

Chapter 3 Midnight Crying (1843-1851)

**"I was hungering and thirsting for full salvation, an entire conformity to the will of God. Day and night I was struggling to obtain this priceless treasure, that all the riches of earth could not purchase"
(*Early Writings* 11).**

The Millerite movement continued to grow rapidly in 1843, the year originally designated by William Miller as the final year of earth's history. On January 1, 1843, Miller published a proclamation declaring, "This year . . . is the last year that satan will reign in our earth. Jesus Christ will come. . . . The kingdoms of the earth will be dashed to pieces. . . . Time shall be no more."¹

Ellen Harmon was wrapped up in the advent spiritual high. One of her greatest pleasures was attending Millerite meetings, many of which were held at Beethoven Hall in Portland, Maine. One of the speakers Ellen heard at Beethoven Hall was William Foy, an African-American minister who had received two visions convincing him to follow William Miller.² When Ellen wasn't attending Millerite meetings, she worked with textiles in her home to earn twenty-five cents a day toward the purchase of Millerite missionary literature.³

By this time, Millerism was so prominent that few could ignore it. American literary figures such as Whittier, Hawthorne, and Poe mentioned the movement in their writings, and it was a common subject for newspaper articles and editorials.⁴ Prominent ministers and theologians were drawn into the debate as the question of Christ's return dominated religious discussions, particularly in the Northeastern United States. In 1843, Reverend John Dowling published *An Exposition of the Prophecies Supposed by William Miller to Predict the Second Coming of Christ in 1843*, a thorough criticism of Miller's hermeneutical methods and conclusions. Moses Stuart, one of America's premier theologians at the time, wrote light-heartedly, "I would respectfully suggest, that in some way or other they [Millerites] have in all probability made a small mistake as to the exact day of the month when the grand catastrophe takes place, the FIRST of April being evidently much more appropriate to the arrangements than any other day of the year."⁵

¹Qtd. in Knight, George R. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1993. 125. Specifically, Miller predicted the return of Christ would occur between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844. He had been reluctant to set such a specific date, but did so at the urging of his followers (see Knight 126, 127).

²White, Ellen G. *Manuscript Releases*. Vol. 17. Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1993. 95-97. [Ms 131, 1906]. See also White, Arthur L. *Ellen G. White*. Vol. 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1985. 6 vols. 488-490.

³White, Arthur L. *Ellen G. White*. Vol. 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1985. 6 vols. 45.

⁴Knight, George R. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1993. 138.

⁵Knight, George R. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1993. 140.

Evidently, Ellen Harmon hadn't read the critiques offered by Dowling, Stuart, and countless eminent clergymen, for after the beginning of her prophetic ministry, she recalled, "The mistake made in reckoning the prophetic periods was not at once discovered, even by learned men who opposed the views of those who were looking for Christ's coming. Scholars declared that Mr. Miller was right in his calculation of the time, though they disputed him in regard to the event that would crown that period. But they, and the waiting people of God, were in a common error on the question of time."⁶

As 1843 progressed into 1844, a schism took place between many Millerites and their original churches. Mainline denominations objected to Miller's unbiblical time-setting and the fanaticism to which it led many adherents. As Millerites became pariahs in their churches, they began viewing the established churches as Babylon, declaring them to be fallen.⁷ An us-versus-them mentality gained ground on both sides. Cartoonists, editorialists, and various humorists began spreading the idea that Millerites were creating white muslin "ascension robes" to smooth their way to the heavenly Canaan, and these stories took on a life of their own until they were believed by many in the Northeastern United States.⁸ One modern scholar allows for some truth to the ascension robes: "At least as much fancy as fact went into the ascension robe stories."⁹ Adventist scholars are more likely to say that these stories "have no basis in fact . . ."¹⁰

Ellen White's views of her theological opponents in 1843 are instructive, revealing the perspective of many Millerites who were fleeing the "Babylonian" denominations. Writing from her subsequent prophetic perspective, she stated, "Those cases were the most hardened that would not yield to such a weight of evidence set home by heart-felt warnings."¹¹ She was particularly hard on ministers who refused to accept Miller's conclusions: "Many ministers would not accept this saving message themselves, and those who would receive it, they hindered."¹² She termed ministers "hypocritical" for pointing to Matthew 24:36, "But of that day and hour

⁶White, Ellen G. *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*. Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1915. 58. Quoted uncritically in White, Arthur L. *Ellen G. White*. Vol. 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1985. 6 vols. 48.

⁷"But the beloved of God, who were oppressed, answered to the message, Babylon is fallen, and left the fallen churches." White, Ellen G. *Spiritual Gifts*. Vol. 1. Battle Creek: James White, 1860. 140.

⁸Ellen White later wrote, "And those who have scoffed and mocked at the idea of the saints' going up, will be visited with the plagues of God, and will realize that it is not a small thing to trifle with him." White, Ellen G. *Spiritual Gifts*. Vol. 1. Battle Creek: James White, 1860. 154.

⁹Doan, Ruth A. "Millerism and Evangelical Culture." *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*. Eds. Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987. 128.

¹⁰Schwarz, Richard W. *Light Bearers to the Remnant*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1979. 48. See also Dick, Everett N. *William Miller and the Advent Crisis*. Ed. Gary Land. Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1994. 126-127.

¹¹White, Ellen G. *Spiritual Gifts*. Vol. 1. Battle Creek: James White, 1860. 134.

¹²White, Ellen G. *Spiritual Gifts*. Vol. 1. Battle Creek: James White, 1860. 136.

knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”¹³ These persons were proven correct regarding the setting of dates for the second coming, but that didn’t save them from rebuke. She ultimately concluded, “Those who had neglected to receive the heavenly message [the 1843 date] were left in darkness, and God’s anger was kindled against them, because they would not receive the light he had sent them from heaven.”¹⁴

When the expected return of Christ didn’t occur in 1843, Ellen explained,

“It was not at first perceived that if the decree [recorded in Ezra 7, and considered by Miller to be the starting point of the 2300 day/year prophecy of Daniel 8:14] did not go forth at the beginning of the year 457 B.C., the 2300 years would not be completed at the close of 1843. But it was ascertained that the decree was given near the close of the year 457 B.C., and therefore the prophetic period must reach to the fall of the year 1844.”¹⁵

In spite of the failure in 1843, Ellen affirmed the experience in her prophetic ministry. She wrote, “I saw that God was in the proclamation of the time in 1843. It was his design to arouse the people, and bring them to a testing point where they should decide.”¹⁶ She explained Millerism’s human failures in terms of God’s action and His inscrutable will. “I saw the people of God, joyful in expectation, looking for their Lord. But God designed to prove them. His hand covered a mistake in the reckoning of the prophetic periods. . . . God designed that his people should meet with a disappointment.”¹⁷

Ellen White would later determine that 1843 was the period of the first angel’s message from Revelation 14, while the time-setting that took place in 1844 constituted the second angel’s message, Babylon is fallen.¹⁸ During the second angel’s message, many Millerites came out of Babylon, or the “fallen” churches that refused to accept their message.

Filled with new hope in 1844, Ellen and the Millerites continued trying to prepare themselves and the world for the soon-coming of Christ. Millerites termed 1844 the period of the “Midnight Cry” because of Matthew 25:6: “And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.” Millerites hoped to have plenty of oil in their lamps so they would not be found lacking like the five foolish virgins, representing the “fallen” churches.¹⁹

¹³White, Ellen G. *Spiritual Gifts*. Vol. 1. Battle Creek: James White, 1860. 135.

¹⁴White, Ellen G. *Spiritual Gifts*. Vol. 1. Battle Creek: James White, 1860. 138.

¹⁵White, Ellen G. *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*. Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1915. 58. Richard Schwarz adds that Miller hadn’t accounted for the lack of a “zero” year during the transition from B.C. to A.D. Schwarz, Richard W. *Light Bearers to the Remnant*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1979. 49.

¹⁶White, Ellen G. *Spiritual Gifts*. Vol. 1. Battle Creek: James White, 1860. 133.

¹⁷White, Ellen G. *Spiritual Gifts*. Vol. 1. Battle Creek: James White, 1860. 137.

¹⁸See White, Ellen G. *Spiritual Gifts*. Vol. 1. Battle Creek: James White, 1860. 133-143. Her chapter on 1843 is entitled “The First Angel’s Message,” and her chapter on 1844 is called “The Second Angel’s Message.”

¹⁹White, Ellen G. *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*. Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1915. 59.

Looking back on her youth, Ellen described the year 1844 as “the happiest year of my life.”²⁰ She experienced a year of spiritual ecstasy. “I knew that I must walk tremblingly and carefully before God. Heaven and its sweet joys were my meditation day and night. I loved Jesus, and the sound of his dear name enraptured me.”²¹

Amid all the joys of 1844, Ellen was not well. She recalled, “My lungs were diseased, and my voice failed me. . . . My frail body could not endure the weight of glory which the mind grasped and feasted upon, and my strength was frequently gone.”²²

Many Millerites expected the coming of the Savior in the spring of 1844, but their hopes were dashed again.²³ Then a spark hit the dry kindling of adventist hopes during a camp meeting in Exeter, New Hampshire. Samuel S. Snow galloped into the camp meeting during a presentation by Joseph Bates, who would later become a close friend and ally of James and Ellen White. Snow declared he had new light, and Bates relinquished the podium. Snow declared that Christ would return on the day of atonement. A careful study of the Karaite Jewish calendar, developed by a Jewish sect, yielded the date October 22, 1844, as the end of the 2300 day/year prophecy of Daniel 8:14.²⁴ Because Snow’s date was the tenth day of the seventh Jewish month, the term “seventh-month movement” entered adventist jargon.²⁵ On October 6, 1844, William Miller cautiously accepted the new date for Christ’s return.²⁶

Many adventists stopped working and gave away their property as a sign of their faith in October 22. Some fields lay uncultivated, others unharvested; apples rotted in the orchards.²⁷ Such vast sums were contributed to the cause that even the treasurer of the Second Advent Association stopped trying to track his accounts.²⁸ Many believers revoked debts owed them,

²⁰White, Ellen G. *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*. Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1915. 59.

²¹White, Ellen G. *Spiritual Gifts*. Vol. 2. Battle Creek: James White, 1860. 29.

²²White, Ellen G. *Spiritual Gifts*. Vol. 2. Battle Creek: James White, 1860. 29.

²³Schwarz, Richard W. *Light Bearers to the Remnant*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1979. 49.

²⁴Schwarz, Richard W. *Light Bearers to the Remnant*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1979. 49-50. Sydney Cleveland has conducted a careful study of the Karaite calendar, arguing persuasively that October 22, 1844, is not the day of atonement. If so, it is another small irony in Adventist history. See Cleveland, Sydney. *White Washed: Uncovering the Myths of Ellen G. White*. Glendale: Life Assurance Ministries, 2000. 159-176.

