

Prophets and Kings (book)

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The Captivity and Restoration of Israel, later *Prophets and Kings*, is the second volume in Ellen White's five-part "Conflict of the Ages" series, published posthumously in 1916. It traces the story of ancient Israel from Solomon's kingship to the post-exilic Messianic hope. The book was Ellen White's final major authorial work and is available today in more than 40 languages.

Spiritual Gifts, C. C. Crisler, and Articles (1858-1901)

The origins of Ellen White's *Conflict of the Ages* series can be traced back to 1858, with reception of her "Great Controversy" vision at Lovett's Grove, Ohio.¹ While she had seen glimpses of the great controversy as early as 1848, the Lovett's Grove vision was the first time she received a comprehensive cosmic framework.²

An initial sketch was published in *Spiritual Gifts*, volumes 1-2 (1858), which covered only select portions of Old Testament history.³ The second iteration, *Spiritual Gifts: Important Facts of Faith* (1864) [volume 4], also dealt in broad strokes, moving from Solomon directly to Christ.⁴ That outline remained unchanged in *The Spirit of Prophecy* vol. 1 (1870).⁵ Over the next four decades, Ellen White filled in the gaps through scores of articles on Old Testament history in the *Review and Herald*, *Signs of the Times*, and *The Watchman*, bridging the gaps left in *Spirit of Prophecy* (1870).⁶

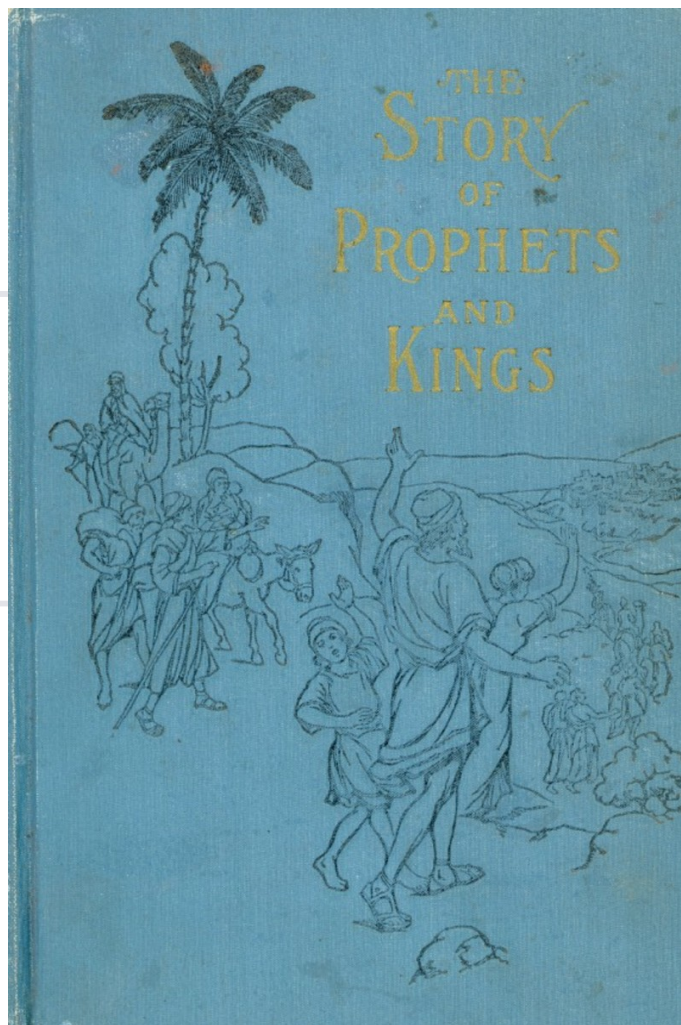


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With the publication of *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1890), Ellen White fulfilled her desire of writing a detailed narrative of early Bible history.⁷ Returning from Australia in 1900, she was approached by [Clarence C. Crisler](#) (1877-1936) during the 1901 General Conference Session. He offered “his services” to Ellen White, which she gladly accepted, later writing, “He is a faithful, efficient, and conscientious worker.”⁸ Crisler would become a key figure in the preparation and publication of *Prophets and Kings*.

Source Materials (1902-1912)

Unlike Ellen White’s earliest books, *Prophets and Kings* was almost entirely built from her previously published articles. Notable examples include excerpts in the *Signs of the Times* (1883-1886) and *Review and Herald* (1905-1915).⁹

On August 17, 1905, Ellen White published the first article of a 23-part series on Solomon. During the preparation of *Prophets and Kings*, the piece, “Lessons From the Life of Solomon – No. 1,” formed the backbone of the book’s opening chapter, often showing near-verbatim overlap (emphasis added):

1905 *Review* article (par. 3): “Solomon was anointed and proclaimed king in the closing years of his father David, who abdicated in his favor. After the death of David, ‘Solomon was king over all Israel.’ At this time ‘Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude.’”¹⁰

