loves His little ones. As they were kneeling together in prayer, Ellen was taken off in vision. It was her first. Here is her account of part of that first vision. It was not an exposé of movie stars or a call to worship devils; it was a description of the deeper Christian experience we all need in order to weather the dark days ahead. And it was also a view of future events:

“While I was praying at the family altar, the Holy Ghost fell upon me, and I seemed to be rising “higher and higher, far above the dark world. I turned to look for the Advent people [the people who were longing for Jesus’ Second Coming] in the world, but could not find them, when a voice said to me, ‘Look again, and look a little higher.’ At this I raised my eyes, and saw a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were traveling to the city, which was at the farther end of the path. They had a bright light setup

behind them at the beginning of the path, which an angel told me was the midnight cry [read Matthew 25:6]. This light shone all along the path and gave light for their feet so that they might not stumble. If they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city, they were safe. But soon some grew weary, and said the city was a great way off, and they expected to have entered it before.

“Then Jesus would encourage them by raising His glorious right arm, and from His arm came a light which waved over the Advent band, and they shouted, ‘Alleluia!’ Others rashly denied the light behind them and said that it was not God that had led them out so far. The light behind them went out, leaving their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled, and lost sight of the mark and of Jesus, and fell off the path down into the dark and wicked world below. . Soon our eyes were drawn to the east, for a small black cloud had appeared, about half as large as a man’s hand, which we all knew was the sign of the Son of man. We all in solemn silence gazed on the cloud as it drew nearer and became lighter, glorious, and still more glorious, till it was a great white cloud. The bottom appeared like fire, a rainbow was over the cloud, while around it were ten thousand angels, singing a most lovely song; and upon it sat the Son of man. .

“Oh, that I could talk in the language of Canaan, then could I tell of the glory of the better world. After we beheld the glory of the temple, we went out, and Jesus left us and went to the city. Soon we heard His lovely voice again, saying, ‘Come, My people, you have come out of great tribulation, and have done My will; suffered for Me; come in to supper, for I will gird Myself, and serve you.’ We shouted, ‘Alleluia! glory! and entered into the city. And I saw a table of pure silver; it was many miles in length, yet our eyes could extend over it. I saw the fruit of the tree of life, the manna, almonds, figs, pomegranates, grapes, and many other kinds of fruit. I asked Jesus to let me eat of the fruit. He said, ‘Not now. Those who eat of the fruit of this land go back to earth no more. But in a little while, if faithful, you shall both eat of the fruit of the tree of life and drink of the water of the fountain.’ And He said, ‘You must go back to the earth again and relate to others what I have revealed to you.’ Then an angel bore me gently down to this dark world. Sometimes I think I can stay here no longer; all things of earth look so dreary. I feel very lonely here, for I have seen a better land. Oh, that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest!” Early Writings, pages 14-16, 19-20.

Years later, she described what happened when she came out of that first vision:

“They thought that I was dead, and there they watched and cried and prayed so long, but to me it was heaven. It was life, and then the world was spread out before me and I saw darkness like the pall of death.

“What did it mean? I could see no light. Then I saw a little glimmer of light and then another, and those lights increased and grew brighter, and multiplied and grew stronger and stronger till they were the light of the world. These were the believers in Jesus Christ.

“I never thought that I should come to the world again. When my breath came again to my body, I could not hear anything. Everything was dark. The light and glory that my eyes had, rested upon had eclipsed the light and thus it was for many hours. Then gradually I began to recognize the light, and I asked where I was.

“ ‘You are right here in my house,’ said the owner of the house.

“What, here? I here. Do you not know about it? Then it all came back to me. Is this to be my home? Have I come back here again? Oh, the weight, and the burden which came upon my soul.” Manuscript 16, 1894.

She was later to learn that two others had had a vision remarkably similar to hers. One was William Foy, another was Hazen Foss. Hazen Foss, was described as a man of fine appearance, good education, and excellent speaking ability. When he refused to relate the vision given to him, he was told that the burden would be taken from him and given to “the weakest of the weak.” Two months later, when Ellen received her first vision, friends fully expected her to be dead before springtime.

