

Lecture Outlines in Prophetic Guidance

As Presented By

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in

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Courses in

**The Life, Ministry, and Writings of
Ellen G. White**

Book

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Revised:
May 26, 1996

Seminary Lecture Outlines
on the
**Life, Ministry, and Teachings
of Ellen G. White**

Prepared by
Roger W. Coon, Ph.D.

A. Introduction

1. What Does It *Really* Means to Be a Seventh-day Adventist? ["Roots"]

How and why they are the only people to find their *prophetic roots* in Revelation 10, their *prophetic messenger* in Revelation 12, and their *prophetic message* in Revelation 14.

GSEM 532 Revision: July 20, 1994 14 pp. cf/nim

B. The Theology of Prophetic Guidance

1. The Biblical Basis of the Prophetic Gift

Paul's Doctrine of Spiritual Gifts and the end-time restoration of the prophetic gift.

GSEM 532 Revision: August 16, 1995 14 pp. pcf

2. The Theology of Inspiration/Revelation

What it is and how it works: Phenomenon and Methodology.

GSEM 532 Revision: January 6, 1995 31 pp. cf

3. Infallibility, Inerrancy, and the Prophets

Does a true prophet ever make a mistake? Do all of a true prophet's predictions come to pass 100% of the time? Does a true prophet ever have to go back and change anything?

GSEM 532 Revision: January 10, 1995 30 pp. cf

**4. The Proper Relationship Between the Scriptures and the Writings of
Ellen G. White**

How are we properly to understand her metaphor of the "Greater Light/Lesser Light"?
What did she *not* intend to teach by this analogy?

GSEM 532 Revision: January 17, 1995 16 pp. cf

C. Biographical

1. Ellen G. White: The Person--Part I

The human-interest story.

GSEM 534 Revision: March 30, 1995 27 pp. cf

2. Ellen G. White: The Person--Part II

The wit and wisdom of the prophet.

GSEM 534 Revision: March 31, 1995 24 pp. cf

D. Hermeneutics: What Does the Prophet *Mean* By What the Prophet *Says*?

1. Ellen G. White and Hermeneutics: An Introduction

It's importance and place (Part I of Four Parts).

GSEM 534 Revision: April 4, 1995 20 pp. cf

2. Ellen G. White and Hermeneutics: Jemison's First Rule

Take ALL That the Prophet Says Before Drawing Your "Bottom-Line" Conclusion (Part II of Four Parts).

GSEM 534 Revision: April 5, 1995 15 pp. cf

3. Ellen G. White and Hermeneutics: Jemison Second Rule

Consider the Context: Internal and External (Part III of Four Parts).

GSEM 534 Revision: April 6, 1995 21 pp. cf

4. Ellen G. White and Hermeneutics: Jemison's Third Rule

Is the Prophet's Counsel a Principle or a Policy? (Part IV of Four Parts).

GSEM 534 Revision: April 26, 1996 18 pp. cf

E. God's Priorities For Vision-Content: The First 20 Years

1. Ellen G. White and SDA Doctrine: God's First Priority [The 1840's]

The "establishing" of "the foundation of our faith."

GSEM 534 Revision: April 18, 1995 18 pp. cf

2. Ellen G. White, Doctrine, Authority, and the SDA Church

The issue of prophetic authority within the body of Christ.

GSEM 534 Revision: March 12, 1996 17 pp. cf

3. Ellen G. White and "Gospel Order": God's Second Priority [The 1850's]

Why did it take a full decade of visions for the SDA denomination to organize? Why is organization important today? What dangers does the church presently face from "Independent Ministries"? Congregationalism?

GSEM 534 Revision: March 5, 1996 23 pp. cf

4. Ellen G. White and the SDA "Health" Message: God's Third Priority [The 1860's]

The need for, the reasons why God gave, the characteristics of, and the health message defined. The first four health-reform visions, their aftermath, and the subsequent testimony of science in corroboration.

GSEM 534 Revision: May 11, 1996 28 pp. cf

F. Literary Issues: The Prophet as Writer

1. Ellen G. White's Use of Literary Assistants

Why did Ellen G. White employ literary assistants? What was their role and function?
What two tasks were they specifically forbidden to perform?

GSEM 534 Revision: April 13, 1995 22 pp. cf.

2. Ellen G. White and the So-Called "Plagiarism" Charge

"Literary Borrowing" and an examination of the five crucial issues involved.

GSEM 534 Revision: April 12, 1995 36 pp. cf.

3. Distinguishing Between the "Sacred" and the "Common"

Is every word a prophet speaks inspired of God? If not, why not? How may the reader intelligently differentiate?

GSEM 534 Revision: May 11, 1995 15 pp. pcf

G. General Issues and "Messages"

1. Ellen G. White and Vegetarianism: Did She Practice What She Preached?

An examination of the historical facts in the light of recent critical charges.

GSEM 532 Revision: October 8, 1986 8 pp. ncf

2. Ellen G. White and the SDA "Sanctuary" Message

What is its theological and historical relevance to Adventism today?

GSEM 534 Revision: January 30, 1996 29 pp. cf

3. Ellen G. White and the SDA "Education" Message:

Wherein lies the uniqueness--and importance--of Christian education?

GSEM 532 Revision: September 17, 1990 14 pp. ncf

4. The Avondale Story

The amazing story of the creation and development of our first college in Australia, and Ellen G. White's role.

GSEM 532 Revision: March 1, 1986 12 pp. ncf

5. Ellen G. White and the SDA Publishing Enterprise

What was Ellen G. White's role in the development of the SDA publishing enterprise?

GSEM 532 Revision: September 18, 1990 16 pp. ncf

6. Belief in Ellen G. White as a Prophet: Should It Be Made a Test of SDA "Fellowship"?

What was historic the position of Ellen G. White and early SDA pioneers? What are the reasons in favor? What are the reasons in opposition? Why do some loyal conservatives in the church today wish to change the historic position?

GSEM 534 Revision: May 29, 1996 22 pp. cf

7. The "Dress" Message

What "reform" did Ellen G. White envisage for SDAs in her day? How does it apply to ours? What distinction did she make between ornamental and functional jewelry? Is it permissible for SDA women to wear slacks?

GSEM 532 Prepared: February 27, 1996 22 pp. . cf

8. The Wedding Band, Ellen G. White, and the SDA Church

Probably the most comprehensive and objective presentation in print today of a highly controversial subject, based upon exhaustive research of the documents in the White Estate archives today.

GSEM 534 Revision: December 10, 1987 22 pp. nic

9. Modern Prophets and How to Test Them

Biblical and non-Biblical tests, and the appropriate methodology of their application.

GSEM 534 Revision: January 9, 1996 23 pp. cf

10. The "Tangled Web" of Margaret W. Rowen: The Bizarre Story of the Woman Who Would Be Prophet

A false prophetess of the 1910's and 1920's claims to be Ellen G. White's successor, and dupes thousands of SDAs. She predicts Christ's return on Feb. 6, 1925, and gains national notoriety on newspaper front-pages across America. She embezzles funds from her own movement, and attempts to murder a fellow leader who discovers the crime and publicly exposes her duplicity. Convicted, she is imprisoned in San Quentin penitentiary!

GSEM 532 Revision: October 17, 1991 6 pp. ncf

11. Ellen G. White's Use of Modern Versions of the Bible

During her lifetime, in addition to the King James Version, Ellen G. White used 10 different contemporary translations of the Bible in preparing her inspired writings. What are the implications of her position and practice regarding the use of modern versions of the Bible for SDA Christians today?

GSEM 534 Revision: March 5, 1992 10 pp. ncf

12. Minneapolis/1888: The "Forgotten" Issue

We generally think of righteousness by faith and the identity of the 10 horns of prophecy as the overriding concern at this General Conference Session. What was the "forgotten" issue, and what role in it was played by Ellen G. Whites nephew, Franklin E. Belden?

GSEM 534 Revision: Nov. 18, 1987 14 pp. ncf

13. Ellen G. White's Perception of the Role of Women in the SDA Church

This question goes far beyond the issue of the ordination of women (though that subject is considered) to the very heart of the subject. Did Ellen G. White urge the ordination of lay deaconesses while resident in Australia? What role did her son W. C. White play in the implementation of this counsel!

GSEM 534 Revision: March 19, 1996 26 pp. cf

14. Satan, Demons, Exorcism, and Ellen G. White

Helpful, useful background material, in the light of contemporary interest within Adventism in the so-called "spiritual warfare" and "deliverance ministry."

GSEM 534 Revision: March 3, 1992 20 pp. ncf

15. Ellen G. White's "Divine-Guidance" Message

How may a committed Christian ascertain the will of God for his or her personal life?

GSEM 532 Prepared: January 2, 1996 14 pp. cf

16. Ellen G. White's "Stewardship" Message

What is included in the Biblical concept of stewardship? What is its significance in the end-time for SDAs?

GSEM 532 Prepared: February 20, 1996 18 pp. cf

H. Ellen G. White and Seventh-day Adventist Eschatology

1. The "Eschatology" Message

What was Ellen G. White's basic view of end-time developments?

GSEM 532 Prepared: February 6, 1996 25 pp. cf/nim

2. The Primary Scriptural Basis of S.D.A. Eschatology

The unique role of, and relationships between, Revelation Chapters 12, 13, and 14.

GSEM 532 Revision: April 16, 1996 8 pp. cf

3. Ellen G. White's Eschatology: The "Scenario"

Events before and after the close of human probation.

GSEM 534 Revision: February 15, 1994 16 pp. ncf

4. Ellen G. White and the Mystical Union of Spiritual Babylon--Part I

The special role of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

GSEM 534 Revision: May 2, 1995 21 pp. pcf

5. Ellen G. White and the Mystical Union of Spiritual Babylon--Part II

The role of Sunday-sacredness and Sunday legislation, past, present, and future.

GSEM 534 Revision: May 3, 1995 43 pp. pcf

6. Known Facts Concerning the 144,000

The testimony of the Bible and of Ellen G. White.

GSEM 532 Revision: September 13, 1990 4 pp. ncf

7. Ellen G. White, the Bible, the Labor Union, and the Christian

What two reasons preclude Christian membership in trade or labor unions? What counsels are given concerning future labor unions in our own time?

GSEM 532 Revision: November 30, 1988 12 pp. ncf

8. The "Sabbath-Observance" Message: A "Day to Remember"

The past, present, and future significance of the Sabbath, and how Christians should observe it today.

GSEM 532 Revision: February 13, 1996 25 pp. cf

9. The Neo-Adventist Flirtation With Futurism: Warnings Against Time-Setting

Ellen G. White identifies the perils and warns against "time-setting" in our day.

GSEM 534 Revision: February 17, 1993 20 pp. ncf

10. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit in the Early and Latter Rain Experience

What is the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit"? What is the "Early Rain" and "Latter Rain" experience mentioned in the Bible? Do I need it? How do I receive it?

GSEM 534 Revision: April 18, 1996 16 pp cf

11. The "Loud Cry" of the Fourth Angel of Revelation 18

What is the "Loud Cry"? What are the two "Falls" and two "Calls" out of Spiritual Babylon? What are the results of the "Loud Cry"?

GSEM 534 Revision: April 17, 1996 17 pp. cf

12. Ellen G. White and the Final "Shaking" of Adventism

What do the Bible and Ellen G. White have to say about the nature, the causes, and the final extent of the final "Shaking" of Adventism?

GSEM 534 Revision: April 9, 1996 24 pp. cf

I. Issues in Science and Faith

1. [Part One] Ellen G. White, Science, and Faith: An Examination of the "Problem" Statements

Fourteen perplexing statements on scientific matters which cause some to doubt Ellen G. White's prophetic inspiration are examined in the light of more recent scientific discovery.

GSEM 534 Revision: May 9, 1995 40 pp. pcf

2. [Part Two] The Danger of Doubt and the Nature of Faith

What did Ellen G. White mean by her request that her followers "judge from the weight of evidence?" The place of doubt and faith in individual Christian experience.

GSEM 534 Revision: May 6, 1996 19 pp. cf

J. The Prophet as Seer and Revelator

1. Ellen G. White's Predictions of Future Events

What predictions did Ellen G. White make concerning developments within the SDA Church and within the world before the end of time?

GSEM 534 Revision: May 24, 1995 23 pp. pcf

K. Pastoral Methodology

1. The Use--and Abuse--of the Ellen G. White Writings in the SDA Church

Ten different ways in which Ellen G. White employed Scripture. How should her writings be handled in evangelistic and soul-winning activities? Is there a proper place in the SDA pulpit for the use of these writings? How does "The Bible and the Bible Only" apply?

GSEM 534 Revision: May 18, 1995 18 pp. pcf

2. Presenting Ellen G. White to the Non-SDA Inquirer

Several successful methods and approaches are examined.

GSEM 534 Revision: May 18, 1995 8 pp. pcf

3. Presenting Potentially Controversial Materials to Our Members

How may ministers correct common misunderstandings about Ellen G. White without destroying faith?

GSEM 534 Revision: February 27, 1992 2 pp. ncf

L. Preservation of the Prophetic Gift

1. The Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.: What It Is, and How It Works

An historical survey of the White Estate from its inception, and its operation today.

GSEM 534 Revision: April 18, 1996 20 pp. cf

M. Personal Testimony

1. The Testimony of NonSDA's Concerning the Life, Ministry, and Teachings of Ellen G. White

An interesting look at the SDA prophet through the eyes of a number of prominent *non-SDAs* from different walks of life.

GSEM 532 Revision: September 10, 1990 25 pp. ncf

2. Why I Believe Ellen G. White Was a True Prophet of the Lord

The personal testimony of Roger W. Coon.

GSEM 534 Revision: March 26, 1996 30 pp. cf

55 topics; 1081 pages

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SDA „Roots“

What Does It *Really* Mean to Be a Seventh-day Adventist? Roger W. Coon

INTRODUCTION

1. There are some questions in life for which there is more than one correct answer, and this is one such:
 - a. For a traveler in the Seattle airport: to be the happiest person in town.
 - b. For many nonSDAs: they don't eat pork, and they keep Saturday for Sunday.
 - c. To many a traveling SDA minister: to be a member of a great worldwide family.
 - d. To one young SDA ministerial student: "We are like all of the other Evangelical Protestant churches, except that we feel that we, perhaps, are a little closer to the Bible."

2. Mark Crane, correspondent of the *Idaho Statesman*, said to me at the Idaho camp meeting in June, 1981: "Every church claims to be the one, true church (including my own--I'm a Mormon). So what are your claims, as a Seventh-day Adventist? And what do you have to back them up?"
 - a. I replied: "SDAs do make three claims to uniqueness that, to my knowledge, no other denomination makes: We are the only church--
 - (1) That claims to find its *prophetic roots* in Revelation, Chapter 10 (and in three different places within that chapter);
 - (2) That claims to find its *prophetic messenger* in Revelation, Chapter 12.
 - (3) That claims to find its *prophetic message* in Revelation, Chapter 14."
 - b. "We do not make these claims with any attitudes of exclusiveness, pride, or arrogance--the issue, you see, is not 'better-than,' but, rather, 'different-from':
 - (1) But we do make these claims to distinction.
 - (2) And we make them kindly and humbly, for we recognize that to whom much has been given, of them shall much more be required (Luke 12:48)."

I. A PEOPLE WITH PROPHETIC ROOTS [Revelation 10]

A. "Time Should Be No Longer" (v. 6, KJV)

1. William Miller's home at Low Hampton, NY, adjoins the Miller Memorial Chapel.
 - a. An annual memorial service is held there by SDAs each August.
 - b. In a cemetery nearby, Miller and his family are buried; on the tombstone marker is inscribed:
 - (1) Born February 15, 1782.
 - (2) Died December 20, 1849 [at 3:05 p.m.; funeral Sunday, December 23]

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(3) [Text] Daniel 8:14 [*"Unto 2,300 days. . . ."*]

2. Miller's message ("Unto 2,300 days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed") is an embarrassment to some SDAs today:
 - a. It did not embarrass Miller, though he was mocked, derided, ridiculed, by the clergy, editorial writers, the rabble, and generally by society at large.
 - b. Like Paul, he was not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16).
 - c. And, like Paul, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision (Acts 26:19).
3. On October 22, 1844, Miller came home to await the expected Second Coming of Jesus.
 - a. With him was Joshua V. Himes, his publicist and publications director.
 - b. Miller, old at 62 years of age, was tired; like Job of old, he suffered acutely from boils; he was partially blind, and literally worn out.
 - c. Together these warriors of the cross had proclaimed Christ's near advent; and together they waited at Miller's home that fateful day.
 - d. How did they happen to get there?
4. **Early Backgrounds:**
 - a. William was the eldest of 16 children.
 - b. His maternal grandfather was a Baptist minister; 2 uncles were also Baptist clergy.
 - c. He was a Captain in the War of 1812; disenchanted with conventional Christianity, he had adopted Deism--but this did not satisfy the innermost longings of his soul..
 - d. After the war, he came home to Low Hampton, abandoned Deism, and attended (though he did not initially join) the local Baptist church.
5. **1816-1818:**
 - a. He commenced a two-year exhaustive study of Scripture.
 - b. He was interested in prophecy, particularly time-prophecy.
 - c. He discovered that the idea of a temporal millennium (taught by many contemporary preachers) had no actual foundation in fact in the Scriptures.
 - d. In his study, he generally eschewed the use of Bible commentaries (though he was strongly influenced by Sir Isaac Newton's), preferring to use only his Bible and a Cruden's Concordance.
 - e. And at the end of two years' study, he came to the earth-shaking conviction that Christ was about to return in perhaps only 25 years ("about 1843").
6. **1818-1822:**
 - a. He restudied all of his conclusions for the next four years.
 - b. And as a result, this time, he:
 - (1) Reaffirmed all of his earlier conclusions.
 - (2) And he now formulated a systematic list of "Twenty Points."
7. **1822-31:**
 - a. He continued his studies for the next nine years.
 - b. He began, privately, to discuss his startling views on the imminent Second Advent with local clergy; but was saddened to note than none seemed to see things his way.

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- c. He had hoped that his visits would spark an interest, and that these ministers would begin to preach the nearness of Christ's return. But none did.

8. On Saturday, August 13, 1831:

- a. This man, who would turn 50 years of age in just six months' time, who was a farmer and not a preacher, felt the overwhelmingly strong conviction from God that he should "Go, tell it to the world."
- b. He went out into an adjoining grove of trees to wrestle with God in prayer. Unable to shake his conviction, he agreed with God that he would go and preach this message, if invited; but that he would solicit no invitations.
- c. Greatly relieved, he re-entered his house; but within 30 minutes his nephew, Irving Guilford, called with an invitation to preach the next day at the Dresden Baptist Church, seven miles distant--the people there had learned of Miller's views, and wanted to hear more. Miller agreed to go.

9. Preaching career:

- a. Miller's first sermon ("lecture") was delivered on Sunday, August 14, 1831 (See *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* [1976]: 889-91).
- b. From August 15, 1831 to October 21, 1844 (a period of 4,817 days), Miller delivered some 4,000 "lectures"--an average of five for every six days, in this period of 13 years, two months.
- c. He spoke in some 500 towns from Maine to the Mississippi, and in Canada.
- d. Some 200 clergy accepted his views, and 500 lecturers proclaimed them.
- e. As a result, nearly 50,000 believers, in nearly 1,000 communities, accepted his advent message (with perhaps 70% coming from Methodist and Baptist fellowships).
- f. By his personal reckoning, Miller's own preaching accounted for 6,000 converts, of whom 700 were previously infidels!
(James White, *Sketches of the Christian Life and Public Labors of William Miller* [Battle Creek, MI: SDA Publishing Association, 1875], pp. 360, 361; cited from Miller's *Apology and Defense*, July, 1845, 36 pp.)

10. Little wonder, then, that on October 22, 1844, William Miller was literally "burned out":

- a. He had preached the message that "time should be no longer" wherever and whenever he had been invited.
- b. October 22 was, indeed, a Day of Great Anticipation!
- c. But at 12:01 a.m., October 23, it became a Day of Great Disappointment.

B. "Sweet in the Mouth"/Bitter in the Belly" (vv. 9, 10)

1. As the Millerites preached the message that "time should be no longer" (based upon the 1260-year prophecy, ending in 1798, and the 2300-year prophecy, ending in 1844), it was, indeed, to many who heard it, "sweet in the mouth."
 - a. Not one critic, interestingly, argued with their mathematical calculation of the date of Christ's anticipated advent.
 - b. They argued, rather: the date is right, the event is wrong; this date, instead, said they, will usher in the great 1,000-year temporal millennium of peace.

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- c. Samuel S. Snow was the originator of the October 22, 1844 date, based upon the Karaite Jewish calendar's reckoning for the Day of Atonement that year.
2. All sorts of untrue myths and legends have grown up in popular American culture concerning what is supposed to have transpired in the Millerite movement:
 - a. Ascension robes were alleged to have been worn (not so).
 - b. Insanity was alleged to have been rampant among Miller's followers (not so).
 - c. A century later, in 1944, Francis D. Nichol wrote *The Midnight Cry*, an exceedingly well-documented "lawyer's-brief" for the sanity of the Millerite movement.
 - (1) The publication of this work resulted largely in the deletion of "ascension-robe" myths in standard reference works and encyclopedias, though the legend seems yet firmly embedded in popular American folklore.
 - (b) As late as November, 1987, this "fact" appeared again in Robert L. Ripley's "Believe-It-or-Not" syndicated newspaper column in the *Washington Post* and other newspapers! (See Appendix A.)
 3. A 16-year-old girl of the time testified otherwise in a personal eyewitness account:

With unspeakable desire those who had received the message watched for the coming of their Saviour. The time when they expected to meet Him was at hand. They approached this hour with a calm solemnity. They rested in sweet communion with God, an earnest of the peace that was to be theirs in the bright hereafter. None who experienced this hope and trust can forget those precious hours of waiting. Worldly business was for the most part laid aside for a few weeks. Believers carefully examined every thought and emotion of their hearts as if upon their deathbeds and in a few hours to close their eyes upon earthly scenes. There was no making of "ascension robes," but all felt the need of internal evidence that they were prepared to meet the Saviour; their white robes were purity of soul, characters cleansed from sin by the atoning blood of Christ.--Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption*, p. 362.
 4. Paul had said:
 - a. "Unto them that *look for Him* shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28).
 - (1) Well, the Millerites really *looked* for Him!
 - b. "And not to me only, but into all them also that love His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8).
 - (2) And the Millerites really *loved His appearing!*
 - c. But He did not come.
 5. And the disappointment at His not coming was truly "bitter in the belly":
 - a. Josiah Litch, who was in Philadelphia on October 24, "wrote to Miller these sorrowful words: 'It is a cloudy and dark day here--the sheep are scattered--and the Lord has not come yet'" (Cited in Nichol, 263).
 - b. "Joseph Bates truly observed that 'the effect of this disappointment can be realized only by those who experienced it'" (Cited in *ibid.*).
 - c. And to Washington Morse, writing in the *Review and Herald* of May 7, 1901--some 57 years later, the event was still vivid and fresh:

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That day came and passed, and the darkness of another night closed in upon the world. But with that darkness came a pang of disappointment to the advent believers that can find a parallel only in the sorrow of the disciples after the crucifixion of their Lord. The passing of the time was a bitter disappointment. True believers had given up all for Christ, and had shared His presence as never before. The love of Jesus filled every soul; and with inexpressible desire 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 jeering and reviling unbelievers who scoffed as never before, was a terrible trial of faith and patience. When Elder Himes visited Waterbury, Vt., a short time after the passing of the time, and stated that the brethren should prepare for another cold winter, my feelings were almost uncontrollable. I left the place of meeting and wept like a child.

(Cited in *ibid*, 263.)

d. And Hiram Edson wrote in his diary:

Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted, and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I never experienced before. It seemed as if the loss of all earthly friends could have been no comparison. We wept, and wept, till the day dawn. I mused in my own heart, saying, My advent experience has been the richest and brightest of all my Christian experience. If this had proved a failure, what was the rest of my Christian experience worth? Has the Bible proved a failure? Is there no God, no haven, no golden home city, no paradise? Is all this but a cunningly devised fable? Is there no reality to our fondest hope and expectation of these things? And thus we had something to grieve and weep over, if all our fond hopes were lost. And as I said, we wept till the day dawn.

(Cited in *ibid.*, 263, 264.)

6. Shortly after midnight, Hiram Edson and a friend (probably Owen R. L. Crosier) went out to pray in Edson's near-empty barn. (The Millerites' barns were all empty this autumn, for they felt that to have harvested their crops would have been to give the lie to their belief that Jesus would return on October 22--so the corn was still in the shock, the potatoes were still undug in the ground.)
 - a. And they prayed the rest of the night.
 - b. As the gray light of dawn began to lighten the sky, they decided to go out and comfort their fellow believers.
 - c. They sought to avoid the roadway--men had scoffed before, but now they would really "come out of the woodwork"; and they didn't need that.
 - (1) Even so, an early-rising neighbor was up and about early; and, espying Edson and Crosier, he sallied forth across the field, "Well, you didn't go up yesterday, did you, Hiram?"
 - (2) To which Edson, without breaking his stride, called back over his shoulder, "No, neighbor, I didn't go up yesterday. But if I had gone up yesterday, where would *you* have gone?"
 - (3) And another critic was silenced, for the moment.
 - d. As they walked, Edson suddenly stopped; and Crosier asked, earnestly, "What is it, Hiram?" Edson seemed almost transfixed, as if in vision.
 - e. To which Edson replied, slowly, his voice filled with awe, "I don't know, Owen; but just maybe the Lord is already beginning to answer our prayers."

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- f. Whether what Edson saw in the sky that early dawn was a vision, like prophets have, or not, I do not know--some might call it an "illumination." But it *did* begin to answer their prayers for understanding of their experience of disappointment. For he, almost instantly, saw that:
 - (1) The *time* was right, but the predicted *event* was wrong.
 - (2) What *really* happened was that their heavenly High Priest--Christ--had moved from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary.
 - (3) Christ still had a work to perform for His people on earth before He could return.
 - (4) The *sacrifice* for man was, indeed, complete; but the *atonement* was not yet finished.
 - (5) And a work of "cleansing" had yet to be performed--a work of "investigation", a work of "judgment."
 - g. And, thus, could Francis Nichol declare that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was born on October 23, 1844!
7. Thus a train of thought was initially commenced, which would be carefully studied out at night by lamplight at Edson's dining room table that autumn and the following winter.
- a. The investigators were Edson, Crosier, and Dr. Frederick B. Hahn (a local physician and interested lay Bible student).
 - b. By spring they would reach their conclusions; and Crosier--a school teacher--was the logical choice to write up their findings; and he did so.
 - (1) And they were first published in the Winter (1845-46) edition of the *Day-Dawn*, at Canandaigua, NY, paid for by the sacrifice of Hiram Edson's wife, who sold their family silverplate in order to provide funds .
 - c. Ellen White subsequently endorsed the main, broad outlines of Crosier's work (though not necessarily every sub-point) in a letter to Eli Curtis (*A Word to the Little Flock*, May, 1847, p. 12).

C. "Thou Must Prophecy Again" (v. 11)

1. There are three possible interpretations of this rather cryptic prophetic expression:
 - a. That the sanctuary truth needed to be added to what had already been preached by the Millerites.
 - (1) Now I don't know whether or not that's what the angel *meant*--but I do know that that's what happened!
 - b. That the 3rd Angel's Message of Revelation 14 needed to be added to the First and Second messages.
 - (1) Millerite Preacher Charles Fitch (who subsequently died an untimely death at age 34 on October 14, 1844) had only begun to preach the Second Angel's Message on July 26, 1843 (LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, IV:544, 545; EGW incorrectly dates the event in the summer of 1844, in GC 603).
 - (2) Again, I don't know whether or not that's what the angel *meant*--but I do know that that's what happened!
 - c. That the expression was to be taken quite literally, instead of symbolically--the

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idea being that the divinely-inspired gift of prophetic utterance would again be restored to God's people, for special guidance, at the end of time.

(1) And, yes, I don't know whether or not that's what the angel *meant*, but I do know that that's what happened!

2. You see, all three interpretations can be correct--and all three events happened!

II. A PEOPLE WITH A PROPHETIC MESSENGER [Revelation 12]

1. The 12th Chapter of Revelation covers more historical time than does any other single chapter in the Bible: from the fall of Lucifer, to 1798 A.D.

a. In the chapter's final verse 17, we find the true church emerging from its "wilderness" experience; and there comes to view a "remnant" people identified by two characteristics:

b. They keep all 10 Commandments of God (including the Fourth, Sabbath Commandment.

c. They possess the "Spirit of prophecy" (19:10 KJV)--a renewed bestowal of the divinely-inspired gift of prophetic utterance.

2. For it was upon an unknown day in the month of December, in 1844, that a 17-year-old teenager, Ellen Harmon, while praying with four other woman in an apartment (flat) in the home of a Mrs. Elizabeth Haines, in South Portland, ME, experienced the Holy Spirit resting upon her in a superlative manner.

a. And God did it again--another prophet was born!

b. She had been an invalid the previous eight years, since being injured in a tragic rock-throwing incident on her way home from school at age nine, in 1836, permanently disfigured her physical appearance.

c. She weighed but 80 pounds (36.3 kg.)--very little for an American girl her age--truly J. L. Loughborough well characterized her as "the weakest of the weak" (*Rise and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists*, 73, 91).

d. In short, she was the most improbable candidate for the prophetic gift in the entire history of prophethood!

3. She was not, however, God's first choice for this role of special messenger:

a. In 1842 God had called William Foy, a light-skinned man of color, to be His prophet.

(1) Foy received a two-and-one-half-hour vision the night of January 18th, and a second twelve-and-one-half-hour vision on February 4th.

(2) But he seems to have discontinued proclaiming his visions after a time, perhaps because of three personal problems:

(a) *Race Prejudice*: this was a problem, even in New England, in the early 1840's, and he doubtless experienced discrimination.

(b) *Religious Prejudice*: "prophets" were in poor reputation at this time, doubtless because of the excesses and allegations of polygamy attributed to self-proclaimed "seer" Joseph Smith, founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

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(Mormons) in Nauvoo, IL.

(c) *Economic Problems*: Foy received no regular income from his work to assist in the support of his family.

(See Delbert Baker, *The Unknown Prophet* [RH, 1988], 160 pp.)

- b. Again, in 1844, God called a second man, Hazen Foss (who, by interesting coincidence, also happened to be Ellen Harmon's brother-in-law, for his brother, Samuel, had married Ellen's older sister, Louisa).
 - (1) But Foss, angered by the Great Disappointment, felt God had not done things the "right" way, and, in the bargain, had let Hazen (as well as the other Millerites) down by Christ's not returning on October 22nd.
 - (2) When called to the office of prophet, Hazen Foss petulantly procrastinated, stubbornly refusing to bear the message given him several times by an angel, who also warned of the personal dangers to Foss in delay.
 - (3) Finally the angel returned, telling Foss that the message had been taken from him, and given to another.
 - (4) In fear and desperation, Foss then booked a hall (probably a schoolhouse), and called a public meeting, only to confess in acute embarrassment that the message--like Nebuchadnezzar's dream--had gone from him.
 - (5) In mid-January, 1845, Foss listened (from another room in his brother's home in McGuire's Hill, near Poland, ME) to Ellen in her first public recitation of her first vision.
 - (a) The next morning, in private conversation, he told her that he recognized the message as the one given him, and expressed the feeling that he was now a lost man. He urged her to be faithful, "and the crown I might have had, you will receive" (1 Bio 65-67).
 - (6) The mantle had, indeed, been placed upon Ellen Harmon; and on August 30, 1846, she became the wife of James White, to be known thereafter as Ellen G. White.

4. The ministry of Ellen White (God's 3rd Choice; "the weakest of the weak"):

- a. Extended for a period of 70 years (December, 1844 to July 16, 1915, at her death).
- b. Brought her approximately 2,000 separate prophetic visions (in the day) or dreams (in the night season).
- c. Resulted in a literary output of approximately 25 million words (by contrast, the KJV contains but 773,746 words)
- d. Produced more than 5,000 periodical articles, in addition to 24 books (plus two unpublished book manuscripts) penned before her death.
 - (1) Today, in addition to various compilations and periodical reprints, the number of her books in English exceeds 100 in number.
- e. Encompassed an amazing variety of topics upon which she discoursed in public and in print:
 - (1) Religious devotional themes, theological, prophecy, ethics & morals.
 - (2) Science (including much that was well in advance of the general contemporary knowledge of her day): health, mental hygiene,

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- physiology, medicine, diet and nutrition, treatment of the ill, etc.
- (3) History, philosophy, literature, music, public-speaking.
 - (4) Educational theory and practice, management/administrative theory and practice.
 - (5) Writing, editorial concerns.
 - (6) Social relationships, courtship, marriage, family affairs (including the home, child-raising, etc.)
 - (7) Church-state relationships.
 - (8) Evangelism, personal soul-winning methodologies, homiletics, pastoral-care concerns.
 - (9) Prophecy, prediction of coming events (many fulfilled within her lifetime, many subsequently fulfilled in ours, and many remaining for future fulfillment).
- g. Even in death, she has attained literary distinction: her writings (as of mid-1994) are presently published in 142 languages, thus constituting her, successively:
- (1) The 4th most-translated writer in the entire history of literature.
 - (2) The most-translated *woman* in the history of literature (because Nos. 1-3 were males).
 - (3) And the most-translated *American* writer (Ernest Hemingway is No. 2).
(See Roger W. Coon, *A Gift of Light* [RH, 1983], pp. 30, 31, Footnote 2, for 1983 statistics.)
 - (a) The writings of Mary Baker Eddy, founder of the Church of Christ, Scientist (Christian Science), are translated into 22 languages.
 - (b) The writings of Mormon-founder Joseph Smith are found in 34 languages.

III. A PEOPLE WITH A PROPHETIC MESSAGE [Revelation 14]

1. Seventh-day Adventists have a message for the world found in Revelation, Chapter 14.
 - a. To our knowledge, no other religious body even claims to find it's prophetic message in this chapter
 - b. And no other people are today proclaiming these "Three Angels' Messages" around the world.
2. In 1939, a Roman Catholic prelate, Msr. Ronald A. Knox, began to translate the New Testament into contemporary English. It was published seven years later, in 1946.
 - a. In Revelation 14:6, where the KJV identifies the Three Angels' message as the "everlasting [literally, "eternal'] gospel," Knox's *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: A New Translation*, characterizes it as the "final gospel."
 - b. He explains his rationale in a footnote: Why the gospel thus preached by this angel is said to be "final" is not clear in the text; but from the context it is clear that this is "the last call to repentance . . . offered to men this side of eternity." (Amen!)
3. In the 1920's an ecumenical meeting was held, reportedly in an eastern American city, at

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- which SDAs were invited to participate; and, to the surprise of most, SDAs attended.
- a. The purpose of the convocation was declared to be the formulation of a plan to make the foreign missionary work of all Protestant bodies more cost-effective.
 - b. The leaders planned to divide up the globe into exclusive spheres of non-competitive territories in which the spectacle of six denominations working for the same soul (while other areas had no corporate Christian witness) would be a thing of the past.
 - c. After presenting the plan, the leaders polled the various denominational representatives, and received a generally enthusiastic response.
 - d. Elder W. A. Spicer, representing the SDAs (who were polled last), said (to the amazement of all) that he thought that his church could participate; in fact, he could think of only one condition that would have to be met:
 - (1) That those other Christian bodies, who would now go to lands to which SDAs would thus be denied access, would agree to preach the Three Angels' Messages of Revelation 14 (since this was the only reason SDAs were going into all the world, anyway).
 - e. The chairman of the hour unwittingly said he saw no problem--after all, Revelation 14 was part of the Bible, and "we all believe in preaching the Bible."
 - f. The general secretary of the gathering, however, sitting behind this chairman on the platform, tugged at his coattails and whispered in *sotto voce*, "Sit down, brother; you're making a fool of yourself!"
4. You see, the general secretary knew what the chairman of the hour did not know: that the other churches simply could not preach Revelation 14 all over the world--for at least two cogent reasons:
- a. The other denominations do not understand what these messages *mean* (they admit as much without embarrassment, in their own literature); and, manifestly, it is hard to preach something you do not understand yourself!
 - b. And, even more importantly, God did not give these messages to these other churches to preach. *But He did give it to SDAs to proclaim!*
 - (1) In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import--the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.--9T 19.
 - (2) Every feature of the third angel's message is to be proclaimed in all parts of the world. This is a much greater work than many realize.--UL 277.
 - (3) The messages that God has given through His servant John are now to be proclaimed as of special importance. This is our work--to revive the sacred truths that called us out from the world and made us what we are. We are not to yield up one feature of the faith, but are to hold our confidence firm unto the end. We are to give no place to doctrines that are not in harmony with the truth for this time.--UL 369.

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CONCLUSION

1. SDAs do not claim to be "*better-than*" other religious bodies; we simply claim that we are "*different-from*" them, in three unique, significant, distinctive ways: We are:
 - a. The only people who find their *prophetic roots* in Revelation, Chapter 10.
 - b. The only people who find their *prophetic messenger* in Revelation, Chapter 12.
 - c. And the only people whom find their *prophetic message* in Revelation, Chapter 14.

2. There was a movement--William Miller's--that arose at exactly the right time in history (see historical context of Revelation 12), which fulfilled all of those characteristics--and continues to fulfill them.

3. William Miller died December 20, 1849, and is buried in a Low Hampton, NY graveyard (NOTE: today the town calls itself simply "Hampton").
 - a. He never embraced either the seventh-day Sabbath or Ellen White's prophetic gift (though he was made aware of both, from letters written to him by fellow Millerites after the Disappointment).
 - b. He would "lean" toward the Sabbath, from time to time; but he allowed himself to be deterred from accepting it by fellow clergy with whom he had labored under the "Midnight Cry": ministry (1831-1844).
 - c. Interestingly, God (who obviously took into account Miller's depleted physical and emotional capacities and capabilities, in the aftermath of October 22, 1844) does not hold Miller responsible--and thus accountable--for his failure to accept this advanced light.
 - (1) God *does* hold those clergy, who deceived Miller, responsible, however!
 - d. And angels mark the final resting place of this worn-out warrior of the cross; and EGW assures us that, at the end of time, Miller will come forth with the righteous redeemed "at the last trump" (EW 257, 258).

4. Interestingly, one of William Miller's sons did, subsequently, accept the teachings of the SDA Church and become one of its baptized members!
 - a. Langdon Miller attended a Sabbath morning service in Chicago on December 6, 1884--40 years after the Great Disappointment (when EGW was now 57 years of age)--at the SDA Mission, located at 219 W. Madison Street.
 - (1) J. H. Waggoner was the preacher that morning.
 - (2) He spoke on the Sabbath doctrine.
 - (3) And Langdon Miller accepted it on the spot..
 - b. He was now more than 70 years of age.
 - c. Previously, he had been reading the *Signs of the Times* for some time, sent to him as a gift by a missionary-minded friend.
 - d. He had left the VT/NY area many years earlier; and had not joined any religious denominational body, because of two personal problems:
 - (1) He was a slave to tobacco. He felt his service to God would not be accepted until he had overcome the habit; and in this meeting he forthwith pledged himself to give it up, once and for all.
 - (2) According to Langdon Miller's own personal testimony, he had never heard any church teach the message quite as had his father--their

What It *Really* Means to Be a Seventh-day Adventist--12

teachings were" so different in theory from that which he had been accustomed to hear from the lips of his father [William Miller], and so lacking in gospel simplicity, that he could not enjoy it, nor feel confident that the Lord was with those churches. Their service seemed to him too much like a form of godliness without the power."

(*Review and Herald*, January 13, 1885 [Vol. 62, No. 2], p. 26; February 10, 1885 [Vol. 62, No. 6], p. 81.)

5. Today it is our privilege to become a part of that divinely-predicted and divinely-led movement, and to participate in its work.
 - a. "We are to hold as very sacred the faith that has been substantiated by the instruction and approval of the Spirit of God from our earliest experience until the present time" (UL 254, Letter 66, August 28, 1911).
 - b. And "we have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget:
 - [1] The way the Lord has led us in the past, and
 - [2] His teaching in our past history" (LS 196).
6. And *that*, for me, is what it what it *really* means to be a Seventh-day Adventist!

APPENDIX A

THE REST OF THE STORY

Ripley's "Believe It or Not" Makes Another Round

William Miller was again maligned—this time from Ripley's "Believe It or Not" in a mid-November, 1987, Washington, D.C., *Post* and other papers.

"A farmer and former atheist," Ripley says, "proclaimed the end of the world four times in 1843 and 1844. Many of his followers waited in graveyards dressed in white ascension robes that he made a fortune selling them."

Information in that little four-inch column (with picture) has been refuted before, for the press has repeatedly resurrected the story since the 1840s. In fact, your church library may have the 500-page *The Midnight Cry* with Francis D. Nichol's scholarly presentation of both newspaper accounts and paragraphs from Miller's own letters and other publications giving the full story.

Boston First

The Millerites originally believed that the second advent would occur sometime during the year of 1843. Thus, Boston's *Bay State Democrat* began early in the year to carry a release about people having ascension robes made.

'Gossip' and Liars'

Later a paper in Maine, a second in New Hampshire, and another in New York spoke of robes the people were making or having made. Throughout the year other newspapers printed such information, some even under columns called "Our Weekly Gossip." Accounts of these stories were reprinted in the Millerite papers or shortened for inclusion in what the Millerites called their "Liar's Department."

A letter from Joshua Himes recounts his visit to an editor responsible for the story.

The story was written, Himes explained, "by one of the clerks of the office, as a hoax" without the editor's knowledge. A later issue calls the ascension robe story "a pure invention."

No Photos

No newspaper carried a picture of anybody in a robe, which would have been appropriate for such a reporter's field day.

"The credulity of the age is one of the striking characteristics of this day," one Millerite paper reads. "Men will believe anything but the Word of God."

Award Offers

In 1868 James White offered a \$50 reward for proof of the "ascension robe scandal." A layman in Rhode Island offered \$100, to which a New York editor wrote, "The writer probably erred in assuming the truth of idle stories set afloat in a time of excitement to satirize Second Adventists."

Refutation of the ascension robe idea would also take care of William Miller's becoming a wealthy man. However, Joshua V. Himes adds, "We sacrifice time, health, money, personal comfort, and all earthly prospects, to the cause. We have continual calls to give lectures all over the country; as we can't do this, we publish books to speak for us. This they call a speculation, and they say Brother Miller has made a fortune by his writings. Why, he hasn't made enough to pay for the paper and ink on which his books were written."

Miller himself wrote regarding his finances, "I own a small farm in Low Hampton, New York; my family support themselves on it. . . . I owe no man anything. I

have expended more than 2,000 dollars of my property in 12 years, besides what God has given me through the dear friends in this cause."

Miller's letter was sent to the daily press and printed widely.

Price of Public Life

"It seems to be a part of the price of being in public life," Nichol wrote, "especially as the exponent of unpopular views, that a man must open the doors of his home to the public as it were, and invite them to look within, even to look into his pocketbook. Miller did not fear what men would see when he opened the door."

Of course, this material on Miller is not an attack on the Seventh-day Adventist Church, although they were organized in 1863 from some Millerite heritage. Early Millerite ministers and lecturers were 70 percent from Methodist and Baptist fellowships. Adventists themselves were from a score and more of denominations, adding belief in a second advent to what their communions were already teaching.

American Folklore

Nichol says of the recurring Millerite story, "The story has made such a unique place for itself in the folklore of America and is so firmly embedded even in reputable reference works that we wish to trace some of the principal references (through the years) between the Millerites and us."

All references to Miller's ascension robes in current encyclopedias have, apparently, been removed.

Tell,
1st Quarter,
1988, p. 8

APPENDIX B

Misreading the Signs of the Times

Source: Christianity Today Institute, Feb. 6, 1987, p. 10-1

Solid promises in the infallible Scriptures point definitely to the second coming of Christ. Yet human efforts to predict the time of the Return definitely have been anything but solid throughout history. Already in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul had to face the problem. Believers who were dead sure that Christ's return was just around the corner needed to be told that "the day of the Lord" would come unexpectedly, "like a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2).

During the Middle Ages there were countless individuals who, through study of Scripture and current events, felt certain they could accurately predict the arrival of the End. One of these was Gerardo of Borgo San Donnino, a follower of the Benedictine abbot Joa-

chim of Fiore (ca. 1135-1202). Joachim taught that all history could be divided into three 40-generation periods, an Age of the Father (the Old Testament), an Age of the Son (the New Testament era), and a forthcoming Age of the Spirit (to be marked by the full realization of the gospel). Consequently, Gerardo was so confident in this scheme and in his own ability to discern the signs of his times that he offered the year 1260 as the date when the "radical turn" to the Age of the Spirit would occur.

During the Reformation era a combination of intense spiritual struggle and momentous political events led many to speculate on the end of the world. A study of Daniel 12, for example, convinced the radical Reformer Melchior Hofmann that his own day was "the time of the end." Hofmann believed

that the armies of the Muslim Turks, which menaced Europe for several decades at the start of the sixteenth century, were the biblical Gog and Magog. And so he confidently asserted that in 1533 he would be imprisoned for six months in Strassburg, and then the Lord would return. The first part of his prediction was fulfilled, but not the second. Followers of Hofmann occupied the city of Münster in Northern Germany in 1534, because they believed the Holy Spirit had directed them to take up the sword as a sign of the End.

Such apocalyptic speculation was not limited to fringe groups, however. Martin Luther, for one, frequently expressed the opinion that the End was very near, though he felt it was unwise to predict an exact date. Christians, he said, no more know the exact time of Christ's return than "little babies in their mothers' bodies know about their arrival." But in January 1532 he could still give the opinion that "The last

day is at hand. My calendar has run out. I know nothing more in my Scriptures." Later he made several similar statements.

"Certainty" about the Second Coming has been a major feature of American Christian life as well. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, many Americans felt the events of the French Revolution, the rise of Napoleon, and the outbreak of warfare in Europe heralded the end of the age. One of these was the distinguished Christian layman Elias Boudinot of New Jersey, a leader in the Continental Congress, a confidant of George Washington, and the first president of the American Bible Society. In 1802 it was obvious to him that Napoleon's restoration of religious freedom in France amounted to "the resurrection of the Witnesses" foretold in the Book of Revelation. When Napoleon threatened to invade Britain, Boudinot thought the end could not be more than 50 years away.

The most famous American prediction of this sort came from William Miller (1782-1849), who studied the Book of Daniel for two years and concluded that Christ would return in 1843. Aided by the enterprising publicity efforts of Joshua V. Himes (1805-95), Miller gained thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of followers. But when 1843 passed, and then when the final readjusted date of October 22, 1844, came and went, there was much disillusionment. In the wake of this "Great Disappointment," some of Miller's followers reinterpreted that date spiritually as the time when Christ entered the heavenly temple to inaugurate a new phase of his saving work. And that reinterpretation figured in the rise of the Seventh-day Adventists.

The verdict of history seems clear. Great spiritual gain comes from living under the expectation of Christ's return. But wisdom and restraint are also in order. At the very least, it would be well for those in our age who predict details and dates for the End to remember how many before them have misread the signs of the times. ■



William Miller

By Mark Noll, professor of history at Wheaton College (Ill.).

Biblical Basis

The Biblical Basis of the Prophetic Gift

Roger W. Coon

Introduction

1. In 1994, the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) numbered more than 8.38 million adult baptized members, who resided in 208 of the 236 nations and areas of the world (as identified by the United Nations). They taught in 732 languages, and published in 219 of them; and they continue to grow at a rate of some 500,000 members annually.
 - a. The denomination, first organized in 1860, grew out of the Second Advent Movement begun by Baptist farmer-turned-preacher William Miller during the late 1830's and early 1840's.
 - b. And it was co-founded by:
 - (1) James S. White, an ex-Millerite Adventist preacher.
 - (2) Ellen G. White, his wife who--according to SDA teaching--was an authentic prophet in the Biblical sense of the term.
 - (3) Joseph Bates, a retired sea captain active in many 19th-century reforms including:
 - (a) The abolition of slavery.
 - (b) Seamen's rights.
 - (c) Temperance.
 - (d) The restoration of the observance of the Biblical 7th-day Sabbath by mankind universally.
2. SDAs claim that they alone, of all Christian bodies:
 - a. Are the true "remnant" church prefigured in the Biblical prophecies of Joel 2:28-31 and Rev. 12:17 which Scripture locates in the "last" days preceding the return of Christ to earth.
 - b. Possess the two mandatory identifying marks of that "remnant":
 - (1) They observe the 7th-day Sabbath required in the Fourth of the Ten Commandments of God's law (Ex. 20:8-11).
 - (2) They possess the prophetic gift, in the writings of Mrs. White, who:
 - (a) Was born Nov. 26, 1827 and died July 16, 1915 at 87 years.
 - (b) Accepted a divine call to the office of prophet in Dec., 1844, at the age of 17, after previously having been invalidated at age 12 by an accident which terminated her her formal education in the classroom with three or four grades of elementary school training.
 - (c) Wrote a torrent of some 25 million words upon an incredibly wide range of subjects, secular as well as religious (by contrast, the King James Version of the Bible has some 773,746 words), which issued forth in more than 100,000 pages of handwritten manuscript and were subse-

The Biblical Basis of the Prophetic Gift--2

- quently published in more than 5,000 periodical articles and 100+ book titles in English.
- (d) Today is recognized as the 4th most-translated author in the entire history of Literature, the most-translated woman writer, and the most-translated American writer of either gender.
- (i) In 1995 her writings appear in 147 languages, Steps to Christ alone appearing in 142.
3. At least three theological issues are raised, chiefly by evangelical Christians as a result of the SDA position on Mrs. White's prophetic gift:
- a. Did the Holy Spirit-given gift of prophetic utterance, mentioned in Paul's various "catalogues" of "Spiritual gifts", extend historically beyond ca. 100 A.D., by which time all of the books in the canon of the New Testament (NT) had been written? Indeed, does not John specifically seek to prohibit the acceptance of any other prophetic writings subsequent to his closing of the writing of the last book of the NT, in Rev. 22:18?
- (1) Many Evangelicals say that this particular gift ended then-- although the remaining gifts continue to the present day.
- (2) Most SDAs hold that the gift of prophecy continues to the present, but in a fairly limited manifestation (informed SDAs do not, however, hold that EGW was the only recipient of that gift in our own time).
- (3) Most Charismatic Christians believe the gift continued to the present and is today evident in a broad-spectrum manifestation.
- b. Are SDAs justified in applying the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32 to a modern-day manifestation of the prophetic gift in the person of EGW when the apostle Peter declared--in Acts 2:16-21--that it had already been fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost in 31 A.D.?
- c. Are SDAs justified in applying the expression "the testimony of Jesus . . . is the Spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 12:17; 19:10, KJV) to EGW when a number of more recent translations of the Bible seem to indicate otherwise?
4. The purpose of this study, then, is to examine the Biblical basis for SDA claims to a latter-day prophet in the person of EGW in the light of these various theological issues.

I. Paul's Doctrine of "Spiritual Gifts"

A. Biblical Symbols of the Work of the Holy Spirit

1. The Scriptures clearly teach the doctrine of a triune God who manifests Himself in three separate and distinct Personages whom Christians generally identify by the names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- a. Any study of Paul's doctrine of "Spiritual gifts", with its component gift of prophecy, must first necessarily involve a consideration of the 3rd Person of the Godhead who is the Giver of all "Spiritual gifts."

The Biblical Basis of the Prophetic Gift--3

2. The Scriptures employ at least six symbols to illustrate the nature of the operation of the Holy Spirit:
 - a. Oil (Zech.).
 - b. Dove (Matt. 3:16).
 - c. Rain (Job 29:23; Joel 2:23; Hosea 6:3; Jer. 5:24; Zech. 10:1; Jas. 5:7).
 - d. Leaven/yeast (Matt. 13:33).
 - e. Mighty wind and fire (Acts 2:2).
 - f. Teacher of Righteousness (John 14:16-26; 16:4-16).
(For a detailed analysis, see Appendix A.)
3. With particular reference to the "Spiritual gift" of prophecy, His work is well illustrated by many of the above-listed metaphors.

B. Paul's Development of a New Testament Doctrine of "Spiritual Gifts"

1. At Christ's ascension to heaven (spring, 31 A.D.) he gave certain gifts to His church and its followers (Eph. 4:8, 11)
2. Some 26 years later (spring, 57 A.D.) Paul wrote his epistle First Corinthians (6BC 655), in which he expressed some concern that some of the new Christians in Corinth were ignorant concerning:
 - a. The true nature of these special gifts of the Holy Spirit, and also
 - b. The right use of these gifts in the Christian church (6BC 768).
3. The Holy Spirit has been operating within our world and the church since the dawn of creation: (see AA 37, 53; PP 593, 594; COL 218)
 - a. He was an active agent in the Creation itself (Gen. 1:2).
 - b. His gift of prophetic utterance was early introduced into the church through Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam (Jude 14).
 - (1) God's true prophets were active throughout the Old Testament period.
 - (2) The Hebrew Bible contained three divisions:
 - (a) The "Law" (Torah)--the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible written by Moses.
 - (b) The "Prophets"--both "major" (long books) and "minor" (short books), excluding Daniel.
 - (c) The Sacred "Writings" (hagiographa)--devotional literature (the rest of the books) (8BC 809).
 - c. The bestowal at the ascension, then, was for the particular purpose of getting the Christian church started, and then keeping it moving steadily toward its goal of developing necessary qualities of human character among its members.
4. The night before His crucifixion Jesus foretold His disciples that special enabling gifts would be bestowed upon them, for the practical purpose of aiding them in their task of taking the gospel to the entire world (John 14 and 16; Matt. 24:14).
 - a. Then perhaps six weeks later--immediately prior to His ascension, He further instructed them to remain in Jerusalem until they had received this bestowal of the Holy Spirit:
 - (1) It would be like a baptism of power.
 - (2) And it would come "not many days hence" (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 5).

The Biblical Basis of the Prophetic Gift--4

5. Paul provides two lists identifying some of the major "gifts" of the Holy Spirit (I Cor 12:8-10; Rom. 12:6-8), and two lists of ministries given by the Holy Spirit which are enabled by His "gifts" (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11):
 - a. 1 Cor. 12:8-10: word of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing miracles, prophecy, discerning of tongues, different kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues.
 - b. Rom. 12:6-8: prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, showing mercy.
 - c. 1 Cor. 12:28: (in descending order) apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healings, helps, governmental administration, different kinds of tongues.
 - d. Eph. 4:11: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers.
6. In connection with the foregoing, it may be well worth noting at this point that:
 - a. Prophecy is the only gift mentioned in all four of these catalogues.
 - b. In the one catalogue where the gifts are mentioned in rank order of significance (1 Cor. 12:28), prophecy is listed as No. 2, second only to that of apostleship.
 - (1) Clearly for Paul prophecy was a pre-eminent gift (1 Cor. 1:6)
 - c. The position of some evangelicals that tongues is the most superior gift is not sustained by Scripture:
 - (1) It appears only in two of the four catalogues (1 Cor. 12:10, 28).
 - (2) In both instances it comes at the bottom of the list, and in the one catalogue listing the gifts in rank order of merit, it is given last (v. 28).
 - d. Also, there are some today who tend to blur distinctions between the gift of prophecy on the one hand, and such "proclamation" gifts as evangelist, pastor, teacher, and exhorter, and imply that these gifts are virtually interchangeable.
 - (1) Scripture would disagree: prophecy is a separate, discrete gift, distinguishable from the others.
7. An important distinction needs to be drawn between the "gifts" of the Holy Spirit, on the one hand, and the "fruit" of the Spirit, on the other:
 - a. The gifts "comprise endowments of divine power upon individuals in the church for the accomplishment of God's purpose in bringing about the perfection of His church;" whereas
 - b. The fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance--Gal. 5:22, 23) "are qualities of character that appear in church members who surrender themselves wholly to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and are actuated by the supreme attribute of the Spirit, which is love" (6BC 768; see 1 Cor. 13:13; AA 388; COL 68, 69; 5T 169; 4T 355).
8. The purpose of the gifts, in the mind of God:
 - a. Eph. 4:12-16: spiritual growth of Christians, aids to the work of the clergy, edification (information), unity, doctrinal purity, etc.
 - b. 1 Cor. 12:25: that there be no schism (division, split) in the church.
 - c. 1 Cor. 1:5: that church members be enriched in all utterance and knowledge.

The Biblical Basis of the Prophetic Gift--5

9. The bestowal of the gifts--who gives what and to whom?
 - a. The gifts are all given at the instance and initiative of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7, 11, 13).
 - b. He gives at least one gift to each Christian in the church (1 Cor. 12:7; Rom. 12:3), the most obvious being:
 - (1) Helps (1 Cor. 12:28).
 - (2) Faith (Rom. 12:7).
 - c. All Christians do not receive the same gift: "some" get one, while "another" receives a different gift (1 Cor. 12:11, 29, 30).
 - d. No Christian may demand any particular gift; indeed, the most the Christian can legitimately do is to "covet" the "best" gifts (1 Cor. 12:31).
10. The continuation of the gifts in point of time-duration:
 - a. There is not the slightest hint in the writings of Paul (or any other NT writer) that one spiritual gift would "drop out" of the church, while all others would continue to the second coming of Christ.
 - b. Contrarily, the purpose of these gifts--all of them--is to help prepare and enable Christians to warn the world and be ready themselves for this climactic event (see 1 Cor. 1:7, 8).
 - c. However, many evangelical Christians claim that the gift of prophecy was discontinued ca. 100 A.D., apparently believing that this particular gift was no longer needed once the canon of Scripture was closed.
 - (1) British theologian John R.W. Stott (Baptism and Fullness 1976, pp. 100-2) is a good example of the view that fresh revelations of divine truth are precluded by that canon's formation.
 - (2) British Anglican Rector J. P. Baker, however, effectively counters this position:

Others have sometimes sought to identify this completion of the NT canon with the time when prophecy will pass away according to 1 Cor. 13:8ff.; but this does violence to the context, which clearly shows that these gifts will pass away "when the perfect comes," which is defined as when we "see face to face" (i.e., beyond this life and age altogether). . . .

All may agree that there is no new revelation to be expected concerning God in Christ, the way of salvation, the principles of the Christian life, etc. *But there appears to be no good reason why the living God, who speaks and acts (in contrast to the dead idols), cannot use the gift of prophecy to give particular local guidance to a church, nation, or individual, or to warn or encourage by way of prediction as well as by reminders, in full accord with the written word of Scripture, by which all such utterances must be tested.*

("Prophecy, Prophets," New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, III [1980]: 1286, 1287; cited in Roger W. Coon's A Gift of Light [1983], pp. 18, 19, emphasis supplied)

The Biblical Basis of the Prophetic Gift--6

11. Evangelicals who take the position that the well-known Reformation credo "Sola Scriptura" ("The Bible and the Bible Only") precludes a further manifestation of the Holy Spirit-indicted gift of prophetic utterance, err:
 - a. Paul, in one of the first books of the NT to be written, urged the Christians of his day not to despise genuine manifestations of the prophetic gift, but, instead, rather to "prove all things" (1 Thess. 5:19-21).
 - b. John, in one of the last NT books to be written, urged the church to "try" or test "the spirits" of alleged prophets, because "many false prophets are gone out into the world" to deceive those who would follow the true God (1 John 4:1).
 - c. The Scriptures clearly teach, in both OT and NT, a restoration of the genuine prophetic gift at the end-time, in the days just before Jesus returns.
 - (1) Thus, if a Christian genuinely, truly believes in "the Bible and the Bible only," then he or she must of necessity accept the Biblically-taught doctrine that the gift of prophecy will resurface in the world at the end of time!
12. Lastly, the injunction against "adding to" the Book of Revelation written by John ("For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book"--Rev. 22:18) cannot legitimately be applied to authentic post-canonical prophets because:
 - a. There is no evidence that the Book of Revelation (in Catholic Bibles, The Apocalypse) was the very last book of the New Testament to be written--though it does appear as the last book in Protestant and Roman Catholic Bibles today in point of chronological sequence.
 - b. The canon of sacred Scripture had not yet been compiled in John's day; he was, therefore, speaking only about his one book of Revelation.
 - c. It is entirely possible that one or more of John's other four books (his Gospel and three epistles) may themselves have been written after he wrote the Revelation--in which case he would have been condemning them by his injunction, if this interpretation be accepted!
 - d. In light of Paul's doctrine of spiritual gifts all of which continue to the end, and John's own prediction of a restored gift of prophecy in the end-time (Rev. 12:17; 19:10), John certainly could not contradict these teaching by his injunction.
 - e. Obviously, John was contraindicating uninspired writings of false prophets by his words, which would effectively deliberately change the message of his book.

II. Restoration of the Prophetic Gift in the End-Time

A. The Old Testament Testimony of Joel

1. Some 14 different men in the OT are identified by the name of "Joel."
 - a. The author of the prophetic book that bears his name probably lived either in the 9th century B.C. or 7th century B.C. (see 8BC [1960] : 582-84).

