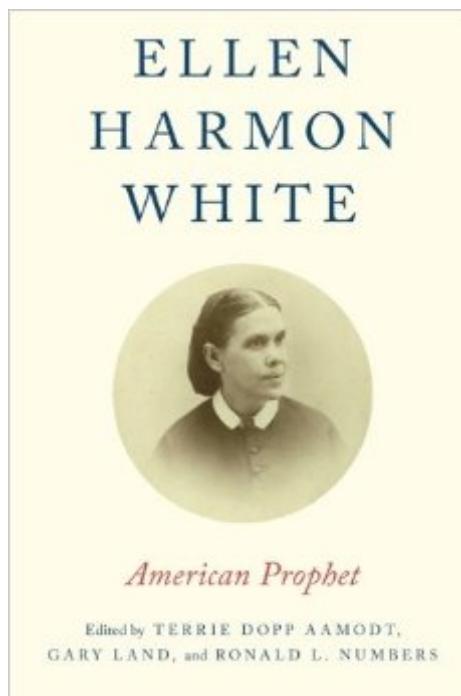


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# Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet



## Synopsis

In America, as in Britain, the Victorian era enjoyed a long life, stretching from the 1830s to the 1910s. It marked the transition from a pre-modern to a modern way of life. Ellen Harmon White's life (1827-1915) spanned those years and then some, but the last three months of a single year, 1844, served as the pivot for everything else. When the Lord failed to return on October 22, as she and other followers of William Miller had predicted, White did not lose heart. Fired by a vision she experienced, White played the principal role in transforming a remnant minority of Millerites into the sturdy sect that soon came to be known as the Seventh-day Adventists. She and a small group of fellow believers emphasized a Saturday Sabbath and an imminent Advent. Today that flourishing denomination posts eighteen million adherents globally and one of the largest education, hospital, publishing, and missionary outreach programs in the world. Over the course of her life White generated 70,000 manuscript pages and letters, and produced 40 books that have enjoyed extremely wide circulation. She ranks as one of the most gifted and influential religious leaders in American history and this volume tells her story in a new and remarkably informative way. Some of the contributors identify with the Adventist tradition, some with other Christian denominations, and some with no religious tradition at all. Their essays call for White to be seen as a significant figure in American religious history and for her to be understood within the context of her times.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ellen White was a controversial religious leader during the 19th and early 20th centuries. This book

is a collection of papers about various aspects of White's life and theology. Some papers provided considerable details of various viewpoints regarding White, some left me feeling flat, not living up to what the paper's titled seemed to promise, especially the chapter titled "Prophet" by Ronald Graybill. This chapter concludes with a section titled "Prophecies of the Prophet." This section is only 4 paragraphs long, and makes no attempt to analyze White's prophecies as to which ones have been full-filled (such as other sources claims that White predicted the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake,) which prophecies failed to come true, and which prophecies remain to be fulfilled. Such an analysis is what I expected from this chapter and the book let me down.

This book is an excellent collection of essays from a 2009 Conference. In essence this volume is a follow-up from a group largely made of historians from the 1970s (Land, Numbers, Butler, Graybill, etc.) as a compendium of scholarly research on Ellen G. White's life and thought. It provides excellent contextualization, but one should be aware this is far from a work of Adventist apologetics. While it does serve a useful role as a corrective to unsubstantiated claims or even hagiography, this is not a work that is intended to build faith in her prophetic life and ministry. It has a definite viewpoint with biases: for example there is a heavy reliance upon the Israel Dammon trial, which from the viewpoint of the majority of contributors is considered more reliable than her own testimony even though D. M. Canright (Ellen White's most vocal critic) never viewed the Dammon incident as significant or reliable enough to use in his later systematic attacks against her prophetic ministry. In essence, what emerges from this collection of essays is an Ellen G. White who was clever enough to outsmart her prophetic rivals, thanks in large part to James White, but who reasserted her own authority in 1855 when she started to issue her own testimony and printing her visions in Sabbatarian Adventist publications (and humbled James White by making Uriah Smith editor of the main denominational periodical). Such an assessment seems very narrow and partisan since James White was the one who pushed for Smith's increasing involvement. Especially critical are the essays by Jonathan Butler, especially his description of end-time events, that even seemed to be to be somewhat snarky and cynical. In essence, he argues, that Ellen G. White harnessed the power of the delay of the Second Coming of Christ to better control her followers. On the other hand, this volume will serve a helpful corrective for non-Adventist scholars (some of whom participated in the conference and two of whom contributed chapters to the book). After Ron Number's 1976 biography, *Prophetess of Health*, that has set Ellen G. White merely as a health reformer, this book will help to showcase the broad range of her life and thought within American religious history and culture. Altogether I found this as a stimulating read that the serious student of Ellen G. White's life

and ministry will need to wrestle through.

This book is an historical masterpiece focusing in bringing the real and historical Ellen G. White out of her "denominational and apologetical-orthodox" understanding of the denomination's prophet. Written by scholars from many disciplines, the book is well presented with plenty references for those seeking a more in-depth approach to the historical facts. Some chapters are better than others, but all the authors made a great job in this book. Regardless of whether bias the reader have in respect to the role of the "supernatural" in Ellen G. White life and ministry, this book shows "how White was both a product and a producer of her age." Highly recommended to any reader interested in these topics, but more importantly to Seventh-day Adventist people who had never heard or read anything outside of the denomination orthodox literature and traditional image.

I think this work is a masterful accomplishment. The Adventist Prophetess, Ellen G White, was certainly a remarkable woman. One can not help but admire her and consider what she was able to achieve relative to where she came from. But The chapters which deal with the history of the development and nature of her writings, her false predictions about the second coming of Jesus, health reform, including her pronouncements on masturbation and sexual excess, amalgamation of man and beast, race relations, the reform dress, and her theology or absence thereof, demonstrate in my view, that Ellen White was not divinely inspired by God. The evidence is overwhelming. But White is a worthy subject of contemporary historiography. This work is delicately balanced and the individual who is interested in pursuing the subject further should consider consulting the copious references highlighted in the text.

I appreciate the balance and academic rigor of this book. It was neither hagiography nor nullification, but sought to explore Ellen White in her many varied roles inside her cultural context(s). Many Adventists might not appreciate so close an examination, but I found it interesting, honest, and thought-provoking.

This book is well-written and thorough. The subject, Mrs. Ellen G. White, had a profound impact on American history and society, as well as being a religious leader in the Seventh-day Adventist church. A chapter is devoted to each of about 20 different topics or aspects of her life, such as "prophet," "author," "health reformer," etc.

THOUGH I HAVEN'T FINISHED THE BOOK, IT IS BOTH WELL-RESEARCHED AND TIGHTLY WRITTEN. AN ANTHOLOGY, I UNDERSTAND IT TO BE RESEARCHED AND WRITTEN BY SCHOLARS BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE ADVENTIST CHURCH. THIS APPEARS TO GIVE IT MORE TRUSTED OBJECTIVITY. HOPE MYR EALY IMPRESSIONS WILL BE SUSTAINED THROUGHOUT THE WORK.

The best book on Ellen White to come out in 20 or 30 years. Beyond hagiography, it offers nuanced and historically-accurate accounts of her life and influence.

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