“Miss Harmon was at that time in a very critical condition of health. For a number of weeks she had scarcely been able to speak above a whisper. One physician had decided that her trouble was dropsical consumption [tuberculosis complicated by edema]. He said her right lung was decayed and the left one considerably diseased, and that her heart was affected. . He said he did not think she could live but a very short time at most, and was liable to drop away at any time. It was with great difficulty that she could breathe when lying down. At night she obtained rest only by being bolstered up in the bed in an almost sitting posture. Frequent spells of coughing and hemorrhages from the lungs had reduced her physical strength” Statement by J.N. Loughborough.

A week after that first vision, she had a second: “In my second vision, about a week after the first, the Lord gave me a view of the trials through which I must pass, and told me that I must go and relate to others what He had revealed to me . . After I came out of this vision I was exceedingly troubled, for it pointed out my duty to go out among the people and present the truth. My health was so poor that I was in constant bodily suffering, and to all appearance had but a short time to live. ...

“For several days, and far into the night, I prayed that this burden might be removed from me, and laid upon someone more capable of bearing it. But the light of duty did not change, and the words of the angel sounded continually in my ears, ‘Make known to others what I have revealed to you.’ . . How could I, a child in years, go forth from place to place, unfolding to the people the holy truths of God? .. My father. . repeatedly assured me that if God had called me to labor in other places, He would not fail to open the way for me.” Life Sketches, pages 69, 70.

It is interesting that when God wants to find someone that He can use for a special work, He may have to select the humblest, simply because the more capable are too self-sufficient to be used.

Ellen had no idea how she was going to answer this call, and travel from town to town in her weakened condition. She had little strength, no money, and no traveling companion. And last but not least, she could not talk above a whisper. She spoke with her father about the situation, and he told her that the Lord would give her strength to do whatever He might ask of her. Then Sarah, an older sister, offered to accompany her at first, if she had to travel and relate what she had been shown to others.

“A day or two after this, Ellen’s brother-in-law, from a little town thirty miles to the north drove up in a sleigh. ‘Will you come back with me, Ellen?’ he asked. ‘Mary wants you to visit her.’

“Ellen felt that God was opening the way for her to give His message and that she must go. It was midwinter in northern New England. Every breath of the icy air pained her lungs. But she dressed warmly, and sitting on the floor of the sleigh, she pulled a heavy buffalo robe over her head. When they arrived, her sister said, ‘I’m glad you came; there’s to be a meeting tonight at MacGuire’s Hill. Will you go with us?’

“When Ellen reached the meeting place [in a private home], she found a large room filled with people eager to hear her describe the vision. But when she stood up to speak, her voice was so weak and hoarse that she could scarcely be heard. For five minutes she tried, while her listeners leaned forward to catch her whispered words.

“Then suddenly, to the surprise of all, her voice changed. It rang out clear as a bell. She spoke for two hours, describing the travels of God’s people to the Holy City, the coming of Jesus, and their heavenly home. Many tears were shed, but they were tears of joy. Every heart was cheered. When Ellen sat down and tried to talk with those near her, her voice was as hoarse as before, and she could only whisper.

“Some people have wondered why God chose one so weak to bring His messages to His people. There was a reason. When that company . . . saw Ellen stand up and try in her weakness to make them hear, and then when the power of God came upon her, enabling her to speak clearly, they knew she was not doing it alone, God was helping her.

“That night as the company broke up, there were shouts of joy: ‘We are going home! We are going home!’ Some who watched Ellen’s friends support her as she went back to the sleigh were thinking of the Apostle Paul’s words: ‘God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; . . . that no flesh should glory in His presence.’” Ella M. Robinson, *Stories of My Grandmother*, page 25, 26.

That evening, unknown to Ellen, Hazen Foss stood outside the door and listened to what she said. The next day he went to the house she was visiting in and introduced himself. She had never met or heard of him before. He told her that he had received the same vision of heaven that she had, but that because he refused to relate it, God told him that He had released him from the work and that He would give it to another.