The Biblical Basis of the Prophetic Gift--7

2. The prophet Joel himself lived many centuries before the 1st coming of Christ (in 4 B.C.), but he foretells certain spectacular events that will transpire in the end-time just before the 2nd coming of Christ (Joel 2:28-31):
 - a. The event was still future to Joel's own day:
 - (1) "Afterward" (v. 28), "shall" [future tense] come to pass" (vv. 28, 32), "will" (v. 30).
 - b. The events spoken of are also declared to be certain ("shall") of fulfillment.
 - c. It would be a remarkable bestowal of this Holy Spirit-given gift: twice the word "pour" is employed (vv. 28, 29).
 - d. It would be a universal bestowal, unlimited by sexual gender, age, social status, or national origin:
 - (1) "All flesh" (v. 28).
 - (2) "Sons . . . daughters" (v. 28).
 - (3) "Old men . . . young men" (v. 28).
 - (4) "Servants . . . handmaids" (v. 29).
 - e. Although other spiritual gifts are not excluded, the one gift upon which Joel particularly focuses is the gift of prophecy:
 - (1) Sons and daughters would "prophesy" (v. 28).
 - (2) Old men would receive prophetic "dreams"; young men would experience trance-like "visions" during the day (v. 28).
 - f. This gift is set in a specific time-frame context elsewhere in Scripture associated with the end of time (Matt. 24:29, 30) by Christ Himself who spoke of signs appearing in the heavens and on earth:
 - (1) "Blood, fire, pillars of smoke" (v. 30).
 - (2) Sun turned to "darkness," moon turned into the appearance of "blood" (v. 31).
 - g. The purpose of this spiritual gift (as, indeed, of all of them!): that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord might find "deliverance" (v. 32).
 - h. The historical beneficiaries of this gift: the "remnant" whom the Lord shall call (cf. Rev. 12:17; 19:10).
3. To evangelicals who stoutly protest the legitimate application of Joel 2:28-32 to the gift possessed by EGW because Peter tells us it was fulfilled at Pentecosts (31 A.D.), SDAs respond politely that Acts 2/ Pentecost may indeed be viewed as a sort of "down-payment"--a partial fulfillment of Joel 2. It cannot be viewed as the total, final fulfillment for two cogent reasons:
 - a. The big spiritual gift mentioned by Joel is the gift of prophecy; the big gifts at Pentecost was the gift of tongues. And there is no Biblical evidence that the gift of prophesy was exercised at Pentecost; therefore the fulfillment then was only partial.
 - b. The heavenly signs mentioned by Joel (and repeated, interestingly, by Peter, to make sure his hearers knew to which prophecy in Joel he was referring) did not take place at Pentecost--at least there is no Biblical proof that they did.
 - (1) In a related passage of Scripture Jesus places these heavenly signs in the context of the period known as "the time of the end" (not to be confused with "the end of time") (see Matt. 24:29, 30).

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- c. Informed SDAs take the position that:
 - (1) Pentecost was a partial fulfillment of Joel 2.
 - (2) EGW was a further fulfillment (there may well be genuine prophets arise subsequent to her day--indeed, there is some evidence that this has already happened--but that's another topic of study in itself!).

B. The New Testament Testimony of John the Revelator

1. Joel 2:32 speaks of a restored prophetic gift in the midst of a "remnant" people; John, on Patmos nearly 1,000 years later, indicated that a "remnant" people, toward the close of time, in "the time of the end," would possess such a gift (Rev. 12:17; 19:10).
2. SDAs are unique among all Christian bodies in that they claim, in a singular way:
 - a. To find their prophetic "roots" in Rev. 10 (see vv. 6, 8-10, and 11 for the three instances), some 17 centuries before William Miller's Second Advent Movement experienced its first stirrings.
 - b. To find their prophetic messenger in Rev. 12 (v. 17).
 - c. To find their prophetic message in Rev. 14 (vv. 6-12).
3. Rev. 12 is a unique chapter of the Bible in several respects. For one, it spans more historical time than any other chapter in the Bible--the fall of Lucifer (some time before 4,000 B.C.) to 1798 A.D.
 - a. An historical period of 1260 literal years is mentioned twice in Rev. 12 (vv. 6, 14).
 - b. And it points to the development of a "remnant" people at the end of this historical time-frame.
4. The characteristics of this "remnant" are identified variously as:
 - a. Keeping all of the commandments of God (including the Fourth, which enjoins observance of the seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath (Rev. 12:17; 14:12, KJV).
 - b. Possession of "the testimony of Jesus" (12:17), further identified as "the Spirit of Prophecy" (12:19, KJV).
 - c. Possessing "the faith of Jesus" (14:12, KJV)--the same faith that Jesus exhibited when He walked on this earth.
 - d. Possessing the virtue of "patience of the saints" (14:12)--patience in waiting those last years before Jesus returns (cf. Jas. 5:7-11; Heb. 10:36, 37).
5. The expression "the testimony of Jesus" appears four times in Revelation: 1:2; 1:9; 12:17; and 19:10.
 - a. SDAs today often tend to use 12:17 and 19:10 to demonstrate that the "testimony of Jesus" is "the Spirit of prophecy," in pointing out that EGW possessed the prophetic gift of that Spirit--the Holy Spirit of God.
 - (1) Sometimes SDAs mistakenly call Mrs. White or her special gift "the Spirit of prophecy," when the term applies more exactly (and correctly) to the Holy Spirit of God who indicts all authentic prophetic writings. All groups have their in-house jargon!
 - (2) And although the earliest SDAs apparently did not link these two texts in identifying EGW's gift with the "remnant" church, there is no reason why they could not have made this legitimate interpretation and connection.

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- b. John, of course, wrote his Revelation in the Greek language. The KJV renders the expression "the testimony of Jesus" (19:10) as a subjective genitive, grammatically, meaning literally: "the testimony that Jesus Himself gave.
- (1) Interesting, the majority of contemporary translations preserve this expression in the subjective genitive:
- (a) American Standard Version.
 - (b) Amplified Bible.
 - (c) Douay (the Roman Catholic equivalent of KJV).
 - (d) Goodspeed (The New Testament: An American Translation).
 - (e) KJV-II.
 - (f) New KJV.
 - (g) New American Standard Bible.
 - (h) New International Version.
 - (i) Revised Standard Version (renders 19:10 subjectively, as, also, 1:2, 9--but 12:17 is rendered objectively!)
 - (j) New Revised Standard Version (in a footnote to 1:9 and 19:10 this version provides an alternative objective rendering).
 - (k) Today's English Version.
- (2) A few contemporary versions, however, render "the testimony of Jesus" as an objective genitive--that this is "the testimony about Jesus, or "the testimony to Jesus," or "the testimony concerning Jesus, etc. This rendering puts the emphasis on those who witness to Jesus, rather than the witness of Jesus Himself, and would not support the SDA use of this passage as identifying EGW's prophetic gift:
- (a) The Berkeley Version in Modern English.
 - (b) Newer Roman Catholic Bibles such as: Confraternity NT, Jerusalem Bible, and New American Bible.
 - (c) Living Bible (a paraphrase, not a translation).
 - (d) New English Bible.
 - (e) Revised English Bible.
6. The SDA has more scholarly translations supporting its position than do those who take issue; and the following four reasons are advanced in support of its position:
- a. The original Greek text permits (but does not require) the objective genitive, but it also permits the subjective genitive--one is as legitimate a rendering as the other.
- (1) However, an examination of the grammatical construction of Rev. 1:2, 9, makes it abundantly clear that "the testimony of Jesus" is testimony from Jesus, not testimony about Jesus.
- (2) That SDAs are on sound linguistic and theological ground in their position is made clear by the following:
- (a) Problems in Bible Translation (RH, 1954), "On Revelation 12:17 and 19:10," pp. 244-56.
 - (b) The position of the late Don Newfeld, as explicated in his last sermon, Takoma Park SDA Church, Feb. 2, 1980, as cited in Roger W. Coon, "The Relationship Between the EGW Writings and the Bible," Journal of Adventist Education, Feb.-Mar., 1982, p. 21.

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- (3) The parallelism of Rev. 19:10 and 22:9:
 - (a) In both John says he fell at the angel's feet to worship him.
 - (b) In both the angel rebuffed/rebuked, saying, Don't.
 - (c) In both the angel begins by saying, "I am thy fellow servant and of thy brethren" but then in --19:10 he continues "that have the testimony of Jesus...." --but in 22:9: "the prophets."
 - (d) In both the angel tells John to worship only God. By comparing these two passages it becomes crystal clear that "the testimony of Jesus" is equated with the person and work of a prophet!
- (4) The greater context of Revelation 10 - 12 - 14.
- (5) And a fifth argument--if one were needed--is the grammatical construction of Rev. 1:2, 9.

Conclusion

1. It is clear that the Apostle Paul intended to convey the idea that the Holy Spirit-originator intended His "gift" of prophecy to continue from Pentecost down through the ages to the very second coming of Christ.
 - a. For it would be no less needed to the end than any of the other gifts (whose continuity to the end has never been challenged by conservative theologians).
2. It is equally clear, from both Old and New Testaments, that a revival--or restoration--of that gift would be vouchsafed to a "remnant" people living in "the time of the end," an historical period established by a number of eschatological/apocalyptic prophets of the Bible--a period which, historically, began in 1798 A.D. at the end of the 1260-day/year period mentioned in both Daniel and Revelation.
3. Joel 2:28-32 was only partially fulfilled at Pentecost, for the two cogen reasons already explicated in the body of this presentation. Ellen G. White, unquestionably (if one will decide upon the preponderant weight of the evidence--and it was always her burden that such decisions be made on that basis) more than meets the Biblical requirements for such a prophet.
4. There is a church today--Seventh-day Adventists--that meets the two requirements to qualify it to be called and identified as the Biblical "remnant" today.
 - a. The Scriptures look forward to a prophetic gift restored in the "last days."
 - b. A prophetic gift, and respect for the seventh-day Saturday Sabbath, will identify such a body.
5. If one is a true evangelical, accepting the Reformation dictum "The Bible and the Bible Only", one is confessionally obliged to accept the evidence in the Bible that there will be a people in the "last days" who meet the identifying prescription.
 - a. One simply cannot reject what the New Testament (and OT, as well) has to say about this, and still cling to "The Bible and the Bible Only"--such a course would be totally inconsistent.

6. It is interesting that Jesus used what we may call the "pitcher-principle" with John on Patmos in that celebrated visit (ca. 95 A.D.) to identify the "remnant" people:
- a. We are assured in both OT (Mal 3:6 "I am the Lord; I change not") and NT (Heb. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever") that the changeless Christ is totally predictable in the way He operates--particularly in salvatory matters.
 - (1) In likening the last days of earth's history to the time of Noah, Jesus said, "As it was . . . so it shall be" (Matt. 24:37; cf. Luke 17:26).
 - b. At His last Passover, the disciples came to Jesus and asked where they would celebrate it--11 of the 12 were Galileans and had no house in Jerusalem in which to commemorate Passover.
 - c. Jesus told the two who came--Peter and John--(Luke 22:8-10; cf. Mark 14:13-15), "Look for a man"
 - d. Now, Jesus did not name the man--if they'd had to stop every male in Jerusalem (and there were at least one million of them there, then, for Passover), they'd still be asking men in that city for their name). This would be unnecessarily time-consuming.
 - d. Nor did Jesus say, "Look for a man with one nose, two eyes, two ears, one mouth" for identifying characteristics--for all men (except, perhaps, lepers) would meet that undistinguishing criteria.
 - e. Instead, He said, "Look for a man carrying a pitcher of water... and follow him home."
 - (1) Now that would be a very unusual thing, and the man thus identified with ease--and accuracy.
 - (2) For in the Middle East in those days (as in many parts of Africa today, which is a continent Eastern in its culture) men did not carry water--that was (and, in many places, still is) woman's work!
 - (3) And those few men who carried water occupationally, to sell it, did not use a pitcher--they used animal skins in which to convey it.
 - f. And so Jesus, now talking to one of the same two disciples to whom He had elucidated the "pitcher-principle"--John--now some 60 to 65 years later--uses the same principle by means of which to identify His "remnant" people who would arise shortly after the beginning of "the time of the end":
 - (1) Only this time, instead of saying, "Look for a man," He says, "Look for a people--with these two characteristics."
 - (2) And He further adds, in effect, "And when you have found them, follow them home"--for that is where they are headed, toward that heavenly home Jesus has already entered, to prepare mansions for us.
 - g. Yes, the "remnant" people will have two identifying characteristics:
 - (1) They will honor the Sabbath that Jesus honored...and kept (Luke 4:16).
 - (2) And they will have the prophetic gift restored and in their midst.
 - h. And it is a fact today that only Seventh-day Adventists meet this highly-specialized twin criteria.

The Biblical Basis of the Prophetic Gift--12

7. Ellen White's prophetic gift in the last days is provided for, and pointed out in Scripture. There is a true "remnant" church today which possesses the prophetic gift and honors the seventh-day Saturday Sabbath.
 - a. Indeed, if the SDA church is not the true "remnant," I must leave it immediately and go hunt for another church which meets the twin-test.
 - b. For God does have a "remnant" church on earth today.
 - c. And He does want me--and you--to be a part of it!

For Further Reading

For an exceedingly helpful monograph, see Frank B. Holbrook, "The Biblical Basis For a Modern Prophet" (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of S.D.A. Biblical Research Institute, April, 1982, 14 pp.). The document is available either from the BRI or the Ellen G. White Estate, Inc., 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600.

List of Appendixes

Appendix A: Six Scriptural Metaphors of the Holy Spirit's Work

Appendix A

Six Scriptural Metaphors of the Holy Spirit's Work

1. Oil: Zech. 4:2)
 - a. In industry oil lubricates machinery, to effect a more smooth and effective productivity.
 - b. In medicine, oil is a well-known and ancient therapeutic agency to promote physical healing and well-being.
 - c. In the housewife's kitchen, with reference to cooking and baking, oil often serves as a bonding agent, to help hold together the various component ingredients in the preparation of food--it unifies.
2. Dove: Matt. 3:16
 - a. This bird is often associated with the human qualities of--
 - (1) Gentleness and innocence (Matt. 10:16).
 - (2) Peace, quietness, happiness--which doubtless explains why the symbol of a dove is often displayed prominently at wedding ceremonies.
3. Rain: (Job 29:23; Joel 2:23; Hosea 6:3; Jer. 5:24; Zech. 10:1; Jas. 5:7)
 - a. Frequent references are made in the Bible to the "Early" (or "Former") and the "Latter" Rain. These fall during the agricultural year to promote and make possible a farmer's good harvest.
 - (1) In the Middle East the "early" rain softens the soil for planting, germinates the seed, and provides for subsequent growth--an apt spiritual symbol of the conversion experience.
 - (2) The "latter" rain follows in the spring, toward the end of the crop-growing season, to complete (and thus to fulfill) the work of the early rains, by bringing the crops to full maturation, full ripening--spiritually illustrating the work of bringing human character development to full, final perfection, maturity, thus wholly transforming the crops in preparation for the farmer's final act of harvest.
4. Leaven/yeast: (Matt. 13:33)
 - a. Leaven is another agency for the effecting of transformation:
 - (1) It works quietly.
 - (2) It works from inside to the outside.
 - (3) Like the wind (below), one cannot behold it while it works, but one may surely observe the sure and certain results of its work.
5. Mighty Wind and Fire: (Acts 2:2)
 - a. Whereas the previous metaphors emphasize the quiet, unobtrusive work of the Holy Spirit, this symbol emphasizes another facet--spectacular display, as exhibited by the two elements in nature of wind and fire.
 - b. Certain aspects of the prophetic gift, in particular, are indeed impressively spectacular:
 - (1) Certain physical phenomena often associated with a prophet in vision (no breathing by the lungs; eyes open in a trance-like state, but not observing activity in the immediate proximity; loss of super-natural physical strength; reception of supernatural strength, etc.).
 - (2) Striking fulfillment on predictions made.

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6. Teacher of Righteousness: (John 14:16-26; 16:4-16)
 - a. He leads/guides the Christian into an understanding of all of the truth that that Christian is capable of comprehending at his present stage of spiritual growth and development.
 - b. He foretells the future.
 - c. He ministers comfort to those in need of it.
 - d. He reprovcs the world and the church in the categories of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

EGW Person – 1

Ellen G. White: The Person--I The Human-Interest Story

Roger W. Coon

Introduction

1. There are at least two equal--but opposite--dangers in the manner in which many SDAs tend to view Ellen White today:
 - a. Some place her too high:
 - (1) They overly-idealize--even idolize--her.
 - (2) Some even make of her the equivalent of a "vegetarian Virgin-Mary."
 - b. Others place her too low:
 - (1) She was just another "ordinary" Christian woman of piety.
 - (2) She wrote a lot of good things on various religious topics/issues.
 - (3) Reading them may well be a good thing to do, and may even reward such reader with spiritual blessing.
 - (4) But I am at liberty freely to agree or disagree with her ideas, to pick-and-choose that which I wish to accept or reject, with impunity.
2. Both positions are wrong--but for different reasons!
3. The purpose of this two-part study is to focus upon the humanity of the "real" EGW, to examine this woman as *a person*, not only in prophetic roles, but also in *non-prophetic* roles, as daughter, sister, mother, neighbor, friend.
 - a. We will look for those traits/qualities that thoroughly marked her as an authentic--if fallible--human being:
 - (1) One who could savor her triumphs/successes.
 - (2) And one who would also mourn her shortcomings/failures.
4. Part One will deal, generally, with the family and daily relationships of a prophet. Part Two will focus upon the wit and wisdom of the prophet, noting in particular both her own well-developed sense of humor, and also her counsels concerning its use in the pulpit--for some may find a paradox here.

I. As a Member of the Harmon Family

1. Parents: of British ancestry, sturdy New England stock.
 - a. Father: Robert F. Harmon, Sr. [Feb. 28, 1786-1866]--a farmer, hat-maker.
 - b. Mother: Eunice Gould Harmon [1787-1863]--a housewife, homemaker.
 - c. Members of the Portland, ME Chestnut St. Methodist Church (Robert, a deacon); disfellowshipped (with other family members) in Sept., 1843, in reaction

- to their accepting Millerite theological positions.
- d. Became Sabbath-keeping Adventists in 1851 or 1852—some seven or eight years after Ellen's first vision—but totally supportive of the genuineness of her gift from the first.
2. Siblings: five sisters (including a twin); two brothers.
- a. *Caroline Harmon-Clough* (Apr. 9, 1812-Mar. 29, 1883, Paola, KS)—wife of a Methodist clergyman.
 - (1) Niece: *Mary Clough*—a writer of some aptitude, and a nonSDA literary assistant to Aunt Ellen (1876-77) in the early development of the "Life of Christ"-project (*Desire of Ages*):
 - (a) Ellen had two goals in creating this relationship:
 - (i) The conversion of her niece, Mary.
 - (ii) Through her, the conversion of her sister, Caroline.
 - (b) This experiment did not succeed, and Mary was released from service because her nonSDA lifestyle (which she refused to change) created conflicts/controversies within the EGW extended family.
 - (c) EGW still continued to maintain contact with her niece, in an effort to win her soul for Christ. Her 1877 letter to Mary is illuminating in several ways:

"I have no wish to control you, no wish to urge our faith upon you, or to force you to believe. No man or woman will have eternal life unless they choose it, . . . with all the self-denial and cross-bearing that is involved in the Christian life. . . . God will test every one of us. He will give privileges and opportunities to all and a sufficient amount of evidence to balance the mind in the right direction, if they choose the truth. . . ."

"God will work for you and make you an able instrument if you will yield your will and affections to His will and if you will become a child of obedience. But if you remain in resistance to the truth, God will remove His light from you and you will be left to take your own course and meet the result at last. I hope you will not say as your mother said to me in regard to breaking the Sabbath, she 'would risk it.' God forbid that you should dare to risk it and pursue a course of disobedience. You have tenfold more light in reference to the truth than your mother. I still have faith that she will accept the truth if you do not hedge up her way. I have written in love and have written because I dare not do otherwise."—

(Letter 6, 1877, cited in Arthur L. White, *Messenger to the Remnant*, p. 119.)
 - b. *Harriet Harmon-McCann* (1814-d. before 1883)—wife of a clergyman in KS.
 - c. *John B. Harmon* (Dec. 29, 1815-Mar. 6, 1883)—a businessman in IL.
 - d. *Mary Plummer Harmon-Foss* (1823-May 22, 1912)—Married Hazen Foss' brother, Samuel, July 5, 1842.
 - (1) In an Adventist chapel (private home?) on Megquier's Hill, near Poland, ME (about 30 miles from Portland), Ellen related her first vision for the first time outside of Portland, in late Jan., 1845.
 - (2) Hazen was present, but sitting in an adjoining room, with door ajar.
 - (3) Met Ellen at sister Mary's home (in Poland) next day:
 - (a) Confessed his own failed Christian experience.

- (b) Declared her vision identical to one he had received, but failed to present to the public as God had commanded.
 - (c) Urged her to faithfulness, "and the crown I might have had, you will receive. . . . I am a lost man" (Letter 37, Dec. 22, 1890, to sister Mary; cited in T. Housel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You*, p. 489; cf. 1 Bio 65-67).
- e. *Sarah Harmon-Belden* (Feb. 13, 1822-Nov. 25, 1868):
- (1) Married Stephen T. Belden, Aug., 1851 (he was 22; she, 28). He worked a Review & Herald publishing house.
 - (2) Two children: Franklin E. (1858) and Lillian:
 - (a) Franklin also worked at RH, became prolific gospel-song writer (est. 600-800) .
 - (b) Warned by Aunt Ellen not to become one of "Noah's carpenters."
 - (c) Fought his aunt at 1888 Minneapolis GC Session; disenchanted with her prophetic gift; gave aid-and-comfort to the enemy, became bitter against the church, apostatized, disfellowshipped c. 1907; (*SDA Encyclopedia* [1976]: 142).
 - (d) Died, 1945, shortly after strenuously resisting efforts of Carlyle B. Haynes and Kenneth H. Wood (Cleveland, OH) to re-establish church relationship.
 - (3) Sarah died of "consumption" (tuberculosis) at age 45; only sister of Ellen's to become SDA.
- f. *Robert F. Harmon, Jr.* (July 13, 1825-Feb. 5, 1853):
- (1) Only brother of Ellen to become SDA.
 - (2) Died of "consumption" at age 27.
- g. *Elizabeth ("Lizzie") N. Harmon-Bangs* (Nov. 26, 1927-Dec. 21, 1891):
- (1) Ellen's fraternal twin.
 - (2) Married Reuben Bangs, a Portland, ME grocer.
 - (3) Never accepted Ellen's gift; never became an SDA; ALW said EGW did not expect to meet "Lizzie" in heaven, as she never made any pretext of religion.
 - (4) Children:
 - (a) Adelaide, died Jan. 31, 1854, age 6 weeks; EGW wrote poignant letter to "Lizzie," with reference to infants in resurrection winging their way to their mother's (or angel's) arms (YI, April, 1858; cited in 2SM 259, 260).
 - (b) Clarence, died 1915.
 - (c) Bertha, died after 1920.

II. "My Misfortune" (2SG 9-12)

A. The Accident

1. At age nine, Ellen Harmon suffered a tragic accident, which, she later wrote, "was to affect my whole life" (LS 17:2).

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- a. She was struck on the nose by a stone, hurled by a classmate angry at some childish trifle.
 - b. She was in a coma three weeks, continued to lay in a "great cradle," constructed especially for her, "many additional weeks."
 - (1) "I was reduced almost to a skeleton" (LS 18:1, 2).
 - c. Her personal physician, and family, did not expect her to survive.
2. A *Physical Problem*: "My nervous system was prostrated." Her hand trembled so much that handwriting was virtually impossible: "I . . . could get no farther than the simple copies in a coarse hand":
- a. Study became impossible: "The letters in the page would run together."
 - b. "Great drops of perspiration would stand upon my brow."
 - c. "A faintness and dizziness would seize me."
 - d. "I had a bad cough, and my whole system was debilitated" (LS 19:1).
3. A *Psychological Problem*: Ellen was also physically disfigured for the rest of her life.
- a. Corrective plastic surgery would not be available until shortly after her death (post-World War I).
 - b. When, out of curiosity, she first looked into a mirror, he was shocked and revolted by what she saw:
 - (1) "Every feature of my face seemed changed. The sight was more than I could bear. The bone of my nose proved to be broken. The idea of carrying my misfortune through life was insupportable. I could see no pleasure in my life. I did not wish to live, and I dared not die, for I was not prepared" (2 SG 9).
 - c. Reflecting upon rejection by playmates because of her disfigurement, she later wrote:
 - (1) "How vain and empty the pleasures of earth looked to me. How changeable the friendship of my young companions. A pretty face, dress, or good looks, are thought much of. But let misfortune take some of these away, and the friendship is broken" (2 SG 10, 11).
 - (2) "As I became able to join in play with my young friends, I was forced to learn the bitter lesson that our personal appearance often makes a difference in the treatment we received from our companions" (LS 18:4).
4. *Recuperation*: "I gained strength very slowly" (LS 18:4).
- a. Because she was unable to read or write, Ellen's teachers advised her to discontinue school until her health should improve.
 - (1) "It was the hardest struggle of my young life to yield to my feebleness, and decide that I must leave my studies, and give up the hope of gaining an education" (LS 19:2).

B. The Aftermath

1. Ellen was never again to be able to resume formal schooling.
 - a. After a later divine healing, she subsequently learned to read without difficulty.
 - b. And she amassed a personal library of 800-1,200 volumes during her lifetime.

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2. Second only to her call to prophethood at age 17, in 1844, her "misfortune" appears to have been her single most defining experience, and it continued to affect her profoundly throughout the remainder of her life, physiologically and psychologically.
3. In our time two SDA physicians--a pediatrician and a dermatologist, both severe critics of EGW, have endeavored to account for her visions on the basis of "partial-complex or psychomotor seizures" (Delbert H. Hodder, M.D.) or "temporal lobe epilepsy" (Molleurus Couperus, M.D.), as a residual effect of her accident.
 - a. But even if we grant that her *physical* condition in the vision state were thus caused (and I, among others, refuse vigorously even to concede this assertion as medically plausible), the *content* of those visions, nevertheless, could not yet be accounted for by means of this absurd hypothesis.
 - b. Interestingly, neither critic is a specialist in neurology; and both have been totally refuted by Donald I. Peterson, M.D.'s *Visions or Seizures: Was Ellen White the Victim of Epilepsy?* (Pacific Press, 1988, 31 pp.; reproduced in *Anthology*, I:88/119-25).
 - (1) Himself a board-certified neurologist, Dr. Peterson, now retired:
 - (a) Taught neurology (and pharmacology) at the Loma Linda University's School of Medicine for 35 years.
 - (b) Served as Chief of Neurology at Riverside (CA) General Hospital for 23 years.
 - (c) Served on the Medical Advisory Board of the California Epilepsy Society for more than 20 years.
 - (d) Authored two medical books and 67 scientific journal articles in neurology.
 - (e) Appeared in American courts in 40 cases to give legal testimony as an expert witness, participated in an additional 40 arbitrations, and made some 50 legal depositions in still other cases.
 - (2) And Dr. Peterson declares that there is absolutely no medical basis upon which to explain away Mrs. White's physical condition during her visions (or their content)!
4. Some 50 years after the accident, EGW returned to Portland, ME, to visit the site of her "misfortune." Reflectively, she wrote that that "which for a time seemed so bitter and was so hard to bear, have proved to be a blessing in disguise. The cruel blow which blighted the joys of earth, was the means of turning my eyes to heaven. I might never have known Jesus, had not the sorrow that clouded my early years led me to seek comfort in Him" (RH, Nov. 25, 1884; cited in 1 Bio 30, 31).
5. The traumatic results of this accident, however, were to continue, medically, to affect adversely EGW's health periodically until the time of her death in 1915.
 - a. Frequently the Lord would temporarily heal her, in order for her to be able to continue functioning physically in her calling as a prophet.

III. As the Wife of James Springer White

1. *Lineage:* JW was born Aug. 4, 1821, at Palmyra, NY, the 5th of nine children.
 - a. Father came from pioneer New England stock (though was not descended from a Pilgrim family who landed at Plymouth Rock, Dec., 1620, as earlier biographers—including James himself— had believed)
 - b. Mother was a granddaughter of Dr. Samuel Shepherd, a prominent New England Baptist clergyman.

2. *Educational Background:*
 - a. As a child, JW suffered from physical disabilities, especially from weak eyesight.
 - (1) As a consequence, did not attend school until age 19.
 - b. At St. Albans Academy, he received a Teacher's Certificate, after completing a 12-week course of study (by studying 18 hours a day), and was thus certified to teach the "common branches" of learning.
 - c. The next winter he taught school.
 - d. Later he would attend school for another 17-week term, thus bringing his formal education to a total of 29 weeks.

3. *Religious Experience:*
 - a. At 15, JW was baptized into the "Christian Connection" denomination.
 - b. He was profoundly moved by the preaching of William Miller and Joshua V. Himes (Miller's director of publications), in eastern ME, Sept., 1842.
 - c. Convicted of the truth of their message, he acquired a prophetic chart, borrowed a horse (with patched-up bridle and saddle), and thus ventured forth to preach on his own.
 - d. He was eminently successful: in the winter of 1842-43, he led more than 1,000 converts to Christ.
 - e. In April, 1843, he returned to Palmyra, and was ordained to the gospel ministry of his "Christian Connection."

4. *Courtship of Ellen Harmon:*
 - a. JW met EH prior to Oct. 22, 1844, at Portland, ME. Very impressed, he watched her carefully.
 - b. He became acquainted with her on a trip to Orrington, ME, where they both went to combat fanaticism.
 - c. A courtship developed, but was allowed to mature only after both had assured themselves that the relationship had God's approval.

5. *Marriage to Ellen Harmon:*
 - a. The ceremony was performed by a justice of the peace, in Portland, ME, Aug. 30, 1846.
 - b. At this time he was 25 years, 1 month, of age; she was 18 years., 9 months old.
 - (1) Some 34 years later (1870), she wrote: "A youth not out of his teens is a poor judge of the fitness of a person as young as himself to be his companion for life" (MYP 452:2).
 - (2) Does this contradict her own experience? Not necessarily:

- (a) The information may have come to her by divine revelation after her own marriage.
- (b) The observation may have come from later, mature reflection upon her own past experience.
- (c) The principles involved are basically true; James and Ellen may have been exceptionally mature at that time (and she later made it clear that God always makes allowances for individual differences in young people--CT 101).
(*SDA Encyclopedia* [1976]: 1598-1604; cf. Virgil Robinson, *James White* [RH, 1976], 316 pp.)

IV. The Humanity of the Prophet

A. A Problem With Timidity

1. Her timidity may have been, at least in part, a residual effect from her accident (which physically scarred her for life).
 - a. At age 15: "I had never prayed in public, and had only spoken a few timid words in prayer meeting" (LS 32:1).
2. At age 17, in her 2nd vision (Dec., 1844), she was commissioned to a public ministry:
 - a. The Lord revealed three things to her:
 - (1) The "great opposition" which she would have to face.
 - (2) That (from this, and other causes) "my heart would be rent with anguish."
 - (3) But "the grace of God would be sufficient to sustain me through [it] all" (LS 69:1).
 - b. Her reaction: "I was exceedingly troubled. . . . My heart shrank in terror from the thought" (LS 69, 70). Reasons why:
 - (1) Poor health: "I was in constant bodily suffering, and to all appearances had but a short time to live."
 - (2) "I was only seventeen years of age, small and frail, unused to society, and naturally so timid and retiring that it was painful for me to meet strangers."
 - (a) "My brother Robert, but two years older than myself, could not accompany me, for he was feeble in health, and his timidity was greater than mine." (LS 69, 70).
 - (3) "I was young and timid, and felt great sadness in regard to visiting the field where fanaticism had reigned" (Letter 2, Aug. 24, 1874, in 8 MR 233).
 - c. To her anguished plea to be released from this call, God instructed her:
 - (1) Her "faith would be tested," her "courage and obedience tried; but, nevertheless, "I must go."
 - (2) "God would give me words to speak at the right time."
 - (3) "If I should wait upon Him, and have faith in His promises, I should escape both imprisonment and abuse, for He would restrain those

who would do me harm."

- (a) "If I would look to God with humble confidence and faith, no man's hand should be laid upon me to do me harm."
- (4) "An angel of heaven would be by my side and direct me when and where to go" (8 MR 233).
- (5) And God helped her to cope with timidity: "Though I took the stand as a speaker timidly at first, yet as the providence of God opened the way before me, I had confidence to stand before large audiences" (1T 104:3).

B. Distress From Family Embarrassment--Meeting Malicious Slander

1. During the first two years of her public ministry, Ellen Harmon was single; and in that age unmarried women of good character did not travel unaccompanied without chaperon, lest personal character come under question and suspicion.
 - a. Her early travel companions included:
 - (1) Her elder sister, Sarah (later Mrs. Stephen Belden).
 - (2) Her twin sister, Elizabeth.
 - (3) Louisa Foss, a sister-in-law and sister to Hazen and Samuel Foss (Ellen's older sister Mary was Mrs. Samuel Foss).
 - (4) James White, her soon-to-be husband (though the two never traveled alone before marriage).
 - (5) An Elder and Mrs. Files.
 - (6) A Brother Haskins (Letter 2, Aug. 24, 1874, p. 2; cited in 8 MR 230, 231).
2. Even with adequate chaperonage, however, enemies sullied her name and slandered her character.
 - a. And, in increasing embarrassment, her family urged her, on one trip, to return home forthwith:

When in my youth God opened the Scriptures to my mind, giving me light upon the truths of his word, I went forth to proclaim to others the precious news of salvation. My brother wrote to me, and said, "I beg of you do not disgrace the family. I will do anything for you if you will not go out as a preacher." "Disgrace the family!" I replied, "can it disgrace the family for me to preach Christ and him crucified! If you would give me all the gold your house could hold, I would not cease giving my testimony for God. I have respect unto the recompense of the reward. I will not keep silent, for when God imparts his light to me, he means that I shall diffuse it to others, according to my ability."

(ST, June 24, 1889:9, p. 370)

3. Writing to J. N. Loughborough in 1874, EGW reflected upon her early experience:
 - a. "I rejoice in God that not a spot or blemish can be fastened upon my name or character. We have in all our deportment, before and since our marriage, tried to abstain from even the appearance of evil. But the very ones God has called me to reprove and warn because of their loose morals and for outbreaking sins, have judged me and have been embittered against me because I have exposed their sins, which were covered up. They have sought to make my testimony of no account by their misrepresentations and malicious falsehoods. But I have gone forward trusting in God to vindicate my cause and to sustain me" (Letter 2, Aug., 12, 1874, in 8 MR 231).

C. Distress From Personal Sensitivity to Feelings of Those Called to Be Rebuked

1. "When the Lord first gave me messages to deliver to His people, it was hard for me to declare them, and I often softened them down and made them as mild as possible for fear of grieving some. It was a great trial to declare the messages as the Lord gave them to me. I did not realize that I was so unfaithful and did not see the sin and danger of such a course until in vision I was taken into the presence of Jesus. He looked upon me with a frown and turned His face from me. It is not possible to describe the terror and agony I then felt" (EW 76:2).
2. God gave her revelations, as He had given to no other person then alive (2T 607, 608).
3. Much of her work required giving reproof to fellow church members (5T 679).
 - a. She had to bear plain and pointed testimonies (5T 678).
 - b. She reproved the secret, private sins of others (1 SM 52; 3T 324; 5T 65, 671:)
 - (1) It was a distasteful, disagreeable task for her (LS 90, 117; 1T 73, 74, 569, 585; 5T 19, 20, 656, 657, 678, 679).
 - (2) And she dreaded it (1T 63, 64).
 - c. It was a work that few would—or could—appreciate (4T 232).
 - d. To one so reproved, she said, frankly, that she felt she had not spoken or written too plainly; and (because the message was God's, not hers), she did not regret or take back any of her plain pronouncements (5T 19, 6776).
4. But much of her ministry was such a continuing emotionally stressful situation, that, she wrote to J.N. Loughborough, in the course of correcting a false report against her:
 - a. "It is utterly false that I have ever intimated I could have a vision when I pleased. There is not a shade of truth in this. I have never said I could throw myself into visions when I pleased, for this is simply impossible.
"I have felt for years that if I could have my choice and please God as well, I would rather die than have a vision, for every vision places me under great responsibility to bear testimonies of reproof and of warning, which has ever been against my feelings, causing an affliction of soul which is inexpressible. Never have I coveted my position, and yet I dare not resist the Spirit of God and seek an easier position" (Letter 2, Aug. 24, 1874, p. 2; cited in 8 MR 238, 239).

D. Acute Privation in the White Home in Early Days of Marriage

1. In the earliest days there was the necessity of living in the homes of others--family, and fellow believers--because of obligatory travel, caused by God directing them first here, and then there, to do their work:
 - a. The first year of their married life (1846-47) James and Ellen lived in the home of the Harmon in-laws, briefly at Portland, ME, and then at Gorham, ME.
 - b. Then, in Oct., 1847, they were invited to bring Henry, their few-weeks-old son, to Topsham, ME, to set up housekeeping in the second-floor rooms of the Stockbridge Howland family. (Later the Howlands would keep little Henry with them while James and Ellen engaged in an itinerant ministry.)
 - (1) They started housekeeping with borrowed furniture, but determined to be financially independent.
 - (a) JW worked very hard hauling stone for a railroad, but could not collect his pay after the work was done.
 - (b) He then took his axe into the woods to chop cordwood. Working from sunrise to sunset, "with a continual pain in his side," he earned 50 cents a day (the daily average wage of a common laborer in the USA in the 1840's).
 - c. In vision Ellen was "shown that the Lord had been trying us for our good, and to prepare us to labor for others; that He had been stirring up our nest, lest we should settle down at ease. Our work was to labor for souls; if we had been prospered, home would be so pleasant that we would be unwilling to leave it; trials had been permitted to come upon us to prepare us for the still greater conflicts that we would meet in our travels" (LS 105, 106).
 - d. Upon another occasion JW and two others hand-mowed 100 acres of hay with a scythe, for 87.5 cents per acre, to meet travel costs; but this would largely bring to an end his efforts to earn funds for travel expense through secular employment (LS 109).
 - a. And the Whites would now begin almost non-stop travel for the next several years (SDAE [1976]: 1599).

2. Speaking of the privation and poverty of those earliest years of service, EGW wrote:

We entered upon our work penniless, with few friends, and broken in health. My husband had inherited a powerful constitution, but his health had been seriously impaired by close application to study at school, and in lecturing. I had suffered ill-health from a child, as I have related. In this condition, without means, with very few who sympathized with us in our views, without a paper, and without books, we entered upon our work. We had no houses of worship at that time. And the idea of using a tent had not then occurred to us. Most of our meetings were held in private houses. Our congregations were small. It was seldom that any came into our meetings excepting Adventists, unless they were attracted by curiosity to hear a woman speak.

At first I moved out timidly in the work of public speaking. If I had confidence, it was given me by the Holy Spirit. If I spoke with freedom and power, it was given me of God.

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Our meetings were usually conducted in such a manner that both of us took part. My husband would give a doctrinal discourse, then I would follow with an exhortation of considerable length, melting my way into the feelings of the congregation. Thus my husband sowed and I watered the seed of truth, and God did give the increase.

(1 T 75:2, 3)

3. Even after the move to Rochester, NY, in April, 1852, Ellen told of being "crippled by poverty, and compelled to exercise the most rigid economy and self denial," in a letter written six years later in a letter dated April 16, 1858:

"We are just getting settled in Rochester. We have rented an old house for one hundred and seventy-five dollars a year. We have the press in the house. Were it not for this, we should have to pay fifty dollars a year for office room. You would smile could you look in upon us and see our furniture. We have bought two old bedsteads for twenty-five cents each. My husband brought me home six old chairs, no two of them alike, for which he paid one dollar, and soon he presented me with four more old chairs without any seating, for which he paid sixty-two cents. The frames are strong, and I have been seating them with drilling. Butter is so high that we do not purchase it, neither can we afford potatoes. We use sauce in the place of butter, and turnips for potatoes. Our first meals were taken on a fireboard placed upon two empty flour barrels. We are willing to endure privations if the work of God can be advanced. We believe the Lord's hand was in our coming to this place. There is a large field for labor, and but few laborers. Last Sabbath our meeting was excellent. The Lord refreshed us with His presence."

(LS 142:2)

- a. Because the daily diet consisted largely of beans and porridge, bachelor-boarder Uriah Smith, after having lived with the family a few weeks, remarked to a comrade that he had no philosophical objection to eating beans 365 times in succession, yet when it came to making them a regular diet, he should protest! (RH, June 13, 1935, p. 10; cited in Eugene F. Durand, *Yours in the Blessed Hope, Uriah Smith* [RH, 1980]).

4. Things did not improve materially very much, even with the move to Battle Creek in 1855. Wrote Ellen, 12 years later (in a "Sketch of Experience," Dec. 19, 1866-April 25, 1867):

For fifteen months my husband had been so feeble that he had not carried his watch or purse, or driven his own team when riding out. But with the present year he had taken his watch and purse, the latter empty in consequence of our great

expenses, and had driven his own team. He had, during his sickness, refused at different times to accept money from his brethren to the amount of nearly one thousand dollars, telling them that when he was in want he would let them know it. We were at last brought to want. My husband felt it his duty, before becoming dependent, to first sell what we could spare. He had some few things at the office, and scattered among the brethren in Battle Creek, of little value, which he collected and sold. We disposed of nearly one hundred and fifty dollars worth of furniture. My husband tried to sell our sofa for the meetinghouse, offering to give ten dollars of its value, but could not. At this time our only and very valuable cow died. My husband then for the first time felt that he could receive help, and addressed a note to a brother, stating that if the church would esteem it a pleasure to make up the loss of the cow they might do so. But nothing was done about it only to charge my husband with being insane on the subject of money. The brethren knew him well enough to know that he would never ask for help unless driven to it by stern necessity. And now that he had done it, judge of his feelings and mine when no notice was taken of the matter only to use it to wound us in our want and deep affliction.

(1T 582, 583)

E. Nursing an Invalid Husband [1865-67]

1. Never in robust health, James White had serious medical problems from time to time throughout his lifetime.
 - a. He was stricken with paralysis on Aug. 16, 1865, probably as a result of overwork; and would be incapacitated for the next 15 months (1T 105).
 - b. He was hospitalized (Sept. 14-Dec. 7) at "Our Home on the Hillside," a health reform institution operated by Dr. James C. Jackson, at Dansville, NY (J. N. Loughborough, *Great Second Advent Movement*, p. 380).
 - (1) Dr. Jackson emphasized the idea of obedience to natural law, opposed tobacco and alcohol, favored natural remedies such as hydrotherapy ("water cure"), and linked healthful living with Christian morality (George W. Reid, *A Sound of Trumpets*, pp. 81, 82).
 - (2) Unfortunately, Jackson was also a promoter of some very extreme practices, which EGW was shown in vision to be not only false but dangerous to recovery of health:
 - (a) Certain amusements were held to be beneficial to the regaining of health: dancing, card-playing, theater-going, etc., and were a part of his regimen for healing.
 - (b) Salt was viewed as a poison, and its use was forbidden totally.
 - (c) Patients were required to observe *total* bed rest—complete physical and mental inaction, no exercise whatever (Dores E. Robinson, *The Story of Our Health Message*, pp. 135-39).
 - (3) God instructed her to remove her husband from "Our Home," and he was discharged on Dec. 7th.

- c. En route to Battle Creek the Whites spent three weeks at Rochester, NY, 45 miles from Dansville, where many of the believers joined various prayer groups to petition God for JW's recovery.
 - (1) On Christmas Day, 1865, morning and afternoon services of special prayer were held on his behalf in the local church.
 - (2) Christmas night EGW received a vision during a prayer session in which she was shown that SDAs had not done enough to promote health reform, and should establish an institution with a twofold task:
 - (a) To promote proper cures for healing of those already ill.
 - (b) To teach prevention of illness through proper diet and other reforms.
 - (i) The founding of the Western Health Reform Institute (later renamed the Battle Creek Sanitarium) was a direct result of that vision (SHM, pp. 139-42).
 - (3) EGW was also shown that "Satan's purpose was to destroy my husband, and bring him down to the grave. Through these earnest prayers his power has been broken. I have been shown that Satan is angry with this company who have continued for three weeks praying earnestly in behalf of this servant of God, and he is now determined to make a powerful attack on them. I was told to say to you, 'Live very near to God, that you may be prepared for what may come upon you.'"
 - (a) Within a few months of that Christmas evening prophecy, "six of the nine who engaged in that three weeks of prayer were in their graves," one of them (J. T. Orton) a murder victim! (GSAM, pp. 380-82).
 - (4) Although JW recovered from this stroke, he would experience a total of three strokes before his death 16 years later, in 1881, at the age of 60 (LS 248, 249).
2. To hasten his convalescence from the 1st stroke, the Whites sold their home in Battle Creek, and relocated on a small farm purchased at Greenville, MI, where EGW nursed her husband back to health during 1866-67 (3T 18).
 - a. During this time they began very limited pulpit work in the summer of 1867 (1T 592-600, 605, 675; LS 173-75).
 - b. On week days JW was most reluctant to engage in any exercise, because he had been converted to Dr. Jackson's erroneous theory of total mental and physical inaction in the recovery of health.
 - (1) In the spring and summer of 1867, Ellen and son Willie planted, hoed, and pruned on their new farm in Greenville; and slowly JW began to show an interest, and join in the activity in a limited way.
 - c. At haying time JW figured that surely his neighbors would come to assist an invalid; but EGW forestalled this in advance, by privately contacting each one, requesting that each contrive an excuse for non-participation at harvest time.
 - (1) JW was livid, incredulous, when he learned that none of his neighbors would assist in bringing in their hay!
 - (2) And EGW cheerfully, but resolutely, said, "We can do it ourselves:

"Let us show the neighbors that we can attend to the work ourselves. Willie and I will rake the hay and pitch it on the wagon if you will load it and drive the team.' To this he consented, but how could they make the stack? The farm was new, and they had no barn. Mrs. White volunteered to build the stack if her husband would pitch up the hay, while Willie should be raking for another load. Thus the hay was gathered and stacked, and with great pleasure they surveyed the result of their labor."—*Life Sketches of Elder James White and Mrs. Ellen G. White* (edition of 1888), p. 357.

(Cited in SHM, p. 162)

3. Subsequently, EGW would have a lot to say about the importance of physical exertion in the recovery of health (1T 554-56).

F. Rejection by the Battle Creek Church Members

1. By March, 1867, after an extended absence from Battle Creek, EGW began to receive letters in Greenville "of a discouraging character" from some of the members of the BC Church.
 - a. "For three nights I scarcely slept at all. My thoughts were troubled and perplexed" (1T 576; cf. LS 175).
2. Her prayers "came from a heart wrung with anguish, and . . . were broken and disconnected because of uncontrollable grief. The blood rushed to my brain, frequently causing me to reel and nearly fall. I had the nosebleed often, especially after making an effort to write. I was compelled to lay aside my writing, but could not throw off the burden of anxiety and responsibility upon me, as I realized that I had testimonies for others which I was unable to present" (1T 577).
3. In this emotionally distressed state, JW and EGW returned to Battle Creek, only to discover that during their past absence of three months the attitudes of many of the members there had totally turned against them:
 - a. "My husband was terribly disappointed at the cold reception which he met at Battle Creek, and I also was grieved. . . . I came home to Battle Creek like a weary child who needed comforting words and encouragement. It is painful for me here to state that we were received with great coldness by our brethren, from whom three months before, I had parted in perfect union, excepting on the point of our leaving home" (1T 579).
 - b. "At Battle Creek we met reports which had been put in circulation to injure us, but which had no foundation in truth. . . . We found a strong accusing spirit against us. . . . We felt homesick. We were so disappointed and distressed . . . I did not feel at home, as we met distrust and positive coldness instead of welcome and encouragement" (1T 580).
 - c. "Grieved in spirit beyond measure, I remained at home, dreading to go anywhere among the church for fear of being wounded. Finally, as no one

made an effort to relieve my feelings, I felt it to be my duty to call together a number of experienced brethren and sisters, and meet the [false] reports which were circulating in regard to us. Weighed down and depressed, even to anguish, I met the charges against me. . . ." (1T 580, 581)

G. Interpersonal Problems With Husband James

1. There were problems between JW and EGW over differences of opinion concerning the handling of son Edson, who had serious problems in developing fiscal responsibility:
 - a. James took a very stern, "tough love," attitude, refusing to bail Edson out from the consequences of his spendthrift ways.
 - b. Ellen, however, took a more tender, lenient, conciliatory attitude, which caused James to explode.
 - (1) Upon one occasion the manager of the Pacific Press asked JW for a recommendation with regard to filling a vacancy of shop foreman (Edson was then working in the plant). James replied, "Anyone but Edson." Edson learned of this "poor-mouthing" by his father, resented it, and a wedge was driven between them (Robinson, *James White*, pp. 261-63; Letter 5, 1880).
2. There were, inevitably, problems caused by the deterioration of JW's condition, because of his three strokes:
 - a. James (as often happens to victims of stroke) eventually experienced a complete metamorphosis of character and personality:
 - (1) He became abusive and domineering, trying to tell EGW how to run her life, her church, and her own prophetic ministry.
 - (2) In a letter to her girl friend, Lucinda Hall, Ellen wrote of James' abusive language toward her:
 - (a) "I shall use the old head God gave me until He reveals that I am wrong. Your head won't fit on my shoulders. Keep it where it belongs, and I will try to honor God in using my own. I shall be glad to hear from you, but don't waste your precious time and strength in lecturing me on matters of mere opinion" (Lt 66, May 16, 1876; cited in Ron Graybill PhD dissertation, p. 41).
 - (3) EGW's response to James was an apology.
 - (4) And the next day she wrote a follow-up letter to Lucinda, requesting her to burn the latter of May 16th (Lt. 67, May 17, 1876).
 - (a) It is a good thing Lucinda did *not* burn the letter as requested, or we today should have no knowledge of this traumatic experience through which EGW passed five years before her husband's death of another stroke.
 - (5) This letter is significant, also, because it clearly shows (in contrast with critical allegations) that:
 - (a) James recognized—and accepted—his wife's inspiration.
 - (b) Neither was manipulating the other!

- b. As a result, Ellen had, increasingly, physically to distance herself from his presence, one traveling and working in one place for the church, while the other served in another (Letters 5 and 22 in 1876; 5, 28-30, and 33 in 1880; (Robinson, p. 263).
3. And there was her grief at her own personal shortcomings, often pathetically expressed to her husband in periodic attempts at reconciliation (see pp. 21, 22, below).

H. Her Prophetic Ministry to Her Husband

1. James White was a perfectionistic workaholic--and he held very uncharitable (and unchristian) opinions and attitudes toward his critics within the church.
2. It was inevitable that divine reproof must be given even to one's husband (especially since he, at times, served as General Conference president, and held other high leadership roles within the church).
 - a. It was equally inevitable that some of this counsel would find its way into public print, delineating his "sins" and shortcomings for all to see (see **Appendix A: A Few of the 'Sins' of James White, As Revealed in the Writings of His Wife.**
 - b. And his response--often irascible--was equally predictable. Concludes one biographer:

In his own personal experience there were times when White was reprovved and corrected by the counsels of his wife. He valued highly these messages, which brought safe guidance. Nevertheless, at times, when he was reprovved for a course of action that to him appeared to be proper and right, he at first was restive. However, a prayerful approach brought him to accept the counsel. A knowledge of his allegiance to the counsels instilled confidence in the hearts of the people.

(SDAE [1976]: 1604)

I. Widowhood and Aftermath [1881-1915]

1. Ellen's last trip with James--and its heart-breaking aftermath--is touchingly recounted in her autobiography:

Little did I think, as we traveled on, that this was the last journey we would ever make together. The weather changed suddenly from oppressive heat to chilling cold. My husband took cold, but thought his health so good that he would receive no permanent injury. He labored in the meetings at Charlotte, presenting the truth with great clearness and power. He spoke of the pleasure he felt in addressing a people who manifested so deep an interest in the subjects most dear to him. "The Lord has indeed refreshed my soul," he said, "while I have been breaking to others the bread of life. All over Michigan the people are calling eagerly for help.

How I long to comfort, encourage, and strengthen them with the precious truths applicable to this time!"

On our return home, my husband complained of slight indisposition, yet he engaged in his work as usual. Every morning we visited the grove near our home, and united in prayer. We were anxious to know our duty. Letters were continually coming in from different places, urging us to attend the camp meetings. Notwithstanding our determination to devote ourselves to writing, it was hard to refuse to meet with our brethren in these important gatherings. We earnestly pleaded for wisdom to know the right course.

Sabbath morning, as usual, we went to the grove together, and my husband prayed most fervently three times. He seemed reluctant to cease pleading with God for special guidance and blessing. His prayers were heard, and peace and light came to our hearts. He praised the Lord, and said: "Now I give it all up to Jesus. I feel a sweet, heavenly peace, an assurance that the Lord will show us our duty; for we desire to do His will." He accompanied me to the Tabernacle, and opened the services with singing and prayer. It was the last time he was ever to stand by my side in the pulpit.

(1T 108, 109)

2. Her initial grief at his passing (on Aug. 6, 1881, at age 60 years, two days), subsequent loneliness, and indomitable determination to press on alone to finish her task, are all revealed in starkly pathetic terms in her subsequent writing :
 - a. "His sympathy and prayers and tears I have missed so much, so very much. No one can understand this as myself. But my work has to be done" (Ms 227, 1902, cited in 3SM 67).
 - b. Five weeks after James' death, Ellen sought a little rest and retirement in a cabin they had formerly shared as a retreat in the Rocky Mountains. There she poured out her heart to her son, Willie:
 - (1) "I miss Father more and more. Especially do I feel his loss while here in the mountains. I find it a very different thing being in the mountains with my husband and in the mountains without him. I am fully of the opinion that my life was so entwined or interwoven with my husband's that it is about impossible for me to be of any great account without him" (Letter 17, Sept. 12, 1881; cited in Robinson, p. 260).
 - c. Extracts from a number of EGW's letters to "The Bereaved" have been gathered together in Chapter 27 (pp. 257-69) of *Selected Messages*, Book Two, and in seeking "to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Cor. 1:4), Ellen repeatedly reveals the depth of her own brokenness in the loss of her husband of more than three decades.
3. Although Ellen's marriage to James extended over 36 calendar years, in actuality it lacked but 24 days of being a full 35 years—almost exactly half of her total 70

years of ministry.

a. And the question of remarriage, naturally arose under these circumstances.

(1) Stephen N. Haskell, a trusted friend and close colleague in her ministry (and the one who received more letters from EGW than any other person in the church apart from the immediate members of the White family), was widowed in 1894.

(2) Two years later he sailed to Australia, spending the rest of that decade "down under," again in close association with EGW. (He would return to the USA in 1899, EGW in 1900.)

(3) In Australia, Stephen reportedly asked Ellen to become his wife. Ellen, ever conscious of her duty to God, and yet keenly sensitive to the inmost feelings of an old family friend, gently declined, reportedly giving two reasons:

(a) I don't want you to have to share and suffer the criticisms and accusations which continue to fall upon me, in my daily ministry to others.

(b) And I have been shown that I must continue to sign my letters: "Ellen G. *White*."

(4) But, practical woman that she was, she told Haskell that he did, indeed, need a wife; and that she would assist him in picking one out!

(a) And in Feb., 1897, Haskell wed Hetty Hurd, a missionary, and trainer of Bible Instructors in Australia at the time.

b. There was nothing wrong in remarriage, itself, she later explained in 1902:

(1) "Since twenty-one years ago, when I was deprived of my husband by death, I have not had the slightest idea of ever marrying again. Why? Not because God forbade it. No. But to stand alone was best for me, that no one should suffer with me in carrying forward my work entrusted to me of God. And no one should have a right to influence me in any way in reference to my responsibility and my work in bearing my testimony of encouragement and reproof" (Ms. 227, 1902; cited in 3 SM 66, 67).

V. As the Mother of Four Sons

A. Identity of

1. Ellen's firstborn, Henry (1847-63), died prematurely at 16 years of age, of pneumonia.

2. James Edson (1849-1928), who throughout his lifetime was known by his middle name (to differentiate him from his father), became a minister, printer, and a missionary to former African-American slaves in the southern United States (often at great personal endangerment, from violence at the hands of angry plantation-owners). He sailed his *Morning Star* up and down the Mississippi River, and upon other southern waterways (see Appendix B, Ms. 56, 1911).

EGW the Person: Part One--19

3. **William Clarence** (1854-1937), known affectionately to all in the church as "Willie," not only became a minister, but after his father's decease he additionally served as counselor, business manager, and traveling companion to his mother, a task to which God had especially called him (again, see Appendix B).
4. **John Herbert** (1860) died at age two and one-half months, from erysipelas (also known medically as "St. Anthony's Fire," "an acute febrile disease associated with a local, intense, reddish inflammation of the skin and subcutaneous tissue, frequently of the face, caused by a streptococcus"—*Webster's New International Dictionary*, 2nd Edition).

B. Leaving Her Children in the Care of Others

1. EGW, in her ministry, spent a great deal of her life in travel—at the express direction of the Holy Spirit, it should be added.
 - a. Her's was a unique calling; and, as such, her life was certainly not the pattern upon which to model an ideal family life.
2. She frequently counseled mothers to spend much time with their children, especially in the early years, a condition contradicted by her own experience in being obliged to leave her infants in the care of others while she went about doing the Lord's will and work.
 - a. And, inevitably, there were those who accused her of hypocrisy at this point.
3. Though required of God to endure extended separation from her small children, Ellen, nevertheless, did not enjoy this deprivation, and once wrote:
 - a. "Maternal love throbbed just as strongly in my heart as in the heart of any mother than lived, yet I had separated from my nursing children and allowed another to act the part of mother to them" (1T 581:1 cf. pp. 101, 102; LS 106, 107, 165. For extracts from letters written to her children during their separation see *I'd Like to Ask Sister White* [RH: 1965, 160 pp.], pp. 85, 93).

C. As a Surrogate Mother

1. Ellen White kept orphans in her own home, from time to time, although she did not legally adopt any into her family; and she recommended this practice to the church at large (WM 221, 222; 1SM 34; AH 160; CG 125, 126).

D. Home Life With the Whites

1. Ellen's extended family often numbered 16 persons (1T 102; CD 488).
2. In addition to *The Adventist Home* and *Child Guidance*, for a representative sampling of her counsels on home life:
 - a. Discipline (1T 102).
 - b. The importance of the absence of dissention, and words of impatience (Ev 102,

- 103).
- c. Methods of amusing children (AH 528).
 - d. Importance of cultivating a solid reading taste in children (SD 178).
 - e. Experiences in child-training (CG 249, 253-55; 2SG 212).
3. One SDA historian, studying the relationship between EGW and her two sons, Edson and Willie, concluded that she favored Willie to the disadvantage of Edson (Ronald D. Graybill, *The Power of Prophecy: Ellen G. White and the Women Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century*. Chapter 3: "Sons of the Founders." Ph.D. dissertation, John's Hopkins University, 1983).
- a. Another historian, studying all of the sources available to Graybill, however, came to markedly different conclusions:
 - (1) William C. Sands provides contextual background of extenuating circumstances which tend somewhat to mitigate the severity of some of the EGW letters of counsel to Edson, and demonstrates other incidents in which she apparently favored Edson over Willie ("Patriarch and Prophetess: A Study of the Interpersonal Relationships Within the James S. White Family," Andrews University, March 20, 1984, 68 pp.).

VI. Was Prophet Ellen White "Perfect"?

1. At the risk of shocking you, let me be totally "up-front," and answer you, candidly--and honestly: "No!" (And, for that matter, neither were any of the other prophets throughout the entire history of prophethood!)
 - a. "In regard to infallibility, I never claimed it; God alone is infallible," she wrote in 1895 (Letter 10, 1895; cited in 1 SM 37:4).
 - b. All of the prophets were, after all, human, and, therefore, error-prone.
 - (1) For "everything that is human is imperfect" (1 SM 20:2).
2. Errors, mistakes, imperfections, inconsistencies, contradictions, character and personality flaws--defects of all sorts--are the hallmark of humanity; and all of the prophets were still human, despite their remarkable gifts, including EGW.
 - a. And some of these imperfections are evidenced in four categories:
 - (1) Literary imperfections.
 - (2) Prophetic mistakes.
 - (3) Character flaws.
 - (4) Personality defects.

A. Literary Imperfections

1. *Technical*: The original draft of any Ellen White manuscript was likely to be filled with errors in spelling, in good grammar, and in needless repetition, all of which required substantial editing before publication.
 - a. This is not surprising, in view of the fact that she never completed the first four years of formal elementary school-level training.

- b. Thus, over the years of her ministry, she hired salaried literary assistants who aided her in making the necessary corrections.
 - (1) These were, however, forbidden to:
 - (a) Change the meaning of anything she wrote.
 - (b) Write new, original material, (or to add any new ideas not in EGW's original draft).
 - c. The work of these helpers will be dwelt upon in much greater detail in a subsequent lecture on "EGW's Literary Assistants."
2. *Content Details*: Minor discrepancies in factual data appeared in her manuscripts--and, sometimes, even in the final published versions of her writings (as, also, in the writings of the Biblical prophets).
- a. For a more complete elaboration, see RWC's lecture outline on "Infallibility and Inerrancy: Does a True Prophet Ever Make a Mistake?" (based on RWC's continuing education course on that subject, published in the *Journal of Adventist Education*, Dec. 1981-Jan. 1982, and reproduced in *Anthology*, I: 81/58-71).

B. Prophetic Mistakes

1. EGW had two "problem" categories:
 - a. Unfulfilled prophecies.
 - b. Giving wrong counsel, by word and by pen.
 - (1) These, too, have also been dealt with in *ibid.*

C. Character Flaws

1. *Deviousness*: Some would doubtless hold that the incident (see p. 13) in which EGW went behind her husband's back, to persuade surrounding farmers not to assist in bringing in the hay of their invalid neighbor on the White farm, in order to force her husband back into physical manual labor, for his health's sake, was disingenuous, if not downright devious.
 - a. Perhaps it was. But so was Abraham's telling an Egyptian Pharaoh that Sarah, his wife, was merely his "sister"--to save his own life (Gen. 12:12, 13).
2. *Sarcasm*: EGW, upon more than one occasion, descended to sarcasm (which is not a notable characteristic of a true Christian spirit) to "put down" something she (and the Lord) opposed:
 - a. In referring to General Conference President George I. Butler's 10-part, six-month series of RH articles advocating "degrees of inspiration," published between January and June of 1884, she wrote:
 - (1) "The Lord did not inspire the articles on inspiration" (1 SM 12:1).
 - b. In referring to the false, counterfeit "gift of tongues,"
 - (1) She characterized this as "unmeaning gibberish which they call the unknown tongue," saying that it is not only "unknown . . . by man, but [it is also unknown] by the Lord and all heaven" as well (1 T 412:1).