1916 *Prophets and Kings*: “Solomon was anointed and proclaimed king in the closing years of his father David, who abdicated in his favor. His early life was bright with promise, and it was God’s purpose that he should go on from strength to strength, from glory to glory, ever approaching nearer the similitude of the character of God, and thus inspiring His people to fulfill their sacred trust as the depositaries of divine truth.”¹¹

1905 *Review* article (par. 13): “With tender earnestness David entreated Solomon to be manly and noble, and to show mercy and loving-kindness to his subjects. The many trying and remarkable experiences through which David had passed during his lifetime, had taught him the value of the nobler virtues, and led him to exclaim ‘He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.’”¹²

1916 *Prophets and Kings*: “With tender earnestness David entreated Solomon to be manly and noble, to show mercy and loving-kindness to his subjects, and in all his dealings with the nations of earth to honor and glorify the name of God and to make manifest the beauty of holiness. The many trying and remarkable experiences through which David had passed during his lifetime had taught him the value of the nobler virtues and led him to declare in his dying charge to Solomon: ‘He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass

springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.' 2 Samuel 23:3, 4."¹³

Manuscript Work (1913-1915)

During her final years at Elmshaven (St. Helena, California), Ellen White and her literary assistants worked on four major works: *Acts of the Apostles*, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, *Gospel Workers*, and *Prophets and Kings*. By 1913, with her health in decline, her secretaries focused on compiling previously written materials into chapters for the new book manuscripts, drawing from her archive of roughly 4,000 periodical articles and 50,000 pages of manuscripts and letters.

By August 1913, Ellen White reported:

During the past few months I have not done much letter writing; for I have wished to keep my strength for the reading of important matter in my book work. I have with me an excellent company of workers, men and women who are as true as steel to principle, and whose entire interests are bound up with this work. My faith has increased as I have tried to do my best to complete my writings.¹⁴

On December 4, 1913, Ellen White wrote to Edson and Emma:

I am fairly well healthwise [sic], not suffering much pain; but I realize that old age is reminding me that I am mortal. My book work is still taking my time, and I am trying to finish my work with joy and not with grief. I have not lost my courage.¹⁵

Ellen White's assistants arranged the material chronologically or by topic, inserted appropriate Scriptures, then brought the drafts to Ellen White for editing and approval. Crisler found the process exhilarating:

Her [Ellen White's] insistence on bringing in the Scriptures—and particularly those Scriptures that inspire faith and hope—has proved a constant inspiration to me, and has, I believe, given life to chapters that otherwise might have been dull and spiritless.¹⁶

On January 4, 1915, Crisler provided a contemporaneous look into the book process:

We [C. C. Crisler and Ellen White] are still going over MSS together. The past three days we have considered anew the three chapters linking the Solomon story with that of Elijah and his work. These chapters were not bright enough and hopeful enough to suit her [EGW], and we have tried to follow her counsel in making them more nearly right. Scriptures have been introduced that I think meet the need she felt should be supplied: and now as she goes over them she feels satisfied.¹⁷

The next day, January 5, Crisler wrote to William C. White in Takoma Park, Maryland. Crisler's four-page letter offers a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at the compilation process:

Today also marks the beginning of the final review of the Elijah portion with Sister White. We read over and discussed one chapter this forenoon; we expect to read over and discuss the second chapter this afternoon; and by the end of the week the six Elijah chapters will have been finally prepared for examination by you and by our brethren to whom the MS. in its entirety is to be submitted when copied.¹⁸

By the time the letter reached W. C. White, all but two chapters were completed. Crisler apologized for not finishing the chapters, before explaining: "I have advanced as far as I can in shaping those last two chapters, until I get more help from her [Ellen White] and from the file."¹⁹

Accident, Death, and Publication (1915-1916)

On Saturday, February 13, 1915, Ellen White tripped and fell while entering her study, crying out in pain. Her nurse, Mary Walling, rushed to her aid. Getting Ellen onto the bed, Walling called for Dr. Klingerman, a physician at the St. Helena Sanitarium. X-rays revealed an "intracapsular fracture" on Ellen's left femur.²⁰ The accident abruptly halted all literary efforts. During the next 153 days, Ellen White gradually weakened. On Friday, July 16, "her breathing became slower and more irregular," until, at 3:40 in the afternoon, it stopped altogether. "It was like the burning out of a candle, so quiet," wrote her son, W. C. White.²¹

At the time of her death, all but two chapters of the book were finished. Following the funeral, the bulk of the work was left to C. C. Crisler and W. C. White.²² Crisler stayed at Elmsaven, compiling chapters 58 and 59. White received the manuscripts by mail, conducting reviews and edits for publication. On August 6, 1915, Crisler reported: "I will have two and a half weeks left in August to do the last two chapters—complete them—of O. T. History."²³

In September 1915, a pre-print draft was submitted to Pacific Press at Mountain View, California. [M. C. Wilcox](#) edited the manuscript, writing a detailed letter with critiques to W. C. White, acknowledging the inherent limitations of publishing a post-humous book:

I have completed reading "The Captivity and Restoration of Israel," and have enjoyed it every step of the way. The only general criticism that I would have upon it would be that there are some gaps in the long record of a thousand years that I wish were filled. These gaps are not serious, however. Some of them lie entirely outside of the Bible; and I recognize, also, that those who were associated in the compilation could find no material for these periods.²⁴

By April 1916, *The Captivity and Restoration of Israel* was nearly finished. With mounting pressure from the publishers, Crisler intensified the process. On April 23, he wrote to W. C. White: "I feel as if the way is opening for the completion of the whole thing during the coming week or ten days. When something has been evolved, I will submit the results to you."²⁵

In the winter of 1916, the first limited trade edition of *The Captivity and Restoration of Israel: The Conflict of the Ages Illustrated in the Lives of Prophets and Kings* was published, and quickly sold out.²⁶ In 1917, an official subscription edition was released. In the months following the publication of *The Captivity and Restoration*, demand was so high that news items as far as Australia reported “American houses” running “entirely out of stock before a new edition could be printed.”²⁷ In May 1917, the *Pacific Union Recorder* reported that the title “*Captivity and Restoration of Israel*” had been altered to appeal to broader audiences. In a nod to its former subtitle, the book was retitled *Prophets and Kings*.²⁸

In 1984, a condensed version of the book was published under the title *From Splendor to Shadow*, later updated using contemporary English as *Royalty and Ruin* (2008) and *The Promise* (2025).

Legacy

In 1904, while speaking to a crowded auditorium in Washington, D.C. (May 7), Ellen White was impressed with the importance of John 15. The meetings went into the afternoon, but Ellen left soon after speaking. [Lucinda Hall and Maggie Hare](#) stayed behind to report on the proceedings. Riding back to Takoma Park with Sara McEnterfer, Ellen grew meditative.²⁹ Two days later, on Monday, May 9, she wrote down her thoughts:

The New Testament opens to us the rich importance of the Old Testament history. Praise the Lord, oh my soul! We are to search the Old Testament carefully, for it is a treasure house of knowledge. . . . Some say the Old Testament history is moonlight, the New Testament history is sunlight. As I read the Old Testament history I cannot say this. His going forth is prepared as the morning. Christ is just as much shining as the Way, the Truth, and the Life in the Old Testament history as in the New.³⁰

Throughout her life, Ellen White saw a Christological impetus as the singular rationale of the Old Testament. As she wrote in her diary, “Christ is the Truth, the Alpha of the Old Testament history.”³¹ In the grand scheme of her writings, *Patriarchs and Prophets* and *Prophets and Kings* were epic introductions, setting the stage for her magnum opus, *The Desire of Ages*.

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NOTES

1. George W. Holt, "Providence Permitting...", *ARH*, March 11, 1858, 136; see James R. Nix, "A Vision of Hope: The Story of Ellen White's 'Great Controversy' Vision of March 14, 1858," Unpublished Paper (150th Anniversary Commemoration Weekend, Kettering, Ohio, May 10, 2008), Ellen G. White Estate.
2. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts: My Christian Experience, Views and Labors* (Battle Creek, MI: Published by James White, 1860), 270; see Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Years (1827-1862)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1985), 372-373.
3. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts: The Great Controversy Between Christ and His Angels, and Satan and His Angels* (Battle Creek, MI: Published by James White, 1858).
4. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts: Important Facts of Faith in Connection With the History of Holy Men of Old* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1864).
5. Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1 (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1870).
6. Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1915), 435.
7. Unlike her previous works, *Patriarchs and Prophets* included a nuanced theodicy, prefacing the entire book. See Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1890), 33-43.
8. Ellen G. White, Letter of October 23, 1907. Quoted in William C. White, "Confidence in God," *The General Conference Bulletin*, June 1, 1913, 218-221.
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10. Ellen G. White, "Lessons From the Life of Solomon – No. 1," *ARH*, August 17, 1905, 7.

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13. Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1917), 26.
14. Ellen G. White to James Edson White and Emma White, August 28, Letter 11, 1913.
15. Ellen G. White to James Edson White and Emma White, December 4, Letter 13, 1913.
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17. Clarence C. Crisler, Letter of January 4, 1915, quoted in Dores E. Robinson, "Authorship of the Last Two Chapters of *Prophets and Kings*," Document File 51d, Ellen G. White Estate. For a discussion of the controversy surrounding page 714 of *Prophets and Kings*, see Robinson, pp. 2-4.
18. Clarence C. Crisler to William C. White, January 5, 1915.
19. Ibid.
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22. See Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years 1905-1915* (Washington, D. C: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982), 432-448.
23. C. C. Crisler to W. C. White, August 6, 1915.
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25. C. C. Crisler to W. C. White, April 23, 1915.
26. "We learn that...," *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 12, 1917, 8.
27. "Australasian Record," *Australasian Record*, July 15, 1918, 8.
28. "Conference Items," *Pacific Union Recorder*, May 10, 1917, 6.
29. Ellen G. White Diary, May 4-9, 1904, Manuscript 142, 1904, Ellen G. White Estate.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

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