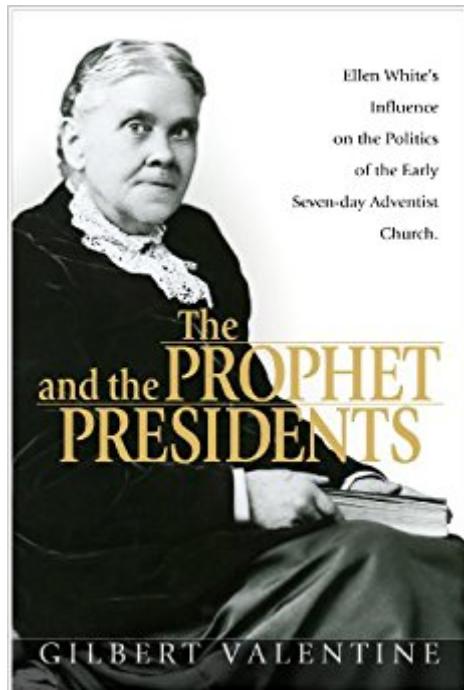


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# Prophet And The Presidents



## **Synopsis**

The Prophet and the Presidents is a study of the influence of Ellen White upon the administrative leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from 1887-1913. While enriching the understanding of a new generation of Adventists, it will deepen their appreciation for her work as they learn of the struggles and joys, pain and sorrow in the development of the church.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Gilbert Murray Valentine, Ph.D., is provost and vice president for academic administration for Mission College in Saraburi, Thailand. After graduating from Avondale College in Australia in the mid-1960s, he pursued a career in pastoral evangelism, youth ministry, and conference departmental work. In 1974 he returned to New Zealand, land of his birth, as head of the Bible Department of Longburn College. His growing interest in Adventist history led eventually to two degrees from Andrews University. This book, W. W. Prescott, is a revision of his doctoral dissertation.

Valentine, G. M. (2011). The prophet and the presidents: Ellen G. White and the processes of change, 1887-1913: A study of Ellen White's influence on the administrative leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Oshawa, Ont., Canada: Pacific Press. ISBN: 9780816324859, pp. 383. Kindle edition, \$9.99. Reviewed by Stanley E. Patterson, PhD Stanley Patterson is the

Executive Director of the Christian Leadership Center and Professor of the Christian Ministry Department of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA. This book exposes a period (c. 1888-1913) in Adventist history and in the life of Seventh-day Adventist prophet Ellen White that has been poorly reported and historically underexplored. Many of the episodes dealt with in the pages of this volume can be appropriately described as painful and troubling. As the Seventh-day Adventist Church matured and adopted organizational structures to deal with the complexities of growth, human nature and the predictable corruptions wrought by power and control revealed themselves in the lives of men and women charged with the sacred duty of providing spiritual leadership. The church and the ministries functioning as extensions of the church suffered the dysfunction and at times the abuse of leadership gone awry. During these years Ellen White, though physically distanced from the General Conference leaders due to her move to Australia, remained active in bearing testimonies intended to guide and influence actions and the direction of the church. Valentine makes a biblical case supporting her intense involvement in church governance by referencing the political behavior of prophets such as Samuel (loc 429), Nathan (*ibid*), Ahijah, Micaiah (loc 437) and others who counseled and advised kings and rulers as a regular part of their prophetic ministry. Ellen White’s testimonies like those of her ancient counterparts were often resented, ignored, or misunderstood. Her relationship with the presidents were consequently fraught with tension and at times conflict due to the failure on the part of leaders to act on her counsel. The narratives shared also raise a question regarding Ellen White’s whose voice was being expressed, God or hers? Was she influenced by the shabby treatment she received from church leaders and especially leaders in the publishing work and did this poor treatment influence the tone of her testimonies? As Valentine delicately points out, “some aspects of temperament and personality became perhaps, more noticeable during her sunset years” (loc 5556). In plain words she became at times quite harsh in her words and reactions to leaders who seemed to be doing the best they could in a challenging context. Thus we see a human side to the prophet that should not surprise us since her ancient counterparts again were presented in both their failures and in their victories. But, “such things did not invalidate her gift” (*ibid*). This is not a book for the immature. It reveals the raw challenge of leading and in turn being led by God’s servant. It reveals not only the humanity of the prophet but lays open the humanity of the leaders who served during the uncertainty of the “turn of the 20th century” church. The reader is exposed to the reality of the personal debt carried by Ellen White incurred by her in agreement with leaders who later betrayed her by withholding

royalties that might have mitigated the debt. This indebtedness was so restricting on her life that there were times she fell months behind in paying something as essential as grocery bills not to mention the salaries of people dedicated to helping with her publications. In some sense the candid expose of this period is refreshing to a reader who too often reads only the good news but is “shielded from the adventures and follies that make up life behind the scenes. Though painful and sometimes difficult to read, this book is a must for anyone wishing for a candid snapshot of life for the church in these formative years. The battles, the broken relationships, and the amazing growth that emerged from what at times appeared to be irreconcilable chaos provide powerful lessons for us more than a century hence. The book is especially helpful as a resource to church leaders who would wish to avoid the pitfalls that ensnared early leaders, some of whom completely lost their way and separated from the church. Read it, reflect on the narratives, and praise God for a Spirit that has allowed the survival of a church that has subsequently blessed millions.

great seller

In this latest installment by Adventist historian, Gilbert Valentine, we see Adventist historiography heading in a new direction. Valentine, who has spent much of his career in denominational administration and education, has spent much of his work up to this point focused on W. W. Prescott. He now tackles a new era of Adventist history (i.e. the 1890s) in relationship to prophetic founder Ellen G. White. While there certainly have been others who have written on the various presidents of the General Conference (the figurehead leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church), no one has done so in such a comprehensive way making this work a significant one for Adventist historiography. And because of the controversial nature of both the topic and the proclivity the author has for being controversial it seems to be a good marriage between author and subject material. Yet, there are some concerns and biases that the same author carries with him. In a sense he attempts to humanize the process of inspiration as Seventh-day Adventists believe was manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White. Was Ellen White in a bad mood when she wrote letters of admonition to church leaders or was she divinely shown to rebuke them? Seventh-day Adventists who believe in the prophetic ministry of Ellen White will find this book unnerving because if you accept the conclusions that Valentine builds toward then it does not leave much left for inspiration. In essence Valentine articulates a view of inspiration that reflects a broad form of inspiration, much in the same way that someone at church is inspired by a good sermon or

book. Thus Valentine lives up to his controversial reputation with this latest work that I believe will be his most controversial.

A very scholarly book, with an incredible amount of detail producing a fascinating record of our church in times past. I canstrongly recommend this book.Dr. Ronald Emmerson

A unique look into the dynamics of leadership within the Adventist church. Not a good introduction to Adventist history, but a worthy read for the well informed.

This is a well written treatise about the inner circle of the Seventh-Day Adventist church at its inception and during its first sixty years. Its spiritual leader, Ellen G. White, is revealed in an honest and insightful manner; one can see why God chose her to lead this great movement.

THIS WORK WILL BE APPRECIATED BY ADVENTISTS WHO WISH TO BECOME KNOWLEDGABLE ABOUT HOW ELLEN WHITE FARED WITH CHURCH LEADERS DURING HER MOST PRODUCTIVE YEARS AFTER HER HUSBAND'S RATHER EARLY DEATH.

Enjoyed the way it was written, very understandable. Gives a fair and unbiased view of Ellen White's challenges with the leaders of her time.

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