- (2) And, six pages later in the same testimony, she prayed, "May God deliver His people from such gifts" (1 T 418:2).

D. Personality Defects

1. Writing to her husband, James, on May 16, 1876, five years before his death, Ellen apologized for personal feelings which she herself characterized as "wrong:"
 - a. "It grieves me that I have said or written anything to grieve you. Forgive me and I will be cautious not to start any subject to annoy and distress you. We are living in a most solemn time and we cannot afford to have in our old age differences to separate our feelings.
"I may not view all things as you do, but I do not think it would be my place or duty to try to make you see and feel as I feel. Wherein I have done this, I am sorry. I want a humble heart, a meek and quiet spirit. Wherein my feelings have been permitted to arise in any instance, it was wrong.
"I wish that self should be hid in Jesus. I wish self to be crucified. I do not claim infallibility, or even perfection of Christian character. I am not free from mistakes and errors in my life. Had I followed my Saviour more closely, I should not have had to mourn so much my unlikeness to His dear image" (Letter 27, 1876; cited in Graybill Ph.D. dissertation, p. 41.)
2. Writing in her diary on March 31, 1868, eight years earlier, she confided:
 - a. "I have not felt and spoken as I ought to James. The burden of writing and other extra labors borne for the church have told upon me seriously. I feel that the enemy is getting advantage of me. I acknowledged to my husband I had erred" (Ms. 14, 1868; cited in *I'd Like to Ask Sister White*, p. 45).
3. In a letter to her husband on March 18, 1880, a scant year before his death, she confessed:
 - a. "I feel every day like deeply repenting before God for my hardness of heart, and because my life has not been more in accordance with the life of Christ. I weep over my own hardness of heart, my life which has not been a correct example to others. . . . Forgive me for any words of impatience that have escaped my lips, every seeming act of wrong in your sight. I mean to make straight paths for my feet and to have control over my own spirit, to keep my own heart in the love of God, and make sure work for eternity" (Letter 5, 1880; cited in 11 MR 27).
4. And in 1886 she would write an appeal:
 - a. "May God help us to have a sense of our own shortcomings, and put away the criticism and severity which we have woven into our characters. . . . Oh, how wearied Christ must be with our stupidity, our disobedience, our oft rebellion, and yet He does not give us up" (Letter 19, 1886).

Conclusion

1. The prophet, while supernaturally given information ("revelation") by God, through a "pipeline" not available to non-prophets, and while experiencing supernatural physical phenomena in this process of "inspiration," is still a basic human being,

who still functions in most ways just like every other of his/her peers.

- a. He/she makes mistakes, sins, and must seek forgiveness of God, just like other humans.
2. There is some truth in the position held by the school of "historical conditioning" that the prophet is a "child of his times," and is thus materially influenced by them.
 - a. But Evangelicals, however, would deny that the prophet is, therefore, the hapless, helpless, hopeless captive victim of his environmental times.
 - b. For there is evidence to the contrary, that the prophets are able to transcend and rise above their times in significant ways, through the direct interposition of the Holy Spirit.
 3. Arthur L. White relates a very moving story about his grandmother who steadfastly throughout her life refused to be a criterion for any other Christian's experience with the Lord:
 - a. A new housekeeper and nurse had come to the White home. She was a woman in her twenties, and as she crossed the continent to enter Mrs. White's employ, she contemplated, "I am going to the home of the prophet. How will it be?" The evening of the first day Mrs. White and the new housekeeper were thrown together for a time, and after quite a silence, Mrs. White spoke, pausing between each sentence:

"Sister Nelson, you have come into my home. You are to be a member of my family. You may see some things in me that you do not approve of. You may see things in my son Willie you do not approve of. I may make mistakes, and my son Willie may make mistakes. I may be lost at last, and my son Willie may be lost.
"But the dear Lord has a remnant people that will be saved and go through to the Kingdom, and it remains with each of us as individuals whether or not we will be one of that number."—As related to the author in 1939 by Mrs. M. J. Nelson.

(Messenger to the Remnant, p. 127)

4. Ellen White may perhaps be best summed up in the words of a high church leader who knew her and worked closely with her for most of his ministerial career.
 - a. Wrote Arthur G. Daniells, president of the General Conference (1901-22), who worked with Ellen White both in the United States and in Australia, within weeks of his own death, in the conclusion of a major work dealing with *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy* (Pacific Press, 1936):

In this present year of our Lord 1935, Mrs. White has been at rest twenty years, while I have been toiling on. I had had twenty-three years of direct observation of her lifework. Since her death I have now had twenty additional years for thoughtful reflection and study of that life and its fruits. Now, at an advanced age, with the constraint of expressing only sober, honest truth, I can say that it is my deep conviction that Mrs. White's life far transcends the life of anyone I have ever known or with whom I have been associated. She was uniformly pleasant, cheerful, and courageous. She was never careless, flippant, or in any way cheap

in conversation or manner of life. She was the personification of serious earnestness regarding the things of the kingdom. I never once heard her boast of the gracious gift God had bestowed upon her, or of the marvelous results of her endeavors. She did rejoice in the fruitage, but gave all the glory to Him who wrought through her.

I realize that these are grave statements, but they come from the deepest conviction and soundest judgment that I am capable of rendering. They are uttered in the sobering atmosphere of my last illness, as I face the Judge of all the earth, before whose presence I realize that I soon shall stand.

(Page 368)

Postscript: Part II of this lecture will deal with "The Wit and Wisdom of the Prophet."

Acknowledgments: A special debt of gratitude is owed Alta R. Robinson, a now-retired researcher, and James R. Nix, associate director, both of the Ellen G. White Estate, for their special contribution to the development of this paper.

List of Appendixes

- Appendix A:** A Few of the "Sins" of James White, as Revealed in the Writings of His Wife
- Appendix B:** The Work of James Edson and William Clarence White

For Further Study:

1. Roger W. Coon, *The Great Visions of Ellen G. White*, Vol. I (RH: 1992, 157 pp.); see especially Chapters 1 and 2.
2. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: Messenger to the Remnant* (RH: 1969, 128 pp.); Brochure 5 deals especially with "Ellen G. White--The Human Interest Story."
3. "Ellen Gould (Harmon) White," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, Revised Edition (1976), pp. 1584-92.

Appendix A

A Few of the "Sins" of James White As Revealed in the Writings of His Wife

1. He kept no personal financial accounts (1T 607).
2. He "erred in:"
 - a. Dwelling upon unpleasant past experiences (3T 97, 98).
 - b. Giving way to despondency (3T 292).
 - c. Sometimes giving too severe reproof (3T 508).
 - d. Murmuring (*ibid.*).
3. He was "inclined to:"
 - a. Become discouraged, distrustful (3T 96).
 - b. Shrink from making efforts in accordance with his faith (1T 619, 620).
4. He "sometimes spoke:"
 - a. Impulsively (3T 501).
 - b. So as to give [intended] offense (*ibid.*).
 - c. Unadvisedly, under the pressure of care (3T 86, 501).
5. He "needed to:"
 - a. Learn the spirit of forgiveness (3T 97).
 - b. Develop a forgiving spirit against brethren who had injured him (1T 613, 614).
6. He thought it wrong to spend time in social enjoyment--a true workaholic! (1T 519).
 - a. His zeal of overwork at times led to his injury (3T 88).
 - b. He tried to crowd two days work into one (GW 244).
 - c. His wife cautioned him against excessive work (1T 517, 518).
7. He was "too exacting" toward persons who had wronged him (1T 614).
8. He tended to view matters in an exaggerated light (3T 502).
9. As a result, his traits often led him into difficulties.

Appendix B

The Work of James Edson and William Clarence White

"God has given to every man his work" (UL 268:3; cf. UL 235:2, et. al.) is a recurring theme in the writings of Ellen White. She was the mother of four sons, two of whom survived to manhood, and both of whom became ordained ministers in the SDA Church. Much public attention has been given to EGW's frequent remarks that God had ordained that her son, William C. ("Willie"), be a special helper to her after the death of her husband, James White. But God also had special plans for her other, senior, surviving son, James Edson. In Manuscript 56, 1911, she writes concerning this special work for each son, in a most interesting manner:

"He had chosen my sons to be my helpers. My son Willie especially was assigned the work of ministry with me to advise and counsel how to prepare the communications that were to come to the people. 'I will be his wisdom, I will be his judgment, and he shall work out in connection with his mother the important matter to come before the people. Select helpers must be given, for a great work is to be done. I will be your wisdom, I will be your judgment, for your son to carry out understandingly the matters I shall reveal to you; that which is for the churches must be brought out distinctly in print that the churches may have it.

"I will appoint both your children, that they shall strengthen your hands in sound judgment. But your youngest son shall carry the work with you, and I have appointed the eldest his work to do. They must be united firmly in harmony and in no way fail or be discouraged. They are to aid one another, to stand firmly, unitedly in heart and mind. But the youngest will I endow with special wisdom for a special performance of this responsibility to work intelligently.

"Both will be your helpers, in perfect agreement in conducting different lines of missionary work, standing firmly, unitedly, for great battles are to be fought. Your sons are of different temperaments. Your youngest will be your dependence, but the eldest shall be My minister, to open the Word to very many people, and to organize the work in various lines. Temptations will come to the eldest, that preference in judgment shall be given him above the youngest. But this cannot be. Both are to be guided by the light given their mother, and stand in perfect harmony. Trials will come, but unitedly the victories will be gained.

"There will be the character in the youngest that he will be counsellor in large degree, and receive the words I shall give you and act upon them. Let no jealousy come in because of the position I have appointed the youngest. I have put My Spirit upon him, and if the eldest will respect the position given the youngest, both shall become strong to build up the work in different lines.

"The eldest must be standing as ready to be counselled by the youngest, for I have made him My counsellor. And because I have given him, from his birth, special traits of character, which the eldest has not, there is to be no contention, no strife, no division; but they are to be sanctified in the same work, to bring about the desired end.'

EGW the Person: Part One--27

"Much more was definitely explained in the words I may hereafter write, but I would not pen them now.

"The Lord said, 'I will prove them both, but both must stand distinct and separate from influences which will be brought to bear to break up the plans I have marked out.. But the youngest is fitted for a work that will make him counsellor; and, receiving the words from his mother, both must carefully consider matters that I shall give, for there are times and places for the subjects to be taken up, and for the subjects to be left for certain times and certain places. The Lord will be your guide, if you work, obedient to all that I shall command you.

"This matter is not to be opened to your children, for both are to be proved. The time will come when you may have to speak all that I shall give you, but both sons are to be workmen, and are to be at perfect agreement, if they accomplish the work. They are to [be] faithful in performing [it]. They are to stand distinct, and not bound up with men, to be influenced by them. I am your and their Counsellor.

"There will be a determination on the part of Satan to disarrange and break up My plan. A constant, ever-increasing confidence in the Word of God, and in the light given My servant, will keep these two workers blended; but the younger must be counsellor, when needed, to the elder. The Lord will work on the minds and hearts. If each will be guided by the Word of God and prayer, the Lord's name will be glorified.

"These things are not to be revealed to either until I shall instruct you. Now you are at this period to open this matter to your sons; and the instruction given, if obeyed, will be able to place things on the right bearing. You, as a mother, have suffered much; but you have not failed nor been discouraged. The eldest son has been sorely tempted, and if he had closed his ears and heart to unwise counsellors, he would have stood a strong man. Now, after he knows My purpose, the eldest must be transformed, and the youngest must stand in the counsel of the Lord. He has borne his test wisely, and the Lord will help him to continue the work appointed."

**A Special Place, A Special Task
For EACH**

COL 327:0 "Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God [at any given moment in our lives" {emphasis supplied].

MH 476:1 "Every man [and woman] has his [her] place in the eternal plan of heaven."

COL 301:0 "There is a place and a work for all."

4T 608:1 "One man [or woman] cannot do the work of all. Each has his [her] respective place, and his [her] special work. . . "

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Ellen G. White: The Person--II The Wit and Wisdom of the Prophet

Roger W. Coon

Introduction

1. The eras of Ellen G. White [1827-1915] and of British Queen Victoria [1819-1901] were almost coterminous.
 - a. And both were generally perceived as starchy, strait-laced, dour, humorless.
 - (1) The only statement of the monarch recorded in John Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations* is the well-known aphorism: "We are not amused."
 - (a) It was her reaction upon being shown an unflattering caricature sketch of herself, executed by the Honorable Alexander Grantham Yorke, the Queen's Groom-in-Waiting [1884-1901].
2. And in the "Victorian Era," of which Ellen White was a conspicuous part, the use of humor in the pulpit was widely condemned in the eyes of the public generally, as also in SDA circles, and especially by their prophet.
 - a. Charles Haddon Spurgeon [1834-92], English fundamentalist Baptist minister, preacher, and founder of London's famed Metropolitan Tabernacle, is characterized by the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (XI [1989]: 84) as a "celebrated preacher whose sermons . . . were often spiced with humour."
 - (1) One Sunday, following the service, a woman from the congregation greeted Spurgeon at the door with reproof for injecting humor into his sermon.
 - (2) Spurgeon reportedly responded—with characteristic grace and (more) humor: "Madam, you'd forgive me, if you knew how much I suppressed!"
 - b. And EGW would address the question of the use of humor—and its appropriateness (or lack thereof), especially in the pulpit of her church, upon more than one occasion.
3. The topic of humor in general, and the EGW proscriptions against employing it in the pulpit, are of particular interest to two groups within Adventism today:
 - a. *SDA Youth*: Regrettably, most tend to view her as a totally humorless little old lady in high-button shoes, sitting upon a stool, and sternly pointing a bony finger at the youth of her church, and screeching at them in a high-pitched voice, hissing: "Whatever it is that you're doing, if it's fun, STOP!"

- (1) Most SDA youth would emphatically deny the suggestion that she ever possessed a sense of humor.
- (2) They tend to view her as a totally unpleasant, negative person who would be about as much fun to visit as a root-canal dentist; and if they had to call upon her, they would seek to make the visit as brief as possible!
- (3) Tragically, many hate her with a cordiality that is distressing to those of us who have come genuinely to know the "real" Ellen White--and found her to be a totally-delightful "fun-person," possessed of a delicious sense of humor.
- b. *SDA Clergy*: EGW had a great deal to say about jesting, joking, and levity--particularly in the SDA pulpit; and almost all of it was negative in character.
 - (1) Many, if not most, of her strictures were directed to the ministry of her church.
 - (2) Much of it was in reference to the pulpit.
 - (3) In a word, she was against its use.
 - (4) And many SDA clergy experience varying degrees of twinges of guilt when they bring into their sermons anything that might bring a smile to the face of any hearer.
4. Some ministers, however, who have given careful study to her writings, with a thoughtful, prayerful, earnest desire to arrive at God's truth, have felt that they find in those writings (and in her own pulpit practice) a legitimate distinction being drawn--admittedly, a very fine line of demarcation-- between:
 - a. "Jesting," "joking," and "levity," on the one hand (concerning which, admittedly, nothing good or positive may be said); and
 - b. A judicious, deft use of wholesome, legitimate humor, which would be more likely to evoke a smile on the hearer's face than engender outright laughter, on the other

I. Toward a Christian Theology of Joy and Laughter

A. From Scripture

1. Christ's Beatitudes (as found in the KJV) traditionally begin with "Blessed are"
 - a. Many contemporary translators, however, render "blessed" more accurately, in today's English, as, "Happy are"
 - b. Jesus certainly made laughter a highly desirable commodity when He declared, "Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh" (Luke 6:21 KJV).
 - c. Jesus had a lot to say about the desirability of joy:
 - (1) Repenting sinners fill all heaven with joy (Luke 15:7).
 - (2) And His expressly stated goal for His followers was "that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11).

- d. Even a cursory examination of "joy" in a concordance of the New Testament evidences its importance and desirability.
2. Interestingly, the Old Testament also places a premium upon joy and laughter:
- a. The name ("Isaac") that Sarah gave to her long-delayed first-born is translated into English as "laughter," for, as she declared with irrepressible glee, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh [for joy] with me" (Genesis 21:6, NIV).
 - b. David also voted in favor of gladness:
 - (1) "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it" Psalm 118:24, NIV).
 - (2) "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the lands! Serve the Lord with gladness!" (Psalm 100:12, RSV).
 - (3) "Break forth into joyous song and sing praises! Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together" (Psalm 98:4, 8, RSV).
 - (4) "Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy" (Psalm 126:2, NIV).
 - c. And David's son, Solomon (who also spoke with David's gift of divinely-inspired utterance) agreed heartily with his father:
 - (1) "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine" (Proverbs 17:22).
 - (2) "To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven. [There is] . . . a time to weep, and a time to laugh" (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4)
 - (a) (And, manifestly, let it also be added, that there is a time *not* to laugh!)

B. From Ellen White

1. "Christians should be the most cheerful and happy people that live. They may have the consciousness that God is their Father and their everlasting Friend. But many professed Christians do not correctly represent the Christian religion. They appear gloomy, as if under a cloud" (MYP 363).

C. Some General Observations

1. With all due respect to Alfred North Whitehead, he could not possibly have been well versed in Scripture—and he certainly was dead wrong—when he wrote: "The total absence of humor from the Bible is one of the most singular things in all literature" (cited in Rudolf Flesch, ed., *The New Book of Unusual Quotations* [NY: Harper & Row, 1966], p. 165).
 - a. Such a declaration makes sense only if one draws the narrowest definition possible, equating "humor" merely with "joke."
2. Indeed, Quaker theologian D. Elton Trueblood [1900-94; 37 books] wrote a 127-pp. treatise on *The Humor of Christ: A Significant But Often Unrecognized Aspect of Christ's Teaching* [Harper, 1964]:

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- a. Among the examples he cites are Christ's references to King Herod being a "fox" (Luke 13:32), and camels going through the eye of a needle (Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25).
 - b. Trueblood also makes a most helpful--indeed, valuable--analysis of Christ's humor by pointing out--correctly--that it was always *situation*-focused, rather than merely *word*-focused.
 - (1) Situational humor readily translates from one language to another, whereas puns and other plays on words immediately lose their pungency (and, also, often their intelligibility, as well) in translation.
3. Perhaps one key to unlocking the apparent paradox of the Bible's appearing to favor joy, lightness, and humor, while Ellen White apparently seems to interdict all manifestations, is to draw (as, I believe, she certainly drew) the distinction between "good" humor and "bad" humor.
- a. "*Good Humor*:" deft wit that never destroys, lightly and judiciously used for a good ("right") purpose.
 - b. "*Bad Humor*:" those categories against which EGW inveighed: "jesting," "joking," "levity."
 - (1) And it may be worth noting at this point that EGW not only interdicted all three categories as far as the clergy in the pulpit are concerned, but also she appears to outlaw them across-the-board for SDA Christians in general social situations.
4. That God Himself, indeed, has a sense of humor, we may be sure (and the creation of the kangaroo, giraffe, and hippopotamus are sometimes offered, tongue-in-cheek, as prime examples of it); but this should never be confused or equated with God's *sardonic laugh of derision* at the wicked; for we note the anthropomorphisms involved, and understand that *these* are *not* such manifestations of the divine sense of humor:
- a. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in . . . derision" (Psalm 2:4).
 - b. "The Lord shall laugh at him; for He seeth that his day is coming" (Psalm 37:13).
 - c. "But Thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them; Thou shalt have all the heathen in derision" (Psalm 59:8).
 - d. "I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when you fear" (Proverbs 1:26).

II. The SDA Minister and the Pulpit

1. As we approach the counsels of the inspired writings, we must immediately be aware of--and seek to avoid--a potential danger inherent in the situation: rationalization.
 - a. Diogenes Laertus [c. 200 A.D.] coined an expression (which would later be borrowed by Milton's epic, *Paradise Lost*: the attempt to "make the worse appear the better reason" (Laertus, *Socrates*, V; *Paradise Lost*, line 112).
 - b. Still earlier, Jesus had warned against "making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition" (Mark 7:13; cf. Matthew 15:6).

2. And so we must beware--and not be guilty--of the practice of "watering down" the instruction of God
 - a. We realize that in seeking to explain, we may go too far, and wind up simply "explaining away" the truth of the passage.
 - b. This we simply must not do.

A. The Ellen White Counsels

1. Most of the EGW strictures against humor deal with the inadmissibility of "jesting," "joking," and "levity."
 - a. They are grouped together, largely, in two compilations:
 - (1) Ev 206-11: "Stories, Anecdotes, Jestings, and Joking."
 - (2) Ev 640-44: "Avoiding Jestings and Joking."
2. Typical are these five statements:
 - a. "Amusement is not to be interwoven with instruction in the Scriptures. When this is done, the hearers, amused by some cheap nonsense, lose the burden of conviction" (Ev 210, 211).
 - b. "Some form the habit of relating anecdotes in their discourses, which have the tendency to amuse and remove from the mind of the hearer the sacredness of the Word which they are handling" (Ev 208, 209).
 - c. "Let them be careful, lest by attempting during their discourse to cause laughter, they dishonor God" (Ev 211).
 - d. "If he is a frivolous, joking man, he is not prepared to perform the duty laid upon him by the Lord. . . . The flippant words that fall from his lips, the trifling anecdotes, the words spoken to create a laugh, are all condemned by the Word of God and are entirely out of place in the sacred desk" (Ev 643).
 - e. "All sang-froid [sic] which is so common . . . , all lightness and trifling, all jesting and joking, must be seen . . . to be . . . a denial of Christ. It unfits the mind for solid thought and solid labor. It makes men inefficient and superficial, and spiritually diseased. . . . Let every minister be sedate . . . yet . . . cheerful and happy" (Ev 645).

B. Some Important Distinctions

1. We do well, before going further, to make some clear distinctions we believe to be implicit in the above inspired counsels:
 - a. Anecdotes that are "trifling" are dismissed out of hand; but EGW clearly did not intend, by this statement, to interdict the use of *all* illustrative material in sermons.
 - b. Interestingly (and, perhaps even significantly), while there is a class of "amusement" which is properly, accurately, characterized as "cheap nonsense" (the kind that causes the hearers in a religious service to lose the burden of Holy Spirit-indicted conviction), a case may perhaps yet be made for "innocent amusement(s)," expressions Mrs. White employed 19 times in her published writings--and these may have positive benefits.

- c. The deliberately intentional "attempt . . . to cause laughter" is properly condemned--and may well be categorized as "joking for the joke's sake."
 - (1) But need this eliminate *anything* that might bring a smile to the hearer's face, or tend to relieve a tense moment in a decision-making sermon on testing-truth? I think not.
- d. The proper condemnation of such activities as being "flippant," "frivolous," "trifling," "jesting," and "joking," is made in the EGW writings in a clearly defined context.
 - (1) And perhaps we do not well to stretch the application, to make it universal.
 - (a) For Jesus used humor in some of His discourses, and so did EGW (as we shall note in Section V, below).
 - (2) Could the *intended purpose* of the speaker, and the *manner* in which he proceeds, have any conditional bearing in the matter. We think the evidence will demonstrate "Yes."

C. The Position of Contemporary Preachers

1. The late William Fagal, Sr. [1919-89], founder of the "Faith For Today" Adventist telecast (May, 1950), had this to say about the use of humor in the pulpit in general, and in his own practice in particular:
 - a. "I can't believe that Ellen White meant that there should never be any light touch to life. I draw a distinction--even as I'm sure she drew a distinction--between jesting and joking on the one hand, and a judicious light touch of humor, of wit, on the other."
 - b. "The man who cracks jokes, who takes his work in the pulpit lightly, not seriously, is to be condemned. I'm against humor merely for the sake of humor. . . . I condemn the man who gets up just to get the people to laugh."
 - c. "But there's good humor and there's bad. That which is clearly inappropriate should never be used. I never make the people laugh for the laugh's sake. I never shock for shock's sake. I never use the after-dinner sort of wit. . . . And I never, never make puns upon [the words of] the Scriptures."
(Roger W. Coon, *The Public Speaking of William A. Fagal of "Faith For Today:" America's First National Television Pastor*. [Ph.D. thesis, Michigan State University, 1969], I: 306, 307).
2. Southern Methodism's late Clovis Chappell, unquestionably the 20th-Century's foremost exponent of the biographical sermon form (who published one volume of sermons each year for 40 years, including some on preaching), mirrors the senior Fagal's (and, I believe, EGW's) distinction between "bad" and "good" humor, as regards its "sanctified" use in the pulpit:
 - a. "All we do is bring joy, a little kick, into life. . . . Humor? I couldn't get along without it. It's better to have bad eyesight than no sense of humor. There is, of course, a danger here--that one will major on minors. I tell few jokes, actually; and never joke for the joke's sake. Humor that counts is

spontaneous—there is much humor in the Bible (the Pharisee who strains the gnat out of his wine, and then gulps down a camel!). No, laughter and tears are the warp and woof of life. If you leave them out of preaching, you are leaving out life itself."

(Roger W. Coon interview with Clovis G. Chappell, Waverly, TN, June 11, 1962; cited in Ph.D. thesis, p. 327).

D. External Historical Context

1. It may be appropriate here to examine a facet of the external historical context of Ellen White's counsel against the use of humor in the pulpit:
 - a. William Ashley Sunday (better known to millions in the first two decades of the 20th Century—and undoubtedly to Ellen White, who died in 1915—as "Billy Sunday") was, according to Clemson University religious historian Charles H. Lippy "the most popular evangelist of the time" [1896-1920], who reportedly preached to more than 100 million people.
 - (1) A former baseball player, this famous evangelist "used his baseball background, slangy language, flamboyant manners, and highly developed promotional methods, to become the most popular evangelist of the time" ("Billy Sunday," *World Book Encyclopedia*, XVIII [1993]: 989, 990).
2. Historian James H. Smylie mirrors the Lippy assessment in a parallel biographical sketch, noting that this popular revivalist "preached a vivid version of an evangelical-fundamentalist theology, and he was noted for flamboyant acrobatics in the pulpit" ("Billy Sunday," *Encyclopedia Americana*, XXVI [1991]: 20, 21).
3. EGW certainly did not want *her* evangelists performing like religious slapstick comedians!
 - a. And it is quite highly probable that some SDA evangelist of that day, noting Billy Sunday's consistently successful drawing and holding of large crowds, were sorely tempted to emulate the flamboyant preacher's highly unorthodox tactics.
 - b. If so, it would go a long way toward explaining the vehemence in EGW's stringent strictures against "flippant" religious comedians parading as preachers in the pulpit!

E. Effective Secular Speakers Mirror Contemporary Theological Counsels

1. Interestingly, echoes of this distinction between "bad" humor ("joking," "jesting," "and "levity"), and the "good" variety (a deft, light, judicious touch), are now being heard from the ranks of effective secular platform speakers.
 - a. Bob Levoy, the dynamic director of Practice Consultants, who conducted management seminars for high-income professional groups throughout the 1960s, when asked by an interviewer if he told jokes in his platform presentations, replied:

- (1) "I don't tell any. I may make a lot of funny remarks, but I don't tell jokes. I don't tell jokes at my meetings, and I don't like our speakers [from Practice Consultants] to tell them. I want them to be comfortable in their presentations; but, more than that, coming out with six or seven snappy stories is not my idea of a good way of starting a meeting with a sophisticated audience.

"I love to make people laugh, but not to the extent of relinquishing what I think is worthwhile information. I think joke-telling is overdone at a lot of meetings" ("Bob Levoy, Slayer of Sacred Cows," *Meetings and Conventions*, August-September, 1967, p. 59; cited in Coon thesis, p. 329).

III. Practical Benefits From the Use of "Good" Humor

A. Therapeutic Benefits

1. The medical benefits are increasingly being noted by contemporary writers:

- a. The Hebrew word translated "merry" means "joyful," "glad." The kind of merriment intended is not the boisterous hilarity that is sometimes justified by reference to this Bible verse. A joyful heart is one that knows peace, freedom from guilt and fear, and contentment with the circumstances of life.

Four hundred years ago, Robert Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, cited authorities who said, "Humor purges the blood, making the body lively and fit for any manner of employment." The philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), believed a hearty laugh to be "a good way to jog internally without going outdoors."

On the other hand, research of grieving persons has revealed a decrease in the number of white blood cells, the "soldiers" that combat germs. The body's defenses against disease are weakened by grief. Significantly, the place where blood cells are manufactured is bone marrow.

(Virginia E. Davidson and Ernest H.J. Steed, *Proverbs*, Adult Sabbath School Lessons, Teachers' Edition, Fourth Quarter, 1991, p. 117)

2. In their book *Time Out: Daily Devotions for Workaholics*, Gary E. Hurst, Mike Kachura, and Larry D. Sides, answer the question: "What happens when we laugh?":

- a. The brain releases chemicals called endorphins, which give us our feelings of well-being. On the other hand, stress depletes vital neurochemicals, bringing on depression and anxiety. It is very important, therefore, to cultivate your sense of humor. God presented this concept long before science was able to verify it. A merry heart necessitates that we allow ourselves the opportunity to relax and enjoy the fruits of our labors. We must be careful not to write off lightness as foolish and trivial. Do not be fooled into thinking that life is all serious business.

[Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991, Selection for January 11]

3. A case in point: Norman Cousins [1912-1990], American editor, author, and "one of the most influential magazine editors of the 20th Century," was diagnosed with a debilitating collagen disease in the 1970s that doctors expected would kill him shortly. He finally died in 1990, after living almost 20 years longer than medical science then would have predicted. He outwitted the odds against him by immersing himself in humor.
 - a. "His book *Anatomy of an Illness* (1979) describes his theory that positive emotions such as hope and laughter produce biochemical changes in the body and aid recovery.

- b. "Cousins pursued his theory as professor of medical humanities at UCLA, and it was the theme of his last book, *Head First: The Biology of Hope* (1989)" (*Encyclopedia Americana* VIII [1994]: 121).
- c. He would do anything that would make him laugh—watch cartoons and Laurel and Hardy films, read anything that would produce a guffaw.
- d. And it worked! His recovery proved to be much more swift than medical science then could have predicted.
- e. Jeris Bragan has told the story in greater detail:

Laughter produces great emotional strength, even in the face of death. Exactly how this works may be uncertain, but the saying is indeed true: He who laughs lasts! Gloom gobbles up strength. Joy multiplies it. The clinically depressed person hardly has the strength to begin each day.

At age 50 Norman Cousins suffered from a chronic debilitating disease of the connective tissue that involved severe inflammation of the spine and joints, making it painful even to turn over in bed. In *Anatomy of an Illness* he described how laughter and joy relieved his pain and helped him move toward health again.

Intrigued by Cousins' theory, researchers at UCLA's prestigious medical school invited him to join their staff in 1979. After 10 years of the most scientific testing of "the laughter connection" in maintaining health, Cousins published *Head First: The Biology of Hope and the Healing Power of the Human Spirit*. In this work he marshalled compelling laboratory evidence that showed how love, hope, faith, will to live, festivity, purpose, and determination make a radical difference in how many patients recover from serious illness.

Today some hospitals for chronically ill patients have "laugh rooms" in which humorous magazines, books, and movies can be used by patients—with remarkable results.

Consider this modern development in medicine and then read this 3,000-year-old verse from Proverbs: "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones" (Prov. 17:22, NIV).

When things go badly, when no one is very happy with anyone else, when all is tension and despair, what we often need is what God offers us in abundance—more joy, more laughter.

["Lighten Up! Laugh!," *Adventist Review*, July 25, 1991, pp. 10, 11]

4. Finally, during the long reign of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, and in the former USSR, church leaders and members (as, indeed, the public at large), found humor an absolute imperative for mere survival itself.
 - a. By being able to laugh at the absurdities of their political (and other) leaders, they succeeded in managing to cope with day-to-day situations which were otherwise intolerable.

B. Benefits to Speakers

1. Proper, appropriate humor that illustrates a point, can be a "shaft into hearts," according to William A. Fagal, Sr.:
 - a. "If in an illustration there is something humorous that is right to the point, then humor can bring a great truth" (cited in Coon thesis, p. 307).
2. Humor has proven to be an excellent means of gaining rapport with an audience, especially at the beginning of a presentation.
3. It may also serve as a vital, on-going, feedback function as the speaker, for it enables him or her to discern whether or not the point just made "got across" or not.
4. Most experienced speakers—and especially is this true in evangelism—recognize that there are times when what they have to say—the point that they wish to put

across--may be a bit "heavy," tension-producing.

- a. A judicious use of humor may help in relieving this tension-strain of the audience/congregation at an important juncture.

IV. Dangers in the Use of "Bad" Humor

A. In Interpersonal Relationships

1. EGW very perceptibly recognized that some humor not only isn't funny, it isn't intended to be!
 - a. Sometimes one may use "humor" to disguise a barbed arrow of criticism.
 - b. This is often particularly true in the marriage relationship, where one partner may "joke" about the other, ostensibly in good humor, but actually with the ulterior intent to wound, even destroy, the other.
 - c. And in 1855, when she herself was yet 28 years of age, she wrote these profoundly moving words:

Sanctity of the Family Circle.--There is a sacred circle around every family which should be preserved. No other one has any right in that sacred circle. The husband and wife should be all to each other. The wife should have no secrets to keep from her husband and let others know, and the husband should have no secrets to keep from his wife to relate to others. The heart of his wife should be the grave[yard] for the faults of the husband, and the heart of the husband the grave[yard] for his wife's faults.

Never should either party indulge in a joke at the expense of the other's feelings. Never should either the husband or wife in sport or in any other manner complain of each other to others, for frequently indulging in this foolish and what may seem perfectly harmless joking will end in trial with each other and perhaps estrangement.

I have been shown that there should be a sacred shield around every family.

[Manuscript 1, 1855; cited in AH 177:1]

B. In the Adventist Pulpit--The Misuse of Humor

1. Levity, inevitably, inexorably, leads to irreverence.
 - a. Joking for the sake of the joke is inappropriate, beneath the dignity of the sacred desk
 - (1) A preacher is out of place when he appears as a stand-up comic/comedian.
2. Furthermore, humor is often unethically used by the clergy (as well as others)--especially in evangelism, with the intent to manipulate the emotions of the audience for personal advantage.
 - a. It is a well-known psychological (and physiological) fact that if you can make someone laugh, first, it is a much easier task then to get them to cry.
 - b. And, of course, if you can get them to cry, it is then only a short step to "wrapping them around your little finger"--and get them to make the desired response.
3. Aroused emotions sometimes provide a handy climate (and rationalization) for obtaining "decisions" for the Lord.
 - a. Now, let it be said, there *is* a totally *proper* place for emotion in preaching.

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- (1) The late great Presbyterian preacher, Peter Marshall, declared that emotion might be legitimately used to provide the "real springboard under the will to action" much better than reasoning, though he, too, thoroughly despised *emotionalism*, and drew the sharp distinction between the use of emotion and that of emotionalism (Catharine Marshall, *A Man Called Peter* [McGraw-Hill: 1951], pp. 193, 194).
 - b. EGW, too, was totally against the use of manipulation and the wrong use of the emotional appeal in the pulpit.
 - (1) She preferred, instead, to speak of the "right" use (or exercise) of the "will." (Indeed, for her, "everything depends" upon that! MH 176:3; cf. SC 48:1).
4. You see, the power of the Word is totally diluted, negated, even destroyed, when the Scriptures are made to be the butt of a joke!
- a. For, forever after, the hearer, upon hearing the text, will instinctively focus upon the joke, rather than upon the sacred truth that the passage in question was intended to teach.

V. Ellen White--Did She Have a Sense of Humor?

A. Four Reasons Why Many Disbelieve

1. There is no photograph of her in a smiling pose extant today.
 - a. In her day, invariably, photographs were taken in long, tedious time-exposures, during which the subject(s) dare not move even a muscle--to do so would thus blur the image upon the photographic plate.
 - b. Therefore, subjects were posed very stiffly, formally, with a very sober expression upon the face.
 - (1) The day of the instant "candid-camera" photographer would yet be long distant in the future.
 - (2) (For an artist's imaginary, highly creative, view of a smiling Ellen White, see Vernon Nye's characterization, originally commissioned by *Insight*, and reproduced as the Frontispiece for the Course Outline of GSEM 534.)
2. Some followers of EGW, who have compiled her writings on the basis of their own highly critical criteria, have often presented only her most stern statements, in the process siphoning off balancing expressions of a more warm, mellow, compassionate nature, which would have brought balance to the total statement.
 - a. Some personalities, indeed, appear to have a penchant for "hard" statements; they love the harsh utterance sometimes contextually necessary to gain the attention of some hearer thus addressed. And the name of those who love to collect such, unfortunately, is "Legion!"

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3. Since Mrs. White did, indeed, have a lot to say against the employment of "bad" humor, in social life and in the pulpit, many--erroneously--assume that she was herself a humorless person, totally bereft of anything that would savor a smile.
 - a. And such could not be further from the truth!

4. Some who are themselves possessed of a harsh, stern, censorious spirit have misused the EGW writings by ramming them down the throats of any hearer whom they could corral.
 - a. And, understandably--if regrettably--many on the receiving end of such misuse have tended to identify the author of those quotations--EGW--with the same harsh spirit of the self-appointed compilers.

B. The Nature of Ellen White's Sense of Humor

1. Ellen White *did* have a delightful, even delicious, sense of humor.
 - a. But it was *not* the more gross, side-splitting, belly-laugh guffaw, slapstick kind of humor.
 - b. It was, rather, a deft, subtle, flashing, sparkling kind of wit, which betrayed her as an exceedingly genuine, warm-hearted human being, in love with both life and the people who live it.

2. EGW's granddaughter Grace Jacques told Jim Nix that her grandmother could always see the funny side of things.
 - a. EGW's eldest granddaughter, Ella M. Robinson added that her grandmother had no use for "sour piety."
 - (1) Upon one occasion, EGW was reported to have said to a family member:
"You look like patience on a monument looking down on grief!"
 - b. EGW, wryly remarking on her own plain (even dowdy, to some) unfashionable dress, reportedly told Jenny Ireland that her own [EGW's] clothing came into style about every seven years!

3. Her implicit distinction between good and bad humor is perhaps best evidenced in her Manuscript 11, 1868 (18 MR 368-71) (see Appendix A):
 - a. Some have unwittingly taken two widely-separated sentences from this document, and contextually misused them, thus wrongfully distorting the author unconscionably:
 - (1) "Christ often wept, but was never known to laugh."
 - (2) "Imitate the unerring Pattern."
 - b. A careful scrutiny of this document, however, will indicate both:
 - (1) The unbalanced personality of a rather dour "Sister Doud," to whom it was addressed; and
 - (2) Balancing statements, such as:
 - (a) "I do not say it is a sin to laugh on any occasion."
 - (b) "Christian cheerfulness is not condemned by the Scriptures. . . ."

C. Examples of Ellen White's Sense of Humor

1. EGW was perfectly capable of characterizing an undesirable situation with a memorable epigram:
 - a. On Unbecoming Dress:
 - (1) "There is a class who are continually harping upon pride and dress, who are careless of their own apparel, and who think it a virtue to be dirty, and dress without order and taste; and their clothing often looks as if it flew and lit upon their person" (RH, Jan. 23, 1900; cited in CG 415).
 - (2) "I would advise those [women] who prepare for themselves a short[er] dress for working purposes to manifest taste and neatness in getting it up. Have it arranged in order, to fit the form nicely. Even if it is a working dress, it should be made becoming, and should be cut after a pattern. Sisters when about their work should not put on clothing which would make them look like images ["scarecrows"] to frighten the crows from the corn" (1T 464).
 - b. On Tedious Public Prayers:
 - (1) "Long, prosy talks and prayers are out of place anywhere, and especially in the social meeting. Those who are forward and ever ready to speak are allowed to crowd out the testimony of the timid and retiring. Those who are most superficial generally have the most to say. Their prayers are long and mechanical. They weary the angels and the people who listen to them" (4T 70, 71).
2. Upon one occasion EGW instructed her personal secretary to write a thank-you note to a lady who had sent Ellen a gift sweater that turned out to be several sizes too small. And Ellen told the secretary kindly to inform the donor that "There is much more to Sister White than many people realize!" (Cited by Ron Graybill [*Insight*, August 14, 1973; reproduced in *Sourcebook*, Sec. A-5] and by Glen Baker [*Adventist Review*, April 30, 1987; reproduced in *Anthology*, I: 87/12-14])
3. Upon one occasion James and Ellen were separated for a period of time because of their respective travel obligations. James, concerned about the lack of news from home, dashed off a postal card to his wife, to which she replied with irony:

"We received your few words last night on a postal card: "Battle Creek, April 11. No letters from you in two days. James White."

"This lengthy letter was written by yourself. Thank you, for we [now] know you are living. No letter from James White previous to this since April 6, 1876" (Letter 5, 1876; cited in 3 Bio 26).
4. One day while James and Ellen were riding in a railroad coach, the windows of which were not hermetically sealed because of air conditioning needs, they were eating a picnic lunch.
 - a. James, upon finishing drinking either water or juice from a bottle he had brought along, in an almost mechanical gesture, tossed the bottle out of the open coach window.

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- b. Ellen, mildly protesting against such "wastefulness," gently remonstrated with her husband: "Well, you could have at least saved the cork!"
 - c. Of course, this incident must be understood in the light of the imperative necessity for frugality in the fight against deprivation which marked the earlier years of their marriage. {Roger W. Coon interview with Arthur L. White, undated}
5. James could be difficult, if not down-right irritating, at times; and once, in exasperation, Ellen wrote a letter from Healdsburg to their son, reporting:
"Dear Willie, Father is trying to be a cabbage-head. . . ." (Letter 5, June 24, 1878)
6. Once while J. S. Washburn was interviewing Ellen White, a young man entered the room and informed the prophet that: "The brethren have asked you to attend the Iowa camp meeting. Will you go?"
 - a. Whereupon, Ellen, gesturing by lifting her foot from the floor and then replacing it, responded: "I have put my foot down that I am *not* going to the Iowa camp meeting."
 - b. After the young man had left to deliver the message, EGW looked at Washburn, and grinned: "But I haven't put it down so hard that I can't lift it, if I want to!"
 - c. She is later reported to have attended, in spite of her message to the conference leadership. (Transcript of Robert L. Wieland interview with SDA Pioneer J. S. Washburn, Hagerstown, MD, June 4, 1950, p. 2)
7. En route back to America after nine years in Australia and the South Pacific, EGW's ship stopped briefly on Sabbath, September 8, 1900, in the harbor at Apia, Samoa.
 - a. A small boat came to the side of the ship to transport passengers to the beach; but since even it could not land on the shore, large, scantily-clad Samoan men waded out to carry them the final distance.
 - b. Two of these nationals joined their arms, to make a "chair" upon which to carry Ellen to land; and when she had arrived, she sat down upon a large rock to await the rest of her party.
 - c. Ethel May Lacey-White, who was wearing a long dress, was, however, told to clamber upon the back of a single, very portly (and near-naked) Samoan (who was already holding her four-year-old daughter, Grace with one hand, and an umbrella with the other), and to wrap her arms around his neck, and her legs around his rather ample girth.
 - d. And Ellen, observing the sight of her rather prim-and-proper daughter-in-law being carried in such an awkward, ungainly, undignified fashion, became so hysterical with laughter that she actually fell off from the rock upon which she was sitting (which brought additional mirth to the other spectators!). (Ethel May Lacey White Currow, "Life With My Mother-in-law," *Adventist Review*, July 7, 1983, p. 5; cf. 5 Bio 20, 21).
8. One Sabbath afternoon, after the turn of the century, when EGW was living in residence at "Elmshaven" in St. Helena, CA, she was speaking in the local church (today, the American Legion hall in that city).

- a. It was a warm, August, day; the building was filled to capacity (as it usually was whenever EGW spoke); there were few windows in the structure; and the ventilation was exceedingly poor.
 - b. Willie, her son, was sitting upon the platform behind Mrs. White; and while she was speaking, she noticed that a number in the congregation were unsuccessfully trying to stifle smiles upon their faces.
 - c. She knew that she had not said anything remotely humorous; and so she, in a gesture, managed to maneuver herself, the better to see what was going on behind her that was so amusing.
 - d. As the meeting had worn on, Willie had become drowsy, and nodded off, with his chin-whiskers now resting fully upon his shirt-front. He was "out-of-it," and the sight was ludicrous.
 - e. EGW took the entire situation in at a glance, and recognized that she must do something, immediately, to defuse the situation, or her words would be totally lost upon her hearers.
 - f. She immediately, even abruptly, stopped speaking, smiled, and in a confidential tone she admonished the congregation, "Don't blame Willie. If anyone is to blame, it is me--his mother. For I was the one who taught Willie to sleep on the rostrum on the Sabbath!"
 - g. Acknowledging the disbelief of the congregation, she went on: "When Willie was a baby, I had no baby-sitter; so I had a Battle Creek carpenter make me a cradle on rocker-arms, just exactly the width of the pulpit in the Tabernacle.
 - (1) "I would then place Willie in the cradle before the worship service began; and while I was preaching, I would use my right foot to rock the cradle, to keep him asleep, lest he awaken and disturb the service."
 - (2) "So, don't blame Willie; blame me. I was the one who taught him to sleep in church on the platform on Sabbath!"
 - h. The congregation enjoyed a hearty chuckle (Willie, the meanwhile, was oblivious to all that was transpiring about him).
 - i. And then, just as quickly as shew had interrupted herself, Ellen returned to her sermon, and continued as if nothing had happened; and her audience immediately forgot the hapless, sleeping minister on the platform, and attentively listened with rapt attention to the remainder of her message. (Roger W. Coon interview with Arthur L. White, August, 1959, Washington, DC; cited in Coon Ph.D. thesis, pp. 306, 307)
9. While EGW was living in Healdsburg, CA, in the early 1880s, she helped establish Healdsburg "College" (really a secondary-level institution), the forerunner of Pacific Union College; and she lived just down the street from the school.
- a. One day a group of students came to her door to call upon the prophet. Sara McEnterfer, EGW's private nurse, housekeeper, travel companion, and confidant, answered the door.
 - (1) The students announced their wished for an interview with the prophet; but Sara, like the disciples of old, who thought Jesus far too busy to be bothered by mothers with small children seeking His blessing, tried to turn them away.

- (2) Ellen, however, overheard all from inside the house, and told Sara to show them into the parlor.
- b. There, she asked them the purpose of their visit. "We have a Bible question we wish you to answer," they chorused.
- c. There were at that time several Bible teachers at the school, who took differing positions on the identity of the 10 horns of the prophetic beast described in the books of Daniel and Revelation.
 - (1) This was to become an acrimonious issue, later, at the General Conference Session of 1888, in Minneapolis, with ministers and Bible teachers greeting each other in the corridors with the challenge, "Are you a 'Hun?' Or are you an 'Alamanni?'" (See 4BC 826; 7BC 21, 22.)
 - (2) The children, obviously, intended to use whatever answer the prophet provided to drive a wedge between their Bible teachers, exploiting their differences to maximize their discomfiture.
- d. Thoughtfully, Mrs. White, restated their question: "Oh, you want to know what I think about the 10 horns?"
 - (1) "Yes," the children responded in unison, sitting on the edges of their chairs and breathlessly awaiting the outcome.
- e. "Well, I'll tell you what I think I think . . . there were too many of them!"
 - (1) "Oh," the children responded, crestfallen, doing a "double-take." And they left at once, unable to make capital out of the prophet's answer to their question.
 - (2) And they also left with food for thought concerning their motivation for their visiting with her in the first place. (Roger W. Coon interview with Dan Ochs, retired General Conference vice-president, Angwin, CA, undated, in the latter 1960s, before his death; cf. also LeRoy Edwin Froom's *Movement of Destiny*, [RH: 1971], p. 245, for a report of a somewhat similar incident).

VI. An Ultimate, Profound Evidence of the Prophet's Humanity

1. During the three years of my pastorate of the Takoma Park SDA Church (1978-80), I interviewed one of my members, Marguerite Bourdeau-Gilbert-Fields (who subsequently died in 1983, at the age of 78), and she related to me an incident in early SDA history that perhaps best illustrates the nature of the wit and wisdom of our prophet in a delightful, compelling manner.
2. Daniel T. Bourdeau, together with his brother, Augustin C., became in 1856 the first French Canadian converts to Adventism; and after becoming SDA ministers they did pioneer missionary work among their people.
 - a. In 1861, Daniel, then 25, married Marion S. Saxby, at Bakersfield, VT.
 - b. JW (himself age 40) and EGW (then 33) were visiting in the region; and JW was asked to perform the marriage ceremony, with his wife offering a consecration prayer.

- c. Both the Whites and the newly-weds spent that wedding night in the home of their host, in whose house the ceremony had taken place.
3. Going upstairs to retire about 9 p.m., Ellen noticed the 25-year-old bridegroom nervously pacing up and down in front of a closed bedroom door.
 - a. Taking in the situation at a glance, she spoke kindly, earnestly to the young man, in her characteristically forthright manner.
 - (1) Motioning in the direction of the closed door, she said: "Daniel, inside that room there is a frightened young woman in bed, totally petrified with fear.
 - (2) "Now you go in to her right now, and you love her, and you comfort her.
 - (3) "And, Daniel, you treat her gently, and you treat her tenderly, and you treat her lovingly. It will do her good."
 - (4) And then, with just a trace of a smile on her face, Ellen added, "And, Daniel, it will do you good, too!"
4. Ellen White was a woman of great humanity, of great compassion, of great understanding, and of great character.
 - a. She was possessed of a very large heart.
 - b. She understood, instinctively--and sympathetically--the emotional needs, as well as the traumatic distress, of a terrified bride and an exceedingly nervous bridegroom.
 - c. And she dealt not only warmly and humanly, but also sensibly, in this situation in a manner that was forever after appreciated by both of the couple.
 - d. And I learned of the story from bride Marion Saxby's own granddaughter, Marguerite Bourdeau-Gilbert-Fields--who heard it from her grandmother's own lips in 1925 on Marguerite's own wedding day!
[For a more complete retelling of this story and its background, see Roger W. Coon, "Counsel to a Nervous Bridegroom," *Adventist Heritage*, Summer, 1990 (Vol. XIII, No. 2), pp. 16-22; reproduced in *Anthology*, II:90/85-93.]
5. Ellen White, in short, was a great humanitarian.

Conclusion

1. Concerning humor, a number of contemporary writers have discussed it from several points of view, but all of their contributions add up to one great truth: humor is human, and humor is necessary for human survival!
 - a. Khalil Gibran opined: "A sense of humor is a sense of proportion" (Flesch, p. 165).
 - (1) And Ellen White is an excellent exemplification.
 - b. Baltasar Gracian cautioned: "Many get the repute of being witty, but thereby lose the credit of being sensible" (*Ibid.*, p. 308).

- (1) But this could never be said of Mrs. White.
 - c. Robert Burton also cautioned: "Wit without employment is disease" (*ibid.*, p. 418).
 - d. And Salvador de Madariaga noted--undoubtedly with tongue in cheek: "Puns should be punished, unless they be pungent" (*Ibid.*, p. 308).
 - (1) And Ellen White's always measured up!
2. Some would say that a sense of humor is one of the distinguishing characteristics separating human beings created in God's image from the animal kingdom at large (though, doubtless, many pet owners would dissent!).
- a. God, too, has a sense of humor--and just possibly the existence of the kangaroo and the giraffe are prime examples of such!
3. And a sense of humor is an imperative necessity for those who would engage in the work of the church, especially in the more underprivileged, underdeveloped parts of the planet, such as "Third World" countries.
- a. Let us, then, thank Him, for providing this "safety net" for sanity.

List of Appendixes

Appendix A: Counsel Against Foolish Talking and Jesting: Christ Our Example

Appendix A

Counsel Against Foolish Talking and Jesting: Christ our Example (Manuscript 11, 1868, in 18 MR 368-71)

I was shown the case of Sister Doud; that a work for her must be accomplished for her before she can be without fault before the throne of God.

She possesses a peculiar organization. She has not seen the necessity of educating herself in carefulness of words and acts. She has felt it to be her privilege to act herself unfettered; that if she restrained and gauged her course of action she was becoming a hypocrite. This sister deceived herself. She has not seen the necessity of entirely controlling the tongue, the unruly member.

James 3:2-18. [See note at end.]

Sister Doud has not seen the force of these Scriptures. She has not carefully considered them, laid them to heart, and formed her character according to them. 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

I was shown that it was impossible to carry out the principles of the ten precepts of Jehovah without especially regarding these truths taught in the above Scriptures. The Word of God should be carefully studied and carried into the daily life.

My sister, you talk too much. I was pointed back and shown that your life has not been the best calculated for you to make an exemplary Christian. You lack the elements of peace and harmony in your organization. You love variety and change, and your tongue has done much mischief. It has been a word of iniquity. It has not only changed the course of nature with yourself but with others.

In your past life you have been one that has stirred up strife, and then you have enjoyed the fruit of evil which has followed. Your tongue has kindled a fire, and you have enjoyed the conflagration. All this has no part in the truth. When you received the truth you believed it from the heart and were ardent in its proclamation; and here has been shown a lack of wisdom in using the truth in a manner to raise opposition, arouse combativeness, and make war instead of possessing a spirit of peace and true humbleness of mind.

Dear sister, there must be in you an entire transformation of character. The tongue must be tamed. Your words must be select, well chosen. If Christ is formed in you the hope of glory, fruits will appear unto righteousness. You sport and joke and enter into hilarity and glee. Does the Word of God sustain you in this? It does not.

Christ is our Example. Do you imitate the great Exemplar? Christ often wept but was never known to laugh. I do not say it is a sin to laugh on any occasion, but we cannot go astray if we imitate the divine, unerring Pattern. We are living in a sad age of this world's history. Violence is in the land, corruption is on ever hand, the inhabitants of earth are fast filling up the measure of the cup of their iniquity. Everywhere we go we see men and women controlled by Satan, captives to do his will. They are blinded and know not that their destruction is near. When the deception shall be removed, they will find out how much is meant in being without God and hope in the world. A day

of destruction and anguish removes the security which enclosed them, and then fierce anguish comes upon them. Probation is ended and they must remain filthy forever.

As we view the world bound in darkness and trammled by Satan, how can we engage in levity, glee, careless, reckless words, speaking at random, laughing, jesting, and joking? It is in keeping with our faith to be sober, watching unto the end for the grace to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

We profess to believe that the end of all things is at hand. "What manner of persons," the apostle inquires, "ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" 2 Peter 3:11. James exhorts us, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up." James 4:8-10.

James would impress us that this condition of mind is more appropriate for the times in which we live than to be seeking friendship with the world and engaging in the folly, levity, pride, and vanity which worldlings are engaged in. We are exhorted to humility. Instead of possessing a boastful self-confidence, the opposite is becoming [for] believers in present truth.

Christian cheerfulness is not condemned by the Scriptures, but reckless talking is censured. Those who live in the last days should be circumspect in words and acts. Sobriety is more in accordance with our faith than levity. Those who realize the solemnity of the times in which we live will be among the number who bear about with them a weight of solemn influence. They are rich in good works, bearing the burden of souls, and by holy example faithfully represent Jesus Christ and win souls to accept Christ as their Saviour. Ezekiel 9:3-6. Notice particularly [that] the sighing and crying ones are alone marked. Those who have engaged in afflicting their souls before God are especially remembered of Him, and the angel is bidden to place a mark upon them. 1 Peter 5:5-9.

Satan and his host are arrayed against the saints of God, and the armor must not be laid aside for a moment. Our only safety is in being instant in prayer, on the watch every moment. There is no release admitted in this warfare. It is a constant battle for life. 1 Peter 3:10-13; Col. 4:5, 6; Eph. 4:1-3; 5:1, 2, 4; Phil. 4:8; 2 Tim 3:16; Matt. 5:9.

The truth received in the heart and carried out in the life will correct the erring. Let love, affection, tenderness abound in your heart.. You possess fortitude, courage, firmness of purpose. You can, when you see the necessity, control your words. Study the effect of your words, whether their influence will be saving upon others. Never talk for the sake of talking, but for the edification of those who hear. Your heart has loved the truth and those who believed it. You are a lover of hospitality, and these excellent traits qualify you to exert an influence that will be saving upon others but for the lack named in this letter, which counteracts it all and greatly injures your usefulness.

I commit this to you in the fear of God, entreating you to lay these things to heart and bring forth fruits unto righteousness that at last you may hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." The Lord has blessed you with a kind, true, God-fearing husband to aid your efforts in the right direction

[Signed] In love, Ellen G. White. [Ms 11, 1868]

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[Note from secretary: Sister White: I have copied the above testimony except the Scriptures which I only refer to, giving the chapter and verse. Sister D. has made a public confession before the churches of Tuscola County and appears to have some fruit of repentance. She has made some confessions to individuals, but a great work is before her. M. E. C.]

Ellen G. White Estate
Washington, D.C.
Jan. 22, 1988. Entire Ms.

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Inspiration / Revelation

Inspiration/Revelation: What It Is and How It Works

By Roger W. Coon

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Part 1: The Prophetic Gift in Operation

Part 2: Infallibility: Does the True Prophet Ever Err?

Part 3: The Relationship Between the Ellen G. White Writings and the Bible

Inspiration/Revelation What It Is and How It Works

Part I: The Prophetic Gift in Operation

Introduction

Before the entrance of sin, God communicated with human beings directly through face-to-face contact and personal fellowship. With the advent of sin this relationship was ruptured and man was alienated from his Maker. To bridge this separating gulf, God employed as many as seven modalities of communication--the "divers manners" of Hebrews 1:1--as He sought to bring mankind back into a personal relationship with Him.

Prophetic night dreams and "open visions" during the day were the methods God most frequently employed in communicating with men and women of His special choosing who came to be known as "seers," "prophets," or special "messengers."

The lot of the prophet was seldom an easy one, as Jesus intimated by His oft-cited observation that "a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house."^[1]

Seventh-day Adventists believe, upon the basis of biblical evidence^[2] as well as empirical data, that one "masterbuilder" (1 Corinthians 3:10) of their denomination, Ellen G. White, was the recipient of the gift of prophecy. Solomon averred that "there is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9), and criticism of the prophets continues to this day.

Misunderstanding also continues concerning the manner in which the prophetic gift operates. Satan has a vested interest in creating confusion as well as rejection of the prophetic gift by the people it was intended to benefit, "for this reason: Satan cannot have so clear a track to bring in his deceptions and bind up souls in his delusions if the warnings and reproofs and counsels of the Spirit of God are heeded."^[3] The "very last deception of Satan" in the Seventh-day Adventist church just before Jesus returns will be the twofold work of (1) destroying the credibility of Ellen White as an authentic, reliable prophet of the Lord, and (2) creating a "satanic" "hatred" against her ministry and writings--satanic in its intensity as well as in its origin.^[4]

Satan's "special object" in these last days is to "prevent this light from coming to the people of God" who so desperately need it to walk safely through the minefield that the enemy of all souls has so artfully booby trapped.^[5]

And what is Satan's methodology for securing this objective? He will work "ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies."^[6] For example, in addition to the two methods mentioned above, satanic agencies seek to keep souls under a cloud of doubt,^[7] in a hurried state, and in a state of disappointment.

This is Satan's plan--his goal and his strategy. This minicourse is dedicated to the proposition that he shall not succeed!

I. Definitions

Three terms in particular need adequate working definitions as we seek to understand biblical and modern prophetism. The following definitions may be helpful:

1. Inspiration. Biblical, prophetic inspiration may be said to be a *process* by which God enables a man or woman of His special choosing both to receive and to communicate accurately, adequately, and reliably God's messages for His people.^[8]

One sometimes tends to say of a particular painter, author, musical composer, or performing artist, "He was inspired!" Indeed, he may have been. But it was a *different kind* of inspiration from that which was possessed by the prophets of God. When Paul wrote to the young ministerial intern Timothy, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16), he chose to employ the Greek term *theopneustos*, which is a contraction of two other Greek words *Theos* (God) and *pneuma* (breath). What he was saying, literally, was "All Scripture is *God-breathed*."^[9]

While some take this to be simply a delightful literary metaphor, yet it is also true--and significant--that while the prophet experienced the physical phenomena of the trancelike vision state, God breathed, *literally*; the prophet did not breathe while in this condition.^[10]

The prophet's inspiration is different *in kind*, rather than different *in degree*, from any other form of inspiration.

The apostle Peter adds to our limited biblical store of information on inspiration by stating that the prophets--these "holy men of God"--spoke as they were "moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). The Greek term Peter employs is *pheromenoi*, from *phero*: "to carry a load, to move." Luke employed the expression twice^[11] in describing the action of a tempestuous wind in "driving" a sailing vessel upon which he and Paul were traveling. The implication is clear: The prophets were "moved by the Divine initiative and borne by the irresistible power of the Spirit of God along ways of His choosing to ends of His appointment."^[12]

2. Revelation. Biblical, special revelation, we would hold, further, to be the *content* of the message communicated by God to His prophet in the process of inspiration. Adventists hold this content--the prophetic message--to be infallible (inerrant), trustworthy (all sufficient, reliable), and authoritative (binding upon the Christian).

This concept is predicted on three corollaries: (a) Man is unable, through his own resources or by his own observation, to perceive certain kinds of information; (b) God is pleased to speak; and (c) this act takes place and unfolds within human history.^[13]

God has revealed Himself, in a limited way, in nature, which gives us glimpses of His power, His wisdom, and His glory. But nature is unable to reveal clearly God's person, His holiness, His redeeming love, and His everlasting purposes for mankind. Thus, supernatural revelation transcends the "natural" revelation of God in nature, and consists chiefly in God's manifesting of Himself and His will through direct intercourse with humanity.^[14]

God speaks! In the Old Testament Jeremiah speaks for all of the prophets when he testifies that "the Lord . . . touched my mouth, And . . . said unto me, Behold I have put my words in thy mouth" (chap. 1:9). In the New Testament Paul assures us that the Holy Spirit "speaketh expressly" (1 Tim 4:1). Paul continues, elsewhere, to

assure us that God reveals His mysteries to the prophets by revelation, which is a progressive work:[15] Paul contrasts natural knowledge with information that is revealed by the Holy Spirit. This knowledge is attainable in no other way and from no other source.[16]

3. *Illumination*. Since the implied answer to Paul's rhetorical question, "Are all prophets?"[17] is negative, there remains one further task of the Holy Spirit, if those *not* possessed of the prophetic gift are to grasp the will of God for them.