²⁵Snow would later proclaim himself Elijah. He fell so low as to issue a proclamation demanding “full surrender of all [earthly] power and authority, into my hands, on behalf of King Jesus the Coming One.” The proclamation listed Snow’s title as “Premier of KING JESUS. Knight, George R. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1993. 255-256.

²⁶Knight, George R. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1993. 203.

²⁷Dick, Everett N. *William Miller and the Advent Crisis*. Ed. Gary Land. Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1994. 141, 150.

²⁸Dick, Everett N. *William Miller and the Advent Crisis*. Ed. Gary Land. Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1994. 149.

even debts totaling hundreds of dollars.²⁹ Responding to a call to “venture all” to show their faith, some people even gave away their houses.³⁰

October 22, 1844, has gone down in Adventist history as the Great Disappointment. Hiram Edson, who would soon play a major role in the reinterpretation of that devastating day, recalled, “Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted, and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I never experienced before. It seemed that the loss of all earthly friends could have been no comparison. We wept, and wept, till the day dawn.”³¹ Joseph Bates was also in agony. He stated, “If the earth could have opened and swallowed me up, it would have been sweetness compared to the distress I felt.”³²

A few hooligans added immensely to the sense of isolation experienced by disappointed adventists. Some Millerite meetinghouses were burned or vandalized. Millerites were mocked and jeered in the streets. Others were threatened by mobs with firearms, while the homes of some were egged.³³

Ellen White recorded little about the devastation she must have felt on that day. She had found peace in Jesus while participating in the Millerite movement, culminating in the “happiest year” of her life. Now the feeling of certainty was gone. Predictably, she suffered a physical breakdown: “My health failed rapidly. I could only talk in a whisper, or broken tone of voice. . . . It was very difficult for me to breathe lying down, and nights was bolstered almost in a sitting posture, and would often awake with my mouth full of blood.”³⁴

James White was more candid than his wife as he recalled his broken-hearted feelings about October 22, 1844, in his memoirs:

“The love of Jesus filled every soul, and beamed from every face, and with inexpressible desires they prayed, ‘Come Lord Jesus, and come quickly.’ But he did not come. And now to turn again to the cares, perplexities, and dangers of life, in full view of the jeers and revilings of unbelievers . . . was a terrible trial of faith and patience. When Elder [Joshua V.] Himes [one of Miller’s top assistants] visited Portland, Me., a few days after the passing of the time, and stated that the brethren should prepare for another cold winter, my feelings were almost

²⁹Dick, Everett N. *William Miller and the Advent Crisis*. Ed. Gary Land. Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1994. 152.

³⁰Knight, George R. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1993. 207-209.

³¹Schwarz, Richard W. *Light Bearers to the Remnant*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1979. 51.

³²Qtd. in Knight, George R. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1993. 222.

³³Knight, George R. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1993. 222-223.

³⁴White, Ellen G. *Spiritual Gifts*. Vol. 2. Battle Creek: James White, 1860. 30.

uncontrollable. I left the place of meeting and wept like a child.”³⁵

On October 23, Hiram Edson and a friend, possibly O.R.L. Crosier, were walking across a cornfield to encourage some fellow-believers when Edson saw a vision of Christ ministering in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. He suddenly realized that their calculations had been correct, but they had been incorrect as to the expected event.³⁶ Crosier would go on to publish this view in a paper called *The Day Dawn*, issued in April 1845. Crosier’s article was reprinted in an extra edition of a Millerite journal called *The Day-Star* in February 1846.³⁷ In this article, Crosier taught that Christ was cleansing the heavenly sanctuary of the accumulated sins of the saints; just as the earthly sanctuary had been cleansed on the Day of Atonement, so the heavenly sanctuary must be cleansed on the anti-typical Day of Atonement before the second coming.

While Edson and Crosier’s views were slowly percolating in the adventist pot, Ellen Harmon was having an eventful winter of 1844-1845. Ellen had given up her belief in the seventh-month movement, and ill-health seemed about to conquer the frail seventeen-year-old who had already suffered so much physical and spiritual trauma in her brief life.³⁸ On December 11, William Miller wrote in the *Advent Herald*, “We have done our work in warning sinners, and in trying to awake a formal church. God in His providence has shut the door; we can only stir one another up to be *patient*, and be diligent to make our calling and election sure.”³⁹ Miller’s message was clear: The door of mercy was shut against all who were not currently right with God, and God’s true followers should occupy the remaining days of earth’s history making certain of their own salvation (“calling and election”).

Although Miller soon renounced the shut door, many of his more excitable followers took the idea and ran with it. After all, wasn’t the door shut against the foolish virgins after the Midnight Cry of Matthew 25? Frustrated Millerites quickly labeled their Christian neighbors the foolish virgins. Some Millerites, such as Israel Dammon and Joseph Turner, would soon teach that Christ hadn’t returned because there were more than 144,000 literal saints on October 22, 1844, and his followers would emphasize that the door was also shut against any adventists who failed “to make [their] calling and election sure,” as Miller had put it.⁴⁰

In December 1844, Ellen was invited to the home of Mrs. Elizabeth Haines in South Portland. While praying with four other women in the Haines home, Ellen Harmon was carried off in vision.⁴¹ The Seventh-day Adventist Church considers this her first official vision. She

³⁵White, James. *Life Incidents*. 1868. Adventist Classic Library. Ed. George R. Knight. Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 2003. 182.

³⁶Schwarz, Richard W. *Light Bearers to the Remnant*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1979. 62.

³⁷Schwarz, Richard W. *Light Bearers to the Remnant*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1979. 62.

³⁸White, Arthur L. *Ellen G. White*. Vol. 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1985. 6 vols. 55.

³⁹Qtd. in White, Arthur L. *Ellen G. White*. Vol. 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1985. 6 vols. 60. For a short time, Miller held the position that the door of mercy had been shut at the time of the disappointment.

⁴⁰Hoyt, Frederick, ed. “Trial of Elder I. Dammon Reported for the *Piscataquis Farmer*.” *Spectrum* 17.5 (1987): 29-36. p. 35.

⁴¹White, Arthur L. *Ellen G. White*. Vol. 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1985. 6 vols. 55-56.

declared, "I was wrapped in a vision of God's glory, and seemed to be rising higher and higher from the earth, and was shown something of the travels of the Advent people to the Holy City"⁴² "I have tried," she stated, "to bring back a good report and a few grapes from the heavenly Canaan"⁴³

Her vision was first published in *The Day-Star* of January 24, 1846.⁴⁴ It was later reprinted by James White in *A Word to the "Little Flock,"* May 1847, with the addition of a view of heaven which Ellen received about a year later. The "*Little Flock*" account was reprinted, with a small but crucial deletion, in her first book, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (1851). Much later, the edited material from *Experience and Views* formed the basis for the account of her first vision in *Early Writings*, pages 14-16.⁴⁵ We will here supply *The Day-Star* version, part of which can be found in Arthur White's widely available (but rarely read) six-volume biography of his grandmother. The portion of the vision that Arthur White skipped comes from a facsimile copy of *A Word to the "Little Flock."* Bolded portions are emphasized for future reference.

"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 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 set up behind them at the first end of the path, which an angel told me was the Midnight Cry. This light shone all along the path, and gave light for their feet so they might not stumble.** And if they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the City, they were safe.

"But soon some got 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

⁴²White, Ellen G. *Early Writings of Ellen White*. 1882. Hagerstown: Review & Herald, 1963. 13.

⁴³White, Ellen G. *Early Writings of Ellen White*. 1882. Hagerstown: Review & Herald, 1963. 14.

⁴⁴Arthur White reveals that the delay in writing and publishing the vision was due to Ellen's shaking hand, which prevented her from writing for several months after receipt of the vision. White, Arthur L. *Ellen G. White*. Vol. 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1985. 6 vols. 56.

⁴⁵Please keep in mind that even though the account in *Early Writings* continues, the second part of this vision was given a year later, according to Arthur L. White: "In actuality what appears in *Early Writings* under the title of "My First Vision" (pp. 13-20) is her first vision and the account of what was shown to her about a year later regarding the new earth. . . . [T]he account of the first vision closes with the words 'made heaven's arches ring.' . . . The seeming technicality here described is of insignificant importance, but one which cannot be ignored in a complete statement." White, Arthur L. "Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question." Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1982. 27n. [Paper available from White Estate]. Therefore, the additional material will not be included here, and it will not directly impact the apparent endorsement by William Foy, which we will discuss later in this chapter.

His glorious right arm, and from His arm came a glorious light which waved over the Advent band, and they shouted, Hallelujah!

“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**, which left their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and got their eyes off the mark and lost sight of Jesus, and fell off the path down in the dark and wicked world below. **It was just as impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the City, as all the wicked world which God had rejected.**⁴⁶ They fell all the way along the path one after another, until we heard the voice of God like many waters, **which gave us the day and hour of Jesus’ coming. The living saints, 144,000 in number**, knew and understood the voice, while the wicked thought it was thunder and an earthquake. When God spake the time, He poured on us the Holy Ghost . .

“At our happy, holy state the wicked were enraged, and would rush violently up to lay hands on us to thrust us in prison, when we would stretch forth the hand in the name of the Lord, and the wicked would fall helpless to the ground. Then it was that the synagogue of Satan knew that God had loved us **who could wash one another’s feet and salute the holy brethren with a holy kiss**, and they worshiped at our feet.

“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, and brighter, glorious, and still more glorious, till it was a great white cloud. The bottom appeared like fire, a rainbow was over it, around the cloud were ten thousand angels singing a most lovely song.

“And on it sat the Son of man, on His head were crowns, His hair was white and curly and lay on His shoulders. His feet had the appearance of fire, in His right hand was a sharp sickle, in His left a silver trumpet. His eyes were as a flame of fire, which searched His children through and through.

“Then all faces gathered paleness, and those that God had rejected gathered blackness. **Then we all cried out, Who shall be able to stand? Is my robe spotless?** Then the angels ceased to sing, and there was some time of awful silence, **when Jesus spoke, Those who have clean hands and a pure heart shall be able to stand; My grace is sufficient for you.** At this, our faces lighted up, and joy filled every heart. And the angels struck a note higher and sung again

⁴⁶This line was deleted upon publication of *Experience and Views* (1851), and it wasn’t restored when *Early Writings* (1882) was published. Ellen White acknowledged the missing line in 1883, and the SDA Church finally made the missing line widely available in White, Ellen G. *Selected Messages from the Writings of Ellen G. White*, Book 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1958. 61-62.

while the cloud drew still nearer the earth.