“Ellen.. the Lord gave me a message to bear to His people. And I refused after being told of the consequences. . . I murmured against God and wished myself dead. . . I heard you talk last night. I believe the visions are taken from me, and given to you. Do not refuse to obey God, for it will be at the peril of your soul. I am a lost man. You are chosen of God; be faithful in doing your work.” Letter 37, 1890.

And so it was that a young girl, barely strong enough to walk to a sleigh by herself, was ultimately to receive a startling array of special messages to the people living in these last days of earth’s history. At seventeen this young woman was opposing mesmerists, rebuking fanatics, and traveling through Maine.

At eighteen and nineteen she was telling others about Christ in Vermont and Massachusetts. By twenty-two she was urging that a major publishing work begin. At twenty-five she was explaining to others twice her age the intricacies of organizational structure of a growing movement. How did this frail girl with only a third-grade education do all this? All this was not

the kind of work naturally belonging to a young woman. No committee would ask a girl to undertake such a task. And no call of any committee could qualify a youth for such service. But God had called and men recognized the call.

In February 1845, a two-day sleigh ride took her to Orrington, Maine, 135 miles to the north-east, and while there she met a young preacher named James White. A year and a half later they were married, on August 30, 1846. James recognized the prophetic gift that Ellen had been entrusted with, and he determined to help her in her work. And so it was that Miss Ellen G. Harmon became Mrs. Ellen G. White.

Poverty in the extreme marked the beginning of their marriage. Recognizing their great need, the Howland family in Topsham offered them a free room in their home. It was not until 1855 that they were able to live in a house by themselves. With borrowed furniture and often food, they kept at their work of traveling from place to place. When at home, Ellen tried to find strength to write out messages needed by others.

But as they traveled and spoke, so much courage was brought to many a heart! Ellen told them that God had not forsaken His people, but that He would be with them to the end. And she would picture for them scenes of what their eternal home in heaven would be like. Many who have since read these words of encouragement and these descriptions in her published books have alike been strengthened to continue on with their allotted duties in this world of sorrow, as they await the goodly land that God is preparing for them.

APPLYING THE TESTS: What are the tests of a true prophet? Here is the test whereby Jeane Dixon knew that her vision of the coming world “messiah” was not only genuine but an extremely important vision: crackling noises inside of light bulbs! It is obvious that we must have a Biblical standard by which to test the prophets. We dare not do otherwise.

You will find that the psychics regularly use occult devices to obtain their information (Jeane Dixon normally uses a crystal ball); they receive information that contains heathen religious symbolism; and produce predictions that are generally incorrect. And the tests that verify that their information is genuine? —such things as crackling light bulbs or the shape of tea leaves in a cup.

These are tests that are no tests, in the Biblical sense. And if the seer does not come from God, we had better not accept him. What are the tests of a true prophet? In lesson 3 we listed ten of them. But three tests will settle the issue in each and every case: (1) Physical condition of the prophet when in vision; six physical signs (listed below). (2) Personal life of the prophet; dedicated to Jesus and in obedience to and in harmony with Biblical principles. (3) The messages given by the prophet; in full agreement with Biblical standards, promises, doctrines and laws.

These are the physical evidences of a person while in vision. Carefully read Daniel 10:8-19. Here you will find six physical signs: (1) The prophet loses his strength and falls to the ground in a deep sleep. (2) Despite the sleep, he hears a voice speaking to him. (3) In the vision, and at times in physical action, the prophet arises to his hands and knees and then to his feet when the being touches him. (4) At first he is dumb; but when his lips are touched, he is enabled to speak. (5) Throughout the vision he is without breath of any kind. His breathing totally ceases.

(6) Strength is given him during the vision. Add to this the sign given in Numbers 24:4: (7) During the vision his eyes are open.

When God calls a prophet, He sees to it that opportunity is afforded for people to test that prophet and know whether he be of God. One who claims to receive visions of God and be a true prophet will, for example, have visions from time to time in public, so that others can see that for ten minutes to three hours or more, he is without any breath, and gives no sign of breathing. And yet, although unconscious to all around him, the one receiving the vision can move easily about the room (if he stands up and walks), and he has a superhuman strength far beyond the capacity of anyone else to overpower.

So it was in the case of little Ellen. Tests performed upon her at the time included closing her mouth and nostrils while she was in vision (which could last for several hours). Her movements while in vision were free and graceful as she would speak and describe some of what she saw. And yet her gestures could not be controlled or stopped. It is of interest that, although normally but a frail individual, the vision never sapped her strength or made her ill. (At times, she was healed of sickness while in vision.) In later years, after confidence had been developed in the genuineness of her call, the visions came more frequently at night.

Those who personally witnessed the visions carefully observed what took place. And they were given the freedom to examine Ellen while in vision. At times physicians were called for a more thorough and critical examination. Here is a statement by Mrs. Martha Amadon, who witnessed a number of the visions:

“As one who has frequently observed her in vision, knowing the company of people usually present, all deeply observant and believers in her exercises, I have often wondered why a more vivid description of the scenes which have transpired has not been given.

“In vision her eyes were open. There was no breath, but there were graceful movements of the shoulders, arms, and hands expressive of what she saw. It was impossible for anyone else to move her hands or arms. She often uttered words singly, and sometimes sentences which expressed to those about her the nature of the view she was having, either of heaven or of earth.

“Her first word in vision was ‘Glory,’ sounding at first close by, and then dying away in the distance, seemingly far away. This was sometimes repeated. . There was never an excitement among those present during a vision; nothing caused fear. It was a solemn, quiet scene, sometimes lasting an hour. “When the vision was ended, and she lost sight of the heavenly light; as it were, coming back to the earth once more, she would exclaim with a long-drawn sigh, as she took her first natural breath, ‘D-a-rk.’ She was then limp and strengthless.” Martha Amadon, Notebook Leaflets.

Here is George I. Butler’s description, given in 1874. He too, on many occasions, witnessed public visions that she received:

“For nearly thirty years past these visions have been given with greater or less frequency, and have been witnessed by many, oftentimes by unbelievers as well as those believing them. They generally, but not always, occur in the midst of earnest seasons of religious interest while the Spirit of God is specially present.

“The time Mrs. White is in this condition has varied from fifteen minutes to one hundred and eighty. During this time the heart and pulse continue to beat, the eyes are always wide open, and seem to be gazing at some far-distant object, and are never fixed on any person or thing in the room. They are always directed upward. They exhibit a pleasant expression. There is no ghastly look or any resemblance of fainting. The brightest light may be suddenly brought near her eyes, or feints made as if to thrust something into the eye, and there is never the slightest wink or change in expression on that account; and it is sometimes hours and even days after she comes out of this condition before she recovers her natural sight. She says it seems to her that she comes back into a dark world, yet her eyesight is in nowise injured by her visions.

“While she is in vision, her breathing entirely ceases. No breath ever escapes her nostrils or lips when in this condition. This has been proved by many witnesses, among them physicians of skill, and themselves unbelievers in the visions, on some occasions being appointed by a public congregation for the purpose. It has been proved many times by tightly holding the nostrils and mouth with the hand, and by putting a looking glass before them so close that any escape of the moisture of the breath would be detected. In this condition she often speaks words and short sentences, yet not the slightest breath escapes. When she goes into this condition, there is no appearance of swooning or faintness, her face retains its natural color, and the blood circulates as usual. Often she loses her strength temporarily and reclines or sits; but at other times she stands up. She moves her arms gracefully, and often her face is lighted up with radiance as though the glory of heaven rested upon her. She is utterly unconscious of everything going on around her while she is in vision, having no knowledge whatever, of what is said and done in her presence. Persons may pinch her flesh, and do things, which would cause great and sudden pain in her ordinary condition, and she will not notice it by the slightest tremor.