Illumination may be defined as the work of that same Holy Spirit who indicated God's message to the prophet by which He now enables the hearer or reader of the prophet's words to comprehend the spiritual truths and discern God's message to himself.

This work of the Holy Spirit is comprehended in the words of Jesus to His disciples concerning the coming of the Comforter: He will teach you all things,[18] He will remind you of Jesus' words (the only current source of which is the writings of the prophets!),[19] and in doing this work He will guide you into all the truth the human mind is capable of comprehending.[20]

Concerning the work of this illumination, Ellen White once spoke of the three ways by which "the Lord reveals His will to us, to guide us, and to fit us to guide others": (a) through an understanding of what inspired writers through the ages have written for our admonition, (b) through providential circumstances (signs), and (c) through the direct impression of the Holy Spirit on the individual Christian's mind and heart.[21]

II. An Operational Gift

The Divine Initiative

It all started with God. He made the first move.

The very first words of the English Bible are these: "In the beginning God . . ." (Genesis 1:1). Three times in the last book of the Bible Jesus identifies Himself as "Alpha and Omega." [22] Those are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet--the language in which John wrote the book of Revelation. What did that cryptic expression mean? Among other things, Jesus perhaps was saying, "I was here when everything began; and I will be here when all is fulfilled."

Paul highlights the uniqueness of the Christian religion by showing that while we were still in the state and act of sin Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). All of the non-Christian religions of the world are alike in one respect: They all show man in search of God. In Christianity alone do we find God in search of man. The central message of Christianity was embodied in the three parables of the "lost" of Luke 15: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost boy. In each of these parables we are shown a God who cared deeply, and who acted on the basis of this concern.

God's concern for man prompted Him to bring into existence the office of prophet. While the liturgical priesthood spoke to God on behalf of man, the prophet spoke to man on behalf of God. God had a message to communicate, and He chose special human messengers to be His agency.

While every Christian is the recipient of at least one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit ("spiritual gifts"), [23] it is still God the Holy Spirit who decides which man or woman receives which gift. [24] And the gift of prophecy was given to "some," [25] but not to "all." [26] Prophecy is the preeminent gift; [27] and the most a human being may scripturally do is to "covet earnestly the best gifts." [28] God alone chooses who will be His prophets.

And, having made that choice, God speaks! Twice in the stately, measured cadences of Hebrews 1:1, 2, we are told that God had already spoken, first through the prophets and then more recently through His Son. Revelation 1:1 suggests what might well be called "God's chain of command" (to borrow a phrase from Bill Gothard).

God's Chain of Command

Just as all three members of the Godhead participated in the creation of this world,[29] just so do all three participate in the process of inspiration: The Father gives the message to the Son,[30] and the Son gives it to the Holy Spirit,[31] and the Holy Spirit moves upon the prophets.[32]

The Godhead delivers the message to "his angel," Gabriel; and Gabriel delivers it to God's servants, the prophets.[33] And thus the prophets could authoritatively declare to their fellow beings, "Hear, therefore, the word of the Lord." [34]

Two points of significance immediately suggest themselves from these facts:

1. Of all the billions of angels created by God,[35] we today know the names of only two--Lucifer ("light bearer"), who was number one, and who fell; and Gabriel, originally number two, who later became number one. And it was the angel Gabriel, heaven's highest, who communicated God's messages to "his servants, the prophets." Only heaven's highest was good enough for this special task.
2. The prophets are called "his servants," that is, God's servants. Now, a servant is, by definition, "one who is sent"--sent by a superior, of course. Jesus made it abundantly clear that the servant was "not greater than his lord." [36] If, then, the message-bearing servant (prophet) is ignored, slighted, or--worse yet--rejected outright, the One who is *really* rejected is the One who gave the message to the prophet.

Seven Modalities of God's Communication

What were some of these "divers manners" by which God communicated with mankind? There seem to have been at least seven methods:

1. *Theophanies* (visible manifestations of God; face-to-face communication). Abraham met the preincarnate Christ and two angels near his tent on the plain of Mamre (Genesis 18); Jacob wrestled with an "angel" at Peniel, only to discover "I have seen God face to face" (Genesis 32:30); and Moses spoke to the Lord in the mount "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exodus 33:11).

2. *Angels*. Those "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Hebrews 1:14) have often come to mankind, to bring messages of hope and comfort (Daniel 10:11, 12; Genesis 32:1), to direct the servants of the Lord to those whose hearts were receptive to God's truth (Acts 8:26), or to warn of imminent disaster if God's word was not heeded (Genesis 3:24).

3. *Audible voice of God*. Sometimes God spoke on His own! At Sinai the Ten Commandments were spoken audibly, jointly, by the Father and the Son in a transcendent "duet" [37] that literally caused the earth (as well as the hearts of the human hearers) to tremble.

Upon occasion the audible voice of God addressed the high priest from the Shekinah--that exceeding bright glory that rested between the cherubim in the center of the ark of the covenant. [38] The Shekinah was the visible manifestation of God's presence in the desert tabernacle.

And, of course, God's voice was heard three times during the earthly ministry of our Lord--at Christ's baptism, upon the mount of transfiguration, and when the Greek philosophers called upon Him in the temple during the week that preceded the crucifixion. At these times God was heard commanding men to heed the message of His beloved Son. [39]

4. *Optics*. During the wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel, the high priest's breastplate had two large stones imbedded at the top--the Urim and the Thummim. The high priest could ask questions, and Jehovah would respond. If the answer were "yes," one stone would glow with a halo of light and glory; if the answer were "no," the opposite stone would be partially obscured by a shadow or a vapor. [40]

The high priest had another means of receiving answers from God. In the most holy place the angel on the right side of the ark would glow in a halo of light if the answer were affirmative, or a shadow would be cast over the angel on the left if the answer were negative.[41]

5. *Casting of lots.* In Old Testament times God also communicated with His people by means of casting lots. A modern counterpart is "drawing straws"--a number of straws of different lengths are held in the hand, with all the ends appearing to be even, the difference of length being hidden by the hand. After the straws are drawn, and are compared, it is easy to determine who drew the longest or the shortest.

Lots were cast upon goats, upon cities, and upon men. The most celebrated instance of the latter was the discovery of Achan and his theft of the "goodly Babylonish garment" as the cause of Israel's humiliating defeat of Ai.[42]

Interestingly, there is only one instance in the New Testament of determining God's will by the casting of lots--the selection of Matthias to take the place vacated by Judas among the 12 apostles.[43] When and why this method fell into disuse is not revealed; but we do know that when the practice of casting lots was resorted to by the Austin, Pennsylvania, Seventh-day Adventist Church for the purpose of selecting church officers, Ellen White wrote from Australia, "I have no faith in casting lots. . . . To cast lots for the officers of the church is not in God's order. Let men of responsibility be called upon to select the officers of the church." [44]

6. *"Open" visions of the day.* The trancelike state into which a prophet entered when going into vision has already been referred to, and will be dealt with more fully below. Both the Old and the New Testaments are replete with references to prophets and apostles receiving visions from the Lord.[45]

7. *Prophetic dreams of the night.* Often the prophets would receive messages from the Lord in the "night seasons" as well as during the day. There is no evidence that physical phenomena accompanied the prophetic night dreams, nor is there evidence that the kind of messages given at night were in any way different from those transmitted in the visions of the day.

Ellen White was once asked if she, a prophet, experienced ordinary dreams at night as noninspired people did. She smiled and said that she did. The next question was inevitable: How are you able to differentiate between ordinary dreams and inspired dreams? Her response was right to the point: "The same angel messenger stands by my side instructing me in the visions of the night, as stands beside me instructing me in the visions of the day." [46]

Physical Phenomena

When in vision state, the prophets experienced supernatural physical phenomena. The tenth chapter of Daniel best illustrates the nature and scope of such singular phenomena. Daniel tells us that in this condition he saw things that others about him did not see (vs. 7); he sustained a loss of natural strength (vs. 8) and then was endowed with supernatural strength (vss. 10, 11, 16, 18, 19). He was totally unconscious of his immediate surroundings (vs. 9), and he did not breathe during this time (vs. 17).

Ellen White experienced all these phenomena in the vision state. However, it should be noted that although her lungs did not function at such times, the heart did continue to circulate blood through the body; her face did not lose color.

Perhaps, as already noted above, there may be a startlingly literal interpretation to *theopneustos*--"God-breathed"--as it related to the physical phenomena associated with a prophet in vision.

In Ellen White's experience, the physical phenomena of "open visions" were more characteristic of her earlier years; from the 1880s onward all of her inspired messages apparently came from the Lord in prophetic dreams. This leads us to consider the purpose of physical phenomena.

First, physical phenomena were not prerequisites for receiving messages from God. The prophetic dreams of the night seem to make this clear. But God, who has a purpose for everything He does, obviously had a purpose in providing these dramatic supernatural exhibitions.

Perhaps the dramatic nature of these exhibitions gives us a clue to Heaven's intention. In the case of Ellen White, we have a 17-year-old girl claiming, "I have a vision from the Lord!" "Well," one might wonder, "how do we know?"

In the early days of a prophet's ministry, when he has made few written or spoken pronouncements, it is difficult to apply the test of consistency with previously inspired testimony (Isaiah 8:20). The test of fruitage (Matthew 7:16, 20) is equally difficult to apply until a few years pass and results are seen in the life of the prophet and in the lives of those who have followed the prophet's counsels. The test of fulfilled prediction (Jeremiah 28:9, Deuteronomy 18:22) cannot be applied until enough time has elapsed to allow a judgment about whether any prophecies made have come to pass.

Obviously, God needed to do something to arrest attention, to suddenly cause people to sit up and take notice. Physical phenomena serve this purpose. God had used such methods before (probably for the same reason) at Pentecost when tongues of fire were seen above the heads of the 120, and these men and women spoke contemporary languages they had never previously studied.[47]

Perhaps God used physical phenomena to validate the fact that something supernatural was here at work. Of course, witnesses would still need to validate, to authenticate the messages by means of the conventional Bible tests.

However, the fact that Satan can and does counterfeit many natural and supernatural phenomena should lead us to make a crucial distinction: Physical phenomena are an *evidence* of supernatural activity, but they are never to be a *test* of the authenticity or legitimacy of a prophet.

Today it has become fashionable among the critics of Ellen White to call for a "demythologizing" of Adventists' historic prophet. One critic in particular recently called for the burying of legendary tales involving "magic."

Concerning stories of Mrs. White holding a large Bible for an extended period of time on her outstretched, upraised hand while in vision, this critic alleges that at the 1919 Bible Conference it was declared emphatically that the event never really happened, that no one had ever seen it; indeed, no one was even there to witness it![48]

If, however, we go to the transcript of the 1919 Bible Conference,[49] we notice, first of all, that the record has been substantially misquoted by the critic. We find General Conference President Arthur G. Daniells discussing the use of physical phenomena as "proof or evidence of the genuineness of the gift." And he opposes such use as proof of legitimacy--a position the White Estate continues to hold today!

Instead, said Daniells, "I believe that the strongest proof is found in the fruits of this gift to the church, not in physical and outward demonstrations."

Then, addressing more directly the question of the stories about Ellen White holding a large, heavy Bible on an outstretched hand while in vision, looking away from the pages, and yet quoting the texts to which a finger of the opposite hand pointed, Elder Daniells declared: "I do not know whether that was ever done or not. I am not sure. I did not see it, and I do not know that I ever talked with anybody that did see it." [50]

One does not need to look far to discover why Daniells had not witnessed such an event. This writer has uncovered four instances thus far where Ellen White held a Bible in vision: three times in 1845 and once in 1847.[51] Arthur Daniells was not born until 1858, at least 11 years after the latest recorded Bible-holding incident took place.

Research shows that physical phenomena was more characteristic of the earlier days of Mrs. White's experience. Indeed, the last "open vision" of record took place at a camp meeting in Portland, Oregon, in 1884, only six years after Daniells entered the gospel ministry.[52]

We should not be surprised, then, that Daniells never witnessed Mrs. White holding a large Bible in vision. He probably saw very few other manifestations of physical phenomena, which ceased shortly after he entered the ministry. Nor is it surprising that he had not met any contemporaries who had observed such phenomena--they were probably too young, too!

Some critics hold that the evidence behind at least two of the Bible-holding stories is not reliable because the stories were not recorded until 45 years after the events took place; and because they were written down by one denominational writer who was not a trained historian. While there may be some validity to this concern, the fact remains that the White Estate still holds in its vault an eyewitness account of the event, known to have been written sometime between 1847 and 1860. The observer was Otis Nichols, and the incident he reported took place during what was probably Ellen White's longest vision, at Randolph, Massachusetts, in the winter of 1845.

During this vision, which lasted approximately four hours, Ellen Harmon (who was unmarried at the time) picked up "a heavy large quarto family Bible" and lifted it up "as high as she could reach." The Bible was "open in one hand," and she then proceeded "to turn over the leaves with the other hand and place her finger upon certain passages and correctly utter their words"--all this with her head facing in another direction! In this activity "she continued for a long time."[53]

Ellen White believed this account to be an accurate record of a genuine experience, because she quoted three paragraphs from it in an autobiographical account published in 1860.[54]

Arthur G. Daniells never said that the event did not happen, as the critic alleges. Instead, he simply said that he didn't see it and didn't know anyone who had. However, had Elder Daniells (who was a member of the White Estate board of trustees) taken the effort to go to the vault and examine the documentary evidence that still is preserved there, he would have had no doubt about whether Ellen White ever held a Bible in vision, or about whether she breathed while in her open visions of the day.[55]

We must emphasize at this point that the position of the Seventh-day Adventist church today is the same as it has always been. Physical phenomena are an evidence of supernatural activity, but it should never be used as a *proof* because Satan can counterfeit much of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Basic Vehicles of Prophetic Messages

The messages given to the prophets were generally given in two different kinds of packaging:

1. The prophets witnessed events unfolding from past, present, or future historical incidents, such as Moses watching the creation of the world, or the apostle John observing both the second and third comings of Christ. Ellen White witnessed many events of the past, present, and future during her 70-year prophetic ministry.

The prophets also saw symbolic or parablelike events. These representations seemed just as real as the other kind, but of course, the beasts Daniel saw and later wrote about in the seventh chapter of his prophecy never really existed. Ellen White had a number of parablelike visions; perhaps one of the better known was one in which she saw a ship that was on a collision course with an iceberg. The captain instructed the helmsman to hit the iceberg head on rather than to allow the ship to suffer a more severe glancing blow. The incident illustrated the church's meeting the "Alpha" pantheism heresy of John Harvey Kellogg at the beginning of the twentieth century in a bruising (but not fatal) head-on confrontation. During this time the providential intervention of the Lord was witnessed in a remarkable manner.[56]

2. The prophets also heard the voice of a member of the Godhead, or of the angel Gabriel, speaking messages of counsel, instruction, admonition, and sometimes of warning and reproof. These voices apparently were unaccompanied by scenes of events, although Ellen White does tell us that she entered into direct conversation with Jesus Christ on a number of occasions.

The Writing Task: The Prophet's Options

Once the prophet received instruction from the Lord, by whatever method the divine mind selected, his immediate task was that of composition, of writing out the message he had received. In this task the prophet had several options to choose among, as far as the source of the words chosen was concerned:

1. The prophet might choose to follow the role model of a newspaper reporter, simply quoting the words of the heavenly personage who had delivered the message. Ellen White's invariable custom was to place the directly quoted words of the angel within quotation marks, thus making it immediately evident to the reader that these were Gabriel's words, not hers.[57]
2. More often the prophet simply put the message into his or her own words. (More will be said about this aspect in discussing, below, the prophet's unique contribution to such a ministry.)

Ellen White was once asked if the nine-inch-from-the-ground skirt length she advocated came directly from the Lord, or if it was simply her own idea. She responded that the Lord caused three groups of women to pass before her in vision. The first group were dressed in the peculiar fashion of the day, with excessively long skirts that swept the filth of the street. Obviously, from a health standpoint, these skirts were too long. A second group then came into view whose skirts were obviously too short. Then Mrs. White was shown a third group of women wearing skirts short enough to clear the filth of the street, but long enough to be modest and healthful. These skirts appeared in vision to be about nine inches from the ground, and Ellen White described them thus.

The angel had not specified any length in inches; and in response to the question of a reader of the *Review and Herald*, Mrs. White declared:

Although I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, yet the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own, unless they be those spoken to me by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation.[58]

Incidentally, this statement has been used by one contemporary critic to suggest that Ellen White claimed she always used only her own words, or else the words of an angel (appropriately designated by quotation marks). And then the critic charges her with untruthfulness by demonstrating that she often used the literary productions of others!

The context of Mrs. White's statement demonstrates that the critic is misapplying her statement. But study of the passage does lead us to a third option, exercised by prophets in many different periods.

3. The prophet sometimes might opt to use words of another author. This was true both of Bible prophets and of Ellen White. Sometimes the other source might be an inspired prophet of the Lord; but sometimes the person copied was not inspired. And, generally speaking, the prophets did not cite their sources or provide bibliographical data as modern researchers do.

Critics today accuse Ellen White of plagiarism because she quoted a number of noninspired authors without giving appropriate credit. Let us look at this charge--and the practice as used by prophetic writers--in detail.

The "Copying" Charge

As we will study in more detail in the second of this series of three presentations, no charge has been leveled against Ellen White in her professional capacity as a prophet of the Lord that had not already been made against the

prophets of the Bible--whether the charge be that of copying, or of having made unfulfilled prophecies, or of having made some errors in what was written or said, or of having to go back and change something that was said by the prophet--even matters of major substance that had to be corrected.

We will deal here only with the charge of copying other writers--inspired or uninspired. Originality is not now, nor has it ever been, a test of an individual's prophetic inspiration, as Robert W. Olson, Director of the Ellen G. White Estate, pointed out to the religion editor of *Newsweek* magazine; and therefore, literary "borrowing does not dilute her [Mrs. White's] claim to inspiration."[59]

The Bible writers copied from one another without attribution of source, and apparently felt no compunctions about such practice:

"Micah (4:1-3) borrowed from Isaiah (2:2-4). The scribe who compiled 2 Kings (18-20) also borrowed from Isaiah (36-39). Matthew and Luke borrowed heavily from Mark as well as from another common source. None of these ever acknowledged their borrowing. (See *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 178, 179.)"[60]

In fact, many scholars openly acknowledge that some 91 percent of the Gospel of Mark was copied by Matthew and Luke when they wrote their respective Gospels!

Of perhaps greater interest, however, is the fact that the writers of the Bible would from time to time copy (or "borrow") the literary productions of noninspired authors, including pagan writers. For example, about 600 B.C. Epimenides wrote:

"They fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high one--The Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies! But thou art not dead; thou livest and abidest for ever; For in thee we live and move and have our being."[61]

Sound vaguely familiar? Well, the Apostle Paul twice used some of these words, once in Titus 1:12 ("One of themselves, even a prophet of their own said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies") and again in his sermon on Mars Hill in Athens, in Acts 17:28 ("For in him we live, and move, and have our being").

Jesus did not invent the Golden Rule of Matthew 7:12. A generation earlier Rabbi Hillel had already written: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor; that is the whole Torah, while the rest is the commentary thereof."

The thoughts--and even some of the words--of the Lord's Prayer may be found in earlier ritual prayers known as the *Ha-Kaddish*.[62]

Substantial parts of John's Apocalypse--the Book of Revelation--are lifted bodily from the Book of Enoch, a pseudepigraphical work known to have been circulated some 150 years before John wrote the last book of the Bible; and even Jude borrowed a line ("Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints") from the same source.[63]

Indeed, some 15 apocryphal or pseudepigraphical books are cited in the New Testament--generally without attribution of their source.

Doctor Luke tells us that he did a substantial amount of research and investigation in sources then available to him before he wrote the Gospel that bears his name:

"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, . . . it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:1, 3, 4, NASB).[64]

In commenting on this passage, Robert W. Olson remarks:

"Luke did not acquire his information through visions or dreams but through his own research. Yet while material in the gospel of Luke was not given by direct revelation it was nonetheless written under divine inspiration. He did not write to tell his readers something new, but to assure them of what was true--'that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.' What Luke wrote was not original, but it was dependable. God led Luke to use the right sources. (See *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol 5, p. 669)."[65]

Because an inspired writer quotes from an uninspired writer, it does not follow that the earlier writer must now be seen somehow as having come under the umbrella of inspiration. *Inspiration is a process, not a content.*

Just as biblical authors used noninspired sources, Ellen White also copied from the writings of authors who were not inspired.[66]

Divine Dreams Alone Do Not a Prophet Make

Just because an individual receives a dream from the Lord, it does not automatically follow that, *ipso facto*, that individual is a prophet of the Lord.

To suit His providential purposes God has often given dreams to pagans as well as to Christians. However, the receipt of such messages does not thereby transform the recipient into an authentic prophet. Perhaps a helpful differentiation might be the following: The nonprophet is generally not called to the task of guiding the church at large. The direction, rather, is primarily intended for the individual himself (or perhaps for someone close to the recipient). Such experiences are often isolated experiences rather than a continuing relationship that is typical of the prophetic order.

In biblical times God gave divine (but non-prophetic) dreams to many: Abimelech (Genesis 20:3-7); Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker (Genesis 40:8-19); and to one of the Pharaohs (Genesis 41:1-7); to the Midianite soldier (Judges 7:13, 14); to Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2 and 4); to Joseph of Nazareth (Matthew 2:13, 14); to Claudia, Pilate's wife (Matthew 27:19), and to the Roman centurion, Cornelius (Acts 10:1-8), to mention only a few.

In the history of the early Seventh-day Adventist church certain believers received divine, but nonprophetic, dreams. J. N. Loughborough had as many as 20 such dreams, which Ellen White apparently accepted as being of divine origin.[67] William Miller, who started the Millerite movement, but who never accepted the seventh-day Sabbath, had a most remarkable parablelike dream.[68] Annie Smith, sister of Uriah Smith, and Captain Joseph Bates both had a remarkable "double dream" the same night, which had an even more remarkable fulfillment the following night.[69] And James White had several unusual dreams that J. N. Loughborough shared with posterity.[70]

The pages of the *Adventist Review* and other regional Seventh-day Adventist periodicals have occasionally carried contemporary stories of Christians and pagans alike who have been led by a divine dream. But these persons were not prophets, nor were they considered to be such by their peers.

III. Three Theories of Inspiration/Revelation

There are at least three theories regarding the definition of inspiration and the way it operates in the Seventh-day Adventist church and in other Christian bodies today. Two are false and dangerous, for reasons that will shortly be made clear. Let us examine these theories in some detail:

Theory of Verbal Inspiration

Over the years a number of Seventh-day Adventists, including some of our ministers and Bible teachers, have held the verbal view of inspiration, despite counsels of Ellen White to the contrary.

This view is a rather mechanical one, since it perceives the prophet's role as simply that of a stenographer who takes down the boss's dictation word for word. In this model the stenographer is not at liberty to change anything that has been given by the dictator: no synonyms may ever be employed; no failing to dot an *i* or to cross a *t* is permitted.

This view seems to suggest that God, or the angel, puts a heavenly hand over the hand of the prophet and guides it--literally--so that every word, every syllable comes directly from God. The prophet, in this view, is not at liberty to change anything or to state the message in his own words. This mechanical view is strictly, stringently literalistic, with infallibility residing at the point of the written word.

This limited view of inspiration provides no opportunity for translation into other languages, and has other even more serious limitations and dangers.^[71]

The strict verbalist has a problem with Matthew 27:9, 10. Here Matthew does something that every teacher and preacher has done innumerable times. Matthew is probably thinking of one name, but out of his pen mistakenly comes another name. As he applies a Messianic prophecy to Christ--the prediction that He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver--he attributes the prophecy to Jeremiah. However, in all the book of Jeremiah, there is not one reference to this prophecy. The alert reader will recognize that Matthew actually meant to attribute this prophecy to *Zechariah* (chap. 11:12, 13).

The person who believes in plenary (thought) inspiration has no problem with this slip of the pen. But the verbalist finds a serious problem here. Did God make this mistake in dictating Matthew's gospel?

This is not the only problem for the verbalist. God the Father spoke audibly three times during the earthly ministry of His Son. The first time was immediately following Christ's baptism in the Jordan River. The problem is, exactly what did the heavenly voice say?

According to Matthew (chap. 3:17), the Father spoke in the third person singular: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But Mark's account (chap. 1:11) has the Father speaking in the second person singular: "Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Exactly what *did* the Father say? The "plenarist" does not see the discrepancy between the accounts as being a problem; he believes that it is the thought that is inspired, not the exact words. There is no disagreement between Matthew and Mark as to the essence of what God said.

Another problem for the verbalist is Pilate's superscription on the signboard he ordered placed on Christ's cross. What did that signboard say? The four Gospel writers give four slightly different accounts of what the sign stated.

Which one was correct? To the plenarist it makes no difference. But the literal verbalist is in a quandary. And it doesn't help to recall that the signboard was in three languages (Latin, Greek, and Hebrew), because we have four different accounts, not three!

Matthew and Luke illustrate yet another kind of problem for the strict verbalist in the way they handle the Sermon on the Mount.

No one today has read or heard the actual Sermon on the Mount. Probably Ellen White's book *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* comes closest to a complete account of a sermon that took virtually all day to preach.

Matthew simply gives an outline of the sermon in chapters 5-7 of his Gospel. But Luke doesn't even give that much. If all we had was Luke's Gospel, we'd never even know there was a *Sermon* on the Mount. For Luke takes the ingredients of the sermon, and plugs in some here and some there as it suits his purpose.

To understand why the material is handled this way, we have to recognize that Matthew was writing to Jews, who liked sermons. So Matthew used a sermon format--indeed, a sermon outline--to display Jesus' ideas from this incomparable discourse, which by some has been called the charter or constitution of the Christian church.

Luke, however, was writing for Greeks, who couldn't have cared less about sermons, as such. They, instead, liked to dwell in the realm of ideas. So Luke took the ideas of the Sermon on the Mount and used them evangelistically, some here and some there, as it served his purpose in dealing with his audience.

The plenarist has no problem with this approach because he sees the *ideas* as being inspired. But the strict verbalist is here in a great deal of trouble. Who is right? Was it a sermon or not? Many questions are raised, but few answers are forthcoming.

Other illustrations could be cited, such as Matthew's listing of the order of Christ's miracles in a somewhat different order than Luke's Gospel. Problems such as these leave the strict verbalist in a real quandary. However, we shall leave him there for now, and proceed to examine the plenary theory of inspiration.

Theory of Plenary Inspiration

In contrast with the view of verbal inspiration, the plenary theory of inspiration suggests that thoughts--rather than words--are inspired. The plenary view is not forced to grapple with the problems of the verbalist. For the Seventh-day Adventist, this view has the added advantage of having been accepted and advocated by Ellen White.[72]

Let us examine in some detail the manner in which Mrs. White explicates her views. These views have been praised by a number of non- Seventh-day Adventist theologians as one of the most comprehensive and concise statements on the subject of plenary inspiration to be found anywhere in print.

1. The purpose of inspiration. Ellen White uses two interesting analogies to illustrate the purpose of inspiration. First she likens inspiration to a map--a guide or chartbook for the human family. The purpose of this map is to show weak, erring, mortal human beings the way to heaven, so that they need never lose their way.[73] Then she also compares inspiration to "hidden treasure"--or precious jewels that may be discovered by arduous digging.[74] And then, in summation, Mrs. White remarks that no one need ever be lost for want of this most crucial information unless he is willfully blind.[75]

2. The human element. Next, Mrs. White recognized the existence of the human element. God committed the preparation of His Word to finite men,[76] thus, in a sense, making problems for Himself. Why? Because "everything that is human is imperfect." [77]

Speaking to the Adventist workers in Battle Creek, Michigan, in a different context, Mrs. White amplified this thought: "No one has so great a mind, or is so skillful, but that the work will be imperfect after he has done his very best." [78]

Since the Bible writers had to express their ideas in human idioms, the concepts could not be given in some grand superhuman language.[79] Infinite ideas can never be perfectly embodied in finite vehicles of thought.[80] The Lord has to speak to human beings in imperfect speech in order that our dull, earthly perception may comprehend His words.[81]

In an apt analogy, John Calvin once suggested that God, through the prophets, talked "baby talk" to us humans, much as a cooing mother lisps to her little child in the universal language of love.

3. *The existence of discrepancies.* Ellen White addressed the question of discrepancies, mistakes, or errors in a forthright manner. She does not just suggest that these are possible; she says that they are "probable."^[82] But she goes on, more importantly, to point out that all of these mistakes will not change a single doctrine, or cause anyone to stumble who is not already inclined to do so. These persons will "manufacture difficulties from the plainest revealed truth."^[83]

4. *Unique divine-human blending.* Paul incisively pointed out that "We have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7). Two elements are thus introduced into the analogy: the "treasure," and the "earthen vessels." Mrs. White develops these two elements by first commenting that, indeed, the Ten Commandments are verbally inspired, being of "divine and not human composition." The servant of the Lord then goes on, interestingly:

But the Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."^[84]

Again, commenting that "In the work of God for man's redemption, divinity and humanity are combined," Mrs. White elaborates along a somewhat similar vein:

The union of the divine and the human, manifest in Christ, exists also in the Bible. The truths revealed are all "given by inspiration of God;" yet they are expressed in the words of men and are adapted to human needs.^[85]

Thus the truths conveyed by inspired writers are all inspired treasure. But the human element--the "language of men," is the earthen vessel--that is, the packaging.

One theologian has suggested that the *human* aspect of the inspired writings, ancient and modern, is revealed in five ways:

a. *The writer expresses himself in his own style.* The Bible has many major stylistic differences in its various books.

b. *The writer expresses himself at his own level of literary ability.* For example, the sentence structure of the book of Revelation is crude. John strings his ideas along with the connector *and* like a string of box cars in a freight train. Stylistically, this book is elementary, not elevated. Its author was a fisherman who was educated by Jesus for three years. John received his education in truth, rather than in rhetoric. In contrast to the book of Revelation, the book of Hebrews exhibits a most elevated stylistic form. Indeed, because of its use of balanced phrases and clauses, some higher critics don't think that Paul wrote it. But Paul undoubtedly had the equivalent of a Ph.D. from the school of Gamaliel in Jerusalem, and he may well have attended the university at Tarsus before he went to Jerusalem.

c. *The writer reveals his own personality.* The Gospel of John can be summed up in one four-letter word--*love*. The concept permeates John's Gospel and all three of his epistles. John, more than any of the other apostles, imbibed this spirit, and yielded himself most fully to Christ's transforming love.^[86] And thus his epistles, especially, breathe out this spirit of love.^[87] His favorite theme was the infinite love of Christ.^[88]

d. *The writer also uses his own words--*words of his selection, and in so doing,

e. *The writer draws on his own personal background and experience.* Luke was called the "beloved physician." And indeed, a whole volume has been written on the medical terminology employed in

the Gospel of Luke. Luke writes with the perception of a scientist. For example, he is the only one of the four Gospel writers to mention that Jesus "sweat . . . as it were great drops of blood."

Amos speaks the language of the herdsman, the shepherd.

And Paul? Trained in the methodology and phraseology of philosophy, Paul wrote some things that to a fisherman like Peter were "hard to be understood" (2 Peter 3:16).[89]

Then, the *divine* aspect, the work of the Holy Spirit, is revealed in four ways, as suggested by T. Housel Jemison:

a. *He enlightens the mind*: The writer is enabled to comprehend truth.

b. *He prompts the thinking*: That is, He stimulates the reasoning processes.

c. *He enlightens the memory*: The prophet is thus enabled to recall events and ideas.

d. *He directs attention to matters to be recorded*: This deals specifically with the selection of topic and content.[90]

5. *Verbal Versus Plenary*. Mrs. White states directly that it is not the words of the Scriptures that are inspired, but rather the men who wrote them--the prophets were "God's penmen, not His pen." [91]

The semantic problem here is recognized--a given word may convey different ideas to different people. Yet if a writer or speaker is intellectually honest, he can usually convey his meaning plainly.[92] The same truth may be expressed in different ways without essential contradiction.[93]

Basically, "inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts." [94]

6. *What the Bible is not*. The Bible does not represent the words, the logic, or the rhetoric of God.[95] "God, as a writer, is not represented." [96] Indeed, God says that His thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are His ways our ways (Isaiah 55:8, 9). But the Bible does point to God as its "*Author*." [97] Christ "Himself [is] the Author of these revealed truths." [98]

7. *Totality*. Ellen White took the Bible just as it stood--"I believe its utterances in an entire Bible." [99] And she urged her hearers and readers to "cling to your Bible, as it reads." [100] Amplifying this thought elsewhere, she continues, "Every chapter and every verse is a communication of God to man." [101]

8. *God's superintendency*. The Lord miraculously preserved the Bible through the centuries in essentially its present form.[102] Indeed, the preservation of the Bible is as much a miracle as its inspiration.

Of course, the Bible was not given in "one unbroken line of utterance." Rather, through successive generations, it was given, piece by piece, as a beneficent Providence recognized various needs in different places. "The Bible was given for practical purposes." [103]

The continuing hand of God is seen in the giving of the messages, in the recording of the messages, in the gathering of the books into the Canon, and in the preservation of the Bible through successive ages.[104]

9. *Unity*. Ellen White draws an interesting distinction with regard to unity: While there is not always "apparent" unity, there is, however, a "spiritual unity." And this unity she likens to one grand golden thread, running through the whole, which is discovered by the "illuminated soul."

However, to trace out this unity requires the searcher to exercise patience, thought, and prayer.[105]

In the days when Britannia ruled the waves, and ships were propelled by wind rather than by steam or oil, the ships of His Majesty's royal navy all carried rope that had a crimson thread woven through its entire length. This thread served two purposes: It made identification easy in cases of suspected theft; and it also assured the sailors (whose lives often depended upon the quality of the rope they handled) that they had the very best.

Applying this analogy to the Bible, the blood of Jesus is the crimson thread that runs throughout the whole Scripture. This unity is exhibited in at least five areas, according to Jemison:

- a. Purpose: the story of the plan of salvation.
- b. Theme: Jesus, the cross, the crown.
- c. Harmony of teaching: Old and New Testament doctrines are the same.
- d. Development: the steady progression from creation to the fall of redemption to final restoration.
- e. Coordination of the prophecies: evident because the same Holy Spirit was at work![\[106\]](#)

10. Degrees of inspiration. Ellen White makes it clear that the Christian is not to assert that one part of the Scripture is inspired and that another is not, or that there are degrees of inspiration among the various books of the Bible. God has not qualified or inspired any man to do this kind of work.[\[107\]](#)

Theory of Encounter Inspiration[\[108\]](#)

A third view of inspiration goes by a variety of labels: "Neo-orthodoxy," "existentialism" (the religious kind), or "encounter" (after one of the more prominent words in its in-house jargon). This view is based, at least in part, on the "I-Thou" concept of Philosopher Martin Buber. The three basic tenets or postulates will now be examined:

Subjective Rather Than Objective.

1. Inspiration is, by its very nature, inherently subjective rather than objective.

Although the verbalist and plenarist views are quite different and distinct, the former holding that inspiration resides in the exact word used, and the latter believing that the inspiration resides instead in the thought conveyed by the prophet, both are alike in one respect: They each hold that inspiration is essentially objective rather than subjective.

Until the turn of the century, these were the two basic positions held by the Christian world. Then along came philosopher-theologian Martin Buber, who helped to develop a new theory of inspiration. This theory holds, among other views, that inspiration is, by its very nature, inherently subjective rather than objective. What does this mean in practical terms?

As "encounter" theology sees it, revelation (or inspiration) is an experience that takes place in an "I-Thou" encounter between the prophet and God. It is then, primarily, an *experience*, with no exchange of information taking place.

Revelation, for the encounter theologian, is "the personal self-disclosure of God to man, not the impartation of truths about God, . . . an 'I-Thou' encounter with God, the full presence of God in the consciousness" of the prophet, as seminary professor Raoul Dederen has phrased it.[\[109\]](#)

There is no communication of information in encounter theology. God does not utter a word. No statements of truth of any kind are made in this unique relationship. Truth is seen not as conceptual in an objective sense, but as experiential in a subjective sense.

At this point the encounterist would argue that there is a content. But the content is not the impartation of some concept about God, but, rather, the imparting of some *One--God Himself*, addressing the individual Christian's soul and calling for a personal response in the transaction.

Revelation, ultimately, for the encounterist, is the full revelation of God to the full consciousness of the prophet. In this experience there is no communication of ideas, truths, concepts, or messages.

As we noted earlier, the Bible writers convey emphatically that God speaks particularly and uniquely through inspired men. There is simply no twisting such declarations as the one made in 2 Samuel 23:2: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue"!

The inquiry of Zedekiah the king to Jeremiah the prophet is central to a genuinely biblical view of inspiration: "Is there any word from the Lord?" (Jeremiah 37:17).

Nor is this merely an Old Testament view of inspiration. In three places in Acts Luke uses such expressions as "the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake" (chap. 1:16), "God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (chap. 3:21), and "by the mouth of thy servant David [God] hast said," et cetera. Chapter four of 1 Timothy opens with "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that . . .," and the opening words of Hebrews declare that whereas in former days God spoke by the mouth of the holy prophets, in more recent times He has spoken more directly to mankind through His Son.

The encounterist holds that the prophet *as a person* is inspired (which is true), but that the thoughts and the words the prophet conveys are his own ideas rather than God's ideas (which is false).

Further, the encounterist holds that the prophet is the interpreter of God's self-disclosure in terms relevant to his own day; and those ideas may contain error. They may even be scientifically or historically inaccurate (as, for example, Moses' idea of a seven solar-day literal creation); yet the prophet nevertheless is held to be inspired, since, in this view, inspiration has nothing whatever to do with ideas!

The encounterist lays great stress on context. His purpose is to demonstrate "historical conditioning"--the idea that the prophet is the helpless victim (as well as the product) of his environment, background, education, and climate of thought.

Although the plenarist is also interested in context, he uses it to discover, by examination of the historical circumstances surrounding the giving of a particular message, whether the prophet's words constitute a *principle--* (an unchanging, unerring rule of human behavior) or a *policy* (the application of a principle to a particular situation, in which case the application may change as the situation changes).

2. *Contains the word versus being the word.* The encounterist says that the Bible *contains* the word of God, but it is *not itself* the word of God. In this view, the Bible is no longer revelation in the pre-twentieth century sense of the word. It is no longer God's revealed word, but rather a *witness* to the revelation experience.

Regarding content, this view sees the Bible as merely the result of its writer's rational reflection upon God's individual and personal self-manifestation to them. In other words, Moses did not receive the Ten Commandments directly from God, nor did he obtain specific instructions concerning the earthly tabernacle, its furnishings, or its ceremonies.

Thus the encounterist does not believe that the concepts conveyed in Scripture are the word of God, as the plenarist believes. The plenarist holds inspiration to be objective--that is, something apart from the individual by which he is

daily judged. The encounterist sees the word of God as a personal, subjective experience--an inner experience that is remarkably powerful and compelling. *Experience*, as the encounterist sees it, constitutes the word of God--not ideas, thoughts, conceptions, or propositional truth.

As the prophet attempts to express *his own* ideas or thoughts in describing this "divine-human encounter" he thus attempts to convey the word of God as he feels it from within. This attempt could be compared to a person's relating in a prayer meeting testimony what God did for him that week.

For the encounterist, *the prophet is inspired in heart, rather than in head*. Thus the person who hears or reads the prophet's words also has a subjective experience. Truth is therefore defined as experiential. The experience becomes the word of God for the student, rather than the word of God being defined as the literal words, concepts, and propositions expressed by the prophet.

The plenarist does not disparage the place of experience in the life of the Christian; indeed, in at least 13 locations Ellen White uses the expression *experimental religion*. But human experience *never supersedes* the objective word of God, which must itself determine the validity of *all* experience.[110]

3. *Quantitative, not qualitative*. Finally, for the encounterist, *everyone* is inspired. The prophet simply has a more superlative degree of inspiration than the ordinary individual.

The issue at this point is *a difference in degree versus a difference in kind*. The prophet has a more intense degree of inspiration, it is held, than that of average people. A prophet's, minister's, or politician's eloquence may lead people to do things they would not otherwise do. Because such a person lifts others up out of themselves, he is thus considered "inspired."

There may certainly be some kind of secular, nonprophetic inspiration. We sometimes think of an artist, a sculptor, a musical composer or performer as being "inspired." But this ordinary, secular inspiration has nothing whatever to do with the kind of prophetic inspiration spoken of in the Bible.

In Biblical inspiration, the prophet is taken off in vision. He or she may lose natural strength only to receive a supernatural endowment. For the prophet, God breathes--literally; for in the vision state the prophet does not breathe. And while in this state, the prophet receives infallible messages from the Lord.

Ordinary individuals may be moved by the inspired words of the prophet; their lives may be fundamentally altered for the better. But that experience is not the "inspiration" that the Bible writers and Ellen White possessed. When ordinary people are "inspired," it is some other *kind* of inspiration than the biblical variety. *It is a difference in kind, not in degree*.

This idea of degrees of inspiration that is so prevalent in encounter theology has, historically, had a certain appeal with Adventism. In 1884 then-General Conference President George I. Butler's series of ten articles in the *Review and Herald* posited this idea of degrees of inspiration. Ellen White wrote him a letter of rebuke[111] in which she pointed out that God had not inspired this series on inspiration, nor had He approved of the teaching of these views at the sanitarium, college, or publishing house in Battle Creek!

A Significant Difference

At this point, the reader may, rather wearily, say, "What practical difference does it make which position I take?" It makes a big difference. Let us note some of the significant implications that result from accepting the encounterist view:

1. The Bible is no longer the bearer of eternal truths; it is no longer a book of doctrine. It degenerates into merely a witness to the "divine-human encounter" between God and a prophet. It is no longer a statement of

truths *from* God or truths *about* God. It is merely the personal view of the prophet giving his subjective reaction to a highly subjective experience.

2. The *reader* of the prophet's words, then, becomes the authority, the arbiter who decides what (for him) is inspired and what is not. He reads the Bible critically; but he is not obliged to believe what it says *in principle*, conceptually, but rather what he interprets it to mean *to him*. He decides whether a given statement is to be accepted at face value, or whether it is to be accepted at all.

The reader's subjective experience becomes normative--the standard of what he will accept or reject as binding on his life and experience.

However, if there is no objective revelation as criterion, then there is no way an individual can validate his experience, no way for him to determine whether this experience is from the Holy Spirit or from an unholy spirit. It is simply not enough to say that one's experience is "self-authenticating." As John former theology professor Robertson commented, "It may also be self-deceiving."

3. The subjective view is a distortion. It distorts the proper, legitimate place of context. It also distorts the proper place of experience, by making it the criterion for authenticity. The subjective view emphasizes "the autonomy of historical conditioning," and makes demythologizing of the prophet a necessity to contemporary understanding. Further, it distorts genuine prophetic inspiration by imposing the idea of degrees of inspiration upon it as a central category.

4. The encounter view results in the adoption of the following theological positions:

- a. Creation, as taught in Genesis, is neither literal nor scientific. Rather, evolution becomes the favored view, with Genesis being seen as merely recording the quaint ideas extant in the time of Moses.

- b. With regard to the incarnation of Christ, Jesus was not really a divine-human being. He was only a man. The encounter view rejects supernatural events such as the virgin birth and miracles, as we commonly define them.

5. In demonology, the Bible, says the encounterist, merely reports the common ideas of a time when it was popularly but incorrectly believed that demons possessed the physical bodies of certain unfortunate human victims. Today, says the encounterist, we know that *all* mental illness and insanity are caused by external conditions such as chemical imbalances and unfavorable environment--but not by spirits.

Plenarists can certainly agree that some mental illness, perhaps much of it, is caused by external, nonsupernatural causes; but they cannot accept a view that declares that *all* mental illness is so caused. This author saw too much in his 12 years of mission service to believe otherwise!

In the final analysis, then, the encounterist, subjective view of inspiration ultimately constitutes a denial of the "faith once delivered to the saints." It is a clever substitution of "cleverly devised fables" for an infallible revelation of truth as given by God through divinely (and objectively) inspired prophets. And those who accept this view risk losing eternal life.

IV. The Purpose of Inspiration/Revelation

Leslie Hardinge, a veteran Seventh-day Adventist college and seminary Bible teacher, once made a very profound statement: "Without analogy, there is no real teaching." The most effective teaching in the Bible, or anywhere else, is done through metaphor and simile. Let us notice, then, two metaphors that Bible writers employ in the New Testament to enlarge our understanding of the purpose of inspiration/revelation.

Two Biblical Metaphors

1. The Apostle Paul repeatedly speaks of prophetic inspiration as the gift from the Holy Spirit--one of the so-called "spiritual gifts" (Ephesians 4; 1 Corinthians 12).

A person may receive many kinds of gifts. Some gifts are useless or even embarrassing. However, the most valuable gifts I have ever received were either utilitarian gifts that filled a particular need in my day-to-day existence (such as a pen, an attache case, or a typewriter) or gifts of love in which the sentiment that prompted the gift far transcended the inherent, immediate value of the gift. This sentiment bestowed upon the gift a value it would not otherwise have possessed.

The gift of prophecy can be described in the same terms. To some it is useless. To others it is a continual embarrassment and annoyance, for it cuts across their lifestyle repeatedly, dealing as it does with particulars of day-to-day existence.

The choice of the metaphor *gift* is a fortunate one when we come to the question of inspiration/revelation. The purpose of this gift is to promote the work of the ministry of the body (church) of God--to strengthen and guide the church (Ephesians 4:12-15). Notice in particular its four purposes in this connection:

- a. The *perfection* of the saints (that they may grow up into Christ).
- b. The *unification* of the saints (so that there will be no schism in the body of Christ. See 1 Corinthians 12:25).
- c. The *edification* of the saints (inspired writings provide doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. See 2 Timothy 3:16).
- d. The *stabilization* of the saints (that they may have an anchor to keep them from drifting about on every wave of doctrine).

2. The Apostle Peter adds a second metaphor, actually borrowing it from one of David's psalms. He sees prophetic inspiration as resembling a light that shines in a darkened place for a practical and necessary purpose--to keep us from stumbling and falling (2 Peter 1:19). A millennium earlier David had likened the word of God to a "lamp" to the feet, a "light" to the path (Psalm 119:105).

As a "light," prophetic inspiration serves two valuable functions:

- a. One of the main purposes of the prophetic writings (although certainly not their only function) is to reveal future events. Revelation thus helps us to make adequate preparation for coming events and enables us to relate constructively to these events when they occur.^[112] However, a less obvious reason for including the prophetic element in Scripture is to validate the Bible's divine origin--to show that God is its Author. Mortals cannot predict what will happen even moments in advance; but God can tell centuries in advance what will transpire. This function of inspiration was the particular burden of Isaiah.^[113]
- b. Equally important is the function of revelation as light to protect the believer. Inspired writings provide a light that exposes Satan's goals and his proposed methodology for accomplishing his objective. Truly, "where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18).

Conclusion

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter" is not only a sound pedagogical device, but also a spiritual imperative.

Inspiration has been seen as a process in which God uniquely imparts eternally important truths through "his servants, the prophets," who "at sundry times and in divers manners" have spoken to their contemporaries and to those who would later follow to enable them to understand the divine mind and will of God for their lives.

Especially in these closing hours of earth's history, there is an overriding need to understand how this phenomena operates, so that one may not only have an intelligent understanding of what God is trying to say, but also to avoid the perils and pitfalls that arise from the holding of false views.

Paul's admonition to the saints of the New Testament--"Quench not the Spirit [don't let the candle go out!]. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21)--is but the echo of the counsel of Jehoshaphat in the Old Testament: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper" (2 Chronicles 20:20).

In the second presentation in this series we will consider the question of inerrancy and infallibility--Does the true prophet ever err? The experience of Ellen White will be examined in the light of the evidence of Bible prophets.

Part II: Infallibility: Does the True Prophet Ever Err?

Introduction

The theological footballs of "infallibility" and "inerrancy" are agitating minds and hearts in evangelical Christendom today, especially as these issues relate to the question of prophetic inspiration. Much of the discussion revolves around semantical considerations,^[114] and is rather closely associated with the verbal view of inspiration. Nevertheless, important questions need to be raised--and answered--such as: Does a true prophet ever err? Do all the predictions of a true prophet come to pass 100 percent of the time? Does a true prophet ever have to change anything he or she has written or said?

Webster defines *infallible* as "1: incapable of error: unerring; 2: not liable to mislead, deceive, or disappoint: certain; 3: incapable of error in defining doctrines touching faith or morals."^[115] He further renders *inerrant* as "free from error: infallible."^[116]

The issue of prophetic infallibility is raised because the Scriptures claim to be more reliable than ordinary literary productions of human authors.

As was noted in part 1 of this series, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16). It is not amenable to "private interpretation" because the message did not originate by private initiative or from private creativity. Instead, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). Therefore, said Peter, "take heed" to it (vs. 19).

In what may well have been the first book of the New Testament to be written, Paul, in the same spirit as the reference cited above from Peter, admonished the Thessalonian Christians: "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21).

Why? Peter responds, because we have a "more sure" word of prophetic writings (2 Peter 1:19). More recent translators have rendered the passage: the word of the prophetic writers is "made more certain,"^[117] "made more sure,"^[118] "surer still,"^[119] "firmer still,"^[120] "confirmed,"^[121] "reaffirmed,"^[122] and "more fully guaranteed."^[123]

The question, then, is not the uniqueness of the inspired writings in being "more sure" than uninspired writings; it is, rather, what is the essence of this "more sureness"? In *what way* are these writings "more sure"?

Several possible analogical models may be found among evangelical Christians and among Seventh-day Adventists:

1. *The "straight-jacket" theory*: This view holds that the control of the Holy Spirit over the prophet during the process of inspiration is so rigid, so tight, that the prophet is prevented from making any type of error.

This position is well illustrated in the words of one Seventh-day Adventist evangelist in a sermon explaining Ellen White to non-Adventists:

And by the way, Ellen White's predictions up to this very minute have been right every time. The psychics like to talk about their batting average. They are proud if they are right seventy-five or eighty percent of the time.

Listen! A prophet of God with a batting average? Never! A prophet of God is right one hundred percent of the time or he isn't right at all!

And another thing! A prophet of God doesn't change his mind!

I think you are beginning to see the difference between a prophet--a true prophet--and a psychic.

Three postulates are thus suggested: (a) The true prophet has a PAQ (Prophetic Accuracy Quotient) of 100 percent, whereas psychics (and false prophets) typically have only a 75-80 percent PAQ; (b) if a prophet of God is not right 100 percent of the time, he or she is not right *any* of the time; and (c) a true prophet never has to go back and change anything he wrote or said in his professional capacity as a prophet.

This position borrows heavily from the basic philosophy of inspiration held by the author of a popular book about Ellen White published a few years ago:

A true prophet [italics in original] is not a psychic who performs with the aid of a mental or "spiritual" crutch, but is someone who has *no degree of freedom* either in tuning or in controlling the prophetic impulses or prophetic recall. These impulses are superimposed over the prophet's conscious mind by a supernatural personal being, having absolute knowledge of both past and future, *making no allowance for error or human miscalculation.*^[124]

This position has serious problems and implications with regard to both the Bible and the writings of Ellen White, as will subsequently be noted.

2. *The "intervention" theory*: This view holds that if in his humanity a prophet of God errs, *and* the nature of that error is sufficiently serious to materially affect (a) the direction of God's church, (b) the eternal destiny of one person, or (c) the purity of a doctrine, *then* (and only then) the Holy Spirit immediately moves the prophet to correct the error, so that no permanent damage is done.

This position can be squared with the objective reality of Scripture and of the writings of Ellen White. But before we apply the acid test of these two theories, we should pause to examine the nature and source of religious belief.

Several penetrating questions are relevant here: (1) Which of the two theories presented above do you believe? (Or do you have a third theory to which you subscribe?) (2) Why do you believe it? This second question may be even more important than the first.

Is your belief based on *source credibility*--some favorite preacher, pastor, Bible teacher, or Biblical scholar whom you highly respect has taken this position, and because of your high regard for this person, you have accepted, uncritically, what you were told? Or do you hold your belief because you have *objectively validated* the position?

In Paul's day the Christian believers in Berea were said to have been "more noble" than their counterparts at Thessalonica for two reasons that have great relevance for us in this discussion:

1. They received Paul's words "with all readiness of mind." That is, they were open to new light; they did not have closed minds.
2. They "searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). That is, they validated what they had heard before they accepted it; they did not gullibly, uncritically accept what they were told without personally verifying it in God's Word.

Paul might have been forgiven somewhat had he told the Bereans, "I am not only an inspired prophet of the Lord, but I also have the highest spiritual gift--that of apostleship. You don't need to check out what I have told you; you can take my word for it, for I have the highest authority from God on this earth."

But he didn't tell them that. Instead, he praised them for *not* simply taking his word for things, but for going instead to the previously inspired writings to verify what he had said.

Validating Truth

How should one validate truth? By counting heads and accepting the position that attracts the largest number of subscribers? Hardly.

What is the best way to determine the correct time of day? If someone is asked, "What time is it?" and responds, "It is 7:10," how does one know whether he is correct? Incidentally, if you ask several individuals for the time of day, you may get as many different answers as there are persons with watches. Furthermore, each person will probably assume that his is the only right time if others disagree.

Many communities have a telephone number one may dial to get the exact time of day. Some radio and television networks have a "blip" signal that may be heard exactly on the hour, superimposed over the voice of the announcer giving the call letters of the station.

Validating the time of day for most of us may not be crucial. Whether we are one or two minutes off may not be too important. But validating spiritual truth may be eternally important.

And how does one validate truth? The response of Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, French bishop and seventeenth century court preacher to Louis XIV, is apropos. Louis was a great lover of the theater, and often had command performances in his court. Bossuet, on the other hand, was widely known to oppose the theater as being inimical to the development of Christian character and as being an instrument of evil.

One day, as the story goes, during a lull in the proceedings of court, Louis looked around and, seeing Bossuet on the periphery, called loudly in his direction, "My bishop, what do you think of the theater?"

Courtiers gasped, for they knew the views of both men. They also knew the peril of rendering a verdict contrary to the royal opinion. At the very least, the offender might be banished from court (a fate, for these sycophants, almost worse than death); at the very worst, he might be sent to his death.

Everyone waited breathlessly for Bossuet's response, wondering whether he would take the expedient way out of the dilemma (on the theory that it is better to be a live coward than a dead hero), or whether he would risk all to speak the conviction of his heart.

Bossuet gravely made his way into the immediate presence of the Sun King, genuflected, and said with great dignity, "Sire, you have asked what I think of the theater. I will tell you, Sire, what I think. There are some great persons in favor of it . . . and there are some great reasons against it!"

It might equally be said of the "strait-jacket" theory of "more sureness." "There are some great persons in favor of it; but there are some great reasons against it." How does one decide? Validation is potentially a painful process, for facts sometimes force us to change long-held highly cherished opinions. But validation is an intellectual necessity to anyone who holds truth to be as important as life itself.

It is important for each of us to know *what* we believe, as well as why we believe it.

In part 1 of this series we noted Paul's declaration that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7) and Ellen White's observation that "in the work of God for man's redemption, divinity and humanity are combined."^[125] Jesus was both Son of God and Son of man; and this same union of the divine and the human exists also in the Bible. The "treasure" consists of truths revealed and inspired by God; the "earthen vessel"--the human packaging--is the words of men, chosen by them to communicate divine truth.^[126]

The "treasure"--the God-given truth or message--is not only "an infallible revelation of His will" but is also "authoritative"^[127]--normative and binding upon the Christian. Commenting upon the question of infallibility, Ellen White wrote, "God alone is infallible."^[128] "Man is fallible, but God's Word is infallible."^[129]

Concerning the "earthen vessel," the human side of the equation, Mrs. White added, "Everything that is human is imperfect";^[130] and "no man is infallible."^[131]

Some have stumbled over the fact that there are imperfections in the writings of Ellen White. Examples cited by the critics include her incorrect numbering of Abraham's allies; her early statement that God commanded Adam and Eve not to touch the forbidden fruit, later changed to state that these were Eve's words; her assertion that only eight souls received Noah's message, contradicted in another place by her statement that there were others who believed and who helped build the ark; and her account of the daily ministrations in the ancient tabernacle,^[132] which does not entirely square with the account given in the Pentateuch.

Some critics have gone on to ask if these imperfections, these inaccuracies, this demonstrated untrustworthiness, are not sufficient reason for not basing any doctrine upon her writings.^[133]

There is no charge that can be leveled against Ellen White, in her professional role as a prophet, that could not and has not first been leveled against the writers of the Bible by the so-called "higher critics," whether such accusations allege misstatements of fact, copying uninspired writers (a charge examined in detail in part 1 of this series), unfulfilled prophecies, or having to retract statements made at an earlier time.

Let us not claim more for Mrs. White than we would for the Bible writers; but let us not claim less, either (for reasons that will be discussed in some detail in part 3 of this series).

Coming back to Peter's forthright claim, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy," let us examine, successively, the lives of the prophets, and then the declarations of the prophets, to see if we are able to determine how this "more sureness" operates--or does not operate.

I. Inerrancy and the Prophet's Personal Life

The evidence of history and Scripture testify that the control of the Holy Spirit over the lives of the prophets did not preclude their freedom to sin. If "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), this would presumably include the prophets as well. To verify this, one need but examine their lives individually, as recorded in sacred writ, to discover the nature and extent of their sins of omission and commission.

One of the earliest prophets mentioned in Scripture is Abraham (Genesis 20:7). Repeatedly the canonical writers of both Old and New Testaments call him the father of the faithful, and indeed, both Jews (through Isaac) and Arabs (through Ishmael) consider him their lineal ancestor as well.

Abraham was not only made the progenitor of peoples too numerous to count, not only given the special relationship with God signified by the role and office of a prophet, but he was also given the title--by Jehovah Himself--"Abraham my friend."^[134] (In the Koran, written by Mohammed in Arabia, this title is rendered *El Khalil*. Islamic philologists state that the word in Arabic--a language noted for its nuances and fine distinctions of meaning--should not be rendered merely "friend" but rather "*a very special friend.*")

What kind of man was the "very special friend" of God? In Genesis 12 we find Abraham and his wife Sarah in Egypt. Because Sarah is a very beautiful woman, Abraham fears that Pharaoh will want to add her to the royal harem, and will kill Abraham to pave the way for this conquest. So Abraham prevails upon Sarah to declare that she is Abraham's sister instead of his wife.

Now Sarah was indeed Abraham's *half*-sister, so what she said was half true; but she was also his *whole* wife. And what is half-truth is whole-lie, because the intent is to deceive. God stepped into the situation in a remarkable manner to protect the life of His friend; and Abraham and Sarah were allowed to leave Egypt unmolested, with all of their possessions intact.

But eight chapters later, in Genesis 20, we find the same story being repeated--with the same results. God bore long with His very special friend--even as He bears long with us. But one somehow tends to expect a little higher standard of behavior of prophets! Surely Abraham should have learned a lesson the first time. But he did not, as we often do not.

Abraham was not only a "royal liar" twice over, but he also sinned in acquiescing to Sarah's proposal that he take Hagar as a secondary wife in order to "help" God's plan to make Abraham's progeny as numerous as the sands of the sea and the stars of the sky.

Sarah was beyond normal child-bearing years (Genesis 18:11); and not believing that God would work a miracle, she sought a naturalistic solution. But in taking Hagar, one of Sarah's servants, as his wife, Abraham demonstrated a serious lapse of faith. God intended Isaac to be a "miracle" child--for he was in several ways to be a type of Christ. And even if Abraham and Sarah's conduct was acceptable by the cultural standards of the day, it was contrary to God's plan. Paul uses this illustration in Galatians, chapter 4, to allegorize Hagar as salvation by works, with Sarah representing salvation by faith.

The seriousness of Abraham's lack of faith at this point is underscored by a more recent prophet. Because he did not trust God to produce a miracle child, but instead took Hagar as his wife, Abraham was called upon, a few years later, to offer Isaac as a human sacrifice on Mount Moriah. Wrote Ellen White, "If he had endured the first test and had patiently waited for the promise to be fulfilled in Sarah . . . he would not have been subjected to the closest test that was ever required of man."^[135]

So much for *El Khalil*, the friend of God.

Abraham's grandson, Jacob, a prophet, was also a sinner. In fact, his very name had to be changed to Israel after his conversion because the old name meant deceiver or supplanter; and God couldn't have a prophet going around with *that* kind of name in a day when the giving of a name had a significance far transcending the same event in modern times.

Then there was David. Twice in Scripture, once in the Old Testament and once in the New, David is given the title "a man after his [God's] own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14; see also Acts 13:22). And what kind of man was he? Well, among other things, he was first an adulterer with Bathsheba, and then a murderer of her husband Uriah in a cover-up effort (2 Samuel 1). Is that any way for a prophet to behave--especially one so close to the heart of God?

Incidentally, the experiences of Abraham and David have been used in recent times by lapsed Christians to condone polygamy, among other sins. However, the question persists, was Abraham the friend of God and was David a man after God's own heart *because* of their sins, or rather *in spite* of them?

Although the prophets were all sinners--and some of them rather lurid ones at that--their sins did not invalidate their prophetic gift!

Jeremiah complained, charging God wrongfully (chaps. 12:1; 15:15-18). Both Jonah (chap. 1:3) and Elijah (1 Kings 19) ran away from duty. And then there was Peter.

Peter denied his Lord three times with foul fishermen's oaths that had not stained his lips for three years. Jesus forgave him, and restored him to the gospel ministry, and even gave him the gift of prophetic inspiration. And did Peter then live a morally impeccable, upright life forever after? He did not.