“Then Jesus’ silver trumpet sounded, as He descended on the cloud, wrapped in flames of fire. He gazed on the graves of the sleeping saints, then raised His eyes and hands to heaven and cried, Awake! Awake! Awake! ye that sleep in the dust, and arise. Then there was a mighty earthquake. The graves opened, and the dead came up clothed with immortality. The 144,000 shouted, Hallelujah! as they recognized their friends who had been torn from them by death, and in the same moment we were changed and caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.

“We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass, when Jesus brought along the crowns and with His own right hand placed them on our heads. He gave us harps of gold and palms of victory. Here on the sea of glass the 144,000 stood in a perfect square. Some of them had very bright crowns, others not so bright. Some crowns appeared heavy with stars, while others had but few. All were perfectly satisfied with their crowns. And they were all clothed with a glorious white mantle from their shoulders to their feet. Angels were all about us as we marched over the sea of glass to the gate of the City. Jesus raised His mighty glorious arm, laid hold of the gate and swung it back on its golden hinges, and said to us, You have washed your robes in my blood, stood stiffly for my truth, enter in. **We all marched in and felt we had a perfect right to the City.** Here we saw the tree of life, and the throne of God. Out of the throne came a pure river of water, and on either side of the river was the tree of life. On one side of the river was a trunk of a tree and a trunk on the other side of the river, both of pure transparent gold.

“At first I thought I saw two trees. I looked again and saw they were united at the top in one tree. So it was the tree of life, on either side of the river of life; its branches bowed to the place where we stood; and the fruit was glorious, which looked like gold mixed with silver. We all went under the tree and sat down to look at the glory of the place, when brothers Fitch and Stockman, who had preached the gospel of the kingdom, and whom God had laid in the grave to save them, came up to us and asked us what we had passed through while they were sleeping. We tried to call up our greatest trials, but they looked so small compared with the far more exceeding a eternal weight of glory that surrounded us, that we could not speak them out, and we all cried out Hallelujah, heaven is cheap enough, and we touched our glorious harps and made heaven’s arches ring.”⁴⁷

This vision clearly indicated that the Midnight Cry of 1844 was a saving experience, casting light on the believers’ pathway as they marched toward heaven. It also indicated that those who lost faith in the Midnight Cry would be left in darkness, along with the rest of the

⁴⁷White, James. *A Word to the “Little Flock.”* 1847. Facsimile ed. Hagerstown: Review & Herald, n.d. 14-18. See also White, Arthur L. *Ellen G. White.* Vol. 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1985. 6 vols. 56-58.

world that had previously spurned the message.⁴⁸

Ellen was terrified of relating her vision, which would contradict the belief of many that there was no significance to the Midnight Cry that culminated on October 22, 1844. In particular, Joseph Turner, an outspoken local leader, had just published a paper which was in her house. According to George Knight, Turner argued that "the work of general salvation was over as of [October 22, 1844]. On October 22, Christ had come spiritually as the Bridegroom, the wise virgins had gone in to the marriage with Him, and the door was shut on all others."⁴⁹ Ellen fled to the home of a friend, determined not to share her vision. She recounted the experience in a letter to Joseph Bates in 1847:

"Brother Bates, you write in a letter to James something about the Bridegroom's coming By the letter you would like to know whether I had light on the Bridegroom's coming before I saw it in vision. I can readily answer, No. The Lord showed me the travail of the Advent band and Midnight Cry in December, but He did not show me the Bridegroom's coming until February following. Perhaps you would like to have me give a statement in relation to both visions. At the time I had the vision of the Midnight Cry [the first vision in Dec. 1844] I had given it up in the past and thought it future, as also most of the band had [she was thinking that the date Oct. 22, 1844, was wrong, and she expected it to be fulfilled in the future]. I know not what time J. Turner got out his paper. I knew he had one out and [it] was in the house, but I knew not what was in it, for I did not read a word in it.⁵⁰ I had been, and still was very sick. I took no interest in reading, for it injured my head and made me nervous. After I had the vision and God gave me light, He bade me deliver it to the band, but I shrank from it. I was young, and I thought they would not receive it from me. I disobeyed the Lord, and instead of remaining at home, where the meeting was to be that night, I got in a sleigh in the morning and rode three or four miles and there I found J. T. He merely inquired how I was and if I was in the way of my duty. I said nothing, for I knew I was not. I passed up [to the] chamber [a bedroom] and did not see him again for two hours, when he came

⁴⁸Herbert Douglass, the current leading apologist for Ellen White, states, "This first vision convinced Ellen Harmon (with no hint of a general shut door for all the living on October 22, 1844) that God's people were at the beginning of new responsibilities, not at the end of all things." Douglass, Herbert E. *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White*. Nampa: Pacific Press, 1998. 503. Douglass must have been reading the edited version found in *Early Writings*, which drops the line, "It was just as impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the City, as all the wicked world which God had rejected." When I read *Messenger of the Lord*, I have an overwhelming sense that Douglass and I see two different "messengers." He would probably agree.

⁴⁹Knight, George R. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1993. 236.

⁵⁰Arthur White indicates that Ellen's "Jonah" experience took place the day following her first vision, in December of 1844. However, George Knight states that the shut-door paper by Joseph Turner came out in Jan. 1845. As Ellen White states that this paper was in her house the day she fled, I must conclude that Arthur White's chronology is a little faulty, unless the paper came out on New Year's Day. White, Arthur L. *Ellen G. White*. Vol. 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1985. 6 vols. 61; Knight, George R. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1993. 236.

up, asked if I was to be at meeting that night. I told him, No. He said he wanted to hear my vision, and thought it duty for me to go home.⁵¹ I told him I should not. He said no more, but went away. I thought, and told those around me, if I went I should have to come out against his views, thinking he believed with the rest. I had not told any of them what God had shown me, and I did not tell them in what I should cut across his track.

"All that day I suffered much in body and mind. It seemed that God had forsaken me entirely. I prayed the Lord if He would give me strength to ride home that night, the first opportunity I would deliver the message He had given to me. He did give me strength and I rode home that night. Meeting had been done some time, and not a word was said by any of the family about the meeting.

"Very early next morning J. T. called, said he was in haste going out of the city in a short time, and wanted I should tell him all that God had shown me in vision. It was with fear and trembling I told him all. After I had got through he said he had told out the same last evening. I was rejoiced. For I expected he was coming out against me, for all the while I had not heard anyone say what he believed.⁵² He said the Lord had sent him to hear me talk the evening before, but as I would not, he meant his children should have the light in some way, so he took them [to the meeting]. There were but few out when he talked, so the next meeting I told my vision, and the band, believing my visions from God, received what God bade me to deliver to them.

"The view about the Bridegroom coming I had about the middle of February, 1845. While in Exeter, Maine, in meeting with Israel Dammon,⁵³ James, and many others, many of them did not believe in a shut door. I suffered much at the commencement of the meeting. Unbelief seemed to be on every hand. There was one sister there that was called very spiritual. She had traveled and been a powerful preacher the most of the time for twenty years. She had been truly a mother in Israel. But a division had arisen in the band on the shut door. She had great sympathy, and could not believe the door was shut. (I had known nothing of their differences.) Sister Durben got up to talk. I felt very, very sad. At length my soul seemed to be in an agony, and while she was talking, I fell from my chair to the floor. It was then I had a view of Jesus rising from His mediatorial throne and going to the Holiest as Bridegroom to receive His kingdom. They were all deeply interested in the view. They all said it was entirely new to them. The Lord worked in mighty power setting the truth home to

⁵¹Joseph Turner was evidently eager to see if her vision would confirm his views.

⁵²At this point, Ellen claims to have discovered the she and Joseph Turner shared the same view that prophecy had been fulfilled on Oct. 22, 1844. To confirm that this was part of Turner's thesis, see Knight, George R. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1993. 236.

⁵³In the Dammon home, I believe.

their hearts. Sister Durben knew what the power of the Lord was, for she had felt it many times; and a short time after I fell she was struck down, and fell to the floor, crying to God to have mercy on her. When I came out of vision, my ears were saluted with Sister Durben's singing and shouting with a loud voice. Most of them received the vision, and were settled upon the shut door. Previous to this I had no light on the coming of the Bridegroom, but had expected Him to [come to] this earth to deliver His people on the tenth day of the seventh month [Oct. 22 in one of the Hebrew calendars]. **I did not hear a lecture or a word in any way relating to the Bridegroom's going to the Holiest . . .**⁵⁴

"I know the light I received came from God, it was not taught me by man."⁵⁵

Ellen's letter to Bates involves two very significant incidents: her initial refusal to relate the first vision, and an account of her shut-door vision of Feb. 1845. Joseph Turner's views are deeply involved in both events, as Bates readily understands. What Bates really asked at the beginning of his letter, using post-Millerite jargon, was whether Joseph Turner's views had influenced her two most important early visions. According to Ellen White, she had opportunity to read Joseph Turner's paper about the Bridegroom shutting the door, but she did not, even though she was terribly worried that their views would clash. In addition, she had several contacts with Turner, during which they never discussed the issue foremost on both minds. When they finally talked the next morning, they discovered that both upheld the Midnight Cry, and they rejoiced, but failed to discuss the rest of Turner's published position. Then Ellen Harmon never heard the remainder of Turner's views until after her vision of February 1845, which confirmed the shut-door aspect of his teachings.

What was the content of the shut-door vision that induced the soft-hearted Sister Durben to grovel on the floor, begging the Lord to keep her on the lighted path in spite of her doubts? Arthur White states that the vision found in *Early Writings*, pp. 54-56, is the shut-door view recounted to Bates.⁵⁶

"Before the throne I saw the Advent people—the church and the world. I saw two companies, one bowed down before the throne, while the other stood uninterested and careless. Those who were bowed before the throne would offer up their prayers and look to Jesus; then He would look to His Father, and appear to be pleading with Him. A light would come from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the praying company. **Then I saw an exceeding bright light come from**

⁵⁴When she says, "I did not hear a lecture or a word in any way relating to the Bridegroom's going to the Holiest," she is referencing Turner's views of the Bridegroom of Matthew 25 shutting the door of mercy, not after a physical second coming, but in conjunction with an invisible spiritual event.

⁵⁵White, Ellen G. *Manuscript Releases*. Vol. 5. Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1993. 95-98. [Letter 3, 1847]. The White Estate has the first four pages of this letter, which ends in the middle of a sentence. The remainder has vanished. This letter can also be found in White, Arthur L. "Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question." 1982. 56-58. Available from the White Estate.

⁵⁶White, Arthur L. "Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question." Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1982. 24. [Paper available from White Estate].

the Father to the Son, and from the Son it waved over the people before the throne. But few would receive this great light. Many came out from under it and immediately resisted it; others were careless and did not cherish the light, and it moved off from them. Some cherished it, and went and bowed down with the little praying company. This company all received the light and rejoiced in it, and their countenances shone with its glory.

