

Streams of Light

In 1885, Ellen G. White made a long journey by ship across the Atlantic Ocean from America to Europe, where the Seventh-day Adventist Church had started its first overseas mission work a few years before. Her son W. C. White and his family went with her. They were going to help make that new mission work stronger, especially its publishing work.

When they reached Basel, Switzerland, the Adventist workers greeting them were anxious to show them the new press building. As they looked into the large room that served as a meeting hall, Ellen White exclaimed, "I feel that I have seen this place before."

The people there were startled. They knew that this was her first visit to Europe. How had she "seen" it before? Was she making this up to impress them? They knew about Mrs. White and her visions. They had been waiting to see for themselves what she was like and to decide what they thought of the "American Prophet," as they sometimes called her, a title she did not particularly like.

In the press room Ellen White carefully examined one of the presses. "I've seen this press before," she stated. "This room looks very familiar to me."

Two young pressmen stepped up to meet Mrs. White. Shaking hands with first one and then the other, she turned to look at the room again.

"Where is the other one?" she inquired.

The manager looked puzzled. "What other one?" he asked. Did she mean another press? What was she talking about?

"The other man," Ellen replied. "There is an older man who works here, and I have a message for him."

The manager was stunned. "I do have another man," he admitted, "but he's in town on business right now. You'll meet him tomorrow, probably."

The next day Sister White met the third man and privately gave him a message from God that she had received ten years earlier in her vision in which she had seen the Swiss press. I can imagine that he, for one, had to believe that the Lord was guiding her.

Later in the year when Mrs. White went to Oslo, Norway, she again felt that all the buildings and presses were familiar to her. She'd already seen them in vision, too!

Six years later in Australia she recognized their printing facilities, too. She even knew of some private troubles among the workers in Australia and suggested solutions to those problems. How had she known? A vision, she told them.

Why had God shown Ellen White all these publishing houses long before her visits to them? I think it was to encourage them, assuring them that God knew all about their efforts to publish His message.

Years before her trip to Europe, God had given Sister White a very important message. Jesus was coming again, and people everywhere needed to prepare their hearts and their bodies to be ready for his arrival. How could she tell everyone about it? She could only hold a few meetings a day, and people would only come to meetings just so many times. There wasn't any radio or television station where she could broadcast the message and reach many people. There was no internet, no email, no Twitter, to make communication easy and quick. But there was printing. Books and papers could be spread like "leaves of autumn" all over the world. These printed items could repeat the same message over and over, to different people.

Ellen White had received a vision from God, telling her that James, her husband, should write Bible-based articles, such as sermons and Bible studies. He should put them in a little magazine which would start very small at first, and then grow in size until it became like streams of light around the whole world.

At the time the Adventist work was just beginning, the Whites had no money to print such a paper. They hardly had enough for food. But God had told them to print. Discouraged over the lack of money, James set out to mow some hay. Maybe that would bring in enough money to print something, at least.

As he went out the door, he may have said something like, "I'll be back tonight, Ellen. Have a good supper ready. After all that mowing, I'll be starved!"

No sooner had James left than Ellen White fainted and fell on the floor. Friends revived her and then were startled to see that she was going into a vision. With her eyes open, and talking sometimes, she listened to a message from God.

A short time later when it was finished, she became aware of the familiar household furniture and knew where she was. Suddenly she remembered the message.

"Run and get James," she urged. "I saw that if he spends time mowing fields instead of getting that paper started as God has asked, he'll be struck with sickness. Get him, quickly!"

Out the door and down the road sped a man to find James on his way to the hay field. James turned around and returned home, obedient to God's call, and began to write. He had no idea where the money for printing would come from, but evidently he wasn't supposed to earn it with his work in the fields. He began to write.

When he was finished, in nearby Middletown, Connecticut, he found a printer who would trust him to pay for the printing later. Together they got out a small eight-page paper called *The Present Truth*. By the time the fourth issue had been mailed out to believers across the northeastern part of America, donations had come in the mail, enough so that James White was able to pay the printer.

Of course Satan did his best to stop the work. The Whites' baby nearly died, but God healed him. James himself thought his end had come when he caught the dread disease called cholera. But God intervened. They ran out of money. Still James printed. *The Present Truth* later became the *Review and Herald* and is now the *Adventist Review*, our church paper that goes each week to thousands of homes.

That was all fine for adults, but didn't James White care about what children read? He certainly did. With careful planning he figured he could print another magazine for young people—*The Youth's Instructor*—for only three cents an issue. He urged Adventist youngsters to save their pennies and pay for their own magazines, but if they couldn't, he'd send it to them free, anyway. As the church grew, so did our papers, and today in the various languages we have papers for the church's young children, older children, and youth—all specially written for them. Do you see how this one stream of light split into many?

In Ellen White's vision about publishing work, God told her it would be like that—streams of light that would go clear around the world. In a later vision she saw a dark, dark world. All at once a tiny light appeared, and it seemed to light another, which sparked another, until the whole world was lightened. In later years as she saw how one publishing house sparked another in a different country, and one magazine became two or three, she rejoiced that the vision was coming true. None of the foreign publishing houses she saw in her visions had even been planned when she first saw them. But God had planned them, and when she saw them in reality, they were exactly as she had been shown they would be.

Today Adventists have over 17 million baptized believers around the world and more than 60 publishing houses. Every year they send out thousands of books, magazines, and tracts in all directions, each one a tiny light. The vision God gave to Ellen White is still coming true.

Adapted from The Spirit of Prophecy Emphasis Stories, volume II, by Norma Youngberg, Fern Babcock, The Ellen G. White Estate, and The General Conference Department of Education (1980), pp. 98-103.