Peter was subsequently guilty of gross hypocrisy. While with the Gentile Christians he was the epitome of friendship; but on occasions when Jews were present, Peter catered to their narrow chauvinistic prejudices by not according the Gentiles the same warmth of Christian fellowship as he would have in private. In fact, this was such a serious moral issue that the apostle Paul was obliged to rebuke Peter in a rather forthright and public manner (Galatians 2:11-14). And Peter was a prophet.

What about Ellen White? She once wrote, "God and heaven alone are infallible. . . . In regard to infallibility, I never claimed it; God alone is infallible."[\[136\]](#)

A recent critic reportedly found Ellen White guilty of three sins (if not crimes): (1) she was a literary thief, since he charged that she stole the writings of others; (2) she was a liar, for she allegedly claimed that those writings were from her own pen when they were not; and (3) she and her husband James were held to be shameless, opportunistic exploiters, writing for a guaranteed, captive market for the purpose of enriching their own family fortunes![\[137\]](#)

Now, for a moment, let us assume that the critics' worst charges about Ellen White are absolutely true. Although these charges have been answered in substantial detail,[\[138\]](#) for the sake of the argument let us momentarily assume the worst. *If* Ellen White were guilty, as charged, would that invalidate her prophetic gift?

And the answer comes quickly, No--not unless you are willing to invalidate Peter's prophetic gift, Jonah's prophetic gift, Elijah's prophetic gift, Jeremiah's prophetic gift, David's prophetic gift, and Abraham's prophetic gift, among others.

We must be consistent; we must treat Ellen White exactly as we would any prophet of biblical times. If we don't tear out of our Bible the Psalms written by David, the prophecies of Jeremiah and Jonah and the two epistles of Peter, then we have no right to throw out the writings of Ellen White.

History and the Scripture testify that the control of the Holy Spirit over the lives of the prophets did not preclude their freedom to sin; and yet, their sinful acts did not invalidate their prophetic gift!

At this point someone is likely to assert that Peter did not say we have a more sure prophetic life; but rather that we have a more sure prophetic word. What about the *words* of the prophet?

II. Inerrancy and the Prophet's Prophetic Word

Three categories of "problems" appear when we examine the utterances of the prophets, biblical and modern, in which significant questions have been raised: (1) unfulfilled prophecies; (2) inconsequential errors of minor, insignificant detail; and (3) major errors of substance. Let us examine each successively, in detail.

A. Unfulfilled Prophecies

Some time ago I was holding a series of class lectures and public meetings at one of our educational institutions on the Atlantic seaboard. At the close of the Thursday evening presentation a denominational worker at this school

asked if he might speak with me privately. I invited him to my guest room where we conversed for more than an hour.

As soon as he was seated, he began, "I really want to believe in Ellen White as a legitimate, authentic prophet of the Lord." I could tell by the tone of his voice that he was not only deeply sincere, but also deeply concerned as well.

"Fine," I responded. "Is there any impediment to the fulfillment of your wish?"

Without answering my question directly, he went on, "Isn't the fulfillment of predictions one of the Bible's tests of a true prophet?"

"Oh, yes," I smiled. "When I used to teach college prophetic-guidance classes in California and Nigeria, we examined four such tests (1) the words of the 'prophet' under scrutiny must agree with earlier inspired revelations known to have come from the Lord (Isaiah 8:20); (2) the fruitage test must be applied, both the prophet's own life and the lives of those who follow the prophet (Matthew 7:16, 20); (3) the prophet must testify that Jesus was the divine-human incarnate Son of God (1 John 4:1-3); and (4) the predictions of the prophet must come to pass.

"This last test," I told my inquirer, "is twice mentioned in the Old Testament. Jeremiah (chap. 28:9) presents it from the positive perspective: 'When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.' And Moses presents it from the negative perspective; 'When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him' (Deuteronomy 18:22)."

"I thought so," my friend said quietly. Then he went on, "Well, what do we do, then, with Ellen White's predictions that never came to pass? For example, I understand that in 1856 she said she was shown a group of our church members at a meeting somewhere. She said that some of them would be 'food for worms,' some would be subjects of the seven last plagues, and some would be alive and translated at the second coming of Christ. Are any of the persons who attended that meeting still alive?"

"Not to my knowledge," I replied. "In fact, the last known survivor died in 1937 at the age of 83. His name was William C. White, and he was a babe in arms at the time. His mother, Ellen White, made the prediction."

"That is what I have heard. Well, how do you handle it--in the light of this Biblical test of a prophet--that his prediction must come to pass, and if it doesn't this is evidence that the Lord has not spoken through him?"

"I handle it the same way I handle other unfulfilled prophecies of genuine prophets that appear in the Bible," I replied. "Incidentally, I will deal with this in substantial detail in just a moment. But my policy, when people raise questions about Ellen White's prophetic role, is to go first to the Bible, to see how the situation is resolved there, before I examine Ellen White. You see, I want to see her in the light of the Bible, not the other way around."

And so we began a most interesting study of unfulfilled prophecies by authentic, acknowledged prophets in the Bible. Probably the best known example is Jonah.

After finishing his celebrated "submarine" ride in the belly of the great fish, Jonah went to Nineveh to do the Lord's bidding. Nineveh was a large city; it would take Jonah three days to cover it entirely. His message was as simple as it was stark: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4). No hope was offered, no compromise, no conditional element.

After delivering the message, Jonah went out of town and found a vantage place where he could witness (and relish) the massacre of his nation's most hated enemies. Jonah despised these people with a passion, for the Assyrians were the most warlike and fearsome of Israel's pagan foes. When they captured Jewish prisoners of war, they flayed them--skinned them alive--to extract every ounce of trauma in torture that they could before they killed

the victim. In such instances death, when it came, was a welcome, merciful release. The Jews quite understandably had no love for the Ninevites.

Although there was no hope explicit in the message of Jonah, the Ninevites (who may have had some prior knowledge about Jehovah from hearing other Jewish prophets, or from reading Jewish prophetic writings) decided to mend their ways. They expressed their repentance in the cultural manifestation appropriate to the times--they put on sackcloth and covered themselves with ashes. God beheld it all, and in love and mercy granted them a stay of execution.

Meanwhile, the prophet was becoming more angry by the moment. One suspects that the real cause of this growing irritation was not merely his narrow chauvinistic Jewish loyalty, but rather a fear that word of this new development might get back to Jerusalem before he did.

Jonah may have been more concerned about his professional reputation as a prophet than about the fate of his 120,000 "converts." Instead of wishing them baptized by water, he wanted them incinerated by fire! Perhaps he was afraid that when he got back to Jerusalem the little children playing in the street would chant after him, "Jonah's a false prophet; Jonah's a false prophet." Why? Because his prediction didn't come to pass.

Interestingly, in a footnote to history, we learn that several centuries after this event the Ninevites "repented" of their former repentance (see 2 Corinthians 7:10) and went back to their former ways. God then "repented" of His reprieve, and sent the threatened destruction that Jonah had originally foretold.

But was Jonah proved a "true" prophet 200 years *ex post facto*? No, not at all. If the Ninevites had *never* subsequently been destroyed, Jonah would still have been deemed a true prophet, even though his prediction did not come to pass.

How? By the conditional element that exists in some prophecies, either explicitly or implicitly. A clue to this is found as early as 950 B.C. when the prophet Azariah instructed King Asa, "The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you" (2 Chr 15:2).

More to the point, however, is the interesting (and significant) fact, that in *both* of the biblical books where the test of fulfillment is mandated, this conditional element is also explicitly stated.

Ten chapters *before* giving the test of fulfillment, Jeremiah mentions this conditional element:

At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that is obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them (Jeremiah 18:7-10).

Moses also mentions the conditional element repeatedly in Deuteronomy.^[139]

Some have felt that this was a face-saving means of maintaining a prophet's professional reputation in the face of adverse evidence such as nonfulfillment of predictions,^[140] but it is not. It is a biblical principle. One does not need an advanced degree in theology to be able to figure out what kind of prophecies are amendable to the conditional element and which are not.

One could cite other biblical examples of unfulfilled prophecies given by authentic, legitimate prophets. The category that comes most quickly to mind is that of a host of predictions made by a half-dozen Old Testament prophets about Israel's national honor and glory--predictions about the worldwide mission of Israel and the ingathering of the Gentiles, eternal rest in Canaan, and deliverance from political enemies.

A few of these predictions were fulfilled, secondarily, through "spiritual Israel" (the Christian church); and some may be fulfilled to Christians ultimately, after sin and sinners are destroyed following the last judgment. Despite these exceptions, the majority of these prophecies were not fulfilled in Bible times, are not being fulfilled today, and never will be fulfilled.[141]

Then do we say that the prophets who made these predictions--notably Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Zephaniah, and Zechariah--were false prophets? No. Nor do we say, as do the Secret Rapture theorists, that these prophecies will be fulfilled in our own time. Indeed, these latter expositors have built a whole theology on the misunderstanding of the conditional element in prophecy, and they posit a last-day fulfillment in order that these Old Testament writers may be proved to be reliable, authentic prophets of the Lord![142]

A Look at the "Food for Worms" Vision

Let us now come back to Ellen White and the "Food for Worms" vision, to discover the facts in that case. During the latter part of May 1856, a conference in Battle Creek was attended by members and denominational workers of a church which was still four years away from assuming a corporate name. Attendees came to the conference from various parts of the eastern and midwestern parts of the United States and from Canada. The conference opened on Friday afternoon, May 23, and closed on Monday, May 26. On Sabbath the attendance was so large that it was necessary to leave the modest chapel that then served the Adventists and go across the street to a large tent pitched to accommodate the crowd.

On Tuesday morning, May 27, another meeting was held, this time back in the chapel, attended largely by workers who were still in Battle Creek. It was at this service that Mrs. White was taken off in vision, and was shown some of those attending the May 23-26 conference.

The report of this vision is found in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 1, pages 127-137, and is still published by the church, although some critics claim that the church tries to hide Mrs. White's unfulfilled predictions.

Incidentally, carefully drawn lists of the names of those in attendance at that conference were compiled by a number of interested parties. Some of these lists still survive in the archives of the Ellen G. White Estate in the General Conference office. The lists were actively circulated among Adventists in earlier days, and J. N. Loughborough tells, in a letter written in 1918, about two ministers, a "Brother Nelson" and George Amadon, who took such a roster to Ellen White in 1905 to see if she could add any names that they had overlooked.

Mrs. White is reported to have said, "What are you doing?" When told the purpose of the list--to show the nearness of Jesus' coming because very few of those attending still survived--Mrs. White asked what use would be made of the list. Brother Nelson responded, "I am going to have copies of it printed and sent out to all of our people."

Mrs. White's instant rejoinder was, "Then you stop right where you are. If they get that list, instead of working to push the Message, they will be watching the *Review* each week to see who is dead." Loughborough, in telling the story, concluded with the observation that Ellen White objected to using this incident as a "sign of the times." [143] Obviously, she recognized the conditional element in the vision, and the fact that the condition had not then been met by the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Was the conditional element explicit in the angel's testimony to Ellen White in the 1856 vision? No. But then, neither was the conditional element explicit in the testimony of Jonah as he trudged for three days throughout the "exceeding great" city of Nineveh. In both cases, however, the conditional element was implicit.

From as early as 1850 to as late as 1911, [144] Ellen White's writings repeatedly suggest that if the Seventh-day Adventist church had done its job, "the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this." [145]

The conditional element in *some* prophecy is exhibited both in the Bible and in the writings of Ellen G. White. To accept it in one, but discard it in the other, is inconsistent and irrational.

True, there *are* some unfulfilled prophecies by authentic, legitimate Bible prophets, but the existence of such prophecies does not necessarily discredit the prophet who made them. There are also unfulfilled prophecies in the writings of Ellen White, and the church has never denied (nor tried to hide) this fact from the public. Those studying the prophetic writings should not ask more of Mrs. White than they would of the Biblical prophets.

B. Inconsequential Errors of Minor Detail

In inspired writings, ancient and modern, there are inconsequential errors of minor, insignificant detail. This is true of the Bible, as well as the writings of Ellen White. Such errors--indeed, all of them added up together--do not affect the direction of God's church, the eternal destiny of one soul, or the purity of any doctrine. That the Holy Spirit *could* have corrected these minor mistakes, one cannot seriously challenge. He obviously chose not to do so, probably because the error wasn't vital to the *message* or the purpose of inspiration.

Let us look first at the Bible. As we noted in part 1 of this series, the writer of the first Gospel informs us (in Matthew 27:9, 10) of a Messianic prophecy, written centuries before Christ's birth, which declared that Christ would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. Matthew attributes that prophecy to Jeremiah.

Matthew slipped. The writer was not Jeremiah, but Zechariah (chap. 11:12, 13).

We noted also the slight discrepancies among the four Gospel writers regarding the exact wording of the superscription written by Pilate and placed upon the cross above the head of Christ. Matthew lists Christ's miracles in a different order than does Luke, even as both writers handle the Sermon on the Mount in different ways--Matthew as a sermon outline, Luke as an evangelistic tool to demonstrate the truths taught by Jesus.

Mention might also be made of the fact that Hobab is described as Moses' brother-in-law in Numbers 10:29, while he is identified as Moses' father-in-law in Judges 4:11. The author of 1 Samuel 16:10 and 11 identifies David as the eighth son of Jesse, whereas the author of 1 Chronicles 2:15 says David was the seventh son. Luke 3:36 mentions a Cainan in the genealogy of Jesus, a person not mentioned in Genesis 11:12. Paul's account of the ratification of the first covenant in Hebrews 9:19 is not entirely in harmony with the account in Exodus 24:3-8.

Nor have we exhausted the list of inconsequential errors of minor, insignificant detail. The point we make here is, simply, that the "treasure" of God's good news is conveyed to mankind in "earthen vessels"; and that those earthen vessels--the packaging--contain mistakes, errors, discrepancies, call them what you will--that in no way deny the divine inspiration of the material nor the divine authority behind the messages.

Ellen White is in the same tradition with the Bible writers. The same kinds of minor errors found in Scripture also crop up here and there in her writings. A few were mentioned in the introduction to this presentation. Others could be cited.

Just after the turn of the century a worker in southern California attempted to justify his loss of confidence in the inspiration of the *Testimonies* because of an inconsistency in an Ellen G. White letter. In this letter Mrs. White spoke of the 40 rooms of the Paradise Valley Sanitarium near San Diego; in actuality there were only 38 rooms. The man apparently believed that if there were any inaccuracies in detail in any writings of one claiming prophetic inspiration, such inaccuracies negated the claim, and his confidence in Ellen White was seriously impaired.

In response, Mrs. White commented:

The information given concerning the number of rooms in the Paradise Valley Sanitarium was given, not as a revelation from the Lord, but simply as a human opinion. There has never been

revealed to me the exact number of rooms in any of our sanitariums; and the knowledge I have obtained of such things I have gained by inquiring of those who were supposed to know. . . .

There are times when common things must be stated, common thoughts must occupy the mind, common letters must be written and information given that has passed from one to another of the workers. Such words, such information, are not given under the special inspiration of the Spirit of God.^[146]

On June 4, 1906, Ellen White wrote a letter to a brother in the church who had written to her earlier concerning the inspiration of the *Testimonies*:

In your letter, you speak of your early training to have implicit faith in the testimonies and say, "I was led to conclude and most firmly believe that *every* word that you ever spoke in public or private, that every letter you wrote under *any* and *all* circumstances, was as inspired as the Ten Commandments."

My brother, you have studied my writings diligently, and you have never found that I have made any such claims, neither will you find that the pioneers in our cause have made such claims.^[147]

When writing about the St. Bartholomew Massacre in the 1888 edition of *The Great Controversy*, Mrs. White mentioned in passing that it was the ringing of the bell in the palace of King Charles IX in Paris that was a signal to begin the wanton destruction that cost the lives of tens of thousands of French Huguenot Protestants on August 24, 1572.

After that volume was in print someone questioned the accuracy of her statement, suggesting instead that it may have been the bell in the church of St. Germain, across the street from the palace. Still another said no, it was the bell in the Palace of Justice around the corner from the royal palace!

Ellen White, in the revised 1911 edition of the book, redrafted the statement to read simply, "A bell, tolling in the dead of night, was a signal for the slaughter."^[148] The identity of the bell was not the issue; it was the events of that night that were important.

Matthew's mistake in attributing the messianic prophecy of 30 pieces of silver to a wrong source (Jeremiah, instead of Zechariah) was duplicated by Ellen White in a *Review and Herald* article less than two years before her death. She wrote: "'The love of Christ constraineth us,' the apostle Peter declared."^[149] She was, of course, quoting 2 Corinthians 5:14, and the attribution should have been to Paul, not Peter.

Dates present unique problems. In two of her published volumes^[150] Mrs. White mentions joining her husband, James, at Wallings Mills, Colorado, on "Monday, August 8," 1878. This was obviously a clerical error, for in that year Monday fell on August 5, not August 8.

Of potentially greater seriousness is another problem in dating, misunderstood by some, and considered by one critic to be an unassailable argument for downgrading the nature and degree of Ellen White's inspiration.

In a postscript to volume 2 of *Spiritual Gifts*, Ellen White wrote this rather unusual statement and appeal: "A special request is made that if any find incorrect statements in this book they will immediately inform me. The edition will be completed about the first of October; therefore send before that time."^[151]

Can you imagine, exclaims one critic, the apostle Paul putting a postscript on one of his epistles telling the members of that church that if they found anything wrong in the epistle that they should write back to him before it was printed and sent out to all the churches?

How is this unusual statement to be understood?

First, volume 2 of *Spiritual Gifts* was an autobiographical account of the experiences of James and Ellen White from 1844 to 1860. The twofold purpose in writing this work was explained in the preface to the book (and therefore was quite likely overlooked by the critic; apparently very few people read the preface of *any* book!):

1. Ellen White wished, quite simply, to refute charges of Mormonism, which had been made especially in the "west." In March 1860, a man in Knoxville, Iowa, claimed to have known James and Ellen White 20 years earlier when they allegedly were leaders of the Mormon colony at Nauvoo, Illinois. (Twenty years earlier Ellen White was an unmarried girl of 12; she would not even meet James White for at least another five years!)
2. Ellen White also wished to confirm the faith of the believers. Some 16 years had now elapsed since 1844. There was now fruitage evident in the lives of others as well as in the lives of James and Ellen White. The last ten pages of this particular volume are filled with personal testimonies from different Adventist believers regarding the accuracy of the statements made in the text concerning her physical condition in vision, her healings from illness, the nature of the heresies the Whites encountered in the early days, in addition to the refutation of slanders made against the leadership.[152]

Further along in the preface is this clue explaining the rather odd request for reporting "incorrect statements":

In preparing the following pages, I have labored under great disadvantages, as I have to depend in many instances, on memory, having kept no journal [diary] till within a few years. In several instances I have sent the manuscripts to friends who were present when the circumstances related occurred, for their examination before they were put in print. I have taken great care, and have spent much time, in endeavoring to state the simple facts as correctly as possible.[153]

In writing this autobiographical account Mrs. White relied for dates largely on letters retrieved from the Stockbridge Howland family of Topsham, Maine. They had kept her child Henry for five years while Ellen journeyed with her husband James. Ellen had written the Howlands frequently as she and her husband itinerated from place to place.

Possible evidence that the odd request bore fruit is the fact that two dates appearing in *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 2, were altered in parallel historical accounts from the pen of Mrs. White in later publications:

In the earlier account of the first series of William Miller's prophetic lectures in Portland, Maine, the date is given simply as 1839, and the date of the second series was given simply as 1841.[154]

A later parallel account, however, amends the dates for the first series to March 1840,[155] and the second series to June 1842.[156] The two-year interregnum is preserved in the later accounts, but the dates are adjusted by one year in each instance.

Ellen White certainly was not asking any reader to correct a message she had received from the Lord! It is therefore incorrect to give that impression, as some critics have done.

Perhaps one more example of the "earthen vessel" imperfections in the "packaging" of the prophetic message will suffice to show that Ellen White (like the Bible writers before her) was thoroughly human, and subject to simple mistakes the Holy Spirit never bothered to correct (although He easily could have):

Ellen White conducted a continuing correspondence with a colporteur named Walter Harper for more than a score of years. In one letter she asked to borrow one thousand dollars, offering him four to five percent interest over the period of the loan[157] (while banks at that time were offering only three to four percent--more evidence against the "exploitation" charge).

On November 9, 1906, Mrs. White wrote Brother Harper in a state of great agitation. Her embarrassment and discomfiture are all too evident; they drip from nearly every line on the page!

Harper had written for a copy of a testimony which Ellen White had originally sent to General Conference President George I. Butler and which apparently was already well known generally in the field. It was not uncommon for these kinds of quasi-public letters to be circulated freely among church members at large at that time.

After the letter had been dispatched, Mrs. White discovered to her consternation that she had sent the wrong letter! In writing to Colporteur Harper she first reminds him that what she sent him was "my special personal property," and then she asks for its immediate return, instructing him not to make the matter public, and if it has already been seen by other eyes such individuals should be instructed in the importance of confidentiality.

She concludes by instructing Brother Harper not even to make a personal copy of the letter before he returns it, telling him that she has, now, the letter she originally intended to send him.

Although obviously embarrassed by the mistake, she does not hesitate to speak of "what I have done in mistake," admitting (as she always did when asked directly) that she was human, and subject to the frailties of human nature.^[158]

Inspiration's "more-sureness" did not extend (as the "strait-jacket" theory would erroneously suggest) to precluding the prophet's making of minor errors. Only when such errors would materially affect (a) the direction of God's church, (b) the eternal destiny of one soul, or (c) the purity of a doctrine, would the Holy Spirit step in to correct the situation immediately through the prophet, so that there would be no permanent damage.

C. Major Matters of Substance

On occasion the prophets, ancient and modern, did make major mistakes that needed the immediate correction of the Holy Spirit. Probably the most prominent example in Scripture is the incident recorded in both 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17.^[159]

One day King David called in Nathan, a literary but noncanonical prophet, to tell him of his concern over the lack of a suitable building to house the ark of the covenant and other liturgical furniture of the Jewish ceremonial ritual, which dated back to Sinai and the Mosaic tabernacle tent.

In what was probably an expansive mood, David suggests that an appropriate building be constructed, especially since the king himself now lives in a luxurious palace. Perhaps he indicated that this building, worthy of the worship of Jehovah, be on such a scale of magnificence that any Gentile traveling within a hundred miles of Jerusalem would detour just to see this wonder of the ancient world.

Nathan, perhaps thinking of the tremendous cost of such an edifice, and possibly having some misgivings about the prospect that he might be asked to lead out in a fund-raising campaign, displayed some reticence. And quite possibly David, sensing that reticence, suggested further that he, the king, would pay the entire cost out of his royal treasury.

At any rate, Nathan now becomes as enthusiastic as the monarch; and gives his wholehearted approval of the project.

That night, when Nathan was back in his home, God came to him and told him, in effect, that he had not properly represented Jehovah's will when he gave the prophet's cachet to the king's proposal. Nathan should have checked with "headquarters" first before endorsing the project.

Nathan was instructed to go back to the king the next day and tell the monarch that God appreciated the generosity which prompted such a magnificent plan, but that it was not God's will for the temple to be built by David. Instead, it would be Solomon's temple, for David had been a man of war, a man of bloodshed. David could draw the

blueprints and specifications, he could hire the contractors and artisans, and he could even provide the money to pay for it. But it would be Solomon's temple, not David's.

Nathan, probably somewhat abashed, manfully returned to the king the next day to tell him of the heavenly amendments to the royal plan. And David, "a man after his [God's] own heart," concurred and said, "so be it." And so it was.

In more modern times, God's most recent prophet of record, Ellen White, had several experiences in which she took positions contrary to the will of God, and the situation was sufficiently serious for God to intervene to correct the matter, again working through the prophet to accomplish that end.

One such incident was the resolution of the question of the correct time to begin observance of the Sabbath.^[160] Seventh-day Adventists originally learned of the seventh-day Sabbath through the labors of Seventh Day Baptist adherents, who observed the day from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. Some Seventh-day Adventists followed the example of the Seventh Day Baptists in this sunset-to-sunset observance.

Three other positions were also taken by Seventh-day Adventists: (1) Some in Maine advocated a sunrise Saturday to sunrise Sunday observance, based upon a misunderstanding of Matthew 28:1 ("In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week"). (2) Some "legalists" held out for "legal" time--midnight to midnight. (3) And a third group held for "equatorial time." On the equator the sun daily rises at 6:00 a.m. and sets at 6:00 p.m. Captain Joseph Bates was the leader of this group, and he had strong support from both James and Ellen White for his position.

The sunrise group was taken care of comparatively early, for in vision on one occasion Ellen White heard the angel quote from Leviticus 23:32, "From even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath." Most Seventh-day Adventists, however, continued to follow equatorial time.

In the summer of 1855 James White requested John Nevins Andrews, one of our earliest scholars, to research the subject. His conclusions were presented to the General Conference session in Battle Creek in November of that year. On the basis of nine Old Testament texts and two New Testament texts, Andrews demonstrated that, for the purpose of the immediate discussion, "even" and "evening" were synonymous with sunset.

Nearly all attending the conference accepted the Andrews conclusion. But the redoubtable Captain Bates held fast to his equatorial time theory. And Ellen White (who first learned of the Sabbath from Bates) sided with her mentor. The conference was thus left divided and in confusion.

God moved quickly. As this General Conference session drew toward its close, those present united in a season of earnest prayer for the prosperity of the cause, and during this prayer meeting Ellen White was taken off in vision and shown that sunset was the correct time to begin the observance of the Sabbath. Nearly everyone accepted the light from heaven, and the spiritual gift of prophecy again produced its fruit of unity.

It was clear to everyone at the conference that God was speaking and leading, for Ellen White was not now merely repeating her personal, previously held views. And the function of the Spirit of prophecy in the life and work of the church again was illustrated in this experience. For the gift of prophecy was never given to *initiate*, but rather to confirm and corroborate whether the church members were headed in the right direction on the basis of their Bible study, or to correct and redirect, if they had gone as far as they could and were headed in the wrong direction.

Another incident in which Ellen White had to reverse an earlier position had to do with the proposed closing of Southern Publishing Association in 1902.^[161]

Ellen White returned from nine years' service in Australia in 1900 and located in the Napa Valley at an estate called "Elmshaven" near St. Helena, California. In 1901 she left early to attend the General Conference session, which would open April 2 at Battle Creek, traveling by way of Nashville, Tennessee, where her son Edson had

begun a new private publishing enterprise. A shoestring operation, the printshop was first housed in a chicken house/barn, and was subsequently relocated in town in March 1900.

On the day the GC session opened, Ellen White penned "An Appeal for the Southern Work." She spoke of the need for schools, sanitariums, and a publishing house where books could be produced for use by denominational workers in the south. She spoke of Edson's limited operation, and urged the brethren to take it over since a larger building was necessary for the kind of program she envisioned.

This counsel to establish and equip a large publishing house was one of the first perplexities to confront Arthur G. Daniells, newly elected president of the General Conference. The church already had two publishing ventures, one in Battle Creek and one in Oakland, California. Both were in a state of "marked depression," there being little demand for our literature at this time (there were only a few colporteurs in the field, and these were experiencing only average success). In fact, both publishing houses were taking in a substantial volume of commercial printing in order to maintain solvency.

The GC Committee felt the time was not opportune to take on a third house when the other two were barely functioning on half-time, and that such a move would serve only to drive all three houses further into commercial work.

But Daniells had complete confidence in Ellen White's vision, for he had worked with her in Australia during the 1890s, and he persuaded the committee to ratify Heaven's plan.

Then Mrs. White further complicated the situation for church leadership by urging the discontinuance of all commercial work at all of our publishing houses. This would mean closing half of the presses and dismissing half of the employees, and some members on the committee began to wonder out loud if the prophet (now 74 years of age) might not be suffering from senility. Some even felt the messages on the publishing work were not really inspired of God.

At the end of the year Daniells went to Nashville for the first annual meeting of the board of Southern Publishing Association, only to discover that during the first year of operation the house had lost \$12,000, equivalent to the original capital invested in the venture! He was assured that they had now turned the corner; but at the end of the second year, and at the end of the third, the plant regularly continued to lose \$1,000 a month.

An investigative commission was appointed. It visited Nashville, and returned with the recommendation that the printing equipment be sold to a junk dealer (the machinery was secondhand and "broken-down" when purchased, and they feared the boiler would explode at any moment) and that the "publishing" house be downgraded to a depository where books printed at the other two plants could temporarily be stored until needed by colporteurs.

The GC Committee still deferred to its prophet, and sent a small delegation to Elmshaven to present the hard facts to Mrs. White and receive (they hoped) her approval of their stop-gap plan to salvage the new publishing house.

Meeting with Daniells and Ellen White were: W. T. Knox, president of the newly-organized Pacific Union Conference (in 1909 he would be elected treasurer of the General Conference); W. C. White, the prophet's son, traveling companion, and confidant; A. T. Jones, president of the California Conference (he would later defect and join John Harvey Kellogg in Battle Creek against Ellen White's counsel); J. O. Corliss, a minister in California at the time who had pioneered the work in Australia with both the prophet and Daniells; E. R. Palmer, secretary of the General Conference; and Clarence Crisler, formerly Daniells' private secretary and now stenographer to Ellen White.

Ellen White listened in silence to the tragic litany of failure reported by the brethren. She was deeply grieved and perplexed, undoubtedly in part because it was her son who had started the program, and because she had given her personal backing to the denomination's taking it over in an expansion program.

Perhaps the committee members reminded her of her recently published counsel:

As church schools are established, the people of God will . . . learn how to conduct the school on a basis of financial success. If this cannot be done, close the school until, with the help of God, plans can be devised to carry it on without the blot of debt upon it. . . . We should shun debt as we should shun the leprosy.[162]

Mrs. White finally spoke. She agreed that the publishing house must be put on a sound financial basis. "If it cannot, it had better be closed." Pressed for a solution she did not have, Mrs. White finally conceded that the publishing house should be turned into a depository.

Daniells, fortified by Crisler with a transcript of Mrs. White's written words in his pocket, boarded the train for Battle Creek, greatly relieved. He promptly called the GC Committee into session upon his return, and they as promptly voted the publishing house out of existence as a printer of literature, and then turned their attention to other, more pressing concerns.

A few days later a bombshell exploded in the form of a follow-up letter from Mrs. White. She now counseled *not* closing the printing operation at Nashville, but rather recommended that the brethren lay plans to prevent further indebtedness and move forward in faith; if the Lord's counsel were followed, He would give success. With some embarrassment, undoubtedly, she said that the instruction she had given to the committee of visiting brethren was wrong. The very night after the meeting the Lord had given her a vision, showing her she was wrong, and telling her what course should actually be pursued.

On October 20, the day after the committee met under the large oak tree on the lawn at Elmshaven, Ellen White wrote A. G. Daniells:

Last night I seemed to be in the operating room of a large hospital, to which people were being brought, and instruments were being prepared to cut off their limbs in a big hurry. One came in who seemed to have authority, and said to the physicians, "Is it necessary to bring these people into this room?" Looking pityingly at the sufferers, he said, "Never amputate a limb until everything possible has been done to restore it." Examining the limbs which the physicians had been preparing to cut off, he said, "they may be saved. The first work is to use every available means to restore these limbs. What a fearful mistake it would be to amputate a limb that could be saved by patient care! Your conclusions have been too hastily drawn. Put these patients in the best rooms in the hospital, and give them the very best of care and treatment. Use every means in your power to save them from going through life in a crippled condition, their usefulness damaged for life."

The sufferers were removed to a pleasant room, and faithful helpers cared for them under the speaker's direction; and not a limb had to be sacrificed.[163]

In a letter written several weeks later, addressed to "My Brethren in Positions of Responsibility," Mrs. White pointed out that

During the night following our interview in my house and out on the lawn under the trees, October 19, 1902, in regard to the work in the Southern field, the Lord instructed me that I had taken a wrong position.[164]

The prophet had erred, and the error was sufficiently serious to warrant the Holy Spirit's stepping in immediately and correcting it so that there would be no permanent damage.

We *do* have a "more sure word of prophecy." If the prophet in his or her humanity errs, and the error is sufficiently serious to affect the direction of the church, the eternal destiny of a member, or the purity of a doctrine, *God moves in* immediately through the prophet, to correct the error so that there is no permanent damage!

One other instance of Ellen White's reversing herself and her position comes to mind in connection with the premature issuance of her *Testimony* No. 11. The brethren were trying to raise money to launch Battle Creek Sanitarium, and they knew that Ellen White had had a vision on the subject. They felt, logically, that if they could use her counsels in marshaling their arguments on behalf of the sanitarium, they could more quickly raise the funds they so desperately needed.

So they pressured Mrs. White to bring out *Testimony* No. 11 before she was prepared to hand it over to the printer. She acceded reluctantly to their importunings, but later regretted it; and in *Testimony* No. 12, which followed shortly, she publicly admitted that "under these circumstances I yielded my judgment to that of others and wrote what appeared in No. 11 in regard to the Health Institute, being unable then to give all I had seen. In this I did wrong."^[165]

Elaborating, she said, "What appeared in *Testimony* No. 11 . . . should not have been given until I was able to write out all I had seen in regard to it."

A comparison of No. 11 and No. 12 shows a slight (but perhaps significant) shift in her theological position with regard to the relationship between health reform and the third angel's message.

In No. 11 she wrote: "The health reform, I was shown, is a part of the third angel's message and is just as closely connected with it as are the arm and hand with the human body."^[166] In No. 12 she wrote: "The health reform is closely connected with the work of the third message, yet it is not the message."^[167]

Concerning this undue pressure from church leaders, Ellen White vowed never again to be forced into an untenable position of writing on any subject before she felt ready:

I must be allowed to know my own duty better than others can know it for me, especially concerning matters which God has revealed to me. I shall be blamed by some for speaking as I now speak. Others will blame me for not speaking before. . . . Should I delay longer to speak my views and feelings, I should be blamed the more by both those who think I should have spoken sooner and by those also who may think I should not give any cautions. For the good of those at the head of the work, for the good of the cause and the brethren, and to save myself great trials, I have freely spoken.^[168]

Conclusion

What do Seventh-day Adventists say, then, about the infallibility and inerrancy of the prophets? "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter."

The Bible *writers* themselves were not infallible *men*. However, the Holy Spirit who inspired them *was* infallible. Their revelations ("this treasure") came directly from an infallible God. These inspired men communicated the message as fallible men, using imperfect human language ("earthen vessels") as the medium of that communication.

With regard to Ellen White, the question was raised while she was still alive, "Do Seventh-day Adventists regard Sister White as infallible?"

The question was answered in the pages of the *Review and Herald* in 1883 by W. H. Littlejohn in a succinct, forthright statement:

No. Neither do they believe that Peter or Paul was infallible. They believe that the Holy Spirit which inspired Peter and Paul was infallible. They believe also that Mrs. White has from time to time

received revelations from the Spirit of God, and that revelations made to her by the Spirit of God are just as reliable as revelations made by the same Spirit to other persons.^[169]

The Seventh-day Adventist denomination today still holds that Ellen White was reliable, trustworthy, and authoritative as a prophet of the Lord.

The Adventist church maintains that she was inspired in the same manner, and to the same degree, as the prophets of the Bible; and yet, paradoxically, the church holds also that we do not make her writings another Bible, nor do we even consider them an addition to the sacred canon of Scripture.

The explication of this position more fully in a discussion of "the proper relationship of the writings of Ellen G. White to the Scriptures" will be the subject of part 3 of this series.

With Peter one may declare with courage and confidence, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day drawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19).

Part III: The Relationship Between the Ellen G. White Writings and the Bible

Introduction

There is perhaps no subject more misunderstood in Seventh-day Adventist beliefs than the question of the proper relationship between the writings of Ellen G. White and those of Scripture.

A comparison of the writings of Christian authors such as Walter R. Martin,^[170] Norman F. Doughty,^[171] and others who have written critically about the doctrinal beliefs of Adventists, with some of the statements often quoted from Adventism's own writers which appear to present differing, if not conflicting, positions, makes one wonder if we in the church may not ourselves be responsible for causing some of the confusion outside!

For example, take the definition of two words we have often used in this three-part presentation: *inspiration* and *revelation*. Former Adventist minister Walter Rea, following Webster, sees inspiration as "the divine influence directly or immediately exerted upon the mind or soul of men." Rea labels this as "subjective." Revelation is seen as "God's disclosure of Himself and His will to His creatures"; this Rea labels as "objective."^[172]

After further defining *objective* and *subjective*, Rea alleges that this objective revelation possesses authority, whereas subjective inspiration does not. Objective revelation, in Rea's eyes, is concerned with fact and policy, whereas subjective revelation is seen as associated with values and personal opinions.

Rea then draws the conclusion that Ellen White's utterances convey mostly subjective inspiration. That is, they consist mainly of personal values or opinions (either hers, those of persons who influenced her, or authors from whom she copied). As such, her writings possess virtually no authority from God unless they can be proved from other sources, preferably Scripture.^[173]

John J. Robertson, in his book, *The White Truth*,^[174] takes issue with this subjective/objective dichotomy. For him, "Revelation represents God's activity as the *sender* of a message to His chosen prophet. Inspiration represents God's activity upon or within the prophet, who then becomes the transmitter of that revelation to His people."^[175]

This writer also takes issue with the subjective/objective dichotomy projected by Walter Rea, but would prefer to define the terms--as was done in part 1 of this series--somewhat differently than Robertson. Borrowing in part from Raoul Dederen, we suggested that inspiration may be thought of as a *process* by which God enables the prophet to

receive and communicate His message, whereas revelation is seen as the *content* of the message thus communicated.[176]

A stranger to Adventism, reading these three sets of definitions, might perhaps be forgiven for wondering if the church really has its theological act together! It has been much the same with our pronouncements on the relationship of the writings of Ellen White to Scripture.

Inside the church there has also been some confusion about, as well as abuse and misuse of, Mrs. White's writings. Some members have indeed made a second Bible of them, often seeming to make Mrs. White the more important of the two. Some ministers and teachers have quoted Mrs. White ten or more times for every quotation from Scripture; some have even preached "freight-train" sermons (the locomotive is the sermon's introduction, followed by a string of freight cars--quotations from Mrs. White; bringing up the rear is the caboose, the conclusion of the sermon). The frustration and irritation experienced by a motorist who is held up by a long, slow freight train is almost identical to the feelings of exasperation and anger on the part of one forced to listen to this kind of homiletical monstrosity.

Mrs. White's writings have also been misused by parents, teachers, and preachers who have used statements from them as a theological club with which to bludgeon an offender into submission.

However, such misuse, whether by proponents of the "second-Bible" view (or even the "addendum to the Bible" idea) or by other misapplications, is not the position of the Seventh-day Adventist church even if these positions are adopted by some of its well-intentioned, though ill-informed, members. And, as John Quincy Adams was wont to say, "Arguments, drawn from the abuse of any thing, are not admissible against its use." [177] In other words, "Don't throw out the baby with the bath water!"

What, then, *is* the position of the denomination with regard to the proper relationship between the writings of Mrs. White and sacred Scripture? As I understand it, we hold that Ellen G. White was inspired in the same manner and to the identical degree as were the prophets of the Bible; but--and this will be paradoxical to some--we do *not* make of her writings a second Bible, or even an addition to the sacred canon of God's Word. Let me explain.

I. God's Word Through the Prophets

Seventh-day Adventists generally believe that the sacred canon of Scripture was closed with the inclusion of the Apocalypse of John. And the canon, therefore, is both complete and sufficient in itself. In other words, it is possible for an individual to find Jesus Christ, to obtain salvation and eternal life, without ever having heard of Ellen G. White or ever having read one word of her writings.

Adventists, further, have traditionally held since their earliest days that the Scriptures are the *source* of our doctrinal beliefs, the *authority* of those beliefs, and the *test* of all beliefs (and all religious experience, as well).

However, having said all that, it is also clearly evident from Scripture that God also used a number of prophetic messengers, many of whom were contemporaries of the Bible writers, but whose utterances do not form a part of the canon itself. Some of them did their work during Old Testament times, some during New Testament times. It seems evident that their prophetic ministries involved the same kinds of work as that of the Bible writers. And this list of noncanonical prophets included women as well as men--five such as mentioned in each of the Testaments.[178]

The first prophet mentioned in Scripture was Enoch, "the seventh from Adam" (Jude 14); thus the "spiritual gift" of prophecy was among the earliest of the so-called "gifts of the Holy Spirit" to be given to the human family. During the first 2,500 years of human history all prophetic utterances were oral. Moses marks a transition point: He was the first literary prophet. From his time onward both varieties of prophet flourished.

Literary but Noncanonical Prophets

Not all of the literary prophets, however, found themselves as authors of works that would later be gathered together in the canons of the Old or New Testaments. At least eight literary but non-canonical prophets are mentioned by name in the Old Testament. Jasher was the first, in the fifteenth century B.C., perhaps a mere 40 years after Moses' time. Although the Book of Jasher is mentioned in both Joshua 10:13 and 2 Samuel 1:18, this book was not included in the Old Testament.

For-and-one-half centuries later, "Nathan the prophet" and "Gad the seer" wrote books[179] during the reign as King David; but while the latter's psalms were incorporated into the Old Testament, the books of the former were not. About two decades later Ahijah the Shilonite authored prophetically inspired writings,[180] and another 20 years later along came the prophet Shemaiah[181] and Iddo the Seer[182] as literary but noncanonical prophets. Then some 20 years afterward, Jehu wrote an inspired prophetic book[183] and the last of the literary but noncanonical prophets (at least as referred to in the Bible) was Elijah[184] in the early ninth century B.C.

The question immediately comes to mind, if these men were truly inspired, why were their writings not included in the Old Testament? Some have suggested a ready solution: Their writings, though inspired, were not *as* inspired as those of the biblical authors. This idea of degrees of inspiration has a long history in Adventism; a variation of the theme has surfaced in our own time.[185]

One hypothesis of equal (if not superior) validity is that the messages of these literary but non-canonical prophetic writers were of a local nature: They were written to meet an immediate situation in their own day. The Holy Spirit in His infinitely superior wisdom felt that it was unnecessary to preserve those messages for later periods in history.

Degrees of Inspiration?

We now offer three arguments against the view of degrees of inspiration (or degrees of revelation):

a. From empirical observation: The scriptural record does not differentiate between the canonical and noncanonical prophets as to the source of their messages, or the "chain of command" employed in communicating the messages from the Godhead to the prophet. There is no difference in the method of communication; no difference with regard to the physical phenomena associated with a prophet in vision; no difference in the kinds of messages communicated--encouragement, counsel, admonition, reproof, rebuke; no difference in the kinds of "imperfections" in the "earthen vessels"; no difference in the responses the messages elicited--some hearers heeded and were blessed, others disregarded and paid the consequences. Admittedly this is arguing from silence; but is it unreasonable to hold that the burden of proof must rest squarely upon the person who would seek to establish different degrees of inspiration?

b. From logic: To raise the question of degrees of inspiration (or of revelation) immediately creates the necessity of determining just who will do the classifying. Such an arbiter must of necessity be raised not merely to the level of the prophet, but must be raised to a level *above* that of the prophet, since he sits in judgment, decreeing that one part of the prophet's writings is more inspired than another.

This problem is further compounded because no man can raise himself even to the level of a prophet--much less a position above a prophet. Paul clearly declares that the *Holy Spirit* divides the spiritual gifts "severally" to every man "according to his own will" (1 Corinthians 12:11; Hebrews 2:4). "No man taketh this honour unto himself"; the most any human, on his own, can do is to "covet earnestly the best gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:31). Surely no mere human should presumptuously place himself over the prophets to determine such a question as this!

c. *From faith:* I accept Ellen White as an inspired prophet of the Lord, and she once declared that there was no such thing as degrees of inspiration. And that, if there were no other argument, would be sufficient to settle the question for me.

No less a person than the president of the General Conference, George I. Butler, once discoursed on the subject of inspiration and revelation. In his ten articles, which were published from January 8 through June 3 of 1884 in the *Review and Herald*, Butler posited the idea that there were "differences in degrees" of inspiration.^[186]

Ellen White remained silent for five years. Was she, charitably, hoping that he would discover his own blunder and correct it, thus sparing himself (and her) the embarrassment of a public rebuke?

We do not know; however, in 1889 she wrote a rather trenchant response:

Both in the [Battle Creek] Tabernacle and in the college the subject of inspiration has been taught, and finite men have taken it upon themselves to say that some things in the Scriptures were inspired and some were not. I was shown that the Lord did not inspire the articles on inspiration published in the *Review*, neither did He approve their endorsement before our youth in the college [there]. When men venture to criticize the Word of God, they venture on sacred, holy ground, and had better fear and tremble and hide their wisdom as foolishness. God sets no man to pronounce judgment on His Word, selecting some things as inspired and discrediting others as uninspired. The testimonies have been treated in the same way; but God is not in this.^[187]

Degrees of Authority--An Untenable Position

Some favoring the idea of degrees of inspiration (or revelation) have recently advanced the idea that prophets also have degrees of authority. The latter position is as untenable as the former, largely for the same reasons. Empirically, there is no evidence from Scripture that one group of prophets had more--or less--authority than another group. However, if there were, indeed, degrees of authority, how would these be determined? And by whom?

King David's experience with two literary but noncanonical prophets who ministered during his reign would seem to provide evidence against degrees of inspiration or authority.

Nathan. In part 2 we discussed the problem of Nathan's enthusiastically endorsing David's plan to build the temple without first checking with God to see whether the plan met *His* divine approval. It did not, and that night God spoke to Nathan telling him to go back to the king and correct the earlier message (2 Samuel 7:1-17).

Five chapters later we find Nathan back at the palace, at God's direction, to rebuke David for his twin sins of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah. Using the guise of a parable Nathan courageously drives home to David's heart the enormity of the monarch's crimes; and David, convicted by the Holy Spirit through His messenger, confesses and repents. Nathan then assures David that God has accepted his response and has forgiven him (2 Samuel 12:1-14).

Nathan warns, however, that inexorable consequences will result from David's acts. These consequences will still take place in spite of God's generous and merciful forgiveness (vss. 15-23). Later, out of his genuine repentance and remorse, David penned Psalm 51, in which he appeals to God to "blot out my transgressions, . . . cleanse me from my sin, . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and . . . Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (vss. 1, 2, 10-13). And God granted him this heartfelt wish.

Nathan and David were both prophets. A few hundred years later when the Old Testament canon would be drawn up (perhaps under the supervision of Ezra), the Book of Nathan would not be included, but the psalms of David

would be. Thus David would become a canonical prophet, Nathan a noncanonical prophet. We know of this encounter not because it is found in the Book of Nathan, but because the author of 2 Samuel 12 included it in his book.[188]

If David perchance had been given a vision of the future, in which he was informed of his subsequent status and that of Nathan, and if David had subscribed to the fanciful theory of degrees of inspiration, the following exchange might logically have taken place:

Upon being rebuked by Nathan, David might have raised his hand in caution and said, "Wait a minute, Nathan. You must show more respect and deference to me. Yes, you're a prophet; but you will be a forgotten noncanonical prophet a few centuries from now. I'll be a canonical prophet; Christians three millennia from now will be singing my psalms in their churches. My fifty-first Psalm of repentance will encourage the hearts of millions down through the ages. But 3,000 years from now no one will know a single word of anything that you wrote in the Book of Nathan!"

David might even have chided Nathan somewhat, in an effort to defend himself, by adding, "Be careful now, Nathan. Remember, you didn't get it quite straight awhile back when you delivered your prophetic approval of my plan to build the Temple. Are you sure you've got it right now?"

What about degrees of authority? Well, the story begins very simply, "And the Lord *sent Nathan* to David." Did Nathan have authority? Whose authority? How much authority? Those simple words quoted from 2 Samuel 12:1 answer these questions in a most forceful way.

The experience of Gad, the other literary but noncanonical prophet who ministered to David, is useful at this point.

In 1 Chronicles 21 we read that Satan tempted David to sin by numbering Israel. The king's general, Joab, protested in vain. Israel was numbered (vss. 1-6), "and God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel" (vs. 7).

In the very next verse, David engages God directly in conversation. He confesses his foolishness and guilt and asks for pardon. But in verse 9 God does not address David directly, as He surely could have, for prophets have a special "pipeline" with the Almighty.

No, "the Lord spake unto Gad, David's seer." Since David would be a canonical prophet, why didn't God communicate directly with him? Why did He choose, instead, a noncanonical prophet?

Notice, further, what God said to Gad: "Go and tell David, saying, Thus saith the Lord . . ." (vs. 10). Surely this phrase indicates most forcefully the authority of Gad's message. Did Gad need any more authority than a "thus saith the Lord"? *Is there any more authority than a "thus saith the Lord"?*

What did God tell Gad to do? He was instructed to tell David that God was now offering the king his choice of three punishments: three years' famine, three months of destruction by his enemies, or three days of pestilence in the land (vs. 12).

God also told Gad to tell David, "Now therefore advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me" (vs. 12). David had the unique prophetic "pipeline"; but he was not to use it in this instance; rather, he was to communicate back to God through Gad.

Again, there is no evidence that David claimed inspiration superior to that of Gad. Instead, "David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the Lord" (vs. 19).

It is absurd to speak of degrees of inspiration. Either a prophet is inspired, or he is not. I recently attended a meeting in which there was a large number of women who were expecting to bear children at some time in the near

future. Some were well advanced in pregnancy; some were in its early stages. Sometimes we speak of a woman in the first trimester of pregnancy as being "a little bit pregnant." But the expression is not only inexact, it is incorrect. You have never seen any woman who was a "little bit pregnant." Either she is pregnant, or she is *not* pregnant!

Likewise, you have never seen a prophet who was a "little bit" inspired.

It is equally absurd to speak of degrees of authority. On February 2, 1980, respected Adventist scholar Don F. Neufeld^[189] preached a sermon in the Takoma Park, Maryland, Seventh-day Adventist church entitled "When Jesus Speaks." For this, the last message he ever preached,^[190] Neufeld took for his text Revelation 19:10: "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." In his message he discoursed on the various possible renderings of those phrases familiar to Adventists, "the testimony of Jesus" and "the spirit of prophecy." And in his conclusion he drove home a very cogent point:

Through His witness to the New Testament prophets, Jesus predicted that prophetic activity, as one of many spiritual gifts, would continue in the church. In other words, the testimony of Jesus to His people was not to cease once the books that make up our present canon of Scripture would be written. Prophetic activity would continue beyond the close of the canon.

This brings us to an important question. If in all prophetic activity it is Jesus who is speaking, whether in Old Testament times, in New Testament times, or in post-New Testament times, *can we logically draw a distinction and say that what Jesus said in any one period is more or less authoritative than what He said in any other period*, at least with reference to the generations involved?

For example, could something that Jesus said in the first century A.D. be more or less authoritative than what He said in the 19th century A.D.? The answer, I think, is obvious. It doesn't make any sense to argue for degrees of inspiration, as if what Jesus said in one generation was more inspired than what He said in another.^[191]

Seventh-day Adventists generally hold that Ellen G. White is best understood in the role of the literary but noncanonical prophets of the Bible. As such, her writings were inspired by the Holy Spirit in the same way and to the same degree as the writings that were incorporated into the Bible; yet we do not make a second Bible of them, nor even consider them as an addition to the sacred canon of Scripture.

Let us note next how Ellen White saw her writings in relation to the Bible.

II. The "Greater Light"/"Lesser Light" Analogy

In an "open letter" to her fellow church members, written December 6, 1902, and published in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* of January 20, 1903, Mrs. White was looking ahead to the new year and was especially burdened about the colporteur work, which was languishing at the time. "I have been instructed that the canvassing work [door-to-door sales of Seventh-day Adventist literature] is to be revived, and that it is to be carried forward with increasing success."^[192]

She expresses appreciation for the united efforts of the laity and literature evangelists in promoting *Christ's Object Lessons* (the royalties from which she dedicated toward lifting the indebtedness of Battle Creek College), and urges giving greater attention to the circulation of her other works. Highlighting the importance of this missionary endeavor, she adds:

Sister White is not the originator of these books. They contain the instruction that during her life-work God has been giving her. They contain the precious, comforting light that God has graciously given his servant to be given to the world. From their pages this light is to shine into the hearts of

men and women, leading them to the Saviour. The Lord has declared that these books are to be scattered throughout the world.[193]

Then, by way of amplifying this idea that "light is to shine" from her writings, and to demonstrate the relationship between those books and the writings of Scripture, she employed an oft-quoted metaphor:

The Lord has sent his people much instruction, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. Little heed is given to the Bible, and *the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light.*[194]

Here Mrs. White makes incidental reference to Genesis 1:16: "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night." By analogy she is saying that the Bible is the "greater light," and her writings are the "lesser light."

Before examining this analogy in detail to determine what Mrs. White intended to teach by it (and, of equal importance, what she did *not* intend to convey), let us first examine the question of how Mrs. White herself viewed this "greater light" of Holy Scripture.

Synthesizing a helpful list provided by Denton E. Rebok[195] and some remarks in three paragraphs from the introduction to *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*,[196] we note Mrs. White's position on Scripture, and then how she saw her writings vis-à-vis the Bible:

a. Nature of the Bible

1. The entire Bible is the inspired word of God.
2. The "truth of God is found in His word." No one need "seek elsewhere for present truth."

b. Purpose of the Bible

1. The Bible sets the pattern for Christian living.
2. It contains "comfort, guidance, counsel, and the plan of salvation as clear as a sunbeam."
3. It is fitted for the needs of all--rich and poor, learned and illiterate, "all ages and all classes."
4. It contains all the knowledge that is "necessary for salvation." Therefore, men should "cling" to their Bibles, believe and obey them; and then "not one" of them would be lost.

c. Primacy of the Bible

1. It is to be accepted "as an authoritative, infallible revelation" of God's will.
2. As such, it is "the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience."

d. Role of Spiritual Gifts (Prophecy):

1. The existence of the Bible "has not rendered needless the continual presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit."
2. Rather, Jesus promised His followers the gift of the Holy Spirit to "open the word to His servants" and "to illumine and apply its teachings."
3. Since consistency is an attribute of Deity, and since it was the Holy Spirit who originally inspired the Bible, it is impossible that the teaching of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Spirit would be contrary to what the Bible says.
4. The Holy Spirit was not, is not, and never will be given "to supercede the Bible" because "the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested."
5. The *Testimonies* were given only because man has neglected his Bible; and these are given to direct him back to the Bible.

(a) They are not given as an addition to the Word of God.

(b) They are not to take the place of the Word of God.

Metaphors to Interpret the Analogy

There are perhaps four metaphors that can be used to help us understand what Mrs. White intended to teach from her "greater light"/"lesser light" analogy (and in so doing keep us from misinterpreting it):

1. Time and geographical relationships. The Bible is God's universal message for all men for all time. Its 66 books were written by approximately 40 literary, canonical prophets over a period of approximately 1,500 years, and the Bible has represented the will of God for all mankind for between two and three millennia. On the other hand, the literary but noncanonical prophets--eight are mentioned in the Old Testament, and Adventists today put Ellen White into this category--wrote primarily for their own time and people. Thus the canonical prophets may be seen in this narrow distinction to be the "greater light," and the noncanonical prophets may be seen as the "lesser light."

2. Tester/testee relationship.^[197] Every nation in the world, from ancient Egypt with its Pharaonic cubit to modern nations with their meter and kilogram, have maintained national standards of line and mass measurement in which precision and accuracy are of paramount importance. Without such, no nation could function. Commerce and trade, the building professions, and mass production would be an impossibility.

A visitor to the museum adjoining the library of the United States National Bureau of Standards at Gaithersburg, Maryland, will see on display the original National Prototype Meter No. 27 which was the U.S. national reference for line measurement from 1893 until 1960 (when the meter subsequently was defined in terms of the light emitted by electrically excited atoms of the gas krypton-86).

After the Treaty of the Meter was signed at Sèvres, France, in 1875, the International Bureau of Weights and Measures made 31 prototype meters and kilograms of platinum (90 percent) and iridium (10 percent), a substance especially noted not only for exceptional durability but also for a low coefficient of expansion and contraction. The signatory powers drew lots (the U.S. thereby acquired Meters Nos. 21 and 17 and Kilograms Nos. 4 and 20), and these new standards were sent to the national capitals of the participating nations. There these were preserved in an environment in which humidity and temperature were stringently controlled. (The technician who works with the national kilogram in Gaithersburg, for example, is not allowed to touch the metal weight--moisture from her fingers could affect its weight! She must also wear an aluminized apron to deflect body heat away from the standard.)

In addition to the national reference standards of length and mass, the National Bureau of Weights and Measures also has "working standards" of exactly the same length and weight, made of the same materials. If you suspect your yardstick or ruler is an incorrect length, you could take it to Gaithersburg and compare it with one of the working standards.

Incidentally, the working standards are indistinguishable from the national reference standard; the only difference between them is that one was arbitrarily chosen by lot for its elevated position as *the* standard of the nation.^[198]

Now to the application: The national standard could be seen as the "greater light"; the working standard could be seen as the "lesser light." Or in an equally valid analogy, the working standard could be seen as the "greater light"; the ruler or yardstick you bring to have tested would thus be the "lesser light."

The national yardstick is never tested by your hardware-store yardstick; likewise, the Scriptures are never tested by the writings of Ellen G. White. However, if and when our store-bought articles of measurement are tested by the authority and found to be totally accurate and reliable, we do not hesitate to use them as an authoritative standard--but always in relationship and reference to the ultimate accepted standard (the "greater light").

3. *Forty candles/one candle.*[199] Place 40 identical lighted candles at one end of a table, and another lighted candle at the other. (The Bible was written by about 40 different authors, and Ellen G. White's writings, of course, by one author.) Since 40 candlepower is greater than one candlepower, so the Scriptures may be seen to be the "greater light," while the writings of Ellen White are seen as the "lesser light."

It is especially important in this context, however, to remember that what is emitted, by either the 40 candles or by the single candle, is "light." And Ellen White's analogy of the sun and the moon as superior/inferior lights is particularly apt because the light that is radiated by the two orbs in the heavens is all the same kind of light. The moon has no light of its own; it simply reflects the light of the sun. Light is light; whether from the sun--or the Son. And if the light that is in you goes out in darkness, "how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:23).

It is also worth remembering that these metaphors we call parables are generally intended to teach one truth and one truth only. If pressed too far, they will break down. For example, while Ellen White is to some extent well represented by the one candle, the fact remains that the bulk of her writing exceeds by many times the total word content of the Old and the New Testaments combined (the "greater light"). The analogy should not be carried too far!

4. *National Map/State Map.* Many travelers in the United States take with them an atlas to aid them in navigating the nation's highways. Many atlases have a double-page map of the 48 contiguous States at the beginning, followed by individual single-page state maps. The national map would thus be seen as the "greater light," the State map as the "lesser light."

Two applications are worth making here: There is no disagreement between the representation of Maryland, for example, on the two-page national map and on that of the single-page state of Maryland map. However, there is substantially more detail on the "lesser light" state map of Maryland than there is on the "greater light" national map.

In concluding our discussion of this "greater light"/"lesser light" analogy, it is probably worth noting that, on the basis of Ellen White's own statements, it would seem to be an improper distortion to assert (as do some modern critics) that by this figure she meant that the Bible had greater inspiration or authority than her writings.[200]

The Analogy of the Telescope

Apart from the "greater light"/"lesser light" metaphors, another analogy, also drawn from the world of nature, has been particularly helpful in defining the relationship between the writings of Ellen White and those of Scripture. It was developed by Mrs. S.M.I. Henry, an "evangelist" for the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in the mid-nineteenth century and a convert to Seventh-day Adventism while a patient at the Battle Creek Sanitarium in 1896. (She subsequently found divine healing through prayer.)[201]

Mrs. Henry wrote, in an extended and fascinating autobiographical account, about her initial misunderstanding of the role of the *Testimonies*, her further disillusionment at discovering that many Adventists in Battle Creek gave only lip-service to belief, her personal struggle to understand the function of the spiritual gift of prophecy in modern times, and her subsequent enlightenment as a result of a season of special prayer. Her study led her initially to view Ellen G. White's writings as a lens--and subsequently, as a telescope--through which to look at the Bible.

Developing the analogy, she said that these writings were also "subject to all telescopic conditions and limitations":

Clouds may intervene between it and a heaven full of stars,--clouds of unbelief, of contention; Satan may blow tempests all about it; it may be blurred by the breath of our own selfishness; the dust of superstition may gather upon it; we may meddle with it, and turn it aside from the field; it may be pointed away toward empty space; it may be turned end for end, so that everything is so diminished that we can recognize nothing. We may change the focus so that everything is distorted out of all harmonious proportions, and made hideous. It may be so shortened that nothing but a great piece of

opaque glass shall appear to our gaze. If the *lens* is mistaken for the *field* we can receive but a very narrow conception of the most magnificent spectacle with which the heavens ever invited our gaze, but in its proper office as a medium of enlarged and clearer vision, as a *telescope*, the Testimony has a wonderfully beautiful and holy office.

Everything depends upon our relation to it and the use which we make of it. In itself it is only a glass through which to look; but in the hand of the Divine Director, properly mounted, set at the right angle and adjusted to the eye of the observer, with a field, clear of clouds, it will reveal *truth* such as will quicken the blood, gladden the heart, and open a wide door of expectation. It will reduce nebulae to constellations; faraway points of light to planets of the first magnitude; and to suns burning with glory.

The failure has been in understanding what the Testimonies are and how to use them. They are not the heavens, palpitating with countless orbs of truth, but they do lead the eye and give it power to penetrate into the glories of the mysterious living word of God.^[202]

Denton Rebok attests that "Sister White herself said that Mrs. S.M.I. Henry had caught the relationship between the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy and the Bible as clearly and as accurately as anyone could ever put into words."^[203]

A telescope doesn't put more stars into the heavens; it simply reveals more clearly the stars that are already there. And Ellen White's writings, to change the figure, may also be seen as a microscope that helps "to magnify and make clear the details of the truths of the Word" of God.^[204] Likewise, the writings of Ellen White add detail and make clear the teachings of the Scriptures.

III. The Jemison Model of Relationship

The late T. H. Jemison, in a work that for decades was the standard Seventh-day Adventist college textbook for prophetic guidance, devotes an entire chapter to "The Ellen G. White Writings and the Bible" in *A Prophet Among You*.

Quoting extensively from Ellen White's own words, chiefly in the chapter "The Nature and Influence of the Testimonies,"^[205] Jemison shows that Mrs. White saw her writings as fulfilling eight functions, which could readily be subsumed under three categories:

A. To Direct Attention to the Bible:

1. To exalt the Bible.
2. To attract minds to the Bible.
3. To call attention to neglected truths.

B. To Aid in Understanding the Bible:

4. To further impress truths already revealed.
5. To awaken minds.
6. To simplify truths.

C. To Help in Applying Bible Principles in Our Lives:

7. To bring out principles and help apply them.
8. To instruct in details.^[206]

Jemison's concluding paragraph in this chapter is especially instructive. After posing the question, what is meant by such Ellen White expressions as "additional truth is not brought out"[207] and "the written testimonies are not to give new light"[208] and "are there no descriptions given and details enumerated in the Ellen White books that are not mentioned in the Bible?" Jemison responds:

Certainly, or there would be little purpose in the giving of these messages. Are these not "additional truth" and "new light"? Not at all. *The writings introduce no new topic, no new revelation, no new doctrine. They simply give additional details and round out subjects already a part of the Scripture record.* The whole realm of spiritual truth is encompassed by the Bible. There is no need for more to be added. But further details, incidents, and applications made in these modern writings lead to keener perception and deeper understanding of the truth already revealed.[209]

The Two "Special Resurrections"

An illustration of how those writings give us not only additional details but also suggest new relationships between certain specific passages of Scripture is seen in the treatment Ellen White gives in her discussion of the two special resurrections spoken of in the Bible.

1. *The special resurrection at Easter.* Twice in the Bible, once in Matthew's Gospel and once in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, there is mentioned an intriguing subject with tantalizingly little detail: the special resurrection that took place on Easter Sunday morning and the amazing aftermath, 40 days later at the Ascension.

These are the facts as they are found in Scripture: In Matthew 27:51-53 we are told that (a) there was an earthquake at the moment of Christ's death; (b) It opened a number of graves; (c) after Christ arose Sunday morning "many" were raised to life; (d) these persons were identified as "saints" (in the Bible a saint is not some super-righteous, miracle-working holy person, but rather an ordinary, garden-variety Christian, a sinner saved by grace); (e) the persons raised from the dead then went into Jerusalem ("the holy city"); (f) they appeared to "many" of the citizens of that place; and in Ephesians 4:8 (margin) we are further told that (g) they ascended with Christ to heaven 40 days after they were raised from the dead.

Ellen White, however, draws back the veil and gives nearly a dozen additional facts of identification and information:

- During their natural lifetimes they were "co-laborers with God." [210]
- They were martyrs; "at the cost of their lives" [211] "they had borne their testimony unflinchingly for the truth." [212]
- They represented "every age" of history "from creation down even to the days of Christ." [213] (Abel was the first martyr; John the Baptist the last martyr of record before Calvary.)
- They differed in stature and form, "some being more noble in appearance than others. . . . Those who lived in the days of Noah and Abraham resembled the angels in form, comeliness, and strength." [214] [Adam was more than twice the height of men now living; Eve a little shorter (her head came a little above his shoulders)]. [215]
- These were raised to immortality; [216] whereas the three persons raised during Christ's pre-Calvary ministry were not raised to eternal life, and subsequently died again. [217]
- Christ was the One who raised them to life. [218]
- Their work was to witness to the resurrection of Christ. They were witnesses that the priests could not silence. [219] Their testimony contradicted the perjury of the bribed Roman soldiers. [220]
- Their message was: The sacrifice for man is now complete; Jesus, whom the Jews crucified, is now risen from the dead. [221] The proof? "We be risen with Him." [222]
- They were the living fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 26:19. [223]
- Jesus presented them in person to His Father in heaven as the first fruits of all the righteous dead who someday would be brought back to life. [224]

It is true that in Ellen White's writings we have "no new topic, no new revelation, no new doctrine"; but we do have a great deal of new information!

2. *The special resurrection just before the second coming of Christ.* Four passages of Scripture speak, directly or by implication, of a special resurrection just before the second coming of Christ.[225] Ellen White interprets for us: There will be three classes of people--(a) all those who have died in the faith under the third angel's message, keeping the Sabbath; (b) the crucifiers of Jesus who did not find salvation before they died 19 centuries ago; and (c) the most violent opponents of Christ's truth and His people.[226] Only the first two categories are reasonably inferred from Scripture, the third comes to us as additional, extrabiblical information, from the prophetic gift in our own time.

Ellen White and Development of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrine

Many of those in the Seventh-day Adventist church today who express concern (if not doubt) about the authority of Ellen White in the church generally focus their interest on the issue of doctrinal authority. This being the case, it is especially helpful for us to examine, successively, how we as a people arrived at our doctrine, what role Ellen White played in the development of these doctrines, and how Ellen White herself viewed the nature of her contribution to that process.

The Sabbath Conferences

Most Seventh-day Adventist church historians would probably agree that the doctrinal framework of the denomination was largely hammered out during a series of long weekend gatherings that we today call Bible conferences, but which in earlier times were generally known as Sabbath conferences.

The historians, however, appear to be in less agreement regarding the time of when these gatherings were held. LeRoy Edwin Froom, author of the monumental, exhaustive four-volume work, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, in a chapter entitled "Sabbath Conferences Consolidate Emerging Movement,"[227] seems satisfied to settle for merely the six conferences held in 1848:

1. *Rocky Hill, Connecticut, April 20-24*, at Albert Belden's home. Attendance: about 50. Speakers: H. S. Gurney, Joseph Bates (the Sabbath and the law), and James White (the dawning significance of the third angel's message, its scope, and specifications).

2. *Volney, New York, August 18*, in David Arnold's carriage house. Attendance: about 35. Speakers: Joseph Bates (the Sabbath), and James White (the parable of Matthew 25:1-13).

3. *Port Gibson, New York, August 27 and 28*, in Hiram Edson's barn. No specific details available.

4. *Rocky Hill, Connecticut, September 8 and 9*, in Albert Belden's home. No specific details available.

5. *Topsham, Maine, October 20-22*, in the Stockbridge Howland home. Discussion centered around the possibility of publishing a paper, but since the participants were without funds, no concrete action was taken.

6. *Dorchester, Massachusetts, November 18*, Otis Nichols' home. A further discussion on publishing a paper took place, and Ellen White received affirmative counsel from the Lord regarding this literature ministry.

The editors of the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, however, see a three-year period as involved in doctrinal formation, rather than merely the beginning year of 1848; and they point out that in 1849 there were another six

conferences (James and Ellen White attended at least three of them: Paris, Maine, in September, and Oswego and Centerport, New York, in November). And in 1850 there were a total of ten Sabbath conferences, eight of which the Whites attended.[228]

The conferences were attended mostly by those who had been caught up in the Millerite movement and were unwilling, after the great disappointment of October 22, 1844, to throw over their former experience (as many others had done). Interested friends of these ex-Millerites also attended the meetings, which might run over Friday and Sabbath, or Sabbath and Sunday, or Thursday through Sunday.

Keeping in mind that the Millerite movement was probably the most ecumenical movement of the entire nineteenth century, it is not surprising that this remnant of it comprised a group of people with widely divergent theological viewpoints. Commenting upon the first of the 1848 conferences, James White, in a letter written afterward to Stockbridge Howland, said of the 50 who attended, "They were not all fully in the truth." [229]

Regarding the second of the Sabbath conferences (and the first general meeting to be held in western New York), Ellen White, in describing the positions of the approximately 35 attendees, wrote that "hardly two agreed. Some were holding serious errors, and each strenuously urged his own views, declaring that they were according to the Scriptures." [230] The problems discussed did not center so much on whether a belief could be found in Scripture, but rather on what the Scripture *meant* by what it said. Yet, invariably, when the weekend was over, there was unity of belief. What happened to bring this unanimity out of such diversity?

First, there was earnest Bible study and prayer. Writing in 1904, more than a half-century after the events, Ellen White still had vivid memories of the conferences. She wrote about them because "many of our people now do not realize how firmly the foundation of our faith has been laid." She identified by name some of the more prominent participants "who searched for the truth as for hidden treasure." Concerning her own participation, she added:

I met with them, and we studied and prayed earnestly. Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the Word. Again and again these brethren came together to study the Bible, in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power. [231]

But Bible study and prayer alone were not enough to convince the participants. These hardy farmers and tradesmen held tenaciously to their pet theological theories, hardly budging an inch. Concerning this Mrs. White added:

These strange differences of opinion rolled a heavy weight upon me. I saw that many errors were being presented as truth. It seemed to me that God was dishonored. Great grief pressed upon my spirits, and I fainted under the burden. Some feared that I was dying. Brethren Bates, Chamberlain, Gurney, Edson, and my husband prayed for me. The Lord heard the prayers of His servants, and I revived. [232]

In addition to earnest and extended Bible study and prayer the conferences saw the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit; but this intervention did not come until the participants had gone as far as they could go. Let us note next, then, the work of the Holy Spirit as He worked through the human vessels at these conferences at which our doctrinal positions were established.

The Role of the Visions in Doctrinal Formation

The function of the visions given at the conferences appears to have been to (a) correct the brethren if they were on the wrong track, or (b) confirm and corroborate if they were on the right track, but (c) never to initiate doctrinal formulation. As Arthur L. White would later state in point No. 12 (of 21) "Helpful Points in the Interpretation and Use of the Ellen G. White Writings":

The counsels are not given to take the place of faith, initiative, hard work, or Bible study. God did not use the Spirit of Prophecy to make us dependent or weak. Rather, the counsels are to make us strong by encouraging us to study the word of God, and by encouraging us to move forward.[233]

Wrote Ellen White concerning this stage of doctrinal development:

When they came to the point in their study where they said, "We can do nothing more," the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to how we are to labor and teach effectively. Thus light was given that helped us to understand the scriptures in regard to Christ, His mission, and His priesthood. A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God, was made plain to me, and I gave to others the instruction that the Lord had given to me.[234]

Speaking of the second Sabbath conference in particular, and of the work and place of the visions, Ellen White wrote in her autobiography:

The light from heaven then rested upon me, and I was soon lost to earthly things. My accompanying angel presented before me some of the errors of those present, and also the truth in contrast with their errors. These discordant views, which they claimed were in harmony with the Scriptures, were only according to their opinion of Bible teaching; and I was bidden to tell them that they should yield their errors, and unite upon the truths of the third angel's message.[235]

What caused those post-Millerite Adventists to accept the visions of this young prophet hardly into her twenties? Perhaps three reasons were instrumental:

First, there was the content of the visions. They were relevant and helpful in solving the immediate problems with which the conferences were dealing.

Second, there was the awesome physical phenomena accompanying an open vision. This was never a *test* of authenticity, because Satan can and does counterfeit physical phenomena, but it surely was an evidence of supernatural activity.

Third, there was the continuing phenomena of the prophet's mind being "locked" when she was not in vision. This apparently lasted for a period of "two to three years"--concurrent with the Sabbath conferences--and during this time when *not* in vision, all Mrs. White could do was to report what she had seen in vision; she could not enter into the subsequent discussions of either the meaning of what she had seen or of Bible truth generally. "My mind was locked, as it were," she wrote years later, "and I could not comprehend the meaning of the scriptures we were studying." And it remained thus "locked" until all of the principal points of our faith had been systematically developed.[236]

She also wrote of the effect of this on those attending the conferences: "The brethren knew that when not in vision, I could not understand these matters, *and they accepted as light direct from heaven the revelations given.*"[237]

From her perspective at the age of 77 years, Ellen White's observation concerning her feelings toward this phenomena in which her mind was locked is even more poignant: "This was one of the greatest sorrows of my life." [238]

Largely because of the helpful nature of her visions at the Bible conferences, Mrs. White could write of such occasions: "Our meeting closed triumphantly. Truth gained the victory. Our brethren renounced their errors and united upon the third angel's message, and God greatly blessed them and added many to their numbers." [239]

Froom, looking at the above facts, sees Ellen White's role in doctrinal formation as essentially that of an umpire: To one, "your idea is right"; to another "your idea is wrong." Says he:

Throughout this entire time of intense searching the Spirit of prophecy was a help--but only a help. No doctrine or interpretation of prophecy was initially discovered or disclosed through the Spirit of prophecy. The doctrines of the Sabbatharians were *all* founded upon Holy Scripture, so that theirs was a truly Protestant platform.[240]

One cannot help but wonder, however, if Froom's statement conflicts with Mrs. White's testimony that "a line of truth . . . was made plain to me" and, in addition, "instruction was given as to how we were to labor and teach effectively"; although Froom's observation is probably fairly close to the mark.[241]

How Ellen White Saw Her Authority

In view of the rather dramatic, if not sensational, experiences through which she passed, not only during 1848-1850 but in later years as those original doctrines were repeated and amplified by the Holy Spirit, it is interesting to examine the effect of these experiences upon Ellen White's consciousness. How did she see herself? How did she evaluate the work God led her to perform? What consequences would result from a rejection of her work?

1. She disclaimed giving merely personal knowledge/opinion. Ellen White was the object of vitriolic attack even during her lifetime; and she spoke out sharply in defense of herself--and God. She disclaimed the notion that she was presenting merely human information or opinion, but rather asserted that all her statements came from God and that she was merely the conduit.

I have no special wisdom in myself; I am only an instrument in the Lord's hands to do the work He has set for me to do. The instructions that I have given by pen or voice have been an expression of the light that God has given me.[242]

In her letters and testimonies, said Ellen White, "I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper expressing *merely* my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision--the precious rays of light shining from the throne." [243]

Ellen White claimed a unique place in her church--a work not given to any other member. She quoted an angel as telling her "'God has raised you up and has given you words to speak to the people and to reach hearts as He has given to no other one. . . . God has impressed this upon you by opening it before your vision as He has to no other one now living.'" [244] Speaking for herself, she went on, "'God has not given my brethren the work that He has given me.'" [245] To illustrate the essential nature of that uniqueness she added:

"When I am speaking to the people I say much that I have not premeditated. The Spirit of the Lord frequently comes upon me. I seem to be carried out of, and away from, myself. . . . I . . . feel compelled to speak of what is brought before me. I dare not resist the Spirit of God." [246]

"From higher ground, under the instruction given me of God, I present these things before you," she declared. [247] She went on to deny that anyone could accept part of her writings, while rejecting other parts. "We cannot be half the Lord's and half the world's. We are not God's people unless we are such entirely." [248] Next, note this: Speaking of her testimonies, she affirmed:

"God is either teaching His church, reproving their wrongs and strengthening their faith, or He is not. This work is of God, or it is not. God does nothing in partnership with Satan. My work . . . bears the stamp of God or the stamp of the enemy. There is no halfway work in the matter. The *Testimonies* are of the Spirit of God, or of the devil." [249]

She was not giving "merely the opinion of Sister White"; and those who asserted this, she declared "thereby insulted the Spirit of God."[250] She further amplified this, saying:

If those to whom these solemn warnings are addressed say, "It is only Sister White's individual opinion, I shall still follow my own judgment," and if they continue to do the very things they were warned not to do, they show that they despise the counsel of God, and the result is just what the Spirit of God has shown me it would be--injury to the cause of God and ruin to themselves.[251]

2. *Mrs. White claimed authority to define doctrinal truth.* But she went still farther. Not only when she spoke about matters in the homes and churches of her fellow church members was she a direct spokesperson for God, but also when she defined a doctrinal position, that definition was authoritative and reliable.

Speaking of "our early experience" (undoubtedly a reference to the Sabbath conferences of 1848-1850), when "one error after another pressed in upon us," with "ministers and doctors bringing in new doctrines," the little bands would sometimes spend "whole nights" searching Scripture and praying to God for guidance. At these times "the Holy Spirit would bring the truth to our minds. . . . The power of God would come upon me, and *I was enabled clearly to define what is truth and what is error.*"[252]

Mrs. White declared, in effect, that her statements on doctrine were essentially without error. "There is one straight chain of truth, without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written."[253] Her testimonies "never contradict" the Bible because she was "instructed in regard to the relation of Scripture to Scripture."[254] Even doctrinal matters in her personal diaries, she wrote five years before her death, should be put in print because they contain "light" and "instruction" that was given her to "correct specious errors and to specify what is truth."[255] To Evangelist W. W. Simpson, laboring in southern California, she wrote in 1906 that "I am thankful that the instruction contained in my books establishes present truth for this time. These books were written under the demonstration of the Holy Spirit."[256]

In 1905, shortly after having had to rebuke the spurious doctrines advanced by Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and his followers, and again looking back to those early Sabbath conferences in which the manifestation of the Holy Spirit was so marked, Mrs. White declared without equivocation:

When the power of God testifies as to what is truth, that truth is to stand forever as the truth. No after suppositions contrary to the light God has given are to be entertained.[257]

In the rest of the passage she talked of men arising in the future (as they had in the past) with "interpretations of Scripture which are to them truth, but which are not truth." These people would claim to possess "new light." But, she asserted, the doctrines of these men would "[contradict] the light that God has given under the demonstration of the Holy Spirit." She then counseled the future leaders of the church to reject such messages that contradict the "special points of our faith" and move even "one pillar from the foundation that God has sustained" from 1844 to the turn of the century. Acceptance of such views would "lead to a denial of the truth that for the past fifty years God has been giving to His people, substantiating it by the demonstration of the Holy Spirit."[258]

3. *Motivation of critics.* The fundamental motivation of those who "dissect" Mrs. White's writings "to suit your own ideas, claiming that God has given you ability to discern what is light from heaven and what is the expression of mere human wisdom"[259] was identified by the prophet as "the prevailing spirit of our time . . . infidelity and apostasy--a spirit of pretended illumination . . . but in reality . . . the blindest presumption." She added:

There is a spirit of opposition to the plain word of God and to the testimony of His Spirit. There is a spirit of idolatrous exaltation of mere human reason above the revealed wisdom of God.[260]

And pressing the question of causation still farther, Mrs. White explained the "*true*" reason (italics hers) for opposition to her writings which is seldom uttered publicly: She has written or said something that cuts across the lifestyle of the critic, perhaps in the area of diet or dress, reading matter, entertainment and amusement,

stewardship, or Sabbath observance. The critic thus exhibits by his criticism "a lack of moral courage--a will, strengthened and controlled by the Spirit of God, to renounce hurtful habits."[261]

4. *The danger of doubt.* Next we notice Mrs. White turning her attention to the question of doubt--doubt of Scripture and doubt of the writings of God's contemporary prophet:

"Satan has ability to suggest doubts and to devise objections to the pointed testimony that God sends, and many think it a virtue, a mark of intelligence in them, to be unbelieving and to question and quibble. Those who desire to doubt will have plenty of room. God does not propose to remove all occasion for unbelief. [If He did, He would simultaneously remove all opportunity for the exercise of faith!] He gives evidence, which must be carefully investigated with a humble mind and a teachable spirit, and all should decide from the weight of evidence." "God gives sufficient evidence for the candid mind to believe; but he who turns from the weight of evidence because there are a few things which he cannot make plain to his finite understanding will be left in the cold, chilling atmosphere of unbelief and questioning doubts, and will make shipwreck of faith."[262]

Mrs. White earnestly declared, "If you lose confidence in the *Testimonies* you will drift away from Bible truth."[263] She even gives the successive steps on the ladder that leads down to "perdition." Note them:

- a. Satan causes church members to engage in a spirit of criticism of denominational leadership at all levels--he excites "jealousy and dissatisfaction toward those at the head of the work."
- b. Spiritual gifts in general (and the gift of prophecy, as exercised through Mrs. White, in particular) "are next questioned;" with the end result that they have "but little weight, and instruction given through vision is disregarded."
- c. The basic, or pillar, doctrines of the church, "the vital points of our faith," engender skepticism; and closely following this:
- d. "Then [follows] doubt as to the Holy Scriptures" themselves, "and then the downward march to perdition."

Mrs. White elaborates:

When the *Testimonies*, which were once believed, are doubted and given up, Satan knows the deceived ones will not stop at this; and he redoubles his efforts till he launches them into open rebellion, which becomes incurable and ends in destruction." "By giving place to doubts and unbelief in regard to the work of God, . . . they are preparing themselves for complete deception."[264]

5. *An appeal--and a warning.* Mrs. White earnestly entreated the critics of her day

not to interpose between me and the people, and turn away the light which God would have come to them. Do not by your criticisms take out all the force, all the point and power, from the *Testimonies*. . . . If the *Testimonies* speak not according to the word of God, reject them. Christ and Belial cannot be united. For Christ's sake do not confuse the minds of the people with human sophistry and skepticism, and make of none effect the work that the Lord would do. Do not, by your lack of spiritual discernment, make of this agency of God a rock of offense whereby many shall be caused to stumble and fall, "and be snared, and be taken."[265]

Going further, she charges that "your unbelief will not change the facts in the case";[266] "your unbelief does not affect their [the *Testimonies*'] truthfulness. If they are from God they will stand."[267]

Then, "God is not as man; He will not be trifled with."^[268] And "opposition to God's threatenings will not hinder their execution. To defy the words of the Lord, spoken through His chosen instruments, will only provoke His anger and eventually bring certain ruin upon the offender."^[269]

Speaking about her work, and the Lord who commissioned it, Mrs. White further warned:

If God has given me a message to bear to His people, those who would hinder me in the work and lessen the faith of the people in its truth are not fighting against the instrument, but against God. "It is not the instrument whom you slight and insult, but God, who has spoken to you in these warnings and reproofs." "It is hardly possible for men to offer a greater insult to God than to despise and reject the instrumentalities that He has appointed to lead them."^[270]

In a night vision the Lord told Mrs. White about those who had turned from the light sent them. "In slighting and rejecting the testimony that I have given you to bear, it is not you, but Me, your Lord, that they have slighted."^[271]

And, finally, "if you seek," said Mrs. White, "to turn aside the counsel of God to suit yourselves, if you lessen the confidence of God's people in the testimonies He has sent them, you are rebelling against God as certainly as were Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. You have their history."^[272]

On the other hand, "all who believe that the Lord has spoken through Sister White, and has given her a message, will be safe from the many delusions that will come in the last days."^[273]

To sum up this consideration of Ellen White's role in the development of Seventh-day Adventist doctrine, we conclude that she played an important part in the formation of Adventist doctrinal belief, especially during the Sabbath conferences of 1848-1850; but her role was essentially limited to passing on messages from God given in vision, rather than entering into dialog with those who were developing the framework of our doctrinal system.

The Spirit of God did not come upon her until those engaged in serious study and prayer had gone as far as they could; then the messages given through Mrs. White tended either to correct (if the participants were going in a wrong direction) or to *confirm* and *corroborate* (if they were headed in the right direction); but there is no evidence that the visions were given to *initiate* doctrinal formulation.

Mrs. White, while maintaining the primacy of Scripture, nevertheless saw herself as the counterpart of the Bible prophets in receiving God's messages and passing them on to His people. Since it was the same Holy Spirit, speaking in Bible times and again in modern times, those messages carried equal weight. They could not be ignored with impunity, either by critics who tried to dissect them, or by others who conveniently neglected or ignored them.

IV. "The Bible and the Bible Only!"

In the days of the Protestant Reformation the rallying cry of the "protesters" against the primacy of human tradition over inspired Scripture was "The Bible and the Bible Only!"

In the early days of the Advent movement this same slogan was often heard, but at this time the slogan was primarily employed to camouflage subtle denigrations of Ellen White's ministry and messages. This slogan is also heard today in the same connection.

At a camp meeting last spring an Adventist pastor from one of our North American colleges told this experience: One Sabbath, in a certain Sabbath school class taught by a professor on campus and attended by college students, the teacher started out by asking the class members individually what insights they had found in extrabiblical contemporary writings that would bear on the day's lesson study. Responses were offered by way of quotations

from such helpful writers as Luther and Calvin, as well as Keith Miller, Paul Tournier, C. S. Lewis, and so on. Next the teacher asked for student reaction to the lesson, and a series of individual testimonies followed. At this point one member of the class, a college student well versed in the writings of Ellen White, said that she had found something helpful, something that met her need, in Mrs. White's writings; but before she could elaborate, the teacher cut her off with the remark, "Let's stay with 'The Bible and the Bible Only' in this class!" Ironically, up until that moment, the direct witness of the Bible had been totally absent from the class!

Ellen White, in addressing Sabbath school teachers in 1900, instructed them to "leave the impression upon the mind that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is our rule of faith."^[274] And in the last book she wrote before her death in 1915 she admonished the church's ministers that "the words of the Bible, and the Bible alone, should be heard from the pulpit."^[275] Did this mean, as some today allege, that her writings should never be incorporated into a sermon? Not at all.

In a helpful 37-page monograph^[276] Arthur L. White, for years the secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate at the General Conference (and himself a grandson of the prophet), surveys the position of the pioneers of our denomination and cites published statements not readily available to the present-day inquirer. He also examines the 13 major statements from Mrs. White's pen in which she used the Reformation slogan "The Bible and the Bible Only," and comes to four conclusions in summarizing the documentary evidence:

1. That at no time was this phrase employed to exclude the binding obligation to respond to the visions as light which God has given to His people.
2. That in most instances the words are employed in the setting of contrasting the teachings of God's Word with tradition or man's theories of a false Sabbath, et cetera.
3. In several cases the words are used in defining our position on the visions with the explanation that to follow the Bible enjoins the acceptance of the workings of the gift of prophecy as binding upon all who accept God's Word, which forecasts the appearance of this gift in the last days.
4. That through the visions God has led us to a correct understanding of His Word and has taught us and will continue to do so. Further, we must ever recognize our obligation to accept this leading of God.

Arthur White also points out that although the 13 major statements from Ellen White's pen span more than half a century (from 1851 to c. 1914), still the tenor of the statements at the end of her life are not appreciably different from the earliest statements written on the subject.^[277] Mrs. White never changed her stand on this subject.

Uriah Smith's Parable

"Do We Discard the Bible by Endorsing the Visions?" was the question posed by Uriah Smith in an editorial in an 1863 issue of the *Review and Herald*. He answers with a resounding "No!" and in the course of his treatment of the subject he tells an interesting parable to illustrate his position:

"Suppose," he proposes, "we are about to start on a voyage." Before departure the ship's owner gives the crew a "book of directions," and assures them that its instructions are sufficient for the entire journey. If these instructions are heeded, the vessel will arrive safely at its destination.

So the crew sets sail, and opens the book to learn its contents. They discover that, in general, the author has laid down basic principles to govern the conduct of the crew during the voyage, and has touched on various contingencies that might arise. However, the author points out that the latter part of the voyage may be particularly hazardous, for "the features of the coast are ever changing by reason of quicksands and tempests." Because of this, the author has arranged for a pilot to join the crew to provide special help in guiding the ship safely into the final port.

The author also counsels the crew to give heed to the directions and instructions of the pilot, "as the surrounding circumstances and dangers may require."

At the appointed time, the pilot appears, as promised. But, inexplicably, as he offers his services to the captain and crew, some of the sailors rise up in protest, claiming that the original book of directions is sufficient to see them through. "We stand upon that, and that alone; we want nothing of you," they declare.

Smith then raises the rhetorical question, "Who now heed that original book of directions? Those who reject the pilot, or those who receive him, as that book instructs them? Judge ye."

Finally, anticipating the objection of some of his readers that he intended this parable to oblige the church to take Ellen White as their "pilot," the editor attempts to forestall such complaint with this postscript:

We say no such thing. What we do say is distinctly this: That the gifts of the Spirit are given for our pilot through these perilous times, and whenever and in whomsoever we find genuine manifestations of these, we are bound to respect them, nor can we do otherwise without in so far rejecting the Word of God, which directs us to receive them.[278]

The position of General Conference President George I. Butler, in a *Review and Herald* article, is fairly typical of the apologetic response of early Seventh-day Adventist pioneers. To the objection that the Bible is sufficient because Paul declares that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17), Butler's rejoinder was:

If all Scripture is profitable, we suppose those portions are which teach the perpetuity of spiritual gifts, and that tell us they will be in the church in the last days, and tell us how to distinguish between the false and genuine. These prove the visions under consideration to be of the right stamp.[279]

Many who today sound the Protestant rallying call, "The Bible and the Bible Only," seem to infer a false dichotomy, an either/or situation: If you have the Bible, you cannot have Ellen White; if you have Ellen White, you cannot have the Bible. This dichotomy is patently invalid.

Some Seventh-day Adventists, including ministers and scholars, say, for example, "I cannot find the Seventh-day Adventist doctrine of the investigative judgment in the Bible." These persons state, however, that they still accept the doctrine because of the legitimate hermeneutical rule that allows for a later prophet to enlarge the understanding of truth by an earlier prophet.

What these people are really saying, in the opinion of this writer, is: "With my present theological a prioris and my present hermeneutical tools--my presuppositions and my predilections--I do not find that doctrine in Scripture." However, other Seventh-day Adventist scholars, of equally impeccable academic pedigree, assert that they do find that doctrine in Scripture--in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, and in Jesus' parables of the wedding garment and the net.

Conclusion

What does the Seventh-day Adventist church hold regarding the relationship between the writings of Mrs. White and the Bible?

1. We do not regard the writings of Ellen G. White as an addition to the sacred canon of Scripture.

2. We do not think of these writings as of universal application, like the Bible, but as written particularly for the Seventh-day Adventist church.
3. We do not regard Mrs. White's writings in the same sense as the Holy Scriptures, which stand alone and unique as the standard by which all other writings must be judged.[280]

But, having said that, we need to say more. Since we believe that inspiration is indivisible, and since the only activity of the prophet is to tell us what Jesus told him ("the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"), there is therefore no basis for a belief in either degrees of inspiration or degrees of authority. Ellen White was inspired in the same manner and to the same degree as were the Bible prophets. And the counsel that Mary gave to the servants at the wedding feast at Cana concerning her Son might well be paraphrased: "Whatsoever he saith unto you [and by whatever prophet] do it" (John 2:5).

If, as at least some scholars believe, Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians was the first book of the New Testament to be written, then his concern as expressed in its closing verses may have an interesting significance to Christians today:

"Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19). "Don't tune Him out," as we might put it in today's vernacular. The existence of the possibility of doing just this undergirds the necessity for the warning.

"Despise not prophesyings" (vs. 20). Was Paul here, first of all, telling the Christians that the word of God to them did not end with the closing of the Old Testament canon of Scripture? That the spiritual gift of prophecy was still being exercised--and would continue to be exercised--until the end of time? Was he warning, don't despise latter-day prophets, who will be just as inspired and authoritative--prophets whose messages also come directly from the Holy Spirit? Perhaps.

"Prove all things" (vs. 21). The Christian has an obligation to "try the spirits" (1 John 4:1), because while not all of them are from God, the obverse is equally true: Not all of them are from the devil, either! The Christian is hereby commanded (by the Holy Spirit through Paul) to seriously examine the content of purported prophetic writings. He must also examine the fruitage of these writings, both in the life of the alleged prophet and in the lives of those who follow that prophet. This task must be undertaken with an open mind willing to receive more truth, a mind that seeks to validate all new light by what has been tested before (Acts 17:11). And, having made the test, and noted the results:

"Hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

In a time of acute crisis, at the turn of the century when leaders in the Adventist church were bringing in subtle heresies, God's prophet proclaimed a message that has startling relevance for us today, in another time of crisis:

The Lord will put new, vital force into His work as human agencies obey the command to go forth and proclaim the truth. . . . The truth will be criticized, scorned, and derided; but the closer it is examined and tested, the brighter it will shine. . . .

The principles of truth that God has *revealed* to us are our only true foundation. They have made us what we are. The lapse of time has not lessened their value. It is the constant effort of the enemy to remove these truths from their setting, and to put in their place spurious theories. He will bring in everything that he possibly can to carry out his deceptive designs. But the Lord will raise up men of keen perception, who will give these truths their proper place in the plan of God.[281]

May you be one of them!

[1] Matthew 13:57. For an especially helpful--and relevant--examination of this phenomenon of rejection, in the context of the current controversy over the role and function of Ellen G White, see J. R. Spangler's editorial, "Persecuting the Prophets," in *Ministry* (February 1981), pp. 21, 25.

[2] Joel 2:28-32; Revelation 10; 12:17; 10:10; Ephesians 4:11-15; 1 Corinthians 12:12, 28. See also "Prophecy After New Testament Times," chapter 8 of T. Housel Jemison's *A Prophet Among You* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1955), pp. 135-147.

[3] Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), book 1, p. 48.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 5, p. 667. Hereafter shortened to *Testimonies*.

[6] *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 48.

[7] Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1955), p. 276.

[8] Indebtedness in deriving working definitions is acknowledged to Dr. Raoul Dederen's "Toward a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Revelation-Inspiration," North American Division Bible Conference Notebook, 1974, pp. 1 - 20.

[9] 2 Timothy 3:16. *Holy Bible: New International Version*. Copyright © 1978 by the New York International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers. Italics supplied. See also *The Amplified Bible*.

[10] See Daniel 10:17, also a subsequent discussion of physical phenomena which follows below.

[11] Acts 27:17, 27.

[12] *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Chicago, IL: The Howard Severance Co., 1915), 3:479, 1480.

[13] Dederen.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Ephesians 3:3-5.

[16] 1 Corinthians 2:6-14.

[17] 1 Corinthians 12:29.

[18] John 14:26.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] John 16:13.

[21] *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 512.

[22] Revelation 1:11; 21:6; 22:13.

[23] 1 Corinthians 12:7.

[24] 1 Corinthians 12:11, 18; cf. also John 15:16.

[25] Ephesians 4:11.

[26] 1 Corinthians 12:29, 30.

[27] 1 Corinthians 1:5-7; 12:28; 14:1.

[28] 1 Corinthians 12:31.

[29] Genesis 1:2, 26. The "Elohim" of verse 26 is plural noun.

[30] Revelation 1:1; John 8:28; 5:19, 30.

[31] John 16:7, 13, 14.

[32] 2 Peter 1:21.

[33] Revelation 1:1; 22:6. Cf. Daniel 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26.

[34] For example, 1 Kings 22:19. This exact expression appears 36 times in the Old Testament alone; variations appear even more frequently throughout the entire Bible.

[35] Revelation 5:11.

[36] John 13:16; 15:20

[37] Exodus 20; cf. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 616; and *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1953), vol. 1, pp. 1103, 1104.

[38] Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1870), vol. 1, p. 399; *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1882), p. 32.

[39] Matthew 3:17; 17:5; John 12:28.

[40] Numbers 27:21; 1 Samuel 28:6; *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 398, 399; *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1913), p. 351.

[41] *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 399; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 349.

[42] Leviticus 16:8; Joshua 7.

[43] Acts 1:26.

[44] Letter 37, March 4, 1900; cited in *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 328.

[45] 1 Samuel 3:1; Numbers 12:6; Joel 2:28-32; Acts 16:9.

[46] Cited by Arthur L. White in quoting his father, William C. White, in *Ellen G. White: Messenger to the Remnant* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1969), p. 7.

[47] See Acts 2.

[48] From the stenographically prepared transcript of Walter Rea's lecture, "White Lies," Adventist Forum, San Diego, Calif., February 14, 1981, p. 10. In a letter dated July 17, 1981, I requested in writing that Walter Rea grant me permission to quote him directly from his verbatim transcript. In his reply dated July 21, Rea in effect declined the request, tacitly admitting that he might have made some small errors in his presentation to the Forum. Instead, he appealed to me not to get into minor nitpicking but to stay with the larger issues. Physical phenomena is one such larger issue, and Walter Rea had tended to emphasize it by alleging that published reports of Ellen White's holding a large Bible in vision are mythical and without foundation.

[49] Published in *Spectrum* 10:1 (May 1979), pp. 23-57.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

[51] See, for example, "The Witness of the 'Big Bible,'" by Arthur L. White, September 13, 1979; and "Ellen G. White and the Big Bible," by Ron Graybill, 1981; both unpublished manuscripts circulated as working papers among the Ellen G. White Estate staff.

[52] See *General Conference Bulletin*, January 29, 1893, pp. 19, 20; *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1976), p. 374; and Paul Gordon's monograph, "Revelation-Inspiration: Ellen G. White's Witness and Experience," July 1978, p. 1.

[53] Eight-page report of Otis Nichols (n.d.), p. 7. From internal evidence it is apparent that Nichols could not have written this first-person eyewitness account before 1847; and it is obvious that it could not have been penned after 1860, since Ellen White quotes three paragraphs of it in *Spiritual Gifts* (Battle Creek, Mich.: James White, 1860), vol. 2, pp. 77-79.

[54] *Ibid.*

[55] See "How the Visions Were Given," in *Messenger to the Remnant*, pp. 6-8.

[56] See "The Alpha and the Omega" and "The Foundation of Our Faith" in *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 193-208.

[57] *Review and Herald* (October 8, 1867), cited in *Messenger to the Remnant*, pp. 13, 60, and 79.

[58] *Ibid.*

[59] "A False Prophetess?" *Newsweek* (January 19, 1981), p. 72.

[60] Robert W. Olson, *101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981), pp. 105, 106.

[61] See *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 345.

[62] See *ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 346, 356.

[63] *101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White*, p. 106.

[64] From the *New American Standard Bible*, © The Lockman Foundation, 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975. Used by permission.

[65] *101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White*, pp. 106, 107.

[66] See *ibid.*, pp. 64-85; 105-108.

[67] *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 600-604.

[68] Virgil Robinson, *Reach Out* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1970), p. 300.

[69] A. W. Spalding, *Pioneer Stories* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1942), pp. 206, 207, cited in *The Spirit of Prophecy Treasure Chest* (Los Angeles, Calif.: Voice of Prophecy, 1960), pp. 28, 29.

[70] J. N. Loughborough, *Rise and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists* (Battle Creek, Mich.: General Conference Association of Seventh-day Adventists, 1892), pp. 231-233.

[71] The author acknowledges indebtedness to Dr. Earle Hilgert, who taught a course in "Introduction to New Testament" at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, January 1959, in which much of the material in this section of the article was presented.

[72] *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 15-23.

[73] *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 16.

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[78] *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 562.

[79] *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 19, 20.

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[81] *Ibid.*

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[83] *Ibid.*

[84] Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. vi; *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956) p. 73.

[85] *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 747.

[86] Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), p. 250.

[87] Ellen G. White, *The Sanctified Life* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1937), pp. 68, 81.

[88] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

[89] Earle Hilgert.

[90] *A Prophet Among You*.

[91] *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 21.

[92] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[93] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[94] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

[95] *Ibid.*

[96] *Ibid.*

[97] *The Great Controversy*, p. v. Italics supplied.

[98] *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 710.

[99] *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 17.

[100] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[101] *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 449.

[102] *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 15.

[103] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[104] T. Housel Jemison, *Christian Beliefs* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1959), p. 22.

[105] *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 20.

[106] *Christian Beliefs*, p. 17.

[107] *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 23.

[108] Indebtedness is acknowledged for many of the ideas in this section to Dr. John L. Robertson, "The Challenge to God's Word," and Dr. Raoul Dederen. Unfortunately, it is not possible to identify individual contributions from existing notes.

[109] Dederen.

[110] *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 512.

[111] Letter 12, 1889, published in *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 23.

[112] See Revelation 1:1, 2; 22:6; John 16:13; 13:19; 14:29; Daniel 2:28; and Amos 3:7.

[113] Isaiah 41:21-23; 42:9; 43:9; 44:7, 8; 45:3, 21, 22; 46:9, 10.

[114] For a recent balanced and extremely helpful discussion of various positions and proponents, see editorial "Rhetoric About Inerrancy: The Truth of the Matter" in *Christianity Today*, vol. 25, no. 15 (September 4, 1981), pp. 16-19.

[115] *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: G & C Merriam Co., 1976), p. 590.

[116] *Ibid.*, p. 589.

[117] *Holy Bible: New International Version*. Copyright © 1978 by the New York International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

[118] *Holy Bible: American Revised Version*. American Bible Society edition. Copyright © 1901 by Thomas Nelson & Sons, New York. *The Bible: Revised Standard Version*. American Bible Society edition. Copyright © 1946 and 1952 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, New York. *New American Standard Bible* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Creation House, Inc.). Copyright © 1971 by The Lockman Foundation, La Habra, Calif.. Used by permission.

[119] *Confraternity New Testament--The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. Translated from the Latin Vulgate. A Revision of the Challoner-Rheims Version. Edited by Catholic Scholars under the Patronate of the Episcopal Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. (Patterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild Press). Copyright © 1941 by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.

[120] *The Amplified Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House). Copyright © 1965 by Zondervan Publishing House.

[121] *King James II Version of the Bible* (Byron Center, Mich.: Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc.). Copyright © 1971 by Jay P. Green. *The New Testament in Modern Speech*. Translated by Richard Francis Weymouth. Revised by James Alexander Robinson (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers). Copyright © by James Clarke & Co, Ltd., London.

[122] *The Holy Bible: The Berkeley Version in Modern English* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House). Copyright © 1945, 1959 by Zondervan Publishing House.

[123] *The New Testament: An American Translation*. Edgar J. Goodspeed, trans. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press). Copyright © 1923, 1948 by The University of Chicago.

[124] Rene Noorbergen, *Ellen G. White: Prophet of Destiny* (New Canaan, Conn.: Keats Publishing, Inc., 1972), p. 21. Italics supplied unless otherwise indicated.

[125] *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 747. Complete bibliographical information for Ellen G. White writings used in both parts 1 and 2 of this article, may be found in the footnotes at the end of part 1.

[126] *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*, p. vii.

[127] *Ibid.*, p. vii.

[128] *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 37.

[129] *Ibid.*, p. 416.

[130] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[131] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1944), p. 376.

[132] Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1958), p. 354.

[133] Robert W. Olson, *101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981), p. 52.

[134] Isaiah 41:8. See also James 2:23.

[135] *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 98.

[165] *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 37.

[137] "Plagiarism Found in Prophet Books" by John Dart, *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 1980, pp. 1, 3, 21.

[138] See Olson.

[139] Deuteronomy 4:9; 8:19; 28:1, 2, 13-15; cf. also Zechariah 6:15.

[140] Walter Rea is one such, and he lists the "failed" prediction of 1856 as "White Lie" No. 8 of a total of 18 such alleged "White Lies," in an address to the Association of Adventist Forums, San Diego, Calif., on February 14, 1981: see transcript pp. 14, 15.

[141] For an excellent and extremely helpful treatment of the subject, see "The Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy," *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 25-38.

[142] For additional examples of the conditional element in biblical prophecies, see LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1971), pp. 573, 574.

[143] J. N. Loughborough letter, from Sanitarium, Calif., August 28, 1918.

[144] For a comprehensive view of several such statements by Ellen White, see Froom, pp. 583-588; and Robert W. Olson, *The Crisis Ahead* (Angwin, Calif.: Pacific Union College Bookstore, 1976), pp. 75-78.

[145] Ms. 4, 1883; published in *Evangelism*, pp. 695, 696, and *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 68.

[146] Ellen G. White, Ms. 107, 1909; cited in T. Housel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1955), pp. 394, 395.

[147] This letter, written from Sanitarium, California, on June 14, 1906, was subsequently published in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 30, 1906, p. 8. Cited in *Selected Messages*, Book I, pp. 24-28. Italics in original. For a helpful consideration of "How Much Was Inspired?" see Jemison, pp. 394-406.

[148] *The Great Controversy* (1911 ed.), p. 272. For a fuller account of this question, see Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1973), pp. 31-34.

[149] *Review and Herald*, October 30, 1913, p. 3. Arthur L. White discusses this question at length in *Inspiration and the Ellen G. White Writings*, a reprint of 11 articles from the *Adventist Review* of 1978 and 1979.

[150] Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 235; and *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 297.

[151] *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 295.

[152] *Ibid.*, p. iv.

[153] *Ibid.*, p. iii.

[154] *Ibid.*, p. 12, 14.

[155] *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 14, and *Life Sketches*, p. 20.

[156] *Testimonies*, vol 1, p. 21; and *Life Sketches*, p. 26.

[157] Letter 339, 1904, p. 2.

[158] Letter 353, 1906, p. 1.

[159] Incidentally, these two chapters, which were written by two different biblical authors, are almost word-for-word accounts of the same event; yet neither indicates the source of his data--an interesting situation in the light of the current controversy over a modern prophet's "copying" from other sources!

[160] The chronological events of this experience are told in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: Messenger to the Remnant* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1969), pp. 34-36.

[161] Arthur Grosvenor Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1936), pp. 322-329.

[162] *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 217.

[163] Letter 162, 1902; cited in Daniells, pp. 326, 327.

[164] Letter 208, 1902; cited in *ibid.*, p. 327.

[165] *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 563.

[166] *Ibid.*, p. 486.

[167] *Ibid.*, p. 559.

[168] *Ibid.*, pp. 563, 564.

[169] *Review and Herald*, December 11, 1883, p. 778.

[170] Walter R. Martin, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960).

[171] Norman F. Doughty, *Another Look at Seventh-day Adventism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1962).

[172] Stenographic transcript of Walter Rea's lecture on "White Lies," San Diego, Calif.: Association of Adventist Forums (February 14, 1981), p. 9.

[173] *Ibid.* Walter Rea refused to grant copyright permission to cite verbatim statements from the transcript. His remarks, therefore, are paraphrased.

[174] John J. Robertson, *The White Truth* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1981).

[175] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[176] *The Journal of Adventist Education*, vol. 44, No. 1 (October-November 1981), p. 18.

[177] John Quincy Adams, sixth president of the United States and part-time Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory (1806-1809) at Harvard College. From a series of 37 lectures on rhetorical theory and practice, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory*, recently republished (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), pp. 62-67.

[178] *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1957), pp. 90, 91, hereafter cited as *Questions on Doctrine*.

[179] 1 Chronicles 21:9; 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29; 29:25.

[180] 2 Chronicles 9:29; 1 Kings 11:29; 14:7.

[181] 2 Chronicles 12:15.

[182] 2 Chronicles 9:29; 12:15; 13:22.

[183] 1 Kings 16:1, 7; 2 Chronicles 19:2; 20:34.

[184] 2 Chronicles 21:12.

[185] The efforts of contemporary polemicists to disassociate the new "degrees of revelation" from the discredited "degrees of inspiration" position instinctively brings to mind Shakespeare's observation: "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet" (*Romeo & Juliet*, Act II, Scene 2, Line 43).

[186] See especially the article published January 15, 1884.

[187] Letter 22, 1889; cited in Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), book 1, p. 23.

[188] There is a Jewish tradition that Nathan and Gad authored 1 Samuel 25-31 and 2 Samuel. [See *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1953), vol. 2, p. 447.] However, the only source is Talmudic tradition, whose accuracy and authenticity is "problematical" at best, according to Dean Gerhard F. Hasel, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich. (interview, November 6, 1981). Whether the last part of 1 Samuel and the whole book of 2 Samuel incorporate portions of the "lost" Book of Nathan and Gad is only conjecture. It is not known whether these books--and the writings of the other noncanonical literary prophets--even survived until the time (perhaps 400 B.C.) when the Old Testament canon was formed; so we do not know whether their exclusion was a deliberate decision on the part of the compiler(s), or whether there was no choice because the books were already lost to history.

[189] Neufeld edited the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Student's Source Book* and the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (vols. 9 and 10 of *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* series), as well as serving as one of the general editors of *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. At the time of his death he was one of the associate editors of the *Adventist Review*.

[190] Letter of Maxine M. Neufeld, Loma Linda, Calif., n.d. (in response to the author's letter of inquiry of August 19, 1981).

[191] Sermon manuscript, "When Jesus Speaks," p. 10; preached at the Takoma Park Seventh-day Adventist Church, February 2, 1980. Italics supplied.

[192] "An Open Letter From Mrs. E. G. White to All Who Love the Blessed Hope," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 20, 1903, p. 15. Hereafter shortened to *Review and Herald*.

[193] *Ibid.*

[194] *Ibid.* Italics supplied.

[195] Denton Edward Rebok, *Believe His Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1956), pp. 165, 166.

[196] Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. vii.

[197] Carlyle B. Haynes was perhaps the foremost exponent of this analogy in his evangelistic crusades in North America during the first half of the twentieth century.

[198] Interview with Walt Weinstein, Historical Information Specialist and Curator of Museum, National Bureau of Standards, United States Department of Commerce, Gaithersburg, Md., October 29, 1981.

[199] M. L. Venden Sr., is believed to have originated this illustration, and popularized it during his evangelistic crusades in North America during the first half of the twentieth century.

[200] For an interesting, if somewhat controversial, discussion of the entire question, see Ron Graybill, "Ellen White's Role in Doctrinal Formation," *Ministry*, October 1981, pp. 7-11. Especially valuable to this writer are Graybill's two compilations of Ellen G. White statements, one emphasizing the subordination of her writings to Scripture and the other illustrating her claim to the right to define and interpret Scripture (p. 9).

[201] "Sarepta Myrenda (Irish) Henry," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, p. 581. Mrs. Henry is credited with conceiving a plan for what she called "woman ministry," and with being the first in the Seventh-day Adventist church to present an organized plan to train mothers and fathers in the art and science of parenting (*ibid.*).

[202] Originally published in *The Gospel of Health*, January 1898, pp. 25-28, cited in Rebok, pp. 180, 181.

[203] *Ibid.*, p. 181.

[204] *Ibid.*, p. 182.

[205] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 665.

[206] T. Housel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1955), pp. 367-371.

[207] *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 665.

[208] *Ibid.*

[209] Jemison, p. 372. Italics supplied.

[210] Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), p. 786.

[211] *Ibid.*

- [212] *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 304.
- [213] Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1945), p. 184.
- [214] *Ibid.*
- [215] Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1945), vol. 3, p. 34.
- [216] *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 304, 305.
- [217] *The Desire of Ages*, p. 786.
- [218] *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 304; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 786.
- [219] *The Desire of Ages*, p. 786.
- [220] *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 305.
- [221] *Early Writings*, p. 184.
- [222] *Ibid.*; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 786.
- [223] *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 305.
- [224] *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 306, 307.
- [225] Daniel 12:1, 2; Matthew 26:64; Revelation 1:7; 14:13.
- [226] *Early Writings*, p. 285; *The Great Controversy*, p. 637.
- [227] LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1954), vol. 4, pp. 1021-1048.
- [228] "Sabbath Conferences," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, p. 1255.
- [229] Cited in *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 93.
- [230] Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 110.
- [231] *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 206.
- [232] *Life Sketches*, p. 111.
- [233] *Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1963), vol. 3, p. 3214.
- [234] *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 206, 207.
- [235] *Life Sketches*, p. 111.
- [236] *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 207.

[237] *Ibid.* Italics supplied.

[238] *Ibid.*

[239] *Life Sketches*, p. 111.

[240] Froom, pp. 1046, 1047.

[241] For a more detailed step-by-step analysis of the formulation of Seventh-day Adventist doctrines, see Froom, pp. 1021-1048; and Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1969), pp. 34-37.

[242] *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 691.

[243] *Ibid.*, p. 67. Italics supplied. The use of "merely" should alert the reader to the fact that Ellen White was *not* claiming that she never got ideas or materials from the writings of others, but rather that what she wrote was always in harmony with the messages God gave her in vision.

[244] *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 667, 668.

[245] *Ibid.*, p. 677.

[246] *Ibid.*, p. 678.

[247] Ellen G. White, *Christ in His Sanctuary* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1969), p. 10.

[248] *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 83.

[249] *Ibid.*, p. 671.

[250] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

[251] *Ibid.*, pp. 687, 688.

[252] Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), p. 302. Italics supplied.

[253] Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), book 3, p. 52.

[254] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

[255] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[256] Letter 50, 1906; cited in Graybill, *Ministry*, p. 9.

[257] *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 161.

[258] *Ibid.*, pp. 161, 162.

[259] *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 691.

[260] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[261] *Ibid.*, p. 675.

[262] *Ibid.*, pp. 675, 676.

[263] *Ibid.*, p. 674.

[264] *Ibid.*, p. 672.

[265] *Ibid.*, p. 691.

[266] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

[267] *Ibid.*, p. 674.

[268] *Ibid.*, p. 664.

[269] *Ibid.*, p. 678.

[270] *Ibid.*, p. 680.

[271] *Ibid.*, p. 668.

[272] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

[273] *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 84.

[274] Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1938), p. 84.

[275] Ellen G. White, *The Story of Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1943), p. 626.

[276] Arthur L. White, "The Position of 'The Bible, and The Bible Only' and the Relationship of This to the Writings of Ellen G. White," unpublished document, Ellen G. White Estate, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Washington, D.C., January, 1971, 37 pages.

[277] *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 20. The appendix material in this monograph is especially helpful, consisting in part of reprints of periodical articles by J. N. Andrews, Uriah Smith, and Ellen G. White.

[278] *Review and Herald*, January 13, 1863; cited in Robert W. Olson, *101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981), p. 40. The entire editorial appears as Appendix D in the Arthur White monograph.

[279] *Review and Herald*, June 9, 1874; cited in White monograph, p. 12.

[280] *Questions on Doctrine*, p. 89.

[281] *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 201. Italics supplied.

Relation EGW - Bible

The Proper Relationship Between the Scriptures and the Writings of Ellen G. White

Roger W. Coon

Introduction

1. Seventh-day Adventists, from earliest days, have held, among their 27 stated beliefs, that:
 - a. The Scriptures are the written word of God:
 - (1) They were given supernaturally through a divine process ("inspiration") through which information and instruction ("revelation"), unattainable by any unaided rational method, were communicated through a special group of persons of God's own choosing ("prophets").
 - (2) In the Bible God has committed to mankind the all of the knowledge necessary for salvation.
 - (3) The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will.
 - (4) They are:
 - (a) The standard of character.
 - (b) The test of experience
 - (c) The authoritative revealer of doctrines.
 - (d) The trustworthy record of God's acts in history.(Doctrine #1 of the 28 "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, 1993 ed., pp. 5-8.)
 - b. One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy:
 - (1) This gift:
 - (a) Is an identifying mark of the "remnant" church (Rev. 12:17).
 - (b) It was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White (1827-1915).
 - (2) As the Lord's special "messenger" her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church:
 - (a) Comfort. (c) Instruction.
 - (b) Guidance. (d) Correction.
 - c. The Bible, also, is the only standard for the testing of all:
 - (1) Teaching.
 - (2) Human experience.
(Doctrine #17, *ibid.*)

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2. SDAs arrive at their conclusions concerning the reintroduction of a special prophetic gift in the "last days" from three separate lines of Biblical investigation:
 - a. The promise of God, some seven centuries before Christ, that "afterward" (in a time-frame characterized by certain stratospheric phenomena, which did not take place until modern times) a prophetic gift would be "poured out" in great abundance upon Goid's people (Joel 2:28-32).
 - (1) Peter's affirmation that Joel's prediction was fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21) can only support a *partial* fulfillment, for two reasons:
 - (a) There is no evidence that the phenomena identifying the time-frame in Joel took place at Pentecost.
 - (b) The prominent gift at Pentecost was the gift of tongues; whereas Joel focuses, rather, upon the prophetic gift.
 - b. Paul's "Doctrine of Spiritual Gifts," to be exhibited in God's church from New Testament times to the second coming of Christ, among which prophecy was second in rank only to apostleship (1 Cor. 12:28; cf. vv. 8-10; Eph. 4:11-16; Romans 12).
 - c. John's prediction of a true, "remnant" church, in the period following the "time of the end" (SDAs hold this began in 1798 A.D.), identifiable by two chief characteristics:
 - (1) They keep all 10 of the commandments of God (including the 7th-day Sabbath).
 - (2) They have the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 12:17), which he further identifies as "the Spirit of prophecy" (19:10 KJV).

(For a more detailed exposition, see RWC's "The Biblical Basis of the Prophetic Gift, unpublished manuscript, Feb. 9, 1993, 12 pp.)
3. Predictably, most Evangelicals have misunderstood this SDA position, and many have thereby relegated SDAs to the category of a cult.
 - a. Typical is Norman F. Doughty's *Another Look at Seventh-day Adventists* (Baker, 1962; Chapter 1, "Inspiration").
 - b. A lone exception: Walter R. Martin's *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventists* (Zondervan, 1960; Chapter 4, "Ellen G. White and the Spirit of Prophecy"), which dissents against the application of the "cult" label and includes SDAs among mainstream Christian bodies. It, nevertheless, manifests acute distress--and distrust--at their unique interpretation of certain Scriptures.
4. One of the main reasons why many nonSDA scholars have such great misunderstanding is a certain ambivalence exhibited *within* Adventism itself in our historical past, evidenced by various SDA writers sometimes taking contradictory positions in the "official" literature prepared by SDA publishing houses (which the critics do not hesitate to reproduce at great length).
5. And this unfortunate misunderstanding among SDAs of the role and use of the EGW writings vis-a-vis the Scriptures extends today all the way down to the level of the individual church member:

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- a. Misunderstanding its proper *role*, some SDAs have tended to:
 - (1) Make a second Bible of her writings.
 - (2) Make them an extension of the sacred canon of Scripture.
 - (3) Replace Bible study virtually entirely by substituting the study of these writings.
 - b. Misunderstanding the proper *use* to which the EGW writings should be put, some pastors, teachers, and parents have manifestly abused those writings by:
 - (1) Quoting EGW 10 times to every Bible text quoted.
 - (2) Quoting EGW to "prove" the truth of SDA doctrines and standards.
 - (3) Preaching "freight-train" sermons (the locomotive is the "introduction;" the caboose (guards-van) is the "conclusion;" and the rest of the sermon is a string of "freight-car" quotations from EGW.
 - (4) Using EGW as a club with which to bludgeon offenders over the head in an effort to secure conformity of belief/behavior to church doctrinal positions/standards.
6. It should be remembered, however, that:
- a. The position of an extreme Adventist does not necessarily (or actually) reflect the position of the church itself; and
 - b. The abuse of any thing is not itself a legitimate argument in favor of the abolition of the thing so abused.
7. In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:13,14) and in EGW's first vision (EW 11-20) a prominent feature was a "narrow road" upon which Christians must travel toward Heaven.
- a. Implicit in this metaphor is the importance of staying in the middle of the road, avoiding ditches on both the right and on the left.
 - b. Some SDAs inappropriately, erroneously place EGW in an extreme position:
 - (1) *Too high*: she is placed upon an exalted pedestal, in effect making of her a "vegetarian Virgin Mary."
 - (2) *Too low*: she is viewed as merely another "ordinary" Christian writer of piety, with whose ideas one may freely agree or disagree with impunity.
8. In the 1980s, in the wake of the most recent major controversy concerning the EGW writings, the church endeavored to clarify matters by publishing "The Inspiration and Authority of the Ellen G. White Writings: A Statement of Present Understanding."
- a. A preliminary draft appeared in both the *Adventist Review* (July 15, 1982) and *Ministry* (August, 1982), soliciting input from readers.
 - b. A revised statement subsequently appeared in the *Adventist Review* of December 23, 1982 and in the *Ministry* of February, 1983 (See Appendix A).
9. The official SDA position (if I understand it correctly) holds that:
- a. While EGW is inspired, in the same manner, and to the same degree, as are the Bible prophets,

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- b. Yet we do not make of these writings a second Bible, nor yet an extension of the sacred canon of Scripture.
 - (1) Let us note how this seemingly paradoxical position is derived.

I. God's Work Through the Prophets

A. An Evangelical Position

1. SDAs, in harmony with most Evangelicals, take the position that the sacred canon of Scripture was closed with the inclusion of Revelation as its last book.
 - a. The canon, therefore, is viewed as both:
 - (1) Complete in itself, and
 - (2) Sufficient for salvation.
 - b. It is, therefore, possible for a seeker of God's truth to find salvation and eternal life through Jesus Christ, and to experience a genuinely authentic "born-again" conversion, without ever having heard of EGW, or ever having read any of her writings.
2. Accordingly, SDAs hold, further, that the Bible is:
 - a. The *source* of our beliefs.
 - b. The *authority* for our beliefs.
 - c. And the *test* of both our beliefs and religious experience.
 - (1) And EGW strongly held this position throughout her lifetime (GC vii:3).

B. The Role of Non-Canonical Prophets: Oral and Literary

1. It is also true, however, that God anciently used a line of prophetic messengers, who lived contemporaneously with the prophets who wrote the Bible, but whose own utterances are not included within the canon:
 - a. They did their work in both Old Testament and New Testament times.
 - b. They appear to have done the same kinds of work as the Bible writers in their respective ministries.
 - c. They included female prophets as well as male.
 - d. And at least eight of them were **literary** (though non-canonical) prophets:
 - (1) "The book of Jasher" (Jos. 10:13; 2 Sam. 1:8) [perhaps a mere 40 years after Moses, c. 1450 B.C.].
 - (2) "The Book of Gad" (1 Chron. 29:29), "David's seer" (1 Chron. 21:9, 18; 2 Sam. 24:1) [a contemporary of David and Nathan, c. 1,000 B.C.].
 - (3) "The Book of Nathan the Prophet" (1 Chron. 29:29; 2 Chron. 9:29; cf. 2 Sam. 7:2) [a contemporary of David and Gad, c. 1,000 B.C.].
 - (4) "The book of . . . Iddo the seer" (2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; cf. 13:22) [wrote accounts of Solomon, Jereboam, Abijah, Jehoshaphat; c. 970 B.C.]
 - (5) "The book of Jehu" (2 Chron. 20:34 [denounced Baasha, c. 950 B.C.].
 - (6) ". . . written in . . . the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite" (2 Chron. 9:29; cf. 1 Kings 11:29) [prophet to Jereboam, c. 947 B.C.,]

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- (7) "The book of Shemaiah" (2 Chron. 12:15; cf. 11:2; 12:7; 1 Kings 12:22) [prophet to Rehoboam, c. 947 B.C.].
- (8) "A writing . . . from Elijah the prophet" (2 Chron. 21:12) [denounced Jehoram; c. 842 B.C.]