“There are none of the disgusting grimaces or contortions which usually attend spiritualist mediums, but calm, dignified, and impressive, her very appearance strikes the beholder with reverence and solemnity. There is nothing fanatical in her appearance. When she comes out of this condition she speaks and writes from time to time what she has seen while in vision; and the supernatural character of these visions is seen even more clearly in what she thus reveals than in her appearance and condition while in vision, for many things have thus been related which it was impossible for her to know in any other way.

“Peculiar circumstances in the lives of individuals, whom she never before had seen in the flesh, and secrets hidden from the nearest acquaintances have been made known by her when she had no personal knowledge of the parties other than by vision. Often has she been in an audience where she was wholly unacquainted with the individuals composing it, when she would get up and point out person after person, whom she never had seen before in the flesh, and tell them what they had done, and reprove their sins. I might mention many other items of like nature, but space forbids. These things can be proved by any amount of testimony, and we confidently affirm that they are of such a ‘character that they could not be accomplished by deception.’ George I. Butler, in “Review and Herald,” June 9, 1874.

Over the years, many physicians carefully examined her while in vision. One was Dr. Brown of Parkville, Michigan, a medical doctor who was also a practicing spiritualist. Hearing of her visions, he declared confidently that they were from spiritualism and that if he could examine

her while in vision he would be able to prove it—for he would quickly get in contact with the “floating spirit” guiding her, and then directly control her himself. Soon he had the opportunity.

On January 12, 1861, Ellen spoke at a meeting in Parkville. As it was concluding, she was taken off in vision. Those present mentioned Dr. Brown, so he was asked to come and examine her. J.N. Loughborough, a witness who was present, wrote down afterward what happened:

“Before he had half completed his examination, he [Dr. Brown] turned deathly pale, and shook like an aspen leaf. Elder White said, ‘Will the doctor report her condition?’ He replied, ‘She does not breathe,’ and rapidly made his way to the door. Those at the door who knew of his boasting, said, ‘Go back, and do as you said you would; bring that woman out of the vision.’ In great agitation he grasped the knob of the door, but was not permitted to open it until inquiry was made by those near the door, ‘Doctor, what is it?’ He replied ‘God only knows; let me out of this house!’” Statement by J.N. Loughborough.

Merritt G; Kellogg, M.D., mentions a similar experience that took place in Tyrone, Michigan on May 29, 1853:

“Sister White was in vision about twenty minutes or half an hour. As she went into vision every one present seemed to feel the power and presence of God, and some of us did indeed feel the Spirit of God resting upon us mightily. We were engaged in prayer and social meeting Sabbath morning at about nine o’clock. Brother White, my father, and Sister White had prayed, and I was praying at the time. There had been no excitement, no demonstrations. We did plead earnestly with God, however, that He would bless the meeting with His presence, and that He would bless the work in Michigan. As Sister White gave that triumphant shout of ‘Glory! g-l-o-r-y! g-l-o-r-y!’ which you have heard her give so often as she goes into vision, Brother White arose and informed the audience that his wife was in vision. After stating the manner of her visions, and that she did not breathe while in vision, he invited anyone who wished to do so to come forward and examine her. Dr. Drummond, a physician, who (before he saw her in vision) had declared her visions to be of mesmeric [hypnotic] origin, and that he could give her a vision, stepped forward, and after a thorough examination; turned very pale, and remarked, ‘She doesn’t breathe!’

“I am quite certain that she did not breathe at that time while in vision, nor in any of several others which she has had when I was present. The coming out of the vision was as marked as her going into it. The first indication we had that the vision was ended, was in her again beginning to breathe. She drew her first breath deep, long, and full, in a manner showing that her lungs had been entirely empty of air. After drawing the first breath, several minutes passed before she drew the second, which filled the lungs precisely as did the first; then a pause of two minutes, and a third inhalation, after which the breathing became normal.” M.G. Kellogg, M.D., Statement dated December 28, 1890 at Battle Creek, Michigan.

The Advent People were experiencing a miracle in the Gift of the Spirit of Prophecy. It was one of the most astounding true stories of modern times! They were eyewitnesses to the amazing history of a young girl, unable to write a sentence or walk out the door unsupported, yet destined to travel across continents and write more than most have ever written!