"I saw the Father rise from the throne, and in a flaming chariot go into the holy of holies within the veil, and sit down. Then Jesus rose up from the throne, and the [sic] most of those who were bowed down arose with Him [the shut-door adventists who followed Ellen's visions]. I did not see one ray of light pass from Jesus to the careless multitude after He arose, and they were left in perfect darkness. Those who arose when Jesus did, kept their eyes fixed on Him as He left the throne and led them out a little way. Then He raised His right arm, and we heard His lovely voice saying, 'Wait here; I am going to My Father to receive the kingdom; keep your garments spotless, and in a little while I will return from the wedding and receive you to Myself.' Then a cloudy chariot, with wheels like flaming fire, surrounded by angels, came to where Jesus was. He stepped into the chariot and was borne into the holiest, where the Father sat. There I beheld Jesus, a great High Priest, standing before the Father. On the hem of His garment was a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate. Those who rose up with Jesus would send up their faith to Him in the holiest, and pray, 'My Father, give us Thy Spirit.' Then Jesus would breathe upon them the Holy Ghost. In that breath was light, power, and much love, joy, and peace.

"I turned to look at the company who were still bowed before the throne [other Advent people who did not follow view of Christ going into the heavenly sanctuary in 1844]; they did not know that Jesus had left it. Satan appeared to be by the throne, trying to carry on the work of God. I saw them look up to the throne, and pray, 'Father, give us Thy Spirit.' Satan would then breathe upon them an unholy influence; in it there was light and much power, but no sweet love, joy, and peace. Satan's object was to keep them deceived and to draw back and deceive God's children."⁵⁷

I refer to the vision as the "shut-door" vision, for it is the pre-eminent example of her early theology (Ellen Harmon and Joseph Bates call it the vision of the Bridegroom).⁵⁸ The "exceeding

⁵⁷White, Ellen G. *Early Writings of Ellen G. White*. 1882. Washington: Review & Herald, 1945. 54-56.

⁵⁸According to Herbert Douglass, this vision reveals that "a *third* group existed who had not yet seen clearly the choices available [prior to Oct. 22, 1844]." He adds that "they had not consciously rejected the light of truth, and thus the possibility remained for them to accept the light if it were properly presented to them. *This third group provided the conceptual seeds for an enriched definition of the "shut door," that is, the door had not been shut on those who had not consciously rejected the light brought to the world in 1844 [italics original].*" Douglass, Herbert E. *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White*. Nampa: Pacific Press, 1998. 503. It seems Douglass is missing the significance of the following line: "I did not see one ray of light pass

bright light” mentioned in the beginning is the Midnight Cry. She then revealed that after Oct. 22, 1844, there was no hope for the world: “I did not see one ray of light pass from Jesus to the careless multitude after He arose, and they were left in perfect darkness.” Then she describes a split in the advent group, with some failing to accept the movement of Jesus from the holy to the most holy place. Interestingly, she depicts the fallen adventists (and the rest of “nominal” Christianity)⁵⁹ as praying to Satan because they aren’t addressing their prayers to the proper location.⁶⁰ This vision clearly harmonized with Joseph Turner’s views, and it also left room for the views of Hiram Edson and O.R.L. Crosier, which would soon be published. It is possible that the Edson/Crosier thesis was already spreading by word of mouth.

A few days after the shut door vision, Ellen Harmon and James White were present at an ultra-fanatical gathering in Atkinson, Maine, led by Israel Dammon. The event led to Dammon’s arrest and trial, the records of which flatly contradict the recollections of Ellen White in *Spiritual Gifts*.⁶¹ Of greatest interest here is the connection between the vision just received and the testimony given at the trial, where they described their beliefs. As recorded in the local newspaper, Dammon “argued that the day of grace had gone by, that the believers were reduced; but that there was too many yet, and that the end of the world would come within a week.”⁶² Clearly, this vision was interpreted to mean that probation had closed, but that there were too many adventists (more than 144,000), so some had to be weeded out before the Lord could come.

On April 20, 1846, an adventist named Otis Nichols sent a letter to William Miller seeking to unite Miller’s influence with Ellen Harmon’s message. The letter reveals that Ellen had resided in the Nichols home for approximately eight months, so Nichols could personally endorse her ministry. He enclosed at least one of her printed visions with the letter. Nichols wrote,

“Her message was always attended with the Holy Ghost, wherever it was received as from the Lord it broke down and melted hearts like little children, fed, comforted, strengthened the weak, and encouraged them to hold on to the faith, and the 7th month movement; and that our work was done for the nominal church

from Jesus to the careless multitude after He arose, and they were left in perfect darkness.” This vision contains no “conceptual seeds” of an open door.

⁵⁹“I saw that the nominal churches, as the Jews crucified Jesus, had crucified these messages, and therefore they have no knowledge of the move made in heaven, or of the way into the Most Holy, and they cannot be benefitted by the intercession of Jesus there. Like the Jews, who offered their useless sacrifices, they offer up their useless prayers to the apartment which Jesus has left, and Satan, pleased with the deception of the professed followers of Christ, fastens them in his snare, and assumes a religious character, and leads the minds of these professed Christians to himself, and works with his power, his signs and lying wonders.” White, Ellen G. *Spiritual Gifts*. Vol. 1. 1858. [Facsimile reproduction]. Hagerstown: Review & Herald, n.d. 171-172.

⁶⁰Mrs. White later toned this teaching down in the *Great Controversy*, but a shadow clearly remains: “All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. Otherwise it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill.” White, Ellen G. *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*. 1888. Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1950. 488.

⁶¹See Chapter 1 for a complete account.

⁶²Hoyt, Frederick, ed. “Trial of Elder I. Dammon Reported for the *Piscataquis Farmer*.” *Spectrum* 17.5 (1987): 29-36. p. 35.

and the world, and what remained to be done was for the household of faith."⁶³ Father Miller never accepted Ellen Harmon's visions, and he renounced all date-setting, choosing to trust the Lord and be ready every day should Jesus come. Miller wrote, "Brethren hold fast; let no man take your crown. I have fixed my mind on another time, and here I mean to stand until God gives me more light, and that is *today, today, and today*, until he comes."⁶⁴ Miller's gravestone reads, "At the time appointed the end shall be."⁶⁵ According to a careful interpretation of Ellen Harmon's visions, Miller had denied the light behind him, and he should have fallen from the path, never again to have a hope of heaven. However, he was such a revered figure, not just to Ellen, but to her entire group, that she saw God making an exception in the case of His old friend William Miller: ". . . I saw that William Miller erred as he was soon to enter the heavenly Canaan, in suffering his influence to go against the truth. Others led him to this; others must account for it."⁶⁶ But angels watch the precious dust of this servant of God, and he will come forth at the sound of the last trump."⁶⁷

EVALUATION

Ellen Harmon's Need for the Visions

For the first time in her life, Ellen Harmon had a strong faith that she would not be weeded out on the great judgement day. The excitement of the Millerite movement had led the adventists to believe that they were being saved by accepting this unique truth. They were diligent about

⁶³White, Arthur L. "Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question." Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1982. 54. [Paper available from White Estate].

⁶⁴Qtd. in Dick, Everett N. *William Miller and the Advent Crisis*. Ed. Gary Land. Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1994. 158.

⁶⁵Dick, Everett N. *William Miller and the Advent Crisis*. Ed. Gary Land. Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1994. 165.

⁶⁶The man most responsible for moving Miller away from the shut door was Joshua V. Himes. Knight, George R. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1993. 240-241. Himes was particularly alarmed by a fanatical band in Portland, Maine: "They will lay all in ruins if they have time enough to do it." He continued, "They are using your influence . . . your name and letters to sustain themselves in their new and visionary movements." Qtd. in Knight, George R. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1993. 241. He was, of course, referring to Ellen Harmon, Israel Dammon, & Co. In the vision relating Miller's salvation, Ellen basically damns Himes. Ironically, the story doesn't end there. Many years later, Himes became a patient at the Battle Creek Sanitarium, and he donated forty dollars to the Adventist medical work. Ellen White wrote a glowing thank-you: "In the name of our Redeemer I thank you. Be assured we shall invest this money in the best possible way to accomplish the most good for the salvation of souls. . . . The spiritual participation evidenced by your donation for this field has rejoiced my heart; for it testifies that you have not lost the missionary spirit which prompted you first to give yourself to the work, and then to give your means to the Lord, to proclaim the first and second angels' messages in their time and order to the world. This is a great gratification to me; for it bears an honorable testimony that your heart is still in the work; I see the proof of your love to the Lord Jesus Christ in your freewill offering for this 'region beyond.'" White, Ellen G. *Manuscript Releases*. Vol. 3. Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1981. 256. [Letter 31a, 1895]. Truth is definitely stranger than the fiction that Adventists are prohibited from reading.

⁶⁷White, Ellen G. *Early Writings of Ellen G. White*. 1882. Washington: Review & Herald, 1945. 258.

confessing sin, but they seemed to believe that they were the special people of God because they knew when He would return.⁶⁸ Ellen's spiritual trauma appears to fade away amid the constant Millerite meetings and her excitement about spreading the truth. Under ordinary circumstances, we could expect her physical and mental health to break after the disappointment, but the visions permanently halted her impending breakdown. Through her prophetic role, she transitioned from a state of perpetual fear to one of confidence and purpose, and she went on to live a long, productive life. The key to her newfound spiritual peace can be found in the assurance of her angel: "If you deliver the messages faithfully, and endure unto the end, you shall eat of the fruit of the tree of life and drink of the water of the river of life."⁶⁹ It wasn't a complete guarantee, but it was good enough. Her mind was at rest. From that point on, she would rest assured of her standing with God. Ironically, her central message of perfection on this earth would transfer her fears to her followers. She was safe, but they would experience a little travail of soul, just as she had.

Theological Errors of the First Vision—Seeds of the Investigative Judgement

Ellen White's early visions are the only ones that she wrote out directly. In later years, she would base her testimonies and books on visions without recording the actual vision. Therefore, later Seventh-day Adventists received her interpretation and application of what she had seen, without ever being able to analyze the visions themselves. Therefore, we will take this opportunity to evaluate the exact record of what she saw in a few early visions.

She begins by affirming the centrality of the Midnight Cry of 1844, apparently for the salvation of all, even down to the present day. "They had a bright light set up behind them at the first end of the path, which an angel told me was the Midnight Cry. This light shone all along the path, and gave light for their feet so they might not stumble." As the views of Edson and Crosier became prominent, Ellen White determined that an investigative judgement had begun when Christ entered the Most Holy Place back in 1844.⁷⁰ The problem is that the hermeneutical basis for the Midnight Cry is so obscure that most Adventist theologians believe it cannot be demonstrated from the biblical texts. In the late 1950's, Raymond F. Cottrell, associate editor of the *SDA Bible Commentary*, wrote a letter to twenty seven SDA theologians requesting analysis of Daniel 8:14. He writes,

"A careful analysis and synthesis of their replies provided no additional help with respect to the problems arising from our interpretation of Daniel 8:14, and made evident that we had no satisfactory answer to the criticisms being directed against

⁶⁸According to Ruth Doan, "A correspondent to the *Signs of the Times* [a Millerite paper] accused the Millerites of substituting belief in the imminent Second Coming for regeneration as the point on which salvation turned . . ." Doan, Ruth A. "Millerism and Evangelical Culture." *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*. Eds. Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987. 128.

⁶⁹White, Ellen G. *Early Writings of Ellen G. White*. 1882. Washington: Review & Herald, 1945. 21.

⁷⁰Ellen White's endorsement of Crosier's views is found in *A Word to the "Little Flock,"* which was published in 1847 and contained reprints of some of her early writings: "The Lord shew me in vision, more than one year ago, that Brother Crosier had the true light, on the cleansing of the Sanctuary, &c; and that it was his will, that Brother C. should write out the view which he gave us in the Day-Star, Extra, February 7, 1846. I feel fully authorized by the Lord, to recommend that Extra, to every saint."

our interpretation of this key Adventist passage. Thirteen replied that they knew of no other valid basis for making such an application; seven based it on analogy; five, on the authority of Ellen White; two, on what they viewed as a “fortunate accident” in translation. Not one of the twenty seven believed that there was a linguistic or contextual basis for applying Daniel 8:14 to the heavenly sanctuary, an antitypical day of atonement, or 1844.”⁷¹

These theologians fall into two basic camps: One group quietly disbelieves Miller’s reasoning, thus implicitly rejecting Ellen White’s consistent, lifelong support for the validity of 1844; the other group reasons that Ellen White’s endorsement of October 22, 1844, seals the deal.⁷²

If the investigative judgement is so important, it would be imperative for God to make it clear in scripture. On time prophecy, along with visions given to Hiram Edson and Ellen Harmon, are not enough to establish a doctrine that would serve as a test to divide the righteous from the wicked. To hold that disagreements over one obscure text should cause countless people to lose their souls is a monstrous misrepresentation of the character of God. Ellen White would later emphasize that God is not unforgiving or severe,⁷³ yet she never renounced this doctrine, initiated during her first vision. As a prophet, she couldn’t back away from statements that had been so prominent. She could only hope that people wouldn’t question things later.

Other Theological Errors of the First Vision

It seems that we’ve covered a great deal of ground in evaluating the first vision, but there is much more objectionable theology. She states that some adventists “denied the light behind them The light behind them went out, which left their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and . . . fell off the path down in the dark and wicked world below. It was just as impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the City, as all the wicked world which God had rejected.” With the 1851 publication of *Experience and Views*, Ellen and James deleted the last sentence. It is a bombshell. It reveals that losing faith in the seventh-month movement was an unpardonable sin. “It was just as impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the City, as all the wicked world which God had rejected.” In addition, it clearly states that God had rejected the entire “wicked world” because they had rejected the Midnight Cry. There is really no wiggle room in this statement. Furthermore, since Ellen didn’t publish this view until 1846 (her hand was shaking so that she couldn’t write), and since it was reprinted in *A Word to the “Little Flock”* (1847), it represents a settled view of the situation. God could have corrected any misunderstandings during the lapse in publication, but apparently He did not. This will have future bearing because Ellen and her apologists will later try to minimize the period during which she prophetically taught the shut door.

⁷¹Cottrell, Raymond F. “Sanctuary Debate: A Question of Method.” *Spectrum* 10.4 (1980): 16-26. p. 18.

⁷²“The truths that have been substantiated by the manifest working of God are to stand fast. Let no one presume to remove a pin or a foundation stone from the structure. Those who attempt to undermine the pillars of our faith are among those of whom the Bible says that ‘in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.’” White, Ellen G. *Manuscript Releases*. Vol. 1. Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1981. 55. [Letter 87, 1905].

⁷³“Because God is a God of justice and terrible majesty, Satan caused [men] to look upon Him as severe and unforgiving.” White, Ellen G. *The Desire of Ages*. 1898. Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1940. 22.

Another problem is that this vision perpetuated the Millerite mistake of seeking a date for the advent. She says that God “gave us the day and hour of Jesus’ coming” just before that event. As we saw in the sad story of Israel Dammon, many in Ellen’s group felt that God would return in February 1845, within a week of Dammon’s trial. We have no idea of Ellen’s position on this date, but we do know that Joseph Bates, a close associate who published some of her early messages, believed that God would return in 1851.⁷⁴ Bates stated positively that Ellen’s visions were given by God to “comfort and strengthen” the advent band “since the closing up of our work for the world in October, 1844.”⁷⁵ Many more dates were set by various adventists, but they all failed. Had Ellen Harmon’s message really been from God, would it have included that date component?

A belief in a literal 144,000 living saints is another problem reinforced and uncorrected by this vision. Notice that the exact 144,000 is achieved after the unwise Adventists fall from the path by denying Miller’s Midnight Cry. For this reason, Elder Dammon would testify at his trial that there were too many living saints, so the number must be reduced.⁷⁶

As we have seen in Chapter 1, the Dammon group was involved in fanatical activities such as “holy” kissing and foot-washing between unmarried men and women, crawling on the floor, refusal to work for a living, “spiritual” marriages, and apparently some major indiscretions which forced some individuals to marry, according to Ellen White. Unfortunately, the first vision reinforced some of these fanaticisms. Ellen clearly taught that God’s love was particularly bestowed on them because they “could wash one another’s feet and salute the holy brethren with a holy kiss” It appears that God missed a good opportunity to reign in this fanaticism. Had the fanaticism been eliminated or sharply reduced, the embarrassing Dammon trial might never have occurred.

Ellen Harmon’s teachings on the attitudes of the saints are also questionable. At the second coming, her saints cry fearfully, “Who shall be able to stand? Is my robe spotless?” No text in the Bible depicts nervous saints at the second coming. This is a preview of the perfectionism that would dog the remainder of Ellen White’s ministry. Ironically, Ellen’s saints undergo a remarkable transition from their original insecurity. When they arrive in heaven, they feel they have “a perfect right to the City.” Could it be that their robes have been judged “spotless,” and that they feel they’ve done something worthy of merit? Pride is the nasty little problem that faces all perfectionists, and I’m speaking from experience. If there is anything we can do to be good enough, then haven’t we “done our part” in salvation? And if we’ve “done our part,” shouldn’t we be pleased with ourselves? Won’t we have “a perfect right” to the joys of heaven?

Evaluation of the “Shut-Door” Vision

Let’s start with Ellen’s letter to Joseph Bates recounting the circumstances of the mid-February 1845 vision in Exeter, Maine. At the outset of the meeting, the shut door was being

⁷⁴Anderson, Dirk. *White Out*. Glendale: Life Assurance Ministries, 2001. 32.

⁷⁵Qtd. in White, James. *A Word to the “Little Flock.”* 1847. Hagerstown: Review & Herald, n.d. 21. Facsimile Reproduction.

⁷⁶Hoyt, Frederick, ed. “Trial of Elder I. Dammon Reported for the *Piscataquis Farmer*.” *Spectrum* 17.5 (1987): 29-36. p. 35.

opposed by Sister Durben, a godly woman who “had great sympathy, and could not believe the door was shut.” Ellen Harmon was highly agitated, indicating that she had already made up her mind on this issue, despite her denial of having heard the shut-door portions of Turner’s views.⁷⁷ Ellen then fell to the floor and had a vision of the shut door. When she arose, Sister Durben was groveling on the floor begging God’s forgiveness, for she did not want to deny the light and fall off the path to heaven. Ellen concludes with great clarity: “Most of them received the vision, and were settled upon the shut door.” When the 1847 letter to Bates escaped the White Estate vaults, Robert W. Olson, head of the White Estate, was forced to concede, “Ellen misinterpreted this vision. She correctly understood that the day of salvation for the latter two groups [fallen Millerites and the ‘wicked world’] was past. For them, the door was shut. But she incorrectly concluded that no one could accept Christ after October 22”⁷⁸

Ellen White will later attempt to tie this vision to the open door theology that finally penetrated fog of her early understanding (see “The Shut-Door Cover-up” later in this chapter). However, no mention is made of a shut door and an open door. Such a compromise might have modified Sister Durben, sparing her the seeming necessity to grovel before the Lord. As we read the actual account of the vision, we can see that no open door is foreshadowed.

“Then Jesus rose up from the throne, and the [sic] most of those who were bowed down arose with Him [the shut-door adventists who followed Ellen’s visions].⁷⁹ I did not see one ray of light pass from Jesus to the careless multitude after He arose, and they were left in perfect darkness. . . . Those who rose up with Jesus would send up their faith to Him in the holiest, and pray, ‘My Father, give us Thy Spirit.’ Then Jesus would breathe upon them the Holy Ghost. . . .

“I turned to look at the company who were still bowed before the throne; they did not know that Jesus had left it. Satan appeared to be by the throne, trying to carry on the work of God. I saw them look up to the throne, and pray, ‘Father, give us Thy Spirit.’ Satan would then breathe upon them an unholy influence”

Her vision shows the wicked world being left in total darkness, and the “apostate” adventists praying to Satan because they didn’t know that Jesus was no longer available at His old “address.” If this was a vision of God, Ellen must have “misinterpreted” it, as Olson suggests. If the vision was inspired by Joseph Turner, then she might not have misinterpreted anything. She and her associates were actually promoting an un-biblical salvation by theology.

The Role of Joseph Turner

As mentioned previously, Ellen is preoccupied with Joseph Turner as she tries to convince Joseph Bates that her visions had no outside influences. This will actually be a recurring theme of her prophetic career. She is always careful to distance herself from outside information. Even

⁷⁷See the end of the letter.

⁷⁸Olson, Robert W. *101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White*. Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1981. 58.

⁷⁹Actually, most of the Millerites followed William Miller in quickly rejecting the shut door. This is why James and Ellen had such a hard time during their ministry in New England—their teachings were widely rejected.

when she was present at doctrinal discussions, and then had a vision settling the issue in the middle of the discussion, she would claim to have been unable to comprehend the arguments presented until she was shown in vision.

I have already suggested that Turner's ideas form the basis for the two visions covered in this chapter. At the time of the first vision, she concedes that a paper by Turner is in the Harmon house. She traveled to a house in which she had several short, private meetings with Turner.⁸⁰ To her great relief, she discovered the next day that their views regarding the importance of Oct. 22 were identical. Approximately two months then passed. According to Ellen, she heard nothing about Turner's views on the spiritual coming of the Bridegroom and the shutting of the door of probation, even though the shut door is clearly shown in her first vision. When Joseph Bates read the two visions, he thought, "This sounds like Turner's views."⁸¹ I find her denials implausible, particularly the second denial that she had heard nothing more of Turner's theology in the ensuing two months. There was so much contact between the advent believers in the Portland area. I'm suspicious: "The lady doth protest too much, methinks!"⁸²

I know this book is incredibly difficult for a Seventh-day Adventist to read. Believe me, it is a faith-wrenching book for a former Adventist to write. At this point, I don't want to overload you with questions, but keep this incident in mind for the future. Similar events are coming soon.

The Shut-Door Deletions

The shut door could not remain closed forever. Either Christ must come, or the door must open. If Christ didn't come, then some embarrassing statements must be explained or forgotten. As we have already shown, her early writings were published several times. Prior to 1851, with the publication of *Experience and Views*, there was little attempt to delete or alter any prophetic lines.⁸³ What happened in 1851? Joseph Bates' date for the second coming passed. According to Arthur White, "What might be termed the "shut door era" in our history extended from

⁸⁰ Arthur White believes she went to a friend's house. She doesn't make this clear in her letter. White, Arthur L. *Ellen G. White*. Vol. 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1985. 6 vols. 62.

⁸¹ Bates' question was particularly pressing because Turner had become a bitter opponent of Ellen Harmon, charging her with mesmerism. See White, Ellen G. *Spiritual Gifts*. Vol. 2. Battle Creek: James White, 1860. 62-63. See also White, Arthur L. *Ellen G. White*. Vol. 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1985. 6 vols. 87-88.

⁸² Quote from William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (3.2.236).

⁸³ An interesting previous situation is referenced by James in *A Word to the "Little Flock,"* p. 22: "Those who have received the little sheet will see by referring to Ex. 26:35, that there is a mistake in the 10th and 11th lines from the top of the first column. This mistake is not in the original copy now in my possession, written by the author [Ellen]. I have therefore, corrected this mistake, that I made in hastily copying the vision to send to brother Bates." He doesn't repeat the faulty line, so we must surmise from the text that there was an error regarding the placement of the sanctuary furniture in the first account of Ellen's vision. Granted, this is a small error, and it may have occurred exactly as James stated, but we would certainly wish that Ellen would have read the final product more carefully so she could stand by it as the actual vision she received. This incident also shows the strong involvement of James White in the preparation of his wife's visions for publication. Anyway, James fell on his pen to atone for the error.

1844 to 1851 or 1852.”⁸⁴ After 1851, the term “shut door” vanished from the vocabulary of James and Ellen White, unless they were trying to explain their original views. In other words, the doctrine went from the highest significance to nothing, basically overnight. We will seek to trace the changing shut-door explanations in this section.

A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White actually deleted nineteen percent of the original material, including a few entire visions.⁸⁵ On page 9, Ellen White explained that she was deleting “a portion [to] prevent repetition.”⁸⁶ However, a missing line stating, “It was just as impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the City, as all the wicked world which God had rejected,” hardly seem repetitious.

The publication of *Experience and Views* led to a crisis in the Advent Movement. Two leading ministers, “Father” Butler and Elder Hart, expressed their doubts publicly to the Whites. They were particularly upset by the missing visions. Elder White then explained that the Whites “had been very short on means, and were able to print at first only a small pamphlet, and he promised the brethren that when sufficient means was raised, the visions should be published more fully in book form.”⁸⁷

When *Early Writings* was published in 1882, the lines and visions deleted from *Experience and Views* were not returned to their place. In 1883, Mrs. White tried to explain the breaking of her husband’s decades-old promise to restore the old material:

“In our frequent change of location in the earlier history of the publishing work, and then in almost incessant travel as I have labored from Maine to Texas, from Michigan to California—and I have crossed the plains no less than seventeen times—I lost all trace of the first published works. When it was decided to publish *Early Writings* at Oakland last fall, we were obliged to send to Michigan to borrow a copy of *Experience and Views*. And in doing this we supposed that we had obtained an exact copy of the earliest visions as first published. This we reprinted, as stated in the preface to *Early Writings*, with only verbal changes from the original work.

“And here I will pause to state that any of our people having in their possession a copy of any or all of my first views, as published prior to 1851, will do me a great favor if they will send them to me without delay. I promise to return the same as soon as a copy can be produced.

“So far from desiring to withhold anything that I have ever published, I would feel great satisfaction in giving to the public every line of my writings that has ever

⁸⁴White, Arthur L. “Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question.” Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1982. 24. [Paper available from White Estate].

⁸⁵Anderson, Dirk. *White Out*. Glendale: Life Assurance Ministries, 2001. 44.

⁸⁶White, Arthur L. “Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question.” Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1982. 38-39. [Paper available from White Estate].

⁸⁷White, Ellen G. *Selected Messages from the Writings of Ellen G. White*. Bk. 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1958. 53.

been printed.”⁸⁸

However, no update to *Early Writings* was ever issued.

Here is Ellen White’s final excuse for not correcting deletions from her early works: “There are two other passages said to be found in my first book, but not given in my later writings. Concerning these I shall only say, when I can obtain a book containing them, so that I can be assured of the correctness of the quotations and can see for myself their connection, I shall be prepared to speak understandingly in regard to them.”⁸⁹

The interesting thing about these excuses is their “spin” quality. In recent years, the term “spin” has been added to the American political vocabulary, as in “White House spin suggests there is no connection between . . .” —you fill in the rest. However, spin has been around ever since the Garden of Eden, when Adam blamed his fall on “the woman you [God] gave me.” Basically, spin becomes necessary when someone is slandering one’s reputation, or when a person has done something wrong.

The Whites left a long, evolving trail of excuses for the shut-door deletions. First, shut-door statements were deleted “to prevent repetition.” Then they claimed they had shortened the early visions because they lacked funds to print them fully, but they assured their contemporaries that they would happily print everything once the funding was available. Next, Mrs. White claimed she had lost all copies of her visions published before 1851, and that she had forgotten that the visions recorded in *Experience and Views* (1851) were still those edited writings that James had promised to restore. Thus, she had mistakenly printed *Early Writings* (1882) from *Experience and Views*, and the deleted materials remained deleted. When pressed on some individual quotations missing from *Experience and Views* and *Early Writings*, she said she would be unable to explain two of them until she could study them in their original context. She never got around to providing that research, and she never got around to updating *Early Writings*. Most likely, she preferred not to.

The Shut Door “Spins” Open

Ellen and her defenders have also tried to shorten the time before the term “open door” was added to her theology, thus “spinning” the shut door open. In 1874, Ellen White wrote Elder Loughborough, an SDA minister and amateur historian, regarding her shut-door salad days:

“With my brethren and sisters, after the time passed in forty-four I did believe no more sinners would be converted. But I never had a vision that no more sinners would be converted. And am clear and free to state no one has ever heard me say or has read from my pen statements which will justify them in the charges they have made against me upon this point.

“It was on my first journey east to relate my visions that the precious light in regard to the heavenly sanctuary was opened before me and I was shown the open and shut door. . . . I was shown that there was a great work to be done in the

⁸⁸White, Ellen G. *Selected Messages from the Writings of Ellen G. White*. Bk. 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1958. 60.

⁸⁹White, Ellen G. *Selected Messages from the Writings of Ellen G. White*. Bk. 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1958. 69.

world for those who had not had the light and rejected it.”⁹⁰

Arthur White says this letter pertains to her “shut-door” vision in Exeter, Maine, of mid-February, 1845.⁹¹ From the historical evidence, it is impossible to credit Ellen’s claim unless one insists on being an intellectual ostrich. This vision was first published in *The Day Star* on March 14, 1846, more than a year after she received it.⁹² There is no mention of an open door with regard to this vision, and she had plenty of time to think it through. Instead, she depicts those who didn’t understand Christ’s move to the heavenly sanctuary praying to Satan. When she described the vision to Joseph Bates in a letter dated July 13, 1847, she again neglected to add anything about an open door. Instead, she concluded that most of the band “received the vision, and were settled upon the shut door.” More damaging, Mrs. White never refers to an open door in her writings until 1849, and there are numerous shut-door references in the writings of James and Ellen White during this time. If she held an open-door position in 1845, she certainly didn’t publicize it. In her letter to Loughborough, she spun her shut door open. But like a revolving door, what goes around comes around.⁹³

Most Likely Chronology for the Opening of the Door

The first appearance of the term “open door” in the writings of Ellen White comes in 1849, although the shut door had been slowly cracking open at least by 1848.⁹⁴

“Sabbath, March 24, 1849, we had a sweet and very interesting meeting with the

⁹⁰White, Ellen G. *Selected Messages from the Writings of Ellen G. White*. Bk. 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1958. 74. Also in White, Arthur L. “Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question.” Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1982. 14-15, 25-26. [Paper available from White Estate].

⁹¹White, Arthur L. “Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question.” Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1982. 26. [Paper available from White Estate].

⁹²White, Arthur L. “Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question.” Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1982. 24. [Paper available from White Estate].

⁹³In 1885, George I. Butler, published a series of articles in the Review and Herald attempting to defend Mrs. White against shut-door questions. Butler cited a letter from Marion Truesdail affirming that she had spoken with Ellen Harmon in the summer of 1845, and that they had both agreed there should be an open door for those who had never heard the Midnight Cry. The letter was signed by five eye-and-ear witnesses to this conversation. See White, Arthur L. “Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question.” Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1982. 26-27. Sydney Cleveland has shown that at least one affidavit published in *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 2, was falsified. Cleveland, Sydney. *White Washed*. Glendale: Life Assurance Ministries, 2000. 120-121. Given the lack of any reference to an “open door” in Ellen White’s writings prior to 1849, we must conclude that the Truesdail document is historically incorrect, whether from faded memories or for more base motives, we cannot say. Of particular interest is a letter addressed to James White and published in the Review & Herald, April 7, 1851. The writer is a Marshall M. Truesdell, who has just accepted the Sabbath and the sanctuary doctrine, but who is worried that he is excluded by the shut door. See White, Arthur L. “Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question.” Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1982. 26-27. It would be nice to know if there is any connection to Marion Truesdail. Could there be different spellings of the same name? (Andrew Jackson once said, “I don’t respect a man who knows only one way to spell his name”). At any rate, the uncertainty revealed in this letter certainly casts doubt on the timing of Marion’s claim. Had the prophetess been consistently teaching an open door for those who had not thoroughly rejected Millerism, the shut-door questions should have been put to rest.

⁹⁴She took the term “open door” from Revelation 4:1.

brethren at Topsham, Maine. The Holy Ghost was poured out upon us, and I was taken off in the Spirit to the city of the living God. Then I was shown that the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus relating to the shut door could not be separated, and that the time for the commandments of God to shine out with all their importance, and for God's people to be tried on the Sabbath truth, was when the door was opened in the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary, where the ark is, in which are contained the ten commandments. This door was not opened until the mediation of Jesus was finished in the holy place of the sanctuary in 1844. **Then Jesus rose up and shut the door of the holy place, and opened the door into the most holy,** and passed within the second veil, where He now stands by the ark, and where the faith of Israel now reaches.

"I saw that Jesus had shut the door of the holy place, and no man can open it; and that He had opened the door into the most holy, and no man can shut it (Rev. 3:7, 8); and that since Jesus has opened the door into the most holy place, which contains the ark, the commandments have been shining out to God's people, and they are being tested on the Sabbath question."⁹⁵

Unfortunately for Ellen White and the "little flock," this view wasn't given until 1849, four-and-a-half years after her ministry began. If light from the visions was correcting their errors, the progression was leisurely at best. Shockingly, the "open door" vision ends with a clear reaffirmation of the shut-door. It reiterates that the believers' work for the world was finished: "My accompanying angel bade me look for the travail of soul for sinners as used to be. I looked, but could not see it; for the time for their salvation is past."⁹⁶ Clearly, she did not envision a large number of converts, as she did not perceive the need for any "travail of soul for sinners." Instead, a small trickle of sinners would be seeking admission to Club Remnant, as had already happened in at least one case (see below). These should not be turned away, but neither should they be sought in the "highways and byways."

There had been hints prior to 1849 that the shut door was about open, however so slowly. At Dorchester, Massachusetts, in November of 1848, Mrs. White had a vision about publishing a paper. She described seeing "streams of light that went clear round the world."⁹⁷ As a result of this vision, James began publishing *The Present Truth*, even though he didn't have the money for the project. As the precious pages for which they were sacrificing so much arrived in their home, James, Ellen, and a few friends would pray and weep over them.⁹⁸ The value of *The Present Truth* in opening the door was minimal; it was full of shut-door theology.⁹⁹ Even so, the pioneers

⁹⁵White, Ellen G. *Early Writings of Ellen G. White*. 1882. Washington: Review & Herald, 1945. 42.

⁹⁶White, Ellen G. *Early Writings of Ellen G. White*. 1882. Washington: Review & Herald, 1945. 45.

⁹⁷White, Ellen G. *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*. Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1915. 125.

⁹⁸White, Ellen G. *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*. Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1915. 125-126.

⁹⁹In May 1850, James wrote in *Present Truth*, "But the sinner, to whom Jesus had stretched out his arms all day long, and who had rejected the offers of salvation, was left without an advocate, when Jesus passed from the Holy Place, and shut that door in 1844." Qtd. in Anderson, Dirk. *White Out: An Investigation of Ellen G. White*.

were beginning to be a little less provincial. Heretofore, they had acted as if God's elect were primarily located in New England, the only place where the third angel's message was available.¹⁰⁰

Arthur White describes several conversions generated by the ministry of Ellen White, but these occur in the late forties and early fifties as the door was opening. The list includes John Y. Wilcox (1848), Hiram Patch and his fiancée (winter 1849-1850), and Heman Churchill (July 1850). Churchill was a particularly interesting case because he had not even been a Christian in 1844. The believers forestalled his baptism until Sister White saw a vision admitting Churchill to the ranks of the remnant.¹⁰¹

A statement that I couldn't date is printed in *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 1. It could have been written in the late 1840's, as it matches the tone of this period: "The light that was shed upon the waiting ones penetrated every where, and those who had any light in the churches, who had not heard and rejected the three messages, answered to the call and left the fallen churches. Many had come to years of accountability since these messages had been given, and the light shone upon them, and they were privileged to choose life or death."¹⁰² This statement does not throw the door of salvation wide open, but it allows young people who were not at the age of "accountability" in 1844 to join the remnant. The door would crack open a little further in 1850.

On January 11, 1850, five years into her ministry, Ellen White finally gets excited about conversions.¹⁰³ She gushes, "SOULS are coming in to the truth and soon the work will be all done. . . . We have the truth. We know it. Praise the Lord. I saw yesterday our work was not to the shepherds [ministers] who have rejected the former messages, but to the honest deceived who are led astray. I saw the false shepherds would soon be fed with judgment."¹⁰⁴ Under this shut-door interpretation, most Christians could be saved; only the leaders of the "nominal" churches deserved ultimate exclusion. In February of 1850, Ellen allowed fallen Millerites who had "rashly denied the light behind them" to get back on the path to the New Jerusalem. "Souls are coming out upon the truth all around here. They are those who have not heard the Advent doctrine and some of them are those who went forth to meet the Bridegroom in 1844, but since that time have been deceived by false shepherds until they did not know where they were or what

Glendale: Life Assurance Ministries, 2001. Of the views given in *Present Truth*, Mrs. White declared, "I saw these efforts of Satan were to hinder the paper coming out, for the lines that were being published were written in the Spirit of God, and would rejoice the hearts of the trusting ones, and Satan knew it would hurt his cause because it would be seen by these testimonies that most of the Advent people once believed as we do that there was a shut door in 1844." White, Ellen G. *Manuscript Releases*. Vol. 6. Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1990. 250. [Ms. 7, 1850].

¹⁰⁰Seventh-day Adventists consider the truths introduced under the guidance of the Spirit of Prophecy the third angel's message.

¹⁰¹White, Arthur L. "Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question." Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1982. 33-36. [Paper available from White Estate].

¹⁰²White, Ellen G. *Spiritual Gifts*. Vol. 1. 1858. [Facsimile reproduction]. Hagerstown: Review & Herald, n.d. 195.

¹⁰³At this time, her "flock" consisted of about a hundred "sheep." Douglass, Herbert E. *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White*. Nampa: Pacific Press, 1998. 509.

¹⁰⁴White, Ellen G. *Manuscript Releases*. Vol. 5. Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1990. 91.

they believed.”¹⁰⁵ In the end, Ellen White concluded that “false shepherds” were the real culprit—both in the churches and in the other Millerite groups. They were irrevocably excluded from heaven on the basis of rejecting October 22, 1844. Her position is still heresy, as we will discuss in the next section, but the door of salvation had finally opened as wide as James and Ellen White would open it.

Even though she has just opened the door, the prophetess continued fulminating against adventists who had rejected the shut door. She wasn’t ready to let bygones be bygones.

“Then I saw Laodiceans. They will make a mighty effort. Will they get the victory? One who has the truth will chase a thousand, and two will put ten thousand to flight. . . . Anguish of spirit will seize them. Dare they admit that the door is shut? The sin against the Holy Ghost was to ascribe to Satan what belongs to God. . . . **They said the shut door was of the devil,** and now admit it is against their own lives. **They shall die the death.**”¹⁰⁶

I can’t help but contrast Ellen White’s attitude regarding a very public error with the post-1844 attitude of William Miller. Miller must have been terribly embarrassed when the movement bearing his name failed. The laughter of critics nationwide and even worldwide must have seemed audible even in his seclusion at his farm in Low Hampton, New York. True, he did believe the shut door for a time, but he quickly gave it up.¹⁰⁷ He humbly wrote, “Brethren hold fast; let no man take your crown. I have fixed my mind on another time, and here I mean to stand until God gives me more light, and that is *today, today, and today*, until he comes.”¹⁰⁸ What was the difference between William Miller and Ellen White? Miller had never claimed visionary guidance. Spiritually, he could move forward in the present, while Ellen White had to constantly affirm her past experience.

Heresy Either Way

Adventists and former Adventists sometimes get bogged down arguing the timing of Ellen’s transition to the open door. Many Adventists hold that the visions quickly corrected the shut door, while the critics argue that the correction took more than five years. However, we must remember what Ellen White meant by the open door. Did she see an opening for all sinners?

¹⁰⁵White, Ellen G. *Manuscript Releases*. Vol. 5. Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1990. 91. It might be too tidy to end things here. She appears to contradict herself in 1853: “I saw that many who enjoyed the truth of the first and second angel’s messages and felt the power and glory of the messages have since rejected the light that came from heaven, called it of the devil, and **there was more hope of sinners [for other sinners] than of such**. Many that know nothing of the first two messages saw not their effects and their glory, that have not hardened their hearts, will be brought to the light of truth.... But those who have called the power of the Holy Ghost that attended these messages of the devil, and will not hear the third, are those who will be shut out.” White, Ellen G. *Manuscript Releases*. Vol. 5. Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1990. 426.

¹⁰⁶White, Ellen G. *Manuscript Releases*. Vol. 5. Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1990. 204. [Ms. 11, 1850].

¹⁰⁷Knight, George R. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism*. Boise: Pacific Press, 1993. 241. Miller gave up the shut door and the October 22 date on March 26, 1845.

¹⁰⁸Qtd. in Dick, Everett N. *William Miller and the Advent Crisis*. Ed. Gary Land. Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1994. 158.

Did she reject the notion that *anyone* could be lost for rejecting Miller's date-setting for the second coming? Let's take a look at Ellen's final position on the shut door, articulated in 1883.

"I was shown in vision, and I still believe, that there was a shut door in 1844. All who saw the light of the first and second angel's messages and rejected that light, were left in darkness. And those who accepted it and received the Holy Spirit which attended the proclamation of the message from heaven, and who afterward renounced their faith and pronounced their experience a delusion, thereby rejected the Spirit of God, and it no longer pleaded with them."¹⁰⁹

We have already shown that this was not her original position, as she saw no open door until 1849, and she continued writing definite shut-door statements for several years, unmodified by any stated exceptions. However, this is heresy either way. I call upon the Adventist Church to recognize that this statement condemns vast numbers of honest souls who were correct in rejecting date-setting for the second coming. "No man knows the day or the hour" means just what it says: God does not intend to reveal this information, and speculation is spiritually destructive.

The Bible never speaks of two times when God stands up and announces, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still . . ." (Rev. 22:11).¹¹⁰ Therefore, the Midnight Cry cannot represent a mass closure of probation, particularly since the Millerite message did not go to all the world.

When we study scripture, we find that soul-saving doctrines are covered clearly in multiple passages. October 22, 1844, on the other hand, is based on one text: Daniel 8:14. Nowhere does the Bible clarify that Christ must cleanse the heavenly sanctuary in antitypical fulfilment of the Hebrew sanctuary service. We could argue further, but stop to think about it: There is no Bible text *spelling out* a ministry for Christ in the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. Yes, there are texts that could be construed to indicate a pre-advent judgement,¹¹¹ but there is nothing that *defines* such an event. If this was a saving message in 1844, meriting a shut door against all who disagreed, is it any less a saving message today, according to EGW? The bottom line is that God always gives more than adequate evidence for the core, saving Christian beliefs, and there is no clear biblical evidence for an investigative judgement. If God insists upon a belief in October 22, 1844, along with its subsequent theological baggage, then He is just as arbitrary and severe as Satan has always charged.¹¹²

There were many wonderful Christian people who lived during the Midnight Cry and

¹⁰⁹White, Ellen G. *Selected Messages from the Writings of Ellen G. White*. Bk. 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1958. 63. However, in 1850, she had opened the door to Millerites who had fallen off the path, so long as a "false shepherd" could be blamed for their fall. See White, Arthur L. "Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question." Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1982. 35. [Paper available from White Estate].

¹¹⁰We recognize the individuals may close their probation by rejecting the Holy Spirit, but we are speaking of an official date-conditioned closure.

¹¹¹Commonly called the investigative judgement by SDA's.

¹¹²Adventist insistence on the importance of their inside knowledge of the investigative judgement, obtained from the Spirit of Prophecy (SDA term for the writings of Ellen White; a term she endorsed by using it as a title for one of her series of books), reminds one of the Gnostic heresy. Gnostics of New Testament times taught that one must have a secret *gnosis*, or knowledge, to obtain salvation.

thoughtfully rejected it as unbiblical. Many of these longed to help their Millerite neighbors avoid a crushing disappointment. As it turns out, they were correct. Christ did not come as predicted. Such persons undoubtedly helped many Millerites survive the winter, as many adventists had given away their possessions and even their homes as a sign of faith prior to October 22. The vast majority of these people never accepted the third angel's message. Why should they? It was a clear cover-up for a false doctrine—an unprovable spiritualization of a provable error. Because Ellen White couldn't back away from her false theology, Adventist apologists continue to doom these honest souls to perdition.¹¹³ What type of gospel is that?

Expectations for a Young Prophetess

Many liberal defenders of Ellen White emphasize her youth and her evident humanity and marvel, "Isn't it amazing that God can use such a misguided, weak woman as His prophet?" As noted earlier, even Robert Olson, former head of the White Estate, admits that she "misunderstood" her February 1845 vision regarding the shut door.¹¹⁴ I believe that prophets are human, but that can never be used as an excuse for inaccurate or theologically incorrect prophecies. As Ellen White has said, "All His [God's] biddings are enablings."¹¹⁵ Therefore, when God calls a prophet, He gives that prophet the ability to *accurately* give his or her message to the intended recipients. The key is accuracy and reliability, which a prophet must possess, even if he or she doesn't understand the vision. I agree with the mature Ellen White that God doesn't dictate the wording of visions.¹¹⁶ However, the Holy Spirit ensures that the prophecy will be accurate and authoritative.

The boy Samuel is an excellent example of an unsophisticated prophet delivering his message flawlessly. Samuel didn't understand his first encounter with God, but under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he accurately repeated the message to Eli (I Sam. 3:1-18). That's what a prophet must do. If we are to believe the liberal defenders of Ellen Harmon, that's exactly what she could not do. God's "biddings are enablings."

Ellen White would never have accepted the liberal excuses being offered for her errors today. In 1906, close to the end of her ministry, she asserted, "The truths given us after the passing of the time in 1844 are just as certain and unchangeable as when the Lord gave them to us in answer to our urgent prayers. The visions that the Lord has given me are so remarkable that we know that what we have accepted is the truth."¹¹⁷

One dear and dedicated Adventist, confronted by biblical evidence showing that Ellen

¹¹³See Olson, Robert W. *101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White*. Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1981. 58. See also White, Arthur L. "Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question." Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1982. 48. [Paper available from White Estate].

¹¹⁴Olson, Robert W. *101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White*. Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1981. 58.

¹¹⁵White, Ellen G. *Christ's Object Lessons*. Washington: Review and Herald, 1941. 333.

¹¹⁶White, Ellen G. Introduction. *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*. Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1950. v-vii.

¹¹⁷White, Ellen G. *Manuscript Releases*. Vol. 1. Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1981. 53. [Letter 50, 1906].

White was not a prophet, went so far as to respond, "How do we know that God deals with modern prophets in the same manner that He used in scripture?" I hope most Adventists, including the speaker (after further consideration), would reject such an argument. It is heresy. If modern prophetic claims cannot be infallibly tested by the Bible, then Ellen White is above the Bible, along with any other prophets that people choose to believe—and these prophets are out there! Seventh-day Adventists who refuse to evaluate Ellen White claims, accepting her *a priori* as a prophetess, come perilously close to cultism because they make themselves immune to biblical guidance.

Did Ellen White Lie?

Ellen Harmon has made a definite misrepresentation with regard to her first vision and the shut door. In her letter to Joseph Bates in July of 1847, she declared, "At the time I had the vision of the Midnight Cry [the first vision in Dec. 1844] I had given it [the validity of the Oct. 22 Midnight Cry] up in the past and thought it future, as also most of the band had."¹¹⁸ James White gave a more extensive but similar statement in May 1847:

"When she recieved her first vision, Dec. 1844, she and all the band in Portland, Maine, . . . had given up the midnight-cry, and shut door, as being in the past. It was then that the Lord shew her in vision, the error into which she and the band in Portland had fallen. She then related her vision to the band, and about sixty confessed their error, and acknowledged their 7th month experience to be the work of God."¹¹⁹

Unfortunately, Mrs. White's later recollections do not accord with her and her husband's testimony from the actual time. In 1883, she famously stated, "For a time after the disappointment in 1844, I did hold, in common with the advent body, that the door of mercy was then forever closed to the world. This position was taken before my first vision was given me. It was the light given me of God that corrected our error, and enabled us to see the true position."¹²⁰ Back in 1847, Ellen and James both testified that she had briefly given up her belief in the significance of October 22 and of the shut door, meaning that she hadn't thought sinners were shut off from mediation because the date had been in error. In her mature years, she changed that to say that she initially believed the door of probation was closed on Oct. 22, 1844, but that her early visions had corrected this error. Seventh-day Adventist believers who think this through cannot accept both statements as factual.

Regarding the shut door, Adventists are continually told by their leaders that all is well, all

¹¹⁸White, Ellen G. *Manuscript Releases*. Vol. 5. Silver Spring: E. G. White Estate, 1993. 95-98. [Letter 3, 1847]. This letter can also be found in White, Arthur L. "Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question." 1982. 56-58. Available from the White Estate.

¹¹⁹Qtd. in White, James. *A Word to the "Little Flock."* 1847. Hagerstown: Review & Herald, n.d. 22. Facsimile Reproduction.

¹²⁰White, Ellen G. *Selected Messages from the Writings of Ellen G. White*. Bk. 1. Washington: Review & Herald, 1958. 63.

the questions have been resolved, and Ellen White's account has been vindicated.¹²¹ Consider the following from a recent attempt to exonerate Ellen White: "*No evidence exists that Ellen White (or anyone else) later tried to deceive her contemporaries¹²² into believing that she had not, after December 1844, taught the shut-door notion of the Turner-Hale¹²³ group [italics supplied].*"¹²⁴ Douglass's use of the double negative (see supplied italics) makes this statement somewhat difficult to follow, but he admits that she did teach Turner's shut door, and he reassuringly states that she was never deceitful about her shut-door involvement. But she was deceitful in later statements to subsequent generations of Adventists. In 1847, she and her husband definitely stated **that she had given up the shut door before her first vision**, and that her visions had confirmed her in the shut door and the significance of October 22. However, in 1883, after most of the "little flock" had passed away, she said she held the shut door doctrine **prior to** her visions, and that the visions corrected the error. The Adventist Church's smooth denials of Ellen White's misstatements must be "weighed in the balances" of history "and found wanting."

An Appeal for Charity and Understanding

Ellen White is my spiritual mother. I was crushed when I realized she was not a prophet, and I still feel the pain as I write today. The sense of anger and betrayal will probably always be there. Even so, I do not consider her a liar. I believe her misrepresentations were unintentional and predictable as we analyze her psychological make-up.

We must remember that Ellen Harmon desperately needed to be a prophetess. Prior to the onset of her visions, she was headed for an early grave or a complete mental breakdown. The only question was which aspect of her fate would strike first. Any one of us would have had the greatest pity for this confused and suffering young woman had we known her in the dark hours of disappointment, and we should still extend that pity to this young woman. However, just because we extend sympathy doesn't put us under any obligation to follow her confused footsteps. False prophets cannot be followed without dire spiritual consequences. Therefore, we must test the prophets, according to scripture.

¹²¹When a video documentary entitled *Seventh-day Adventism: The Spirit Behind the Church* was produced by a group of former Adventists in the late 1990's, my conference president met with the staff at my boarding academy to present us with a document to answer the objections raised. This document, produced by the White Estate, lists thirty two charges against Ellen White and the SDA Church. Each charge is denied in general terms, with no evidence supplied. Instead, a list of resources is given for each question, listing works which purportedly supply evidence for the Estate's position. Everything has been answered, we were assured. The effect upon loyal SDA's was to give the impression that there was really no need for the average member to investigate. One of the major sources listed was *Messenger of the Lord*, by Herbert Douglass, who is currently the leading SDA apologist for Ellen White.

¹²²The word *contemporaries* is a bit too clever, hopefully unintentionally so. As we have seen in her 1847 statement, she made no attempt to deceive her contemporaries in the "little flock." They knew, so any direct denials would be pointless. However, by 1883, she told a different story to the grandchildren of her contemporaries, as we have just seen.

¹²³Apollos Hale was a shut-door associate of Joseph Turner.

¹²⁴Douglass, Herbert E. *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White*. Nampa: Pacific Press, 1998. 508.

I believe that Ellen Harmon's mental sufferings, combined with the brain injury suffered as a child, led to some mental confusion on her part. These stresses might also have led to cataleptic seizures, a rare condition resulting from head trauma and manifesting symptoms of seizures, visions, excessive negativity, and an insatiable desire to write. Other than this suggestion, it is not my intention to explore the possible causation of the visions. Ellen stated that the visions must either come from God or the devil.¹²⁵ I have dedicated my life to exploring the Bible truthfulness of her visions and helping others do the same.

I believe her writings do not match the good news of the gospel; therefore, I could label them of the devil, and you are welcome to do so if that makes the most sense to you. However, I prefer to see her as the victim of some unusual natural phenomena. Because she desperately needed the assurance of God's approval, she could never objectively evaluate these "visions." Therefore, she subconsciously blocked all contradictory data, resulting in fairly frequent discrepancies between the truth and her recollections. Was she lying? No, she thought she was telling the truth. Was she crazy? No! She was an extremely intelligent woman, particularly in practical matters. She guided the SDA Church and countless individuals through many difficulties, often giving excellent counsel.¹²⁶ She wasn't crazy. She was a practical genius who became detached from reality on one crucial issue: her visions.

¹²⁵White, Ellen G. *Testimonies for the Church*. Vol. 4. Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1948. 230.

¹²⁶The fact that most recipients of her letters and testimonies apparently accepted her verdict on their personal secrets reveals a most intuitive sense on her part.