C. Arguments Against Degrees of Inspiration or of Prophetic Authority

1. There are at least three arguments against the idea of *degrees of inspiration*:
 - a. The scriptural record draws absolutely no difference between the canonical and the noncanonical literary prophets with regard to:
 - (1) The source of their messages.
 - (2) The "chain of command" employed by God in communicating to them.
 - (3) The method of that communication.
 - (4) Physical phenomena during the vision state.
 - (5) Kinds of messages communicated: encouragement, counsel, admonition, reproof, rebuke.
 - (6) The kinds of imperfections in the "earthen vessels."
 - (7) The hearer/reader's response elicited by the message.
 - (a) The burden of proof to demonstrate there were significant differences between the two groups lies with the one who seeks to argue otherwise.
 - b. If there are degrees of inspiration, *who* is to make such determination?
 - (1) For such a person must, perforce, be raised to a level *above* that of the prophets, to be qualified to look down and pronounce judgment upon the work of the prophets.
 - (2) Yet there is not even a hint of such a category of supererogation to be found anywhere in the Word!
 - (3) And no human, of his own volition, can raise himself even to the level of a prophet--much less place himself *above* that level!
 - c. EGW herself declared that there are no degrees of inspiration (ISM 23).
 - (1) Inspiration, like pregnancy, is a *process*; and one cannot have just a little bit of a process:
 - (a) It is quite incorrect to say that a woman is a "little bit" pregnant: if she has a fetus in the abdominal cavity, she is pregnant; if she does not, she is not pregnant
 - (2) You never have never seen a woman who was a "little bit" pregnant; and you have never seen a prophet who was just a "little bit" inspired!
 - (3) Some years ago the *Converted Catholic* magazine poked fun at that church's distinction between mortal and venal sin by reproducing a cartoon showing a priest wearing a butcher's apron. With meat cleaver in hand, he cut a sausage into pieces of varying thickness. On one side of the his table there was a pile of very thin slices, labeled "venal sin;" on the other end, a pile of large chunky slices, labeled "mortal sin." And a one-word caption summed it all up: "Baloney!"
 - (a) Just so is the idea of degrees of inspiration.

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2. There are at least two arguments against *degrees of authority*:
 - a. When **Nathan** reproved David for his sin of murder, adultery, and coverup in connection with Bathsheba, David—a literary, *canonical* prophet—bowed to the authority of Nathan—a literary but *non-canonical* prophet (2 Sam. 12).
 - b. When **Gad** reproved David for the king's sin in numbering Israel, again the canonical prophet bowed to the authority of the non-canonical prophet (1 Chron. 21).
3. SDA's tend to view EGW in the light and role of a literary but non-canonical prophet.

II. How Ellen White Viewed the Bible

1. Before attempting to determine how EGW viewed the proper relationship to be sustained between her writings and the Scriptures, we must first examine her views concerning the Bible itself, as to the nature, purpose, and primacy of the Bible. Note the following brief summary/synthesis:

A. The Nature of the Bible

1. Three amazing miracles characterize the absolute uniqueness of the Bible in the literary history of all time:
 - a. *Content*: The Holy Spirit "dictated" the content (though *not*, generally, the very words--1SM 21:2) of the Bible to those "holy men of old" (2 Peter 1:21):
 - (1) The prophets had absolutely "no control of the work themselves."
 - (2) "They penned the literal truth, and
 - (3) "Stern, forbidding facts are revealed
 - (4) For reasons that our finite minds cannot fully comprehend" (4T 9:1).
 - b. *Organization*:
 - (1) "The Lord gave His Word in just the way He wanted it to come" (1SM 21:5).
 - c. *Preservation*:
 - (1) Through the intervening three millennia, "the Lord has preserved this Holy Book by His own miraculous power in its present shape" (1SM 15:3)
 - (a) There are approximately 2,000 separate manuscripts of the Bible which have survived and come down to modern men today, more than for any other ancient literary work.
 - (2) "Men should let God take care of His own Book, His living oracles, as He has done for ages" (1SM 17:5).
2. The "entire Bible" is "the Inspired Word" of God (1SM 17:3).
3. "The truth of God is found in His Word" (8T 192:4).
 - a. No one need "seek elsewhere" for "present truth" (*ibid.*).

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B. The Purpose of the Bible:

1. "The Bible was given for practical purposes" (1SM 20:2).
2. The Bible sets forth the "pattern" for Christian living (AH 354:5; Ev 684:2).
 - a. It is like a "chart or guidebook" to show the human family the way to heaven" (1SM 15:3).
3. It contains—"as clear as a sunbeam:"
 - a. "Comfort."
 - b. "Guidance."
 - c. "Counsel."
 - d. "The plan of salvation" (1SM 18:3)
4. The Bible is fitted for the needs of all—rich and poor, learned and illiterate, "for all ages and all classes (1SM 18:4).
5. It contains all the knowledge needed by man for salvation:
 - a. There is no need to "seek elsewhere" for truth (8T 192:4).
 - b. Men should "cling" to their Bibles (1SM 18:1).
 - c. Men should "believe" and "obey" their Bibles (1SM 393:2).
 - d. "No one need be lost for want of knowledge, unless he is wilfully blind" (1SM 18:3).

C. The Primacy of the Bible:

1. It is "to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His [God's] will" (GC vii:1)
2. As such, it is
 - a. "The standard of character."
 - b. "The revealer of doctrines."
 - c. "The test of experience" (*ibid.*).(See also "The Primacy of the Word," 3SM 29-33.)

III. How Ellen White Viewed Her Own Writings

A. The Role of the Spiritual Gift of Prophecy, Vis-a-Vis the Bible

1. "Yet the fact that God has revealed His will to men through His word has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit" (GC vii:2).
2. "On the contrary, the Spirit was promised by our Savior, to open the word to His servants, to illuminate and apply its teachings" (*ibid.*).

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3. And since consistency is an attribute of the Deity, "and since it was the Spirit of God that inspired the Bible, it is impossible that the teaching of the Spirit should ever be contrary to that of the word" (*ibid.*)
4. "The Spirit was not given--nor can it ever be bestowed--to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested (GC vii:3).
5. The EGW writings were given only because SDAs had neglected their Bibles; and, thus, these were given to redirect them back to the Word:
 - (1) "If you had made God's word your study, with a desire to reach the Bible standard and attain to Christian perfection, you would not have needed the *Testimonies*. It is because you have neglected to acquaint yourselves with God's inspired Book that He has sought to reach you by simple, direct testimonies, calling your attention to the words of inspiration which you had neglected to obey, and urging you to fashion your lives in accordance with its pure and elevated principles" (2T 605:1).
6. The EGW writings are *not* given as *an addition to* the Word of God:
 - a. "Brother J would confuse the mind by seeking to make it appear that the light that God has given through the *Testimonies* is in addition to the word of God, but in this he presents the matter in a false light.
 - (1) "God has seen fit in this manner to bring the minds of His people to His word, to give them a clearer understanding of it" (4T 246:0).
7. They are *not* to *take the place of* the Word of God:
 - a. "God's Word is the unerring standard. The *Testimonies* are not to take the place of the Word" (Letter 12, 1890, in Ev 256:2)
 - b. "The Lord desires you to study your Bibles. He has not given any additional light to take the place of His Word, which, if eaten and digested, is as the lifeblood of the soul" (Letter 130, 1901, in 3SM 29:2).

(Portions of the foregoing were adapted from Denton E. Rebok, *Believe His Prophets* [RH: 1956], p. 165, 166)

B. "Greater Light"/"Lesser Light": The Defining Metaphor

1. In the RH, Jan. 20, 1903, EGW offers a defining metaphor to describe the proper relationship between her writings and the Bible:
 - a. "Little heed is given to the Bible [among God's people], and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light."
 - b. It was an allusion to the Creator's activity on the fourth day of Creation Week: "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night." Gen. 1:16.
 - (1) She obviously saw the "greater light" as the Bible.
 - (2) The "lesser light" referred to her own inspired writings.

C. Analogies to Explicate the Meaning of the Metaphor

- 1. Time and Geographical Relationships** (Gerhard F. Hasel):
 - a. The Bible is God's universal message for all men, for all time.
 - (1) Its 66 books were written by approximately 40 canonical prophets over a period of approximately 1,500 years.
 - (2) The Bible has represented the will of God for all mankind for between two and three millennia.
 - b. The literary but *non*-canonical prophets (including EGW) wrote primarily for their own time and people.
 - c. Thus, the canonical prophets may be seen to be the "greater light," while the non-canonical prophets may be viewed as the "lesser light."

- 2. Tester/Testee Relationship** (Carlyle B. Haynes):
 - a. Every nation has a national standard prototype for measurement of line and volume, against which samples may be tested to see if they provide full measure.
 - b. That which does the measuring/testing is "greater" than that which is measured/tested thereby--though both may be exactly identical in size/shape.
 - c. The national standard (which does the testing) is the "greater light"; that which is tested is the "lesser light."

- 3. Forty Candles/One Candle** (M. L. Venden, Sr.):
 - a. Forty identical lighted candles are placed on one side of a table in a darkened room; another lighted candle is placed on the opposite side.
 - (1) The end of the table with the 40 candles is considerably brighter than the opposite end with its one candle--40 candlepower vs. one candlepower.
 - b. The Bible was written by 40 writers; the prophetic gift in the last days was given to one writer.
 - c. In this sense the Bible is the "greater light"; the EGW writings the "lesser light."
 - (1) But, it should be noted: light is light:
 - (a) From whatever source it may come (for all spiritual light comes from God).
 - (b) With whatever degree of concentration it may shine.

- 4. National Map/State Map** (Roger W. Coon):
 - a. The opening pages of *The Rand McNally Road Atlas* first present a double-page map of the contiguous 48 United States; then follow maps of the various individual states of the union.
 - b. The maps of the individual states do not disagree with anything that is contained on the national map; but they, indeed, go far beyond the limited depiction in the national map in providing much greater additional detail.
 - c. Thus, the national map is seen as the "greater light;" the state map is seen as the "lesser light."

5. A Telescope (Mrs. S.M.I. Henry):

- a. Although, strictly speaking, this analogy does not explicate the "greater light"/"lesser light" metaphor, it is placed here for purposes of convenience, to illustrate certain analogous truths.
- b. A telescope does not add more stars to the heavens; it merely reveals more clearly the stars that are already there.
- c. A telescope may have reduced efficiency because:
 - (1) "Clouds" of "unbelief"/"contention" may intervene.
 - (2) "It may be blurred by the breath of our own selfishness."
 - (3) "The dust of superstition may gather upon it."
 - (4) "We may meddle with it, and turn it aside from the field."
 - (5) "It may be pointed away toward empty space."
 - (6) "It may be turned end for end, so that everything is so diminished that we can recognize nothing."
 - (7) "We may change the focus so that everything is distorted out of all harmonious proportions, and made hideous."
 - (8) "It may be so shortened that nothing but a great piece of opaque glass" is seen.
 - (9) "If the *lens* is mistaken for the field, we can receive but a very narrow conception of the most magnificent spectacle" in the heavens.
 - (10) "But in its proper office, as a medium of enlarged and clearer vision, as a *telescope*, the Testimony has a wonderfully beautiful and holy office" (Cited in Rebok, *op. cit.*, pp. 180,181.)

D. Cautions in Applying the Metaphor: What the Prophet Did *Not* Intend to Teach

1. The very narrow application obviously intended by the prophet in the use of her "greater light"/"lesser light" metaphor was strictly in terms of *function*--how one *functions vis-a-vis* the other.
2. Ellen White did *not* intend by the metaphor to convey the idea that there were:
 - a. Degrees of inspiration:
 - (1) 1SM 23 clearly declares that there are no such degrees.
 - b. Degrees of prophetic authority:
 - (1) Most cogently the late SDA scholar Don F. Neufeld said (in the last sermon he ever preached):

"Through His witness to the New Testament prophets, Jesus predicted that prophetic activity, as one of many spiritual gifts, would continue in the church. In other words, the testimony of Jesus to His people was not to cease once the books that make up our present canon of Scripture would be written. Prophetic activity would continue beyond the close of the canon.

"This brings us to an important question. If in all prophetic activity it is Jesus who is speaking ["the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy"], whether in Old Testament times, New Testament times, or in post-New Testament times, can we logically draw a distinction and say that what Jesus said in any one period is more or less authoritative than

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what he said in any other period, at least with reference to the generations involved?

"For example, could something that Jesus said in the first century A.D. be more or less authoritative than what He said in the 19th century A.D.? The answer, I think, is obvious. It doesn't make any sense to argue for degrees of inspiration, as if what Jesus said in one generation was more inspired than what He said in another" (Transcript of sermon, "When Jesus Speaks," Takoma Park, Md. SDA Church, Feb. 2, 1980).

IV. The Jemison Model of Relationships

1. T. Housel Jemison, in his college prophectic guidance textbook, offers the following model to explicate the proper relationship that exists between these two inspired literary works:

A. To Direct Attention to the Bible

1. To exalt the Bible (5T 665; CT 427).
2. To attract minds to the Bible (5T 665).
3. To call attention to neglected truths (*ibid.*).

B. To Aid in Understanding the Bible

4. To impress truths already revealed (*ibid.*; 4T 246:0):
 - a. No new topic, no new revelation, no new doctrine is here revealed.
 - b. But much new information on facts, details, relationships between texts, and interpretation of texts is provided herein:
 - (1) Example: the special resurrection on Easter Sunday (see **Appendix B**).
 - (2) Example: the special resurrection immediately prior to Christ's second coming (EW 285; GC 637).
5. To awaken minds (5T 665; 6T 356; 2T 70; DA 483).
6. To simplify truths (5T 665; examples: Prayer, SC 97; Faith, Ed 253; Sanctification, LS 237).

C. To Help in Applying Bible Principles in Our Lives

7. To bring out principles and help apply them (2T 687; 5T 660).
8. To instruct in detail (2T 608; 5T 667).

(*A Prophet Among You* [Pacific Press, 1955], Chapter 19, pp. 364-74)

V. "The Bible and the Bible Only"

1. The slogan "*Sola Scriptura*" originated in the Protestant Reformation, as a protest against the Papacy's placing church tradition on an equal footing with Scripture.

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2. It is often used disingenuously as a subterfuge to camouflage opposition the EGW writings:
 - a. In was in her day.
 - b. It still is today.
3. EGW cited this expression in 13 major statements, employing it variously in four ways:
 - a. Never to exclude the binding obligation upon SDA church members to respond to visions as light that God had given to His church.
 - b. Generally to set in contrast the teachings of God's word as opposed to tradition/mere human theories (e.g., Sabbath vs. Sunday).
 - c. To define the SDA positions on visions vis-a-vis the fact that the Bible enjoins upon Christians the acceptance of all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit ("spiritual gifts")--including prophecy--as binding upon all who accept the Bible.
 - d. The fact that through the visions God has led us to a correct understanding of His word.
 - (1) He has taught us, and He will continue to teach us, through this particular spiritual gift.
 - (2) We have a corresponding obligation to accept and follow this leading of God.
4. Uriah Smith wrote a devastatingly powerful parable in practical application of these points, which appeared in the RH, Jan. 13, 1863, which is worth re-examining today (see **Appendix C**).
5. Ironically, the ultimate implication of accepting the Reformation dogma of "The Bible and the Bible Only" is to obligate acceptance of this last-day prophetic gift, for EGW's work, clearly, was forecast in both Old and New Testament Scriptures:
 - a. Joel predicted a last-day manifestation of the prophetic gift (Joel 2:28-32)
 - b. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit after His ascension (John 14; 16)
 - c. Paul's doctrine of "spiritual gifts" identifies the gift of prophecy as second only to the gift of apostleship (1 Cor. 12:28).
 - d. Jesus told John on Patmos that His "remnant" church would possess a restored prophetic gift in the last days (Rev. 12:17; 19:10).
6. Actually the critics' "either/or" dichotomy (that we must take either the Bible or the EGW writings, but we cannot have both) is a false one:
 - a. Scripturally, it is not only possible, but even necessary, to have both.
[See Arthur L. White's monograph, "The Position of 'The Bible and the Bible Only' and the Relationship of This to the Writings of Ellen G. White," White Estate shelf document, January, 1971, 37 pp.]

Conclusion

1. The position of the SDA Church on the proper relationship to be sustained between the Bible and the EGW writings may perhaps be best summed up by pointing out that:

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- a. The writings of EGW are neither an addition nor a replacement to the sacred canon of Scripture.
 - b. They are not of universal application (as is the Bible); but were given, more particularly, for the guidance of the SDA ("remnant") Church.
 - c. The Bible stands unique from all other writings (including EGW's), in that it, alone, is the universal standard by which all other writings are to be tested.
 - d. Yet, since inspiration is indivisible, and since all the prophets do, anyway, is to tell what Jesus said ("the testimony of Jesus *is* the Spirit of prophecy"), there are not among the various canonical and non-canonical prophets:
 - (1) Degrees of inspiration.
 - (2) Degrees of prophetic authority.
 - e. And one is morally obliged to follow the counsel of Mary, the mother of Jesus:
 - (1) Therefore, "Whatsoever He saith to you [and by whomsoever the prophet], do it!"
2. Paul's admonition in 1 Thess. 5:19-21 still applies to Christians today:
- a. Quench not the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Despise not prophesyings.
 - c. Prove all things [including all claims to inspiration/revelation].
 - d. Hold fast to that which proves genuinely good and true.
3. EGW predicted that, at the very end of time, the "very last" work of Satan in deceiving members of the SDA Church would be to:
- a. Destroy her credibility as an authentic prophet of the Lord.
 - b. Create a "satanic" hatred against her writings:
 - (1) Satanic in its origin.
 - (2) Satanic in its intensity (1SM 48).
4. In the earlier "Alpha" crisis in the church, at the turn of the century, EGW penned these words which have great relevance for us in the church's present crisis:
- "The Lord will put new, vital force into His work as human agencies obey the command to go forth and proclaim the truth. . . . The truth will be criticized, scorned, and derided; but the closer it is examined and tested, the brighter it will shine. . . .
- "The principles of truth that God has revealed to us are our only true foundation. They have made us what we are. The lapse of time has not lessened their value. It is the constant effort of the enemy to remove these truths from their setting, and to put in their place spurious theories. He will bring in everything that he possibly can to carry out his deceptive designs. But the Lord will raise up men of keen perception, who will give these truths their proper place in the plan of God" (1 SM 201).

List of Appendixes

- Appendix A: "The Inspiration and Authority of the Ellen G. White Writings."
- Appendix B: The Special Resurrection on Easter Sunday.
- Appendix C: Uriah Smith's Parable of the Ship.

Appendix A

[The first draft of the following statement was published in the *Adventist Review* of July 15, 1982 and in *Ministry* of August, 1982; this revised version appeared in the *Adventist Review* of Dec. 23, 1982, and in *Ministry* in Feb., 1983.]

The inspiration and authority of the Ellen G. White writings

A statement of present understanding.

In response to requests, a statement on the relationship of the writings of Ellen G. White to the Bible was prepared initially by an ad hoc committee of the General Conference. The statement was published in the July 15 *Adventist Review* and August issue of *MINISTRY* with an invitation to readers to respond to it. Suggestions from readers and from several groups have led to a refinement of the statement to its present form. Although it is not a voted statement, we believe that the worldwide participation in its development makes it a reflection of the views of the church on the topic it addresses.—Biblical Research Institute.

In the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists at Dallas in April, 1980, the Preamble states: "Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures." Paragraph one reflects the church's understanding of the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, while paragraph seventeen reflects the church's understanding of the inspiration and authority of the writings of Ellen White in relation to the Scriptures. These paragraphs read as follows:

"1. The Holy Scriptures

"The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.)"

"17. The Gift of Prophecy

"One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is

prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10.)"

The following affirmations and denials speak to the issues which have been raised about the inspiration and authority of the Ellen White writings and their relation to the Bible. These clarifications should be taken as a whole. They are an attempt to express the present understanding of Seventh-day Adventists. They are not to be construed as a substitute for, or a part of, the two doctrinal statements quoted above.

Affirmations

1. We believe that Scripture is the divinely revealed Word of God and is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

2. We believe that the canon of Scripture is composed only of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments.

3. We believe that Scripture is the foundation of faith and the final authority in all matters of doctrine and practice.

4. We believe that Scripture is the Word of God in human language.

5. We believe that Scripture teaches that the gift of prophecy will be manifest in the Christian church after New Testament times.

6. We believe that the ministry and writings of Ellen White were a manifestation of the gift of prophecy.

7. We believe that Ellen White was inspired by the Holy Spirit and that her writings, the product of that inspiration, are applicable and authoritative, especially to Seventh-day Adventists.

8. We believe that the purposes of the Ellen White writings include guidance in understanding the teaching of Scripture and application of these teachings, with

prophetic urgency, to the spiritual and moral life.

9. We believe that the acceptance of the prophetic gift of Ellen White is important to the nurture and unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

10. We believe that Ellen White's use of literary sources and assistants finds parallels in some of the writings of the Bible.

Denials

1. We do not believe that the quality or degree of inspiration in the writings of Ellen White is different from that of Scripture.

2. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are an addition to the canon of Sacred Scripture.

3. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White function as the foundation and final authority of Christian faith as does Scripture.

4. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White may be used as the basis of doctrine.

5. We do not believe that the study of the writings of Ellen White may be used to replace the study of Scripture.

6. We do not believe that Scripture can be understood only through the writings of Ellen White.

7. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White exhaust the meaning of Scripture.

8. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are essential for the proclamation of the truths of Scripture to society at large.

9. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are the product of mere Christian piety.

10. We do not believe that Ellen White's use of literary sources and assistants negates the inspiration of her writings.

We conclude, therefore, that a correct understanding of the inspiration and authority of the writings of Ellen White will avoid two extremes: (1) regarding these writings as functioning on a canonical level identical with Scripture, or (2) considering them as ordinary Christian literature.

Appendix B

The Special Resurrection on Easter Sunday

I. BIBLICAL DATA: The Bible Gives Eight Facts of Information/Identification (in Matt. 27:51-53 and Eph. 4:8)

1. There was an earthquake, (with great rocks dislodged on Friday (v. 51).
2. Graves were opened--also on Friday (v. 52).
3. "Many" arose from the dead--on Sunday: see point 5 below) (v. 52).
4. They were called "saints" (v. 52).
5. They came out of their graves "after His resurrection" (v. 53).
6. They then went into the "holy city" (Jerusalem) (v. 53).
7. They there "appeared unto many" of the local inhabitants and visitors (v. 53).
8. They ascended with Jesus to heaven 40 days later (Eph. 4:8).

II. SPIRIT OF PROPHECY: TEN ADDITIONAL FACTS OF INFORMATION?IDENTIFICATION

1. Service: During their natural lifetimes they had been "co-laborers with God" (DA 786).
2. Nature of Sacrifice: "at the cost of their own lives" (DA 786) "they had borne their testimony unflinchingly for the truth" (1SM 304).
3. Historical Era: They represented "every age" of history, "from creation down to the days of Christ" (EW 184). (Note: Abel was the 1st martyr; John the Baptist was the last martyr of record before Calvary. Now, EGW does not say, explicitly, that Able and John the Baptist themselves were included (though they may well have been); she says, simply, that their respective eras were included!)
4. Size: They differed in stature and form, "some being more noble in appearance than others. . . . Those who lived in the days of Noah and Abraham resembled the angels in form, comeliness, and strength" (EW 184). (Adam was more than twice the height of men now living; Eve was a little shorter--her head came a little above his houlders. 3SG 34).
5. Nature of New Life: These were raised to immortality (1SM 304, 305); whereas the three raised from the dead during Christ's pre-Calvary ministry were only raised to mortality--and they subsequently died again (DA 786).
6. Benefactor: It was Christ Himself who raised this large group ("many") to eternal life (1SM 304; DA 786).
7. The New Work Now: To witness to Christ's resurrection. They were witnesses whom the Christ could not silence (as they had the bribed Roman soldiers) (DA 786). Indeed, their testimony contradicted the perjury of the bribed soldiers (1SM 305).
8. Their Message: The sacrifice for man is now complete; Jesus, whom the Jews crucified, is now risen from the dead (EW 184). The proof? We be risen with Him (EW 184; DA 786).
9. Their Prophetic Significance: They were the living fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 26:19 (1SM 305).
10. Their Symbolic Significance: After they all ascended to heaven, Jesus presented this group as the firstfruits of all the righteous dead who someday would be brought back to life--and He did it on the very same day as the Ceremony of the First Fruits in the earthly temple at Jerusalem! (1SM 306, 307).

Appendix C

Uriah Smith's Parable of the Ship

Originally appearing in the *Review and Herald* of January 13, 1863, this parable was reproduced in Robert W. Olson's *One Hundred and One Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, March, 1981), p. 40:

"Suppose we are about to start upon a voyage. The owner of the vessel gives us a book of directions, telling us that it contains instructions sufficient for our whole journey, and that if we will heed them, we shall reach in safety our port of destination.

"Setting sail we open our book to learn its contents. We find that its author lays down general principles to govern us in our voyage, and instructs us as far as practicable, touching the various contingencies that may arise, till the end; but he also tells us that the latter part of our journey will be especially perilous; that the features of the coast are ever changing by reason of quicksands and tempests; 'but for this part of the journey,' says he, 'I have provided you a pilot, who will meet you, and give you such directions as the surrounding circumstances and dangers may require; and to him you must give heed.'

"With these directions we reach the perilous time specified, and the pilot, according to promise, appears. But some of the crew, as he offers his services, rise up against him. 'We have the original book of directions,' say they, 'and that is enough for us. We stand upon that, and that alone; we want nothing of you.' Who now heed that original book of directions? Those who reject the pilot, or those who receive him, as that book instructs them? Judge ye.

"But some . . . may meet us at this point like this: 'Then you would have us take Sister White as our pilot, would you?' It is to forestall any efforts in this direction, that this sentence is penned. We say no such thing. What we do say is distinctly this: That the gifts of the Spirit are given for our pilot through these perilous times, and wherever and in whomsoever we find genuine manifestations of these, we are bound to respect them, nor can we do otherwise without in so far rejecting the Word of God, which directs us to receive them."

Infallibility

Infallibility, Inerrancy, and the Prophets: Does a True Prophet Ever Make a Mistake?

Roger W. Coon

Introduction

1. The SDA Church grew out of William Miller's Advent Movement of 1844.
 - a. This movement was one of the most authentically ecumenical of all in the 19th century:
 - (1) They came from "every kindred, . . . nation, . . . tongue, and people"--as prophecy had predicted that they would (Rev. 14:6).
 - (2) And they came from virtually every Christian denomination.
 - b. And they brought with them all of the varied, peculiar doctrinal beliefs of their respective churches.
 - c. But, for the sake of unity, cohesion, and focus, most Millerites subordinated their varied beliefs as to what was "true" doctrine to the proclamation of Christ's coming on Oct. 22.
2. The remnant from Millerism which, in 1860, would form the SDA Church, were theologically divided into many splinter factions.
 - a. During the 22 Sabbath Conferences of 1848-50, when the group's doctrinal framework was hammered out, all of these conflicting views surfaced, among which were:
 - (1) That Christ really had come in 1844--spiritually.
 - (2) That no Bible prophecy whatever was fulfilled on Oct. 22, 1844.
 - (3) That the millennium of Rev. 20 was already in the past.
 - (4) That the 144,000 had been raised on Easter Sunday.
 - (5) That the New Testament Lord's Supper--like its Old Testament Passover counterpart--should be celebrated by Christians only once yearly.
 - b. At the 2nd Sabbath Conference (Volney, NY, Aug. 18, 1848): "About 35 were present. . . . But of this number there were hardly two agreed. Some were holding serious errors, and each strenuously urged his own views, declaring that they were according to Scripture" (LS 110:4).
3. By the end of 1850, however, doctrinal unity had been achieved, in large measure because of much prayer; hard, investigative study of the Word; exhaustive discussion, much fasting, and the prophetic gift--which God used after the people had gone as far as they could go, or when they were in danger of going off on the wrong track.

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- a. Some differences of opinion, of course, continued.
 - b. Doctrinal understandings were "fine-tuned" along the way:
 - (1) A formal statement of our belief concerning the Trinity was not published until 1980 (though most SDAs believed it long before then).
 - c. But, as late as 1892--nearly a half-century after the work of the Sabbath Conferences, EGW continued to warn:
 - (1) "Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed."
 - (2) "Long cherished opinions must not be regarded as infallible. . . . God and heaven alone are infallible" (RH, July 26, 1892, in CW 36, 37).
4. Ironically, it is in this very arena of "infallibility and inerrancy," as it relates to the prophets, that many SDAs will yet have to adjust an incorrect viewpoint.
- a. Three questions, here, insistently demand an answer:
 - (1) Does a true prophet ever err?
 - (2) Do *all* of a true prophet's predictions come to pass, *100%* of the time?
 - (3) Does a true prophet ever have to go back and change something?
 - b. In 1 Thessalonians (probably the first book of the New Testament to be written), before ending his epistle, Paul admonishes all Christians:
 - (1) "Quench not the [Holy] Spirit."
 - (2) "Despise not prophesying."
 - (3) "Prove all things; [and] hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:19-21).

I. Two Contrasting Theories About the "More-Sureness" of Prophecy

1. Peter informs us that the word of the prophet is "more-sure" than the word of the non-prophet (2 Peter 1:19 KJV).
 - a. The issue, however, lies at the point of the quintessential essence of this "more-sureness."
 - b. And two (mutually-exclusive) theories have been set forth.

A. The "Strait-Jacket" Theory: "More-Sure," Because of "Prevention"

1. For the holders of this theory, the prophet's words are "more-sure" because, they allege, the control of the Holy Spirit is so tight, so total, that the prophet is precluded error--"he couldn't possibly make a mistake, even if he wanted to!"
2. Thus, for the holders of this view:
 - a. A true prophet is right in his/her predictions *100%* of the time.
 - (1) If a prophet is not right *100%* of the time, he/she is not a true prophet at all; for the true prophet's "batting-average" is *always* *100%*
 - b. Furthermore, a true prophet of God does not change his/her mind: they simply never, ever, have to go back and change anything that they said or wrote.

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3. For additional commentary on "Strait-Jacket" thinking in contemporary SDA publications, see Examples of "Strait-Jacket" Thinking in Regard to the Nature of Prophetic Safeguards, in Appendix A.

B. The "Intervention" Theory: "More-Sure" Because of "Correction"

1. For the holders of this theory, the prophet's words are "more-sure" because if, in his/her humanity, a prophet of God errs, *and* the nature of that error is sufficiently serious that it affects:
 - a. The direction of God's church; or
 - b. The eternal destiny of even one soul; or
 - c. The purity of even one doctrine:God does for the prophet that which He does not do for the non-prophet: THEN (and only then) the Holy Spirit moves in:
 - a. Usually immediately,
 - b. Usually through the very same prophet who made the error, and
 - c. God then corrects the error, so that
 - d. There is no *permanent* damage done to the church or its members.

II. Paul's Divine "Treasure" in "Earthen Vessels"

1. Paul draws a contrast divine "treasure," and the "earthen vessel" in which it is held and conveyed (2 Cor. 4:7):
 - a. The "*treasure*" is held to be God-given truths: "divine light has been imparted to the world by revelations to His chosen servants"(GC v:1). This is the *divine* part of the equation.
 - (1) The Bible is "an authoritative, infallible revelation of His [God's] will" (GC vi:1).
 - (2) "God and heaven *alone* are infallible" (1SM 37:3; emphasis supplied).
 - (3) "Man is fallible; but God's Word is infallible" (1SM 416:2).
 - b. The "*earthen vessel*" is held to be the human "packaging" (which holds and conveys the treasure)--the language/words of men, the *human* part of the equation.
 - (1) "*Everything* that is human is imperfect" (1SM 20:2; emphasis supplied).
 - (2) " . . . *no man* [including prophets?] is infallible" (TM 376:2; emphasis supplied).
2. EGW, furthermore, emphasizes that everything that has to do with the process of salvation combines divinity with humanity, by giving two examples:
 - a. " . . . the *Bible*, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human."
 - b. "Such a union existed in the nature of *Christ*, who was the Son of God and the Son of man."
 - (1) "Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that 'the Word was

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made flesh, and dwelt among us' John 1:14" (GC vi:0; emphasis supplied.).

(2) Again, "The union of the divine and the human, manifest in Christ, exists also in the Bible" (5T 747:1).

3. One contemporary critic, looking only at the human (EGW) and forgetting the divine (inspiration of the Holy Spirit), alleges that EGW's writings are not a reliable foundation upon which to base doctrine, because of the mistakes/errors in her writings.

a. We respond: both reason and consistency demand that if we reject her writings upon this ground, we must also reject the writers of Scripture!

(1) For, as we are about, to note below, the writers of the Bible made *exactly* the same kinds of "mistakes" in their writings that EGW made in hers!

4. We now will examine three categories of errors/mistakes, discrepancies--call them what you will--in this context:

a. Unfulfilled prophecies.

b. Small matters of minor detail.

c. Major matters of substance.

5. And in each instance we shall first examine the Scriptures, before proceeding to the writings of EGW:

a. For we will always wish to see EGW in the light of the Bible.

b. We will *not* want to see the Bible in the light of EGW--and that distinction is crucial!.

III. The Category of Unfulfilled Prophecies

A. Scripture

1. One of the Biblical tests of a genuine prophet is fulfillment of prediction; and the same identical test is specified by both Jeremiah and Moses, though each presents the opposite side of the same coin:

a. Jeremiah presents the positive: "When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall [it] . . . be known that the Lord hath truly sent him" (Jer. 28:9).

b. Moses presents the negative: "if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously" (Deut 18:22).

2. Does this, then, mean that a prophet's predictions must be fulfilled 100% of the time, in order to consider him/her to be a true prophet? The evidence of Scripture answers: No!

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- a. These same two prophets who give us the test of prediction-fulfillment *also* remind us that a conditional element must be taken into account in some (though not all) prophecies; and, interestingly, they do this:
 - (1) In the *very same* books in which they spell out the test; and, also,
 - (2) They introduce the conditional *prior* to the giving of the test!
 - (a) Jeremiah gives the test in 28:9; but introduces the conditional element 10 chapters earlier, in 18:6-10, and, again, in 26:2-6!
 - (b) Moses gives the test in Deut 18:22; but introduces the conditional element in 4:9 and 8:19 (as well as in 28:1-15).
 - b. Other Biblical writers mention the conditional element:
 - (1) A prophet speaks to King Asa: "The Lord is with you, *while* ye be with Him; and *if* ye seek Him, He will be found of you; *but if* ye forsake Him, He will forsake you" (2 Chron 15:2; emphasis supplied).
 - (2) See also: Zech. 6:15; Ex. 19:5, 6; 1 Kings 9:4-7, etc.
3. Biblical examples of conditional--and unfulfilled--prophecies:
- a. **Jonah and Nineveh:**
 - (1) Jonah's prophecy (2 Kings 14:25) concerning the restoration of the northern boundary of Israel 150 years after Solomon and the division of his kingdom, was fulfilled in the early days of Jereboam II (c. 793-753 BC)
 - (2) One of the main reasons Jonah did not want to deliver the message to Nineveh was because he somehow feared the Lord might not follow through; and if Jonah had even one unfulfilled prophecy, people would thereby tend to view him as a false prophet! He was, in short, "jealous of his reputation," caring more for it than for 120,000 lost souls! (PK 271:1).
 - b. **Predictions of Israel's national honor/glory, made by seven Old Testament prophets--Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Zephaniah, and Zechariah:**
 - (1) Worldwide mission of ancient Israel.
 - (2) Ingathering of the gentiles.
 - (3) Eternal rest in Canaan.
 - (4) Deliverance from their political enemies.
 - (a) Now, literal Israel anciently did not meet the conditions specified by the Lord; and so the Lord did not fulfill the promises as predicted.
 - (b) Some of these prophecies do have a secondary application to "spiritual Israel today, and thus will find limited fulfillment; but the rest will never be fulfilled, though predicted by a true prophet of the Lord!
 - c. (For an exceptionally helpful article, see "The Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy," 4BC 25-38.)

4. Some conservative theologians, wrongly believing that *every* prediction of a true prophet *must* come to pass, else his/her credibility be fatally tarnished, and failing to recognize the conditional element in some prophecy, have made two

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hermeneutical blunders, thereby creating the "Secret Rapture" heresy in connection with Christ's second coming:

- a. They amputate the 70th week of Daniel 9, cutting it off from the preceding 69 weeks; and then they reposition this 70th week far into the future.
- b. Then they take all of the as-yet unfulfilled prophecies concerning literal Israel, and move them into this future 70th week.
- c. Finally, they apply these predictions (with no Biblical justification whatever) to modern, *literal* Israel, thus compounding their problem (and confounding the reader) still further, in the creation of this false doctrine.

B. Ellen White

1. **"Food For Worms" Vision (1856):** Critics of EGW love to point to this vision to prove that EGW was a false prophet, because, admittedly, this prediction has not only totally failed of fulfillment, it can never be fulfilled in the future:
 - a. Background source: 1T 127-37 (but, especially, pp. 131, 132).
 - b. In the vision, given Tuesday, May 27, 1856, EGW shown the group attending a conference in Battle Creek that preceding weekend (May 23-26).
 - c. The angel told her:
 - (1) Some of this group would die (thus, "food for worms") before Jesus returns.
 - (2) Some would live through the close of probation, being subjects of the seven last plagues.
 - (3) And some would be alive to witness the second coming, and then be translated without seeing death.
 - d. For many years, the pioneers kept various lists of names of those known to have attended this meeting.
 - (1) EGW, however, discouraged this practice; for she felt the members would focus more on the list, rather than upon getting the Lord's work done, so that Jesus could return.
 - (2) She also understood (as the pioneers in those days did not) the conditional element in this prediction.
 - e. Today, ALL of those who were in attendance at the 1856 meeting have become "food for worms:"
 - (1) The youngest person present at that conference was an infant of 1 year, 9 months, held in the arms of his mother--the woman who made the prediction: William C. White:
 - (a) Born on Aug. 29, 1854, Willie died in 1937, at the age of 83.
 - f. For additional background, see:
 - (1) Francis D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, Chapter 8, pp. 102-11.
 - (2) The "Food For Worms" Vision of 1856, in Appendix B.
2. **Predictions of the Imminent Return of Jesus:**
 - a. LeRoy Edwin Froom has compiled 45 EGW statements, ranging from 1850 to 1915, in which she says, essentially, If we'd done our work, the Lord would have come before now (*Movement of Destiny*, pp. 571-88).
 - (1) The *time* of the Second Coming is conditional!

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- (2) But the *fact* of the Second Coming is *not* conditional: "What do ye imagine against the Lord? He will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time" (Nahum 1:9).
3. Actually, there appear to be remarkably few conditional prophecies to be found in the body of EGW's writings.
- a. And some that today may *appear* to be *conditional* (e.g., the prediction of slavery existing in the USA at the time of the Second Coming), may quite possibly, in the end, wind up meeting a literal fulfillment!
- (1) See White Estate shelf document, "Slavery, Will It Be Revived?," Oct. 17, 1963, 20 pp.
4. Taking into account the conditional element in some prophecies, EGW today is demonstrably no more of a false prophet than was Jonah, or the seven Old Testament prophets who prophesied concerning ancient, literal Israel.

IV. Category of Small Matters of Minor Detail

1. Many Christians are startled—even disturbed—to learn that in both the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen White there appear, here and there, small errors/discrepancies/mistakes:
- a. Now, admittedly, these are of a very minor nature: not a single one of them affects:
- (1) The direction of God's church,
(2) The eternal destiny of even one soul, or even
(3) The purity of even one doctrine.
- b. But they are there.
- (1) And the Bible-believing Christian must candidly account for them.
(2) And we must deal with them, and seek to explain them:
- (a) Forthrightly,
(b) Honestly,
(c) Fully and frankly, and
(d) Sensibly.
2. Now it is clearly evident that the Holy Spirit *could* have *prevented* these errors from appearing in print in the first place:
- a. He *could* have informed each of the respective prophetic writers, in advance of the publication of his/her work, to "clean up your act"—get these mistakes, these human imperfections, out—so that *everything* connected with Me and My work is absolutely perfect. He could have done this.
- b. But it is equally clear that *He did not*.
- c. And the inescapably obvious reason must be: He didn't, because the error/discrepancy/mistake was so small, so minor, as to be inconsequentially meaningless.
- (1) We will now proceed to examine four categories of these errors/discrepancies/mistakes to be found in the Bible:

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A. Scripture

1. Historical Uncertainties:

- a. David's toll in warfare slaughter:
 - (1) Was it 40,000 *horsemen*? (2 Sam. 10:18).
 - (2) Or was it 40,000 *footmen*? (1 Chron. 19:18).
- b. Performing the healing of blind Bartimaeus by Jesus at Jericho:
 - (1) Was it done *as Christ approached* the city? (Luke 18:35).
 - (2) Or was it done *as He left* the city? (Mark 10:46).
 - (a) *Or was it two* blind men, as He departed? (Matt. 20:29, 30).
- c. Moses' lineal relationship to Hobab:
 - (1) Was Hobab Moses' *brother-in-law*? (Num. 10:29).
 - (2) Or was he Moses' *father-in-law*? (Judges 4:11).
 - (a) Note: the Hebrew word here employed may refer to "an 'in-law' of any sort" (IBC 856).
- d. The cock-crowing at Peter's denial during Christ's trial:
 - (1) Was it *once*? (Matt. 16:34, 69-75).
 - (2) Or was it *twice*? (Mark 14:66-72).
- e. The exact wording of Pilate's signboard on the cross at Calvary: Did it read--
 - (1) Was it: "The King of the Jews"? (Mark 15:26).
 - (2) Or: "This is the King of the Jews"? (Luke 23:387).
 - (3) Or: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews"? (Matt. 27:37).
 - (4) Or: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews?" (John 19:19).
- f. The point-in-time of Herodias' instruction to Salome:
 - (1) Was it *after* Herod made his amazing offer? (Mark 6:24).
 - (2) Or was it *before* he made the offer? (Matt. 14:8).
- g. The disciples' words spoken to Christ during the storm, en route to Gergesa:
 - (1) Did they say: "Lord, save us; we perish"? (Matt. 8:25).
 - (2) Or: "Master, carest Thou not that we perish"? (Mark 4:38).
 - (3) Or: "Master, Master, we perish"? (Luke 8:24).
- h. The words spoken by the Father at Christ's baptism:
 - (1) Did He say: "This is My beloved Son"? (Matt. 3:17--addressing the crowd, 3rd person singular).
 - (2) Or: "Thou art My beloved Son?" (Mark 1:11--addressing Jesus Himself, 2nd person singular?).
--and many more similar examples could easily be cited.

2. Numerical/Chronological Uncertainties:

- a. The number of deaths at Baal-Peor/Shittim:
 - (1) Did 24,000 die? (Num. 25:9).
 - (2) Or was it 23,000? (1 Cor. 10:8).
- b. How many stalls were prepared for Solomon's horses?
 - (1) Was it 40,000? (1 Kings 4:26).
 - (2) Or was it only 4,000? (2 Chron. 9:25).

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- c. How old as Jehoachin when he began to reign as king:
 - (1) Was he 18 years old? (2 Kings 24:8).
 - (2) Or was he 8 years old? (2 Chron. 36:9).
- d. How old was Ahaziah when he came to the throne:
 - (1) Was he 22 years of age? (2 Kings 8:26).
 - (2) Or was he 42 years of age? (2 Chron. 22:2).
- e. What was David's chronological position in the list of Jesse's sons:
 - (1) Was he Jesse's 8th son? (1 Sam. 16:10, 11).
 - (2) Or was he Jesse's 7th son? (1 Chron. 2:15).
- f. For how long did the Old Testament Judges rule:
 - (1) Was it for 450 years? (Acts 13:20).
 - (2) Or was it for 350 years? (1 Kings 6:1).
- g. The number in Jacob's family who went down into Egypt:
 - (1) Was it 70, as Moses reported? (Gen. 46:27).
 - (2) Or was it 75, as Stephen--"full of the Holy Ghost"--reported? (Acts 6:3; 7:14).
- h. How many demoniacs confronted Christ at Gergesa?
 - (1) Was it *one* man? (Mark 5:2,3; Luke 8:27, 28).
 - (2) Or was it *two* men? (Matt. 8:25).
- i. For how many years did Israel sojourn in Egypt?
 - (1) Was it for 430 years--with them coming out upon the "self-same day"? (Ex. 12:40, 41).
 - (2) Or was it only 400 years? (Acts 7:6).--and many more similar examples could easily be cited.

3. Inaccurate Citations by New Testament Writers:

- a. Who wrote the Messianic prophecy about Christ being sold for 30 pieces of silver?
 - (1) Was it *Jeremiah* (Matt. 27:9).
 - (2) Or was it *Zechariah*? (Zech. 11:13).
- b. Concerning the ratification of the First Covenant, who was correct:
 - (1) *Paul*, who said Moses took the blood of *calves and goats*, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled the *book* and the people? (Heb. 9:19).
 - (2) Or *Moses*, who said he sacrificed *oxen*, and sprinkled the *altar* and the people? (Ex. 24:3-8).

4. The Use of Scripture Out of Context:

- a. Who was called out of Egypt?
 - (1) Hosea reports that God called His son, *Israel*, out of Egypt (1:11).
 - (2) But Matthew says that Hosea prophesied that the child *Jesus* would be called out of Egypt (2:15).
- b. What was the sign promised to Ahaz:
 - (1) That a "*young woman*" would conceive? (Isa. 7:14).
 - (2) Or that a "*virgin*"-- Mary--would conceive? (Matt. 1:23).

B. Ellen G. White

1. Inaccurate Descriptions of Biblical Events:

- a. The tower of Babel:
 - (1) 3SG places it *before* the Flood.
- b. John the Baptist:
 - (1) 2SP 183, 184 says he was *dead* when the events of Matt. 4:18-22 occurred.
 - (2) DA 245 says, rather, that he was "*languishing alone in the dungeon*" at this time.
- c. The number of Chedorlaomer's allies:
 - (1) PP 134 reports he had *four* allies.
 - (2) Gen. 14:1, 9 states he had only *three*.
- d. The Roman nails at Calvary:
 - (1) 1SG 58 speaks of "the crashing of the nails . . . through the *bone and muscle*" of His hands and feet.
 - (2) But DA 744 (in harmony with John 19:36) reports of the nails being driven only through His *flesh*.
- e. The trees in the Garden of Eden:
 - (1) In RH, Aug. 18, 1874 the "tree of *life*" is mentioned.
 - (2) The immediate context, however, indicates that the references should have been to the "tree of *knowledge*."

2. Numerical/Chronological Discrepancies:

- a. The duration of Solomon's temple:
 - (1) PK 149 says it stood for *more than four centuries* (in agreement with Ussher's chronology).
 - (2) But archaeology has since proven that it lasted *only 384 years* (870-586 BC).
- b. The date of William Miller's two lecture tours at Portland, ME:
 - (1) 2SG 12, 14, reports that they took place in 1839 and 1841.
 - (2) 1T 14, 21, adjusts the dates to 1840 and 1842.
 - (a) In the Preface of her first autobiographical account, EGW reports that she had had to work largely from memory in reporting subsequent events, as she had not kept a journal during earlier years (p. iii).
 - (b) In a postscript to the first printed edition she made a "special request" of her readers, that if "any find incorrect statements in this book, they will immediately inform me," in order that later editions might be corrected (p. 295). (Apparently some one did just that, for the dates were adjusted in the later account in 1T.)
- c. The number of texts on the card held up the angel:
 - (1) "A card was held up before me, on which were written in letters of gold the chapter and verse of fifty texts of Scripture" (EW 22, 23).

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- (a) A footnote indicates that "these texts are given at the close of this article."
- (b) On pages 24-31 the texts, not otherwise enumerated, are printed; but actually only 41 passages appear (with a grand total of 120 verses of Scripture). But where are the other nine?
- (2) Four possible solutions to this mystery are identified in: *The Strange Case of the Missing Texts*, in **Appendix C**.
- d. Wrong date on a document:
 - (1) When EGW joined her husband at Wallings Mills, Colorado, she dated the event as "Monday, August 8, 1878" (LS 235; 4T 297).
 - (2) But Monday of that week fell, instead, upon August 5th.
- e. Number of rooms in the Paradise Valley Sanitarium:
 - (1) In a letter written to a denominational worker, EGW made incidental reference to the 40 rooms in the Paradise Valley Sanitarium.
 - (2) Elder E. S. Ballenger, in writing to Mrs. White in 1909, stated that there were only 38 rooms in this institution--and this error had caused him to lose confidence in her prophetic gift!
 - (a) EGW replied to him that God had not revealed to her "the exact number of rooms in any of our sanitariums," and that she was relying for her information upon the report of another (who, in any event, may, for convenience's sake, have simply employed a round number). (ISM 38).

3. Application of Scripture Out of Context:

- a. In 1 Thess. 1:9 Paul speaks of Christ coming "after the working of Satan."
 - (1) In PP 686 EGW uses the word "after" in a temporal sense, which, clearly, was not Paul's intent.
 - (2) But in 8T 226 she cites the text in harmony with Paul's obvious intent.

4. Erroneous Attribution of Cited Works:

- a. In 2 Cor. 5:14 the apostle declares that "the love of Christ constraineth us."
 - (1) In RH, Oct. 30, 1913, EGW incorrectly attributes this statement to Peter.
 - (2) But Paul--not Peter--was the author of 2 Corinthians.

5. Grammatical Imperfections:

- a. On Jan. 10 and 11, 1873, EGW lamented in her diary: "I am not a scholar. I cannot prepare by own writings for the press. . . . I am not a grammarian" (3SM 90).
- b. By way of explanation concerning the limitations placed upon EGW's literary helpers, EGW's son, William C. White, wrote to then-General Conference President G. A. Irwin, on May 7, 1990: "Mother's copyists are entrusted with the work of correcting grammatical errors, of eliminating unnecessary repetitions, and of grouping paragraphs and sections in their best order." (Cited in Robert W. Olson, *One Hundred and One Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White* [White Estate, March, 1981], p.88.)

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6. Historical Discrepancies (in the 1888 and 1911 editions of *Great Controversy*)

a. Characterization concerning the Pope:

(1) In the 1888 edition, EGW wrote that the Pope "styles himself" as Lord God the Pope."

(2) In 1911, after discovering there was a question as to the source of the statement, she adjusted it to read: "He has been styled "Lord God the Pope. . . ." (GC 50),

b. The Waldensees: were they first to have a translation of the Scriptures?

(1) Again, in 1888, EGW wrote that the Waldensees were the first of all of the people of Europe to obtain a translation of the Holy Scriptures.

(2) After learning that at least one other group had had the Scriptures prior to the Waldenses, she revised the reference in the 1911 edition to read: "The Waldensees were among the first of the peoples of Europe to obtain a translation of the Holy Scriptures" (GC 65).

c. The signal to begin the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day (Aug. 24, 1571):

(1) In the 1888 edition, the ringing of the palace bell was reported to be the signal to begin this slaughter.

(2) Upon subsequently learning that historians were divided on the fine point as to whether it was the palace bell, the bell of the Church of St. Germain, or yet the bell in the Palace of Justice, the 1911 edition was revised to read simply: "A bell, tolling at dead of night, was a signal for the slaughter" (GC 272; for background, see Arthur L. White, *Inspiration and the Ellen G. White Writings*, p. 24).

7. Other Mistakes:

a. Sending a Wrong Document: In 1906 a colporteur named Walter Harper wrote to EGW to ask for a copy of a testimony that had originally been directed to another member.

(1) In responding to the request, Mrs. White, unfortunately and inadvertently sent the colporteur a different--and highly sensitive, confidential--testimony, which had not previously been made public.

(2) In considerable embarrassment, upon discovering her mistake, EGW wrote to Harper, requesting him to return this document immediately, and to make neither a copy of it, nor yet share it with anyone else (Letter 353, 1906).

b. A Misprint in a Periodical Article: In "Words to Students. Health," EGW wrote: "A meat diet is not the most wholesome of diets, and yet I would take the position that meat should not be discarded by every one" (*Youth's Instructor*, May 31, 1894, p. 174).

(1) Her attention was drawn to the statement which, as printed, reflected the exact opposite position of the prophet (it *should* have read: "Yet I would not take the position . . ."), and in a letter to Elder Asa Oscar Tait she explained:

- (a) "Sr. Davis [one of her principal literary assistants] has called my attention to [this] . . . article. . . {And} the question is asked: Did I design to have this sentence [read] just as it appears in the *Instructor*? I am surprised to see it just as it appears. . . . I cannot explain why this appears just as it does. [For since the Brighton camp meeting "I have absolutely banished meat from my table".] (Letter 76, 1895, p. 7.)

V. The Category of Major Matters of Substance

1. More disturbing to many Christians, however, is the fact that there are not only small errors/discrepancies/mistakes of minor consequence to be found in the inspired Scriptures--as, also, in the writings of EGW--but evidence also exists of errors involving major matters of substance.
 - a. Let us now examine some of them:

A. Scripture

1. In two different Old Testament books (2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17), a story is told concerning King David and Nathan, one of his literary (but non-canonical) prophets:
 - a. David calls Nathan to the palace to tell him of the king's intention to replace the worn, tattered, portable tabernacle with a permanent structure that will be beautiful beyond any other edifice in the world--truly worthy of Jehovah.
 - b. When Nathan learns that the king is proposing to fund the entire project out of the royal treasury (and, thus, perhaps, spare the prophet from a building fund-raising campaign!), he is perhaps both relieved and delighted.
 - (1) But, more to the point, the prophet unwittingly gives the monarch's project his personal (and, by implication, prophetic) blessing (without first bothering to check with God, to see if it has *His* blessing!).
 - c. But, as it turns out, David's plan is contrary to the Lord's will; and the issue--this time--is not simply a minor one:
 - (1) It is a major "goof" on the part of the prophet.
 - (2) And the Lord comes to Nathan, after he returns home, with a message of rebuke for the prophet's presumption in responding without first "touching base" with heaven, to first ascertain the Divine mind..
 - d. And Nathan is instructed to return to the king--as embarrassing and humiliating, personally, as this will be--and bring the monarch a different message:
 - (1) God is pleased with the large-hearted generosity of the king in proposing such a grand and lavish project.
 - (2) And, yes, there does need to be a permanent Temple, to replace the tattered Tabernacle.

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- (3) But David is not to be the builder--he has been a man of war, a man of bloodshed.
 - (a) Instead, David's son, Solomon, will be the builder--it will be "Solomon's Temple," not "David's Temple."
 - (4) David, however, may undertake the financing, arrange for the preparation of architectural plans, and gather together the building materials.
 - (a) But Solomon is to be the builder.
2. This narrative, and the "Strait-Jacket" theory of "more-sureness" cannot be harmonized in any way.
- a. Only the "Intervention" theory can account adequately for what happened in this incident.
 - b. The prophet made a mistake--a serious mistake, which God could not overlook.
 - (1) It was a major error which affected:
 - (a) The direction of God church, or
 - (b) The eternal destiny of a soul, or
 - (c) The purity of a doctrine.
 - (2) And God moved in:
 - (a) Immediately,
 - (b) Through the same prophet who had made the error,
 - (c) To correct the error,
 - (d) So that no *permanent* damage would be done.
 - c. God did *not prevent* in advance the prophet's error (through "Strait-Jacket" control)--though He certainly could have done so, through any one of several different expedients.
3. God does intervene, not to prevent the prophet's problem, but, rather, to prevent *permanent* damage to His church.

B. Ellen G. White

1. The number of major mistakes/errors/discrepancies made by the Biblical prophets, requiring "intervention" by God, is comparatively few.
 - a. Just so, the number of instances in the ministry of EGW was quite limited.
2. But there *were* a few times when she erred--and the nature of that error was sufficiently significant as to require God to step in--instances where the prophet had to "go back and change something:"
 - a. **The Time to Begin the Sabbath (1846-55):**
 - (1) In 1855, the church was called to decide at what hour the observance of the Sabbath should properly begin, since four contemporary positions were then circulating throughout the church:
 - (a) Legal time: 12:01 a.m. Saturday morning.
 - (b) Sunset Friday evening.
 - (c) "Equatorial Time" (6 p.m. Friday evening).

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- (d) Sunrise Saturday morning (based upon a misunderstanding of Matt. 28:1).
- (2) In an attempt to resolve the problem once and for all, the church appointed J. N. Andrews to prepare a scholarly paper, deciding the question from Scripture alone.
 - (a) At a general meeting in Battle Creek in November, 1855, he read his paper, in which he conclusively demonstrated (on the basis of 9 OT and 2 NT texts) that the Sabbath begins at sunset Friday evening.
- (3) Those present, now fully in agreement, were ready to accept this position; but Joseph Bates refused, holding out, instead, for "equatorial time."
 - (a) Bates was a co-founder of the SDA Church, and his credibility was understandably high.
 - (b) And some wavered, in the face of his opposition.
- (4) More serious--and more to the point--however, was the surprising opposition of EGW, who sided with Bates--seemingly in the face of Scriptural evidence to the contrary!
 - (a) And the meeting broke up in confusion, without any resolution of the problem being made by those in attendance.
- (5) After the closing session, a number of ministers and others interested laymen met for a special season of prayer, at which time EGW was taken off in vision, and told that she--and Bates--had taken the wrong position.
 - (a) Both quickly corrected their views; harmony and unity prevailed; and the church was saved from potential catastrophe (RH, Feb. 25, 1868, p. 168; see also *The Time to Begin the Sabbath: Ellen White Changes Her Mind*, in Appendix D.)

b. The Proposed Closing of the Southern Publishing Association (1901, 1902):

- (1) The Southern Publishing Association was established by the church at the urging of J. Edson White, son of the prophet, at her insistent urging.
- (2) For several years it annually continued to lose enormous sums of money.
 - (a) Efforts at financial reform were attempted, but all proved fruitless in the end.
- (3) A committee met at Elmshaven, with the prophet, in an effort to resolve the problem once and for all.
 - (a) EGW was not only disappointed at the financial hemorrhage, but also obviously embarrassed because of:
 - (1) Her personal family connection with Edson.
 - (2) Her general counsel to "shun debt like leprosy."
 - (b) Assured that the brethren had already taken all possible steps to correct the situation, she finally, reluctantly, agreed that the publishing house should be closed.

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(4) That night, after the brethren had taken the train back to Battle Creek, to implement the decision, EGW was told by the Lord in a remarkable dream that she had given wrong counsel.

(a) She arose early, and wrote a letter to leadership at General Conference headquarters, correcting her mistake.

(i) Thus the church was spared unnecessary loss at a critical time in its history and development. (For background, see: *The Closing of the Southern Publishing Association: Ellen White Changes Her Mind*, in **Appendix E.**)

c. **Sending out Testimony #11 Too Soon: "In this I did wrong"--1T 563).**

d. See: **Giving [Unspecified] Counsel, as Rebuked by the Lord**, in **Appendix F.**

Conclusion

1. The "Strait-Jacket" theory, that the prophet's word is "more-sure" in that the control of the Holy Spirit over the prophet is so stringent as to preclude even the possibility of his/her making an error, simply cannot be sustained in the face of the evidence in the Bible and denominational history.
 - a. Only the "Intervention" theory adequately explains all of the Biblical and historical evidence.

2. In EGW's day the question was raised: "Do SDAs regard Ellen G. White as infallible?"
 - a. W. H. Littlejohn, president of Battle Creek College, responded in 1883:
 - (1) "No. Neither do they believe that Peter or Paul was infallible. They believe that the Holy Spirit which inspired Peter and Paul was infallible. They believe also that Mrs. White has from time to time received revelations from the Spirit of God, and that revelations made to her by the Spirit of God are just as reliable as revelations made by the same Spirit to other persons" (RH, Dec. 11, 1883).

 - b. The revelations to the prophet ("this treasure") came directly from an infallible God, who permitted imperfect human language ("earthen vessel") to be used as the medium of that communication--with all the attendant potential risks that this might entail!

3. SDAs continue today to hold that EGW was--and still is:
 - a. Reliable,
 - b. Trustworthy.
 - c. Authoritative, possessing all of the same prophetic authority invested in every other prophet of earlier times.
 - d. Inspired--in the same manner, and to the same degree--as were the prophets who wrote the Bible:
 - (1) Yet we do not make of her writings
 - (a) Another Bible, nor yet
 - (b) An extension/addition to the sacred canon of Scripture.

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(i) These issues will be the subject of our next lecture on "The Proper Relationship Between the Writings of Ellen G. White and the Scriptures."

5. Speaking of herself, EGW wrote:

- a. "We have many lessons to learn, and many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible" (RH, July 26, 1892, in 1SM 37).
- b. "In regard to infallibility, I never claimed it; God alone is infallible. His word is true, and in Him is no variableness, or shadow of turning" (Letter 10, 1895, in 1SM 37).
- c. "Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed" (RH, July 26, 1892, in CW 36, 37).

6. Truly, as Peter declared, "We have a more sure word of prophecy."

- a. But let us be exceedingly careful in determining just the exact point at which that "more-sureness" resides.
 - (1) The "Strait-Jacket" theory is an insufficient guide, creating far more problems than it ever is able to resolve.
 - (2) Pragmatically, the "Intervention" theory is the only one which adequately meets the data of Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy,

Notes:

1. This presentation is based on a three-part Continuing Education Course for SDA Teachers: "Inspiration/Revelation: What It Is and How It Works," Part II of which deals with "Infallibility: Does the True Prophet Ever Err?" It was published in the *Journal of Adventist Education* (Vol. 44, No. 2), December, 1981-January, 1982.

2. The course instructor wishes to express a particular debt, in the preparation of this outline, for insights and examples discovered in the writings of Robert W. Olson and Raymond F. Cottrell

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Appendix A

Examples of "Strait-Jacket" Thinking in Regard to the Nature of Prophetic Safeguards

Peter says that the word of the prophet is "more-sure" than the word of the non-prophet. One school of thought, in seeking to determine the exact nature of this "more-sureness" has suggested that the control of the prophet is like a constricting strait-jacket. The analogy teaches that the control of the Holy Spirit over the prophet is so total, the prophet could not make a mistake (even if he wanted to!). This view emphasizes the of prevention of error.

Examples of "strait-jacket" thinking:

1. A very prominent SDA evangelist, in a sermon dealing with Ellen White and her remarkable gift of prophetic inspiration, put it this way, in dealing with the "more-sureness" of the prophet (as compared with ordinary fortune-tellers who attempt to foretell the future):

"And by the way, Ellen White's predictions up to this very moment have been right every time. The psychics like to talk about their batting average. And they are proud if they are right seventy-five or eighty percent of the time.

"Listen! A prophet with a batting average? Never! A prophet of God is right one hundred percent of the time, or he isn't right at all!

"And another thing: a prophet of God doesn't change his mind!

"I think you are beginning to see the difference between a prophet-- a true prophet--and a psychic."

(From "She Never Owned a Crystal Ball," p. 6)

The evangelist then proceeded to make direct reference to Rene Noorbergen's book, Ellen G. White: Prophet of Destiny, which also promulgates this "strait-jacket" theory (and may have been the source of the evangelist's ideas in the first place!

The evangelist made three principal points:

- a. EGW was right in her predictions every time, right up to the present. (Psychics are happy with a batting average in the 80's; but EGW was right 100% of the time--and this is the test of a true prophet).
- b. If a prophet of God is not right 100% of the time, he isn't right any of the time. (Noorbergen speaks of a PAQ = "Prophetic Accuracy Quotient" as a convenient yardstick of measurement. p. 10)
- c. A prophet of God never changes his mind--never has to go back later and correct anything.

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2. Noorbergen's book came out in 1972 and contained this thought:

" . . . a true prophet is not a psychic who performs with the aid of a mental or 'spiritual' crutch, but is someone who has no degree of freedom either in tuning in or controlling the prophetic impulses or prophetic recall. These impulses are superimposed over the prophet's conscious mind by a supernatural personal being, having absolute knowledge of both past and future, making no allowance for error or human miscalculation." (Ellen G. White: Prophet of Destiny, p. 21; emphasis supplied).

3. In the SDA youth devotional book for the year 1982, the selection for January 11th reads as follows:

"If a true prophet does make predictions, all these prophecies must come true." (Light For My Life, 1981)

Appendix B

The "Food For Worms" Vision of 1856

A gathering of SDAs was held in Battle Creek in the Spring of 1856. This "Conference" was widely advertised, and was attended by believers from many states and Canada. It opened Friday afternoon, May 23, and closed Monday, May 26. Because of the large attendance, the small local church could not accommodate the numbers, and on Sabbath they met across the street in a tent pitched for this purpose.

On Tuesday, May 27, even though the "Conference" was officially concluded, a post-session was held, attended largely by denominational workers who had not yet returned to their posts of duty. At this meeting EGW was present, and taken into vision. And she was given a view of a number of those who had attended the main meeting (not those surrounding her on this Tuesday gathering).

"I was shown the company present at the Conference. Said the angel, 'Some food for worms, some subjects of the seven last plagues, some will be alive and remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Jesus.' Solemn words were these, spoken by the angel' (1T 131, 132; see the larger selection 1T 127-37 for the background).

Various SDA members and workers prepared lists attempting to identify all who were present at this meeting, and thus viewed by EGW--and the angel. Over the years, as one after another would die, his or her name would be checked off.

John N. Loughborough, a leading minister (and first real historian of the Advent movement) was not present at the meeting in Battle Creek, but obtained one of the lists of attendees. Writing from Sanitarium, CA on August 28, 1918 (some three years after Mrs. White's death) his list (in two columns) showed 63 as then deceased, and only 27 yet remaining alive.

He also mentions that "Sister White disapproved" of the keeping of such lists, and adds this interesting insight:

"About 1904, as told to me by Brother Nelson, at the General Conference in 1905, he and Geo. Amadon were making a list of those who attended that meeting in Battle Creek in 1856. They went to see Sister White to ask her if she could remember any names they had omitted. Brother Nelson told me, 'She said, "What are you doing?" I replied "I'm getting a list of those who attended that meeting." She asked me, "What are you going to do with it?" I replied, "I am going to have copies of it printed and sent to all our people." She replied, "Then you stop right where you are. If they get that list, instead of working to push on the Message, they will be watching the Review every week to see who is dead.'

"So it seems she objected to using, as a Sign of the Times, the fact that but few of that company are still alive.

"Most of those living are Sabbath Keepers. Some are not."

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The last-known survivor of this meeting was Elder W.C. White, son of the prophet who made the prediction, and a babe in her arms on the day it was made. Born Aug. 29, 1854, he was but one year and nine months old at the time. He died in 1937 at the age of 83. Thus, all who attended the fateful Conference became "food for worms"!

Sources:

1T 127-37.

J.N. Loughborough letter of August 28, 1918 from Sanitarium, CA.

EGW Estate Document File DF 74

Francis D. Nichol, Ellen G. White and Her Critics, Chapter 8, pp. 102-11
White Estate Shelf Document: "The Question of The Vision of 1856," March, 1962, 4 pp.

Appendix C

The Strange Case of the Missing Texts

In Early Writings, first published in 1882, Ellen White tells of an experience early in her ministry (prior to 1846). "I was sometimes tempted to doubt [the divine origin of] my own experience." On one such occasion, during family devotions one morning, she began to feel the power of God at the onset of a vision. In her mind she thought it might be mesmerism (hypnotism), and she resisted it. She was immediately struck dumb and momentarily lost consciousness of her immediate surroundings. God revealed that her resistance was sinful, and as a warning she would remain dumb for a period of less than 24 hours.

During this momentary vision, "A card was held up before me, on which were written in letters of gold the chapter and verse of fifty texts of Scripture." On coming out of vision she beckoned for a slate, and wrote that she was dumb, explained about the texts, and asked for a Bible. She immediately turned to all of the 50 texts identified on this card in vision (EW 22-23).

At the conclusion of this chapter, beginning on p. 24, the text and references of these Biblical passages are printed in full and continue to the bottom of p. 31.

One enterprising reader of the book counted and discovered that only 41 texts and references are published in these pages. He noted that nine appeared to be missing, and he wanted to know why. He observed that the 41st and last passage completely used up the remaining space on page 31, and wondered if perhaps the typesetter at the Review & Herald publishing house had decided that this was enough space to devote to this exercise, for the next chapter begins at the very top of page 32. Was he the culprit? The reader plaintively beseeched the White Estate for an explanation of the missing nine texts.

Possible Explanations

1. An identical account of this incident is published in an EGW compilation, The Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White (Pacific Press, 1922) on pp. 77, 78. Here the Scriptural passages are not printed in full, but only the source reference appears in a box captioned "The Fifty Texts." (And there are 50!)

A quick comparison of this listing with those printed in full in EW reveals that in EW some adjacent verse references appear as only one text, whereas in CET they are divided into two--or even three--separate groupings. For example:

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<u>EW</u>		<u>CET</u>
Acts 4:29-31	appears as:	Acts 4:29, 30 Acts 4:31
Matt. 7:6-12, 15	=	Matt. 7:6 Matt. 7:7-12 Matt. 7:15
Col. 2:6-8	=	Col. 2:6, 7 Col. 2:8
Heb. 10:35-39	=	Heb. 10:35-37 Heb. 10:38, 39
Heb. 4:10-12	=	Heb. 4:10, 11 Heb. 4:12
Phil. 1:6, 27-29	=	Phil. 1:6 Phil. 1:27-29
Eph. 6:10-18	=	Eph. 6:10-13 Eph. 6:14-18
1 Cor. 3:10-13	=	1 Cor. 3:10, 11 1 Cor. 3:12, 13

Therefore, it has been suggested, the only problem is how the texts are grouped together. There really were 50 texts; the problem lies at the point where the publishing house editor, in one instance, decided to make all adjacent references as one single entry!

2. She indeed saw a card with 50 texts, as she testified; but when we came to writing them down in a manuscript for publication, she forgot nine.
3. She indeed wrote down all 50 texts in her manuscript, but the editor at the publishing house at the Review & Herald decided that after eight pages of merely citing text reference and passage, it was enough, and that the 41 could be representational of the entire 50 and not a chronological listing of all 50.
4. She didn't see 50 texts; later in writing it down she merely used the numeral 50 as a round number, as an approximation. Or, perhaps instead, she used 50 as hyperbole (exaggeration to make a point). This is what John did in the very last verse of his Gospel (21:25) when he spoke of the events connected with the life of Christ: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." (Amos 7:10 may be another example of hyperbole.)

In focusing on the specifics of a particular numeral, one may be in danger of forgetting the central point of the story (which is not how many texts were on the card): the important thing is that while God rebuked his young prophet for resisting the presence of the Holy Spirit, He did indicate she was forgiven this sin and gave her Scriptural passages for her encouragement.

Appendix D

The Time to Begin the Sabbath: Ellen White Changes Her Mind

James and Ellen White first learned of the Sabbath truth from former sea captain Joseph Bates early in 1846. Her first impression was that Bates was off-base in his emphasis on keeping the seventh-day for the Sabbath (both JW and EGW were Sunday-keepers at the time of the Disappointment on Oct. 23, 1844) (LS 95).

(Incidentally, when Bates first learned of EGW's prophetic gift, he was negatively disposed toward it; interestingly, both would change their minds concerning the other's position!)

However, JW and EGW studied Bates' tract "The Seventh-day Sabbath, a Perpetual Sign" (48 pp.) which used only evidence from Scripture as proof of his position. (The tract was published in Aug., 1846). They were convinced by Scripture alone of the correctness of his position, and accepted it in the autumn of that year, seven months before she had her first vision which indicated supernaturally that the seventh-day Sabbath was the right day to keep (Letter 2, 1874). (That vision did not come until April 3, 1847, when she was--for the first time--taken into the heavenly sanctuary above, shown the ark of the covenant, shown the original 10 Commandments inside, and saw a special halo of light encircling the 4th Commandment.)

The group of Adventists coalescing around the leadership of the two Whites and Bates, who in 1860 would take the denominational name "Seventh-day Adventist," generally accepted the seventh-day Sabbath; but the big issue was a question of time: when does the Sabbath begin. There were, at first, four views on this:

1. Legal time: Many held that the Sabbath began at 12:01 a.m. Friday night.
2. Sunset: Perhaps more held that the Sabbath began at the setting of the sun on Friday night--the position of the Seventh-Day Baptists, from whom Bates first learned this truth (in the person of Rachel Oakes-Preston, of Washington, NH).
3. Six o'Clock--Equatorial Time: Bates, a former sea captain, felt that what he called "equatorial time" was the correct basis for calculating the beginning of the Sabbath. On the equator the sun rises at 6 a.m. each day and sets at 6 p.m. each day. (EGW favored this view, initially.)
4. Sunrise, Saturday Morning: One small group favored this position, on a mistaken interpretation of Matt. 28:1, which points out that the women came to the tomb of Christ on Easter Sunday "in the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week." And they reasoned, with a certain logic, that if the Sabbath "ended" at dawn on Sunday, it surely must begin at dawn on Saturday! This view was quickly put down, on the basis of Lev. 23:32 ("From even unto even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath").

The early Adventists decided that since all of their doctrines were based upon the Bible, that this should be settled by detailed Bible study; and in the summer of 1855 they appointed a young minister (familiar with both Hebrew and Greek) to make an intensive study and report back his results. Thus began the research that ultimately would find permanent form in J. N. Andrews' book on the history of the Sabbath.

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At a general conference meeting in November, 1855, Andrews read his paper. And on the basis of nine OT texts and two NT texts, he concluded (rightly) that the Sabbath should begin at sunset. Most present accepted this conclusion, but not either Bates or EGW. This threw the meeting into consternation--after all, these were two of the three human founders of their new church!

However, at the close of the meetings a number of ministers and other interested laymen met for a special season of prayer, and in that meeting Mrs. White was taken off in vision and shown that she (and Bates) had taken a wrong position. She quickly corrected herself (Bates also promptly changed his view), and then there was harmony and unity (RH, Feb. 25, 1868, p. 168, col. 2).

Source: Messenger to the Remnant, pp. 34-36.

Appendix E

The Closing of the Southern Publishing Association: Ellen White Changes Her Mind

1. In 1901 EGW, recently returned from nine years in the South Pacific, left her new home at Elmshaven in St. Helena, CA, to attend the 1901 GC Session at Battle Creek--her first in a decade. She traveled there by a circuitous route, going through the Southern states so she could visit her son Edson in Nashville, TN, whom she had not seen since before going to Australia.
 - a. On April 2, 1901 (the day the GC Session opened), she wrote "An Appeal for the Southern Field."
 - b. She spoke of the need for schools and sanitariums in the South.
 - c. Then, she spoke of a need there for a well-equipped printing press, so that books might there be published (with a southern address, which might dilute continuing Southern antagonism and hostility to the Yankee-North!) for use by workers in the South.
 - (1) "I have been instructed that publication of books suitable for use in the field is essential."
 - (2) Action was urged without delay.
 - (3) She commented on her visit to Edson's small, privately-held printing press in rented quarters in Nashville.
 - (4) Then she urged the necessity of a larger building (with newer and better equipment--Edson's was old, second-hand, virtually rescued from a junk dealer)--and urged our members to provide a suitable church-owned publishing house for the Southern field.
 - d. At the GC Session of 1901, and after, this was one of the principal burdens of her public and private labors.
2. This counsel to establish/equip a publishing house in the South was one of the first issues faced by newly-elected GC President A.G. Daniells--and it caused him particular perplexity.
 - a. The church already owned two publishing houses--one in Battle Creek, and one in California.
 - b. And both were--to use his words--in a "state of marked depression"--there seemed little public demand for SDA literature at the time.
 - c. Only a few colporteurs were in the field, and they were experiencing only very average success.
 - d. In order to meet overhead costs both publishing houses were taking in commercial job work (banking jobs, catalogues, etc.)
3. A small place in Nashville had been bought by EGW's son, J. Edson White, in Nashville on behalf of the recently-created Southern Missionary Society (1900). (At first they utilized a barn/chicken house; in March, 1900, they moved into somewhat larger quarters in town in Nashville.)
 - a. The Lord was now calling for a larger publishing house--when the two already established houses were barely functioning on a half-time basis.
 - b. The committee at Battle Creek feared that to add a third house would only result in all three being driven deeper into doing commercial work.
 - c. But the EGW messages were so direct, positive, clear-cut, that AGD dubiously complied, and the Southern Publishing Assn. came into being.
 - d. They got a small building, bought broken-down 2nd-hand equipment, and feared the boiler might blow up at any time!

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4. Then EGW "dropped the other shoe"--and send leadership a message that the Lord was not pleased with our publishing houses taking in commercial work, and they should cease and desist forthwith:
 - a. They were told that only truth-filled literature should come from SDA presses.
 - b. But to comply would probably mean closing down half of the presses, and sacking half of the workers.
 - c. And some on the GC Committee felt that EGW's message to establish this third house, and then deny revenue from commercial work, was not an inspired message.
 - (1) At this time (1901) EGW was 73 years of age; and some suggested gently that it would not be surprising if senility was beginning to set in with the aging prophet.
5. At year-end AGD went to Nashville to attend the new publishing house's first annual meeting.
 - a. The balance sheet tendered showed a loss of \$12,000 (equal to the original capitalization by the church of the project itself!)
 - b. Leadership there assured him that prospects for the next year would be better--but in the 2nd year it lost another \$12,000 (equal to \$1,000 a month, an enormous sum in those days). For the first two years it was already \$24,000 in debt.
 - b. The third year of operation was about as bad (the SDA Encyclopedia states that the loss for the first three years equalled \$36,000).
 - c. Said Daniells: "For a long time I kept these three balance sheets on my desk as a souvenir of unsuccessful management, distressing experience, and our terrible feelings."
6. Understandably, the GC leadership at Battle Creek headquarters were alarmed.
 - a. They appointed an investigating, fact-finding committee to go to Nashville, study the situation on the spot, and return with solid recommendations for a future course of action. (AGD was a member of this committee, as GC President.)
 - b. It was obvious to all that something drastic needed to be done.
 - c. The committee recommended that the equipment be sold to a junk dealer, and the house be turned into a limited "publishing" house known as a book depository, where books from the other two houses might be stored prior to sale by Southern colporteurs. It would thus circulate, rather than technically publish. Perhaps they had misinterpreted the original EGW counsel that we should physically publish in Nashville.
 - d. After all, it was EGW herself who had given strict counsel that the church and its agencies should not go into heavy debt (shun it like "leprosy," she had repeatedly urged), to protect the laity who would have to pay it off.
7. Wisely, the GC officers felt EGW should be first contacted and approached on the matter before any definitive action were taken.
 - a. AGD travelled by train to Northern California, and met EGW and a small committee of representative church leaders in an outdoor meeting in the yard at Elmshaven under a large oak tree (which still stands) on Oct. 19, 1902:
 - (1) W. T. Knox: pres. Calif. Conf. 1897-1900; in 1901 president of the newly-organized Pacific Union Conf.; in 1909 he would be made GC Treasurer.
 - (2) W.C. White: son of EGW, her adviser, and generally respected leader.
 - (3) A. T. Jones: pres. of Calif. Conf. 1901-3; in 1903 he would join John Harvey Kellogg at BC San., against EGW's counsel.

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- (4) J. O. Corliss: pioneer worker in Australia, writer, preacher, religious liberty advocate--a minister in Calif. at this time.
 - (5) E. R. Palmer: educator, publishing administrator in Australia, and made GC Secretary at the Session of 1901.
 - (6) Clarence Crisler: one of EGW's secretary/stenographers; earlier he had been AGD's private secretary; in July, 1901, he had transferred to EGW's staff at Elmshaven.
- b. EGW was deeply grieved, distressed, perplexed by AGD's recital of the terrible losses the first three years of the new publishing house's existence:
 - (1) It had been created solely at her insistent demand.
 - (2) Her son was the chief leader there--and there was family embarrassment as well.
 - c. She agreed the institution must be put on a firm financial basis--and "If it cannot, it had better be closed."
 - d. As she had no counter proposal to offer, she agreed that it be turned into a mere book depository, as earlier proposed.
 - e. This solution brought great relief to the embattled GC leadership, for this vexing problem had baffled them for a long time.
 - f. As a precaution, AGD got from Crisler a transcript of EGW's oral remarks, to shore him up in case any opposition developed; he then got on a train and went back to Battle Creek, greatly relieved.
8. The GC Committee promptly met, and voted the change of status, with a sigh of relief.
- a. But a few days later AGD received a letter from EGW which stunned him.
 - b. She said she had spoken in the committee in accordance with her own best judgment in agreeing to the change of status for the Nashville house.
 - c. But the very night Daniells had left for Battle Creek she had received a message from the Lord that she had given wrong counsel: the printing house--and printing work--in Nashville should not be closed.
 - d. Instead, plans must now be laid to prevent further indebtedness.
 - e. They must move forward in faith--if they would follow the Lord's counsel, He would ultimately bring them success.
 - f. And in this letter (Letter 162, 1902) she spoke of a symbolic vision employing the metaphor of a surgeon preparing to amputate limbs from patients in his hospital:

"Last night I seemed to be in the operating room of a large hospital, to which people were being brought, and instruments were being prepared to cut off their limbs in a big hurry. One came in who seemed to have authority, and said to the physicians, 'Is it necessary to bring these people into this-room?' Looking pityingly at the sufferers, he said, 'Never amputate a limb until everything possible has been done to restore it.'

Examining the limbs which the physicians had been preparing to cut off, he said, 'They may be saved. The first work is to use every available means to restore these limbs. What a fearful mistake it would be to amputate a limb that could be saved by patient care! Your conclusions have been too hastily drawn. Put these patients in the best rooms in the hospital, and give them the very best of care and treatment. Use every means in your power to save them from going through life in a crippled condition, their usefulness damaged for life.'

"The sufferers were removed to a pleasant room, and faithful helpers cared for them under the speaker's direction; and not a limb had to be sacrificed."—*E. G. White Letter 162-1902.*

Source:

The Abiding Gift
of Prophecy

pp. 326, 327

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g. She interpreted the symbols: "Let the publishing field have its own home, and let it publish books. . . . There is need in the Southern field of a publishing house for the publication of truth for this time."

9. A few weeks later another letter was written to 'My Brethren in Positions of Responsibility' (Letter 208, 1902). In it she admitted she had acted--wrongly--on her own account, but was now correcting the position; and she closed with assurance that the Lord would bring blessing if His plan and counsel were followed:

"Light will shine upon the workers in Nashville. From this center light will shine forth in the ministry of the word, in the publication of books large and small. We have as yet merely touched the Southern field with the tips of our fingers. 'The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' The same voice that at the beginning said, 'Let there be light,' in these last days declares that a knowledge of God's word shall not be confined merely to a few places. . .

"During the night following our interview in my house and out on the lawn under the trees, October 19, 1902, in regard to the work in the Southern field, the Lord instructed me that I had taken a wrong position."—

E. G. White Letter 208-1902.

Source:

The Abiding Gift
of Prophecy

p. 327

10. The GC officials were truly disconcerted by this change and turn of development:
- Many were disappointed.
 - Some were perplexed that the written testimony contradicted earlier testimony--when was the prophet correct, then, or now? Prophets are supposed to be inspired of the Lord, and not make mistakes. (The prophetic word is, after all, "more sure"!)
 - Then they remembered the experience of Nathan and David, and Nathan's earlier wrong counsel, which he later had to correct on the basis of a subsequent vision (1 Chron. 17:1-4)
 - David accepted Nathan's amended counsel; and the GC Committee did so, too, rescinding their earlier action to change the Southern publishing house into a mere book depository.
11. The So. Publishing Assn. took new measures which proved effective:
- New personnel were brought in.
 - New economies were effected.
 - Each year the losses were further reduced, until there was no deficit at all, with the gains offsetting the earlier losses.
12. Finally, commercial work was discontinued at all three houses.
- The presses eventually ran overtime.
 - The annual Ingathering publication was given to the Southern Publishing Association, and was its principal money-making job.
(1) And with this publication it began to serve the world field.
13. Daniells expressed the conviction that that God had indeed sent a message to prevent their untimely narrowing of the work in a time of temporary disappointment.
- Messages from the Lord sometimes seemed difficult to understand.
 - The implementation sometimes called for superhuman effort.
 - Said AGD: "I number this experience as one among many that have confirmed my confidence in the divine leadership of God's people through the prophetic gift." Sources:
- A. G. Daniells, The Abiding Gift of Prophecy (1936), Chapter 29 (pp. 322-29).
Arthur L. White, The Early Elmshaven Years (1981), Chapter 14 (pp. 187-97).

Appendix F

Giving [Unspecified] Counsel, As Rebuked By the Lord

Source: Letter 17, January 14, 1903, to Judge Jesse Arthur, from Elmshaven.
Published as Manuscript Release #1016, in 13MR 120, 121.

I received your letter today, and, after reading it, wished very much that I could be with you and talk with you.

My nephew, Frank Belden, has written me several letters regarding matters in Battle Creek, but these letters I have not read, for his own sake and for the sake of those who, when I send the reproofs that God gives, are liable to be tempted to think and say, "Somebody has told her or written to her." I shall not read these letters of Frank Belden's now, and perhaps not at all. It is not best.

Notwithstanding all the evidence that men have had that the testimonies given me are of God, when their own plans are interrupted and hindered by these testimonies, they say, "Somebody has told her." The testimonies cannot help those whose faith is of this texture, and I am obliged to lose confidence in them as trustworthy men who will be true to themselves and to God.

I know that matters in Battle Creek are in a most precarious condition. For two months recently I suffered great distress of mind. For more than a month I was unable to sleep past twelve o'clock, except once or twice. At a council held at my house here, I spoke words which gave liberty for certain things to be done in a certain place. I was reprovved by the Lord. For three nights in succession scenes were presented before me in which I saw what the result would be of following the plans of men instead of the plans of God. A horror of great darkness came upon me. As soon as possible I wrote a letter saying that I had been wrong in sanctioning these plans, that God did not endorse them.

Hermeneutics – 1

EGW and Hermeneutics: It's Importance and Place-- An Introduction

(Part I of Four Parts)

Roger W. Coon

Introduction

1. All study of hermeneutics by SDA's is predicated upon two *a priori* basic assumptions which all Evangelical Christians hold to be historical fact:
 - a. God has spoken, through "His servants, the prophets" (2 Peter 1:21; Rev. 1:1; 19:10; 22:6; Jer. 1:4-10).
 - b. It is possible for men and women to understand this revelation sufficiently to enable the Christian to function, not merely adequately, but even effectively (Isa. 1:18; John 7:17).
2. This subject of hermeneutics is one of the two most important with which we shall deal in this course (the other: SDA eschatology); and we shall devote four class periods to its consideration.
 - a. Perhaps as many as 75-80% of pastoral problems dealing with EGW issues revolve around hermeneutical understandings.

A. Definitions

1. The late Dr. Charles E. Weniger, Dean of this Seminary (1948-59; and Dean of the AU School of Graduate Studies, 1959-61), whose Russ Harlan oil portrait hangs in this lecture hall (for whom it was named), was a man of many aphorisms:
 - a. One of his favorites: "All research begins with the dictionary."
2. Toward a working definition of the term "hermeneutics:"
 - a. *Webster*: "The study of the methodological principles of interpretation (as of the Bible" (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1974 ed.).
 - b. *Van Harvey*: "The inquiry concerned with the presuppositions and rules of interpretation of . . . a written text" (*A Handbook of Theological Terms* [Macmillan, 1964], p. 117).
 - c. *RWC*: "That branch of Biblical theology whose primary concern is the study and practice of the science and art of deriving meaning from the prophet's words."
3. The chief concern of hermeneutics:
 - a. "What does the prophet *mean* by what the prophet *says*?"
 - (1) The words, indeed, are significant and important.

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(2) But the ultimate concern focuses upon the *meaning/message* conveyed by those words.

b. This search for meaning is well-illustrated in the conversation between Humpty Dumpty and the Duchess, in Lewis Carroll's [pseud. of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, 1832-98] children's fable, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865):

(1) "'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in rather scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean--neither more nor less.'

"'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you *can* make words mean so many different things.'"

"'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master--that's all.'"

(2) "'Tut, tut, child,' said the Duchess. 'Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it.'"

c. Hermeneutics, ultimately, is concerned with:

(1) What words mean (and do *not* mean)!

(2) How to arrive at the moral (lesson) from the data.

B. Need For Illustrated in the Old Testament story of Ahimaaz (2 Samuel 15-18)

1. Background:

a. King David had been driven from Jerusalem by the usurper Absalom, his own son; the nation was in civil war, and people took sides.

b. David arranged with his commander, Joab, for messenger-runners to keep the king informed of developments, and the progress of the war.

c. When Absalom was killed, Ahimaaz wanted to "run" with the news, but Ahimaaz had a problem; and Joab, wisely, sent Cushai, another official messenger, instead.

2. Ahimaaz had a lot going for him; please note what his problem was *not*:

a. It was *not* that he was not religious: his father, Zadok, was both High Priest and a prophet (2 Sam. 15:27; *SDA Bible Dictionary* [1979]: 25).

b. It was *not* that he was unqualified to run: David himself had designated Ahimaaz as one of two official runners (15:36).

c. It was *not* that he was unwilling to fulfill his commission: he repeatedly volunteered, even after another had been appointed (18:19, 22, 23).

d. It was *not* that he was not in earnest: he ran, when he could have walked (18:23).

e. It was *not* that he was not enterprising: he, in fact, outran the official messenger, who had started earlier, by taking a short-cut (v. 23).

f. It was *not* that he was not articulate when he reached the king: he got the first part of his message straight--"all is well" (v. 28).

g. *Nor* was it because he was unobservant: he said, correctly, "I saw a great tumult" (v. 29).

3. Note, please what Ahimaaz's problem *was*:

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- a. His name in Hebrew ("born of anger") may have indicated a trait of impulsiveness, that would subsequently develop, and hinder his effectiveness.
- b. He craved the spotlight of attention—a reward that would surely be his in carrying *this* message (v. 22, margin).
- c. But the ultimate problem of Ahimaaz involved a singular deficiency; for, although he had seen something ("a great tumult"), he was forced to confess to the king that he did not know what it *meant* ("I knew not what it was," v. 29).

C. An Opportunity for Contemporary Misunderstanding

1. Example: A visitor from Eastern Europe reportedly was observed standing upon the platform of the New York City underground railroad, watching a succession of trains, from various lines, arrive and depart. Yet he made no effort to board any.
 - a. A uniformed police officer strolled over, wondering if the tourist had come merely to see the novel sight, or if, indeed, he wished to take one of the coaches.
 - b. Drawing nearer, he noted a look of frustration, helplessness, even exasperation and futility, on the visitor's countenance.
 - (1) "Did you wish to take one of the trains?" the policeman inquired politely, noting that a number had arrived and departed, while the man had stood stock still the whole time.
 - (2) "Yes, I wish to take the 'A' train," the visitor noted plaintively.
 - (3) "Well, three of them have come in and gone out while you have been standing here," the officer observed.
 - (4) "I know," said the man with some impatience.
 - (5) "Well," persisted the officer, "then what's the problem?"
 - (6) "I don't have a dog!" the tourist said, his irritation now growing perceptibly.
 - c. "You don't *need* a dog," the policeman said, now thoroughly puzzled.
 - (1) "O yes I do!" the man said, triumphantly pointing to a signboard on one of the steel beams above the platform, which read: "Dogs must be carried in the coaches."
 - d. Now the visitor's problem, manifestly, was *not* that he could not read--or that he could not read English.
 - (1) He knew, clearly, what the sign *said*!
 - (2) His problem, rather, was that he unfortunately did not know what the sign *meant*!
2. Other potentially-troublesome signs (if read with too-stringent literalness):
 - a. At a North Spokane fast-food eatery: "Drive In Window."
 - b. On an Arizona desert highway: "Watch for rocks."
 - c. In a sealed cabinet containing a fire extinguisher, outside the entrance to the Andrews University housing office: "Break glass."

D. Objectives and Methodology

1. The goal of hermeneutics: to "rightly" divide "the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15; emphasis supplied).
2. The guiding purpose of hermeneutics is twofold (like a coin with two sides):
 - a. To achieve balance (the best single word to describe EGW, incidentally!).
 - b. To avoid distortion (7BC 336, 337).
3. The importance of hermeneutics:
 - a. "Listen as for your life to 'what saith the Scriptures.' It is of supreme importance that you hear aright. . . . Your salvation depends on your hearing aright, and receiving with meekness the engrafted Word" (UL 50:1; from Lt. 32, Feb. 5, 1907).
4. The best methodological approach seeks to develop and employ "tools"—rules by means of which meaning may be correctly extracted from the message.
 - a. During the early days of World War II, before the U.S. entry, British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill, understanding America President Franklin D. Roosevelt's political inability to involve an isolationist America directly, short of provocation, nevertheless called for U.S. assistance:
 - (1) In a radiobroadcast on Feb. 9, 1941, he pled with Americans: "Give us the tools, and we will finish the job" (John Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations* [15th ed.], 744:13)
 - b. Ten months before Pearl Harbor, the Construction Battalion of the U.S. Navy (C. B. = "Seabees") on Mar. 5, 1942, adopted Churchill's slogan as their organizational motto, where it came into greater public prominence (*World Book Encyclopedia*, XVI [1960]: 213).
5. Hermeneutics exemplified: Quintilian (Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, A.D. 35?-95?), Spanish-born founder of one of Rome's most famous schools of public speaking and rhetoric in the A.D. 70's and 80's, is today best remembered for his 12-volume *Institutio Oratoria* (*The Training of the Orator*) Concerning hermeneutics, he told his budding orators:
 - a. "We must take care, not that it shall be possible for him [the hearer] to understand, but that it shall be utterly impossible for him *not* to understand!" (Book VIII, Chap. 2, Nos. 23, 24; translated by John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation of Sermons*, New and Rev. Ed. by Jesse Burton Weatherspoon [NY: Harper and Brothers, 1944], p. 241).

I. The Biblical Preoccupation With the Search for Meaning

1. Earliest Preaching:
 - a. Preaching, as customarily thought of today, was first done in the post-Exilic synagogues of Palestine following the Captivity. And it was inextricably

intertwined with concerns about hermeneutics. Note these various translations of Nehemiah 8:8:

- (1) **KJV:** "They read in the book of the law of God distinctly [mar., "with an interpretation"], and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."
- (2) **NIV:** "They read from the book of the law of God, making it clear, and giving the meaning, so that the people could understand what was being read."
- (3) **NASB:** "And they read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading."

2. **Solomon:** When God incredibly offered the king a "blank check" upon ascending Israel's throne, the monarch humbly requested, "Give therefore Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad" (1 Kings 3:9).
 - a. God was so pleased, that He bestowed that gift in such preeminent degree, "so that there was none like thee before thee, and neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee" (v. 12).
 - b. The Book of Proverbs was compiled from many contemporary (and, perhaps, earlier) sayings (Eccl. 12:9, 10), to which, doubtless, Solomon added many of his own; and a continuing preoccupation throughout the book is the unrelenting search for wisdom:
 - (1) The words "understand" and "understanding" alone appear some 60 times.
 - (a) Typical is this admonition: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding" (Prov. 4:7).
3. **Jeremiah:** Some 300 years after Solomon, God was still desirous that His people should understand Him; and He prompted Jeremiah to urge men and women not to "glory" in knowledge, power, or wealth, for the most essential quest in life is to "understand" and "know" God (Jer. 9:23, 24).
4. **Philip:** This New Testament Deacon asked the Ethiopian treasurer, who was reading the Book of Isaiah as he rode in his chariot near Gaza, "Understandest thou what thou readeest?" (Acts 8:30).
5. **Paul:**
 - a. Prayed that the Christians at Colosse "might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. 1:9).
 - b. Urged Timothy (a young "ministerial intern" laboring in Ephesus), in his last epistle before martyrdom (7BC 325) to:
 - (1) "Consider what I say: and the Lord give thee understanding in all things" (2 Tim. 2:7).
 - (2) "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (v. 15):
 - (a) "Rightly handling" (RSV).
 - (b) "Correctly handling" (NIV).

- (c) "Handling accurately" (NASB).
- (d) "Know what His word says and means" (LB).

II. The Continuing Quest for Balance

1. Various Bible writers employ related metaphors in illustrating the fact that in living the Christian life, one is not merely a pedestrian, out walking merely for the sake of bodily exercise, but, rather, more like the athlete traversing a prescribed course, with a predetermined goal toward which he strives, and at which he receives the symbolic "crown of glory" attesting his victory. Note the metaphors:
 - a. "Walk": (John 12:35; Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 7:17; Gal. 5:16,25; Eph. 5:2, 8; Phil. 3:16; Col. 2:6; 4:5).
 - b. "Run": (1 Cor. 9:24, 26; Gal. 2:2; 5:7; Phil. 2:16; 2 Tim. 4:7; Heb. 12:1).
 - c. "Way" which leads either to "destruction," or to "life": (Matt. 7:13, 14).
2. Significantly, EGW's first vision (Dec., 1844) depicted "a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world," upon which the Advent people were traveling with Jesus, with the New Jerusalem destination lying dead ahead.
 - a. A light shone from behind them on the pathway; light also emanated from Jesus before them.
 - b. Some rashly denied the divine origin of the light from behind (the "Midnight Cry"), and--for them--it went out, leaving them to stumble off the path, dropping back down into "the dark and wicked world below."
 - c. Others maintained their faith--and balance--and arrived safely at the City, to meet Jesus and there to receive His commendation (EW 14, 15).
3. As Satan views struggling Christians attempting to reach heaven on this symbolic path of life:
 - a. His *goal*: to get them off from the path leading upward.
 - b. His *methodology*: to divert them off into either the right-hand ditch, or the left-hand ditch--he cares not which--because, off the roadway, they will become mired down and make little forward progress
4. EGW was concerned about "extremists" within her church:
 - a. Categories employed:

(1) "Bigot," "bigotry."	(6) "Zeal" (usually with the
(2) "Extreme," "extremism," "extremist."	suffix, "not according
(3) "Fanatic," "fanaticism."	to wisdom").
(4) "Narrow."	(7) Tangent."
(5) "Smallness."	
 - b. Concepts conveyed:
 - (1) Balance.
 - (2) Moderation.
 - (3) Temperance.
 - (4) Equilibrium.
 - (5) "Middle-of-the-Road" (especially important on a "narrow" road!).

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- (6) Common Sense.
- (7) "Rightly-dividing."
- (8) Not going "overboard:"

(a) Warning to Dudley M. Canright ("Brother M") about jumping ship, in favor of one with worm-eaten planks and already doomed to sink ("An Impressive Dream," 5T 571-73).

(b) Warnings against making "shipwreck of faith" (4T 233, 246; 5T 275, 675, 676).

c. Categories of extremists:

- (1) Pharisee/Sadducee.
- (2) Conservative/Liberal.
- (3) Strict Constructionist-Loose Constructionist.
- (4) Literalist/Symbolist.
- (5) "Ice of Indifference"/"Fires of Fanaticism."

III. EGW's Counsel Against Extremism

A. The Counsel Summarized:

1. In Matters of *Dress*:

- a. "Christians should follow Christ and conform their dress to God's word. They should . . . shun extremes" (2SM 476, 477).
- b. "There is a medium position in these things. Oh, that we all might wisely find that position and keep it" (1T 425).

2. In Matters of *Diet*:

- a. "Take the middle path, avoiding all extremes" (CD 211).

3. In Matters of *Educational Theory/Practice*:

- a. "God wants us to have common sense, and He wants us to reason from common sense" (3SM 217; context: age at which children should begin formal schooling).

B. The Counsel Expanded

1. "Take the middle path, avoiding all extremes" (CD 211, Lt. 57, 1886).

- a. "Christians should follow Christ, and . . . should shun extremes" (2SM 476, 477).
- b. "There is a medium position in these things. Oh, that we all might wisely find that position and keep it" (1T 425).
- c. "The people who follow Christ's example will not be extremists" (GW 317).
 - (1) Every vice is a virtue carried to an extreme position:
 - (a) "It is in carrying that which is lawful to excess that makes it a grievous sin" (4T 505).

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- d. Satan seeks to get Christians into either "the fires of fanaticism," or the "ice-cold water of indifference" (5T 644; TM 228; CH 628).
 - e. "There is a class of people who are always ready to go off on some tangent, who want to catch up something strange and wonderful and new. . . ." (Ev 611, undated Ms 111).
 - f. "True Temperance" defined:
 - (1) For the ancient Greeks: "'Nothing to excess' (*meden agan*) was their central doctrine . . . which the Roman poet Horace later interpreted as 'the golden mean.'" ("Ancient Greece: The Heritage of the Ancient Greeks," *Compton's Encyclopedia*, X [1982]: 226).
 - (a) The modern perversion of this doctrine: "If you are going to sin, just don't be gross!"
 - (2) For EGW: Total abstinence from ("dispensing entirely" with) everything harmful/hurtful; and a "judicious" (moderate) use of that which is healthful/good (PP 562).
 - g. Why extremists are harmful to the church:
 - (1) They bring it into disrepute; a few can discredit the entire church (1T 212).
 - (2) They greatly injure and hinder the cause of truth (3T 315).
 - (3) They make Christian duties burdensome (2SM 319).
 - (4) They raise a false standard, and then try to force everyone else up to it (2T 375).
 - (5) Satan uses them to cast contempt upon the work of the Holy Spirit (GC 8).
 - (6) Their spiritual eyesight is perverted (Ev 610, 611).
 - h. Areas in which extremism is a problem to SDAs:
 - (1) "Health Reform." (6) Religious experience/practice.
 - (2) Diet. (7) Racial issues.
 - (3) Dress. (8) Cultural issues.
 - (4) Recreation/amusement. (9) Debt.
 - (5) Education: theory/practice. (10) Homemaking (especially in areas of neatness/order).
2. No human being (apart from Christ) is to be a criterion for any other human being--not even EGW!
- a. "I eat the most simple food, prepared in the most simple way. . . . But the other members of my family do not eat the same things I do. I do not hold myself up as a criterion for them. I leave each one to follow his own ideas as to what is best for him. I bind no one else's conscience by my own. One person cannot be a criterion for another in the matter of eating. It is impossible to make one rule for all to follow" (CD 491, Lt 127, 1904).
 - b. "Do not give up the use of meat [or cheese] [just] because Sister White does not eat it. I would not give a farthing for your health reform if that is what it is based upon. . . . Do not make any human being your criterion. . . . You are not to lean on any human being" (Ms 43, Apr. 1, 19901, pp. 13, 16).
3. Daniel and his friends were "well-balanced."
- a. They were "well-balanced" because:

- (1) They had yielded themselves to the control of the Holy Spirit.
- (2) They were not self-exalted.
- (3) They had studied science without being corrupted.
- (4) They gave God *all* the glory for their endowments:
 - (a) Secular.
 - (b) Scientific.
 - (c) Religious.

b. Their learning did not come by chance:

- (1) *They*: obtained knowledge by the faithful use of their powers.
- (2) *God*: gave them skill and understanding:
 - (a) They had to study--use the gifts already given them.
 - (b) They didn't ask even their Jewish leaders what to believe.
 - (i) The Berean Christians were "more noble than their counterparts in Thessalonica because:
 - [1] They were not prejudiced/bigoted: they received the Word of God with all readiness of mind.
 - [2] But they *also* searched the Scriptures daily, to validate these new truths taught by Paul--who had the two highest spiritual gifts: apostleship and prophecy! (UL 161, from Lt 134, May 27, 1898)

4. "God wants us to have common sense, and He wants us to reason from common sense" (3SM 217, from Ms 4, 1904).

a. Christianity is based upon divine revelation, but it is applied through sanctified human reason:

- (1) The "kingly power of reason" is to bear sway (MH 130; ML 70; MYP 134; PK 489); we are to make intelligent use of the reasoning powers given us of God.
- (2) Reason is both God's gift (CT 423) and a talent (5BC 1100).
- (3) It is to be used for noble purposes (5T 600) and to bring God glory (1SM 259).

b. Christianity is a "reasonable" religion--and we are to reason from common sense:

- (1) "The unreasonable always go to extremes" (4SGa 41).
- (2) We are to reason by analysis:
 - (a) From cause to effect; and also
 - (b) From effect back to cause.

c. The ground of our reasoning is to be divine principles [see final lecture in this series on hermeneutics]:

- (1) Your salvation depends upon acting from principle (1T 698).
- (2) We are to follow the principles God has laid down, in our dealings with one another (Ms 43, 1901, p. 10).
- (3) "By studying the word of God and carrying out its precepts, . . . men may . . . in the place of following human impulse and natural inclination . . . learn by diligent study of the principles . . . that should control the sons and daughters of Adam. The Bible . . . not only furnishes great and important principles, but [also] supplies

practical lessons for the life and conduct of man toward his fellow man" (UL 187, from Letter 22, June 22, 1896).

IV. Misinterpretation--A Problem for Prophets

A. A Problem for Jesus

1. The earthly ministry of Jesus was made unnecessarily difficult because He was so frequently misunderstood:

a. By the religious leaders of His day:

(1) "The envious Pharisees misinterpreted the acts and words of Christ which, if properly received, would have been beneficial to their spiritual understanding" (ISM 30).

(2) "When Christ was in our world, He said to the Pharisees and scribes, 'Why do ye not understand my words and appreciate them?' They were continually placing their own construction upon the plain words of truth that fell from His lips" (UL 236, from Ms 115, Aug. 10, 1905).

(3) "But those who had been entrusted with the oracles of God, that they might be faithful expositors of the Scriptures, rejected and denied the Teacher sent from heaven. Christ saw that their spirit and principles were entirely contrary to the Scriptures. He saw that the Word of God was misinterpreted and misapplied. He saw how difficult it would be to instruct the people to read the Scriptures correctly, when their teachers read them in the light of their perverted judgment. What could He do to soften and subdue their hearts? This was the burden of His prayer [when He prayed all night in the mountain--Luke 6;12]" (UL 80:2, from Ms 31a, Mar. 7, 1898).

b. By His own disciple, Judas Iscariot:

(1) "He [Judas] would introduce texts of Scripture that had no connection with the truths Christ was presenting. These texts, *separated from their connection*, perplexed the disciples, and increased the discouragement that was constantly pressing upon them. Yet all this was done by Judas in such a way as to make it appear that he was conscientious. And while the disciples were searching for evidence to confirm the words of the great teacher, Judas would lead them almost imperceptibly on another track. Thus in a very religious, and apparently wise, way he was presenting matters in a different light from that which Jesus had given them, and attaching to His words a meaning that He had not conveyed. His suggestions were constantly exciting an ambitious desire for temporal preferment, and thus turning the disciples from the important things they should have considered" (DA 719, emphasis supplied).

B. A Continuing Problem for Ellen White

1. 1893: A. W. Stanton, in Battle Creek (and while EGW was in Australia), published a pamphlet (*The Loud Cry of the Third Angel's Message*) in which he alleged that the SDA Church had become spiritual Babylon, and that true believers must now "come out of her, My people" (TM 521, Appendix note).
 - a. EGW's response appeared in a four-part series in the RH of Aug 22 (TM 32-38), Aug. 29 (TM 38-45), Sept. 5 (TM 45-52), and Sept. 12 (TM 52-62).
 - b. In these articles her major concern was how Stanton was misusing and misapplying her writings.
 - (1) (A detailed analysis of her response will appear in the 3rd of this series of four presentations on hermeneutics, when we deal especially with the problem of taking a writer's words out of context.)
2. 1901: "Many men take the testimonies the Lord has given . . . picking out a sentence here and there, taking it from its proper connection, and applying it according to their idea. Thus poor souls become bewildered, when could they read in order all that has been given, they would see the true application, and would not become confused. Much that purports to be a message from Sister White, serves [only] the purpose of misrepresenting Sister White" (1 SM 44, from Ms 21, 1901).
3. 1906: Addressing George C. Tenney, a teacher and chaplain at the Battle Creek Sanitarium, editor of the *Medical Missionary Magazine*, and co-editor (with Uriah Smith) of the RH (1895-97), who apparently had erred in contextual misuse of her writings, she reproached:
 - a. "Those who are not walking in the light of the message, may gather up statements from my writings that happen to please them, and that agree with their human judgment, and, by separating these statements from their connection, and placing them beside human reasoning, make it appear that my writings uphold that which they condemn. I charge you not to do this work. To use my writings thus . . . is misleading and inconsistent" (Lt 208, June 29, 1906, p. 3; cited in ALW's *Messenger to the Remnant*, p. 86).

V. The Need for an Adequate Hermeneutic--Differing Viewpoints

A. Some Say We Do NOT Need Hermeneutical Rules to Understand the Bible/EGW

1. These advocate: "Take it just as it reads, in plain English. You don't need a fancy set of rules to interpret inspired writings."
 - a. And, triumphantly, they add: "After all, didn't Sister White, herself, say, more than once, to the church members of her day: 'Take the Word as it reads?'" (UL 234).
 - b. And we reply, "Indeed, she did. But what did she *mean* by what she said? Let us allow her to explain herself." (And we shall, below.)

2. These "no-hermeneutics" people feel very confident in relying upon the command of Mary, the mother of our Lord, to the servants at the wedding feast of Cana: "Whatsoever He saith into you, do it" (John 2:5).
3. Such, invariably, tend to see each issue in life as a simply matter of "black-or-white":
 - a. For such, there are no "gray" area; a matter is either right or wrong, good or bad; and they are in great danger of going to extremes.
 - (1) At Ife Hospital in Nigeria, physicians dispensed medications only on the basis of one-day-at-a-time; for the African reasoned that, if one pill a day were good, then 10 pills a day would be 10 times as good--when that dosage might actually kill them! They acted upon the erroneous--extreme--theory that if some is "good," more is "better."
 - b. For such, certain passages of Scripture take on an ominous significance, with a different emphasis:
 - (1) "Let your communication be yea, yea, and nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matt. 5:37; Jas. 5:12).
 - (2) "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou were cold or hot. so then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth" (Rev. 3:15, 16).
 - c. Everything in life appears to be divided into but two categories:
 - (1) Sheep, or goats.
 - (2) Wheat, or tares.
 - (3) "Right-hand," or "left-hand."
 - (4) Good or bad, right or wrong.
 - d. And, as such, they often have a simplistic world view.
4. Finally, we may note that they are often given to sweeping, all-inclusive generalizations, and unsupported exaggerated claims.
 - a. They are often to be found in a group that some might categorize as "ultra-right-wing" conservative Christians.
 - b. They often have a tendency toward rigid legalism (but, on the other side of that coin, please note, *obedience* is equated with legalism only by the most superficial of thinkers).
 - c. And they often hold a rigid verbal/mechanical view of inspiration/revelation.
5. Now, in fairness, let it be said, also, that there, indeed, may be a justifiable basis for the lurking suspicion on their part--not always groundless--that rules of interpretation are dangerous. For there *is* a potential problem at this point.
 - a. "Liberals," they hold, have invented these unnecessary rules of interpretation as a cloak under which to hide their "watering-down"--if not totally nullifying--the clear intent of the plain Word of God, by clever "spiritualizing-away" the obvious point and intent of the passage.
 - (1) Rules of interpretation are, for them, therefore, mere subterfuge, and are neither necessary nor legitimate for proper study of inspired writings.
 - b. Now there *are* responsible grounds for concern here, for, at the turn of the century, EGW did, indeed, warn of a danger:

- (1) "And now, brethren, I entreat you not to interpose between me and the people, and turn away the light which God would have come to them. Do not by your criticism take out all the force, all the point and power, from the *Testimonies*. Do not feel that you can dissect them to suit your own ideas. . . . For Christ's sake, so not confuse the minds of the people with human sophistry and skepticism, and make of none effect the work that the Lord would do" (5T 691).
 - (2) And an excellent Biblical example of this "watering-down," "explaining-away," is the "Corban" policy and practice of the Jewish leaders in Christ's own day (Matt. 15:6; DA 396, 397).
6. Most holders of the "plain-English" (or "Mary") hermeneutical position would probably miss the irony in the fact that a "no-hermeneutic" position is, itself, a hermeneutical position! And consistency is therefore often a victim in the process.
- a. I received a letter once from a woman who had attended a seminar I held in Canada, and she wished me to clarify something I had said in connection with the question of whether it is permissible to eat of cheese.
 - b. In reply, I not only gave her the EGW quotations, but also some historical background, to help her better understand conditions in the times in which these statements had been written:
 - (1) Lack of pasteurization and refrigeration at the turn of the century.
 - (2) Generally filthy conditions in dairies in those days.
 - (3) Lack of public-health inspection of dairies and animals then.
 - (4) Widespread disease among dairy herds in those days.
 - (5) The widespread practice of adding foreign substances (chalk, plaster-of-Paris, etc.) to milk by unscrupulous merchants, to change the color of yellow milk from sick cows back to white, so it would sell.
 - (6) The dilution of milk by means of bacteria-laden, polluted water, to make it "go farther."
 - c. My reply subsequently fell into the hands of a local SDA lady physician, prominent in health-education programs for the public, and she wrote to chide me for "White"-washing (her pun) the EGW counsels, saying:
 - (1) "I have always wondered why it so hard for us to read [plain] English. To me, when Sister White wrote in *Ministry of Healing* [1905] that 'Cheese is wholly unfit for food,' I accepted it. . . . When I asked Dr. _____ [another SDA lady doctor, also prominent on the public platform of the church] about cheese, she replied, 'If God took all the trouble to send an angel from heaven down to tell Sister White that cheese was 'wholly unfit' for food, I am going to believe it.' I thought that was a good answer."
 - d. I was sorely tempted to respond by pointing out to her that, by exactly the same line of reasoning, one might equally conclude that "If God took all the trouble, *twice*, to send an angel from heaven to tell Paul that women should remain silent, and not speak publicly, in Christian services of worship in their local churches [1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 3:11, 12], then, to be logically consistent, I must believe--and practice--*that*, too!"
 - a. And, one instinctively thinks of something that Aesop wrote (which was *not* a fable), when he said: "I will have nought to do with a man

who can blow hot and cold with the same breath" (From *The Man and the Satyr*; cited in Bartlett, 66:17).

B. Nine Reasons Why We DO Need Hermeneutical Rules to Guide in Interpretation

1. Sometimes the words themselves may be clear; but the intended meaning of those words may yet remain unclear.

a. Automobile bumper stickers often provide excellent examples of double entendre ("ambiguity of meaning arising from language that lends itself to more than one interpretation;" "a word or expression capable of two interpretations one of which often has a risqué connotation"):

(1) "Do it!"

b. Printout from a computerized auto engine diagnostic tool: the "words," indeed, were "Plain-English"; but their meaning was clear only to the technician, who had to "translate" them to the vehicle owner.

c. Initial-abbreviations may have different perceived meanings by several different persons:

(1) "P.C." may, variously, stand for:

(a) Personal computer.

(d) Pussy cat.

(b) Police constable.

(e) Politically correct.

(c) Pop corn.

(2) "C.C." may, in different circles, represent:

(a) Chesapeake Conference.

(b) Cubic centimeter.

2. A mistaken use of synecdoche (a figure of speech in which a part represents the entire whole) may actually distort the intended meaning totally.

a. Psychology: EGW once wrote, "Satan works through the science of psychology" (MYP 57; 2SM 351; 1T 290-92). (And, for a fact, he surely does!)

(1) But does that mean that *all* psychology is evil?

(2) Not necessarily; for the same lady also wrote: "The true principles of psychology are found in the Holy Scriptures" (ML 176).

b. Music and drums in the church: In connection with the "Holy Flesh" fanaticism of 1900, EGW wrote to condemn "drums, music, and dancing" in certain SDA churches in Indiana (2SM 36-38).

(1) But does this interdict the use of *all* "drums" and "music" in the church, upon any and every occasion?

(2) No. For her expressions are qualified by additional descriptions indicating the particular *reasons why* she opposed certain particular performances:

(a) "Every uncouth thing will be demonstrated."

(b) "A bedlam of noise shocks the senses and perverts that which, *if conducted aright*, might be a blessing."

(c) "The powers of satanic agencies blend with the din and noise."

.."

(d) "Satan works among the din of such music, which, *if properly conducted*, would be a praise and glory to God."

(e) "Satan will make music a snare *by the way in which it is conducted*" (emphasis supplied).

(3) And since "those things which have been in the past will be [found] in the future" in the remnant church, just before Jesus comes, it is especially important that we learn to differentiate between the good and the bad on the basis of genuine, legitimate hermeneutical principles!

3. The possibility may exist of a technical/editorial error in the printed text.

a. In 1T 296 we read a statement that has puzzled many and troubled some over the years:

a. "Phrenology and mesmerism [hypnosis] are very much exalted. They are good in their place, but they have been seized upon by Satan as his most powerful agents to deceive and destroy souls."

b. In attempting to analyze the statement (which flies in the face of everything else she wrote concerning these two practices, labeling them unmitigated evils), the crucial question is: What is the antecedent of the word "they" as it appears in the expression "They are good in their place. . . ."

(1) *Is there a proper--if greatly limited--place for phrenology and mesmerism [hypnosis]? It almost seems so, from reading this one passage.*

(2) If, however, one were to change the antecedent of "they" from "phrenology and mesmerism" to "the sciences of the mind," would that alter the puzzling impression that these words of warning initially make?

(a) Yes! And EGW *did* make such a statement (with the different antecedent), in RH, Feb. 2, 1862, and again in the ST, Nov. 6, 1884 (see 3SM 352).

(i) (For a more complete explanation, see 2MCP, Sec. 79, pp. 711-21 [especially footnote, pp. 720, 721]; and ALW's White Estate shelf document "Paralleling Statements Regarding Mesmerism and Hypnosis," April 21, 1960, 13 pp.)

4. Words in every language evolve in meaning over a period of time (and the nature of that evolution is from a broad to a more limited meaning of the word).

a. As believers (with EGW) in thought-inspiration (in contradistinction with the strictly verbal/mechanical view), while we are interested in the words a prophet may choose to employ, we are still more interested in the *meaning* which they may seek to convey.

b. The KJV, so favored by many SDAs (and the only translation acceptable to some), was translated in 1611 A.D.--nearly 390 years ago.

(1) But what was "Plain-English" in 1611 A.D. is, in very many respects, no longer such today!

c. Some KJV words have a much *more narrow* meaning today:

- (1) *Conversation*: today indicates oral discourse between two or more persons; but in 1611 A.D., it meant, literally, one's whole way of life!
 - (2) *Meat*: today (to SDAs, particularly), any article of flesh food--(to nonSDAs), an even more limited category, which would exclude fish and poultry; but, in 1611 A.D., it meant food in general.
- d. Some KJV words have an *altogether different--even opposite*--meaning today:
- (1) *Meet*: today, short for the noun "meeting," or as a verb indicating the gathering together of a group; then, "appropriate," "suitable," "fitting."
 - (2) *To allow*: today, "to permit;" then, to "approve" or "accept."
 - (3) *Approve*: today, to "accept;" then, to "marvel at" (positively, or negatively).
 - (4) *By and by*: today, in a short time in the future; then, "immediately."
 - (5) *Prevent*: today, to "keep from happening;" then, to "precede."
 - (6) *Let*: today, to "allow;" then, to "hinder."
 - (7) *Suffer*: today, to "endure pain;" then, to "allow."
 - (8) *Outlandish woman*: today, "ridiculous;" then, merely a "foreign" person.
[NOTE: In 1955, Dr. Luther A. Weigle published a list of 857 [KJV] Bible Words That Have Changed in Meaning in the English language since 1611 A.D.; however, the 2nd ed. of William Aldis Wright's *The Bible Word Book*--published in 1884!--required 680 pages to highlight 2,316 KJV words that had changed in meaning, to that year!]
- e. An number of words employed by EGW herself have changed just in the comparatively short time that has elapsed between when she used them and today:
- (1) *Shut door*: as used by ex-Millerites, after Oct. 22, 1844, meant that the door of probation was shut for all who did not accept the validity of Oct. 22; but, by 1852, it came to mean that probation was closed only for those had openly turned their backs on the doctrine of the 2nd advent in 1844, but that the door of mercy was still open for others (on the basis of Rev. 3:7, 8, in the light of their new understandings concerning the heavenly sanctuary).
 - (a) (See, also, Appendix B, *Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*, pp. 3185-88) "Glossary of Obsolete and Little Used Words and Terms With Altered Meanings.")

5. Cultural factors may affect meaning.

- a. Culturally, the Bible, basically, is an "Eastern" (rather than a "Western") Book:
 - (1) In the Middle East, and in much of Africa, respect is shown by removing the footwear (see Ex. 3:5); and, also, in Eastern Europe and the former USSR, by standing for prayer (in contrast with kneeling). In the West, respect is shown, variously, by kneeling, removing one's hat (and, often, additionally, by placing it over one's heart), rising to one's feet, or (for military personnel in uniform) saluting.
 - (2) The Aso Ebi custom of the Yoruba tribe of western Nigeria, West Africa, is manifested by a group of individuals who appear at special

public occasions (religious, social, or political), all wearing garments made of identically patterned cloth; and better enables the Christian to understand the parable of the man who attended a feast without the "wedding garment" (Matt. 22:9-13). This custom in Africa, today, has a twofold purpose there:

- (a) To show one's identification with either the host or the principal guest of honor; or
 - (b) To show respect for such an honored (and honorable) person.
- b. Prophets are sometimes said to be "a child of their age" (the doctrine of "historical conditioning").
- (1) SDAs have no problem in understanding that the prophets (including EGW) were influenced, sometimes even strongly, by the cultural milieu in which they were raised and lived.
 - (2) But we do *not* accept the idea that the prophet was a "prisoner" of the culture of his or her times, and thus unable to transcend it. We say, emphatically, that they were *not* the helpless, hapless, captive victim of their age and contemporary cultural background; they were enabled by God to transcend it, thus to give messages timeless in their value.
 - (3) But an understanding of the age will, in many instances, often help us better understand the prophet--and the prophet's utterances.

6. Circumstances often affect meaning.

- a. Two men in New Testament times asked, essentially, an identical question, under quite different circumstances; and each got an answer quite different from that given the other:
 - a. The *Rich Young Ruler* asked: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17). Christ told him to (1) Sell all he owned, (2) give the proceeds to the poor, (3) take up his "cross," and (4) follow Jesus.
 - b. The *Philippian Jailer* asked virtually the same question, worded slightly differently: "What must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas told him that he must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:30).
 - c. Why different answers to the same question? Because the conditions--and, therefore, the needs--of each man differed from the other. The Rich Young Ruler's problem was idolatry of wealth; the Greek jailer's problem, however, was one of intellectual belief (probably steeped as he was in the humanistic philosophy of Greece--as taught by the philosophers--in which there was no room for the one true God.

7. A given word/expression may have a different meaning in different books by the same author--or even different meanings in different places within the same book.

- a. In DA 780, EGW wrote: "Christ came forth from the tomb glorified;" yet, only 25 pages later in the same book, she wrote: "Christ had not yet been glorified."

- b. Is she talking out of both sides of her mouth? No.
 - (1) In the first statement, "glorified" refers to Christ's *physical appearance*.
 - (2) In the second it referred to His *legal status* before God, as Saviour.

8. Authors sometimes make statements that seemingly contradict the teachings of the Bible--or even other expressions from their own pens.

- a. In MM 14, EGW wrote: "The way in which Christ worked was to preach the word, and to relieve suffering by miraculous works of healing. But I am instructed that we cannot now work in this way; for Satan will exercise his power by working [counterfeit, but genuinely supernatural] miracles. God's servants today could not work by means of miracles, because spurious works of healing, claiming to be divine, will be wrought."

- (1) (See, also: "God's people will not find their safety in working miracles, for Satan will counterfeit the miracles that will be wrought" 9T 16.)

- b. These statements superficially appear to be a flat contradiction of the Bible teaching (and SDA position) that *all* of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, given to the Apostolic church, will continue in the church until the end of time.

- (1) They also seem to contradict another EGW statement to the effect that in the time of the pouring out of the Latter Rain of the Holy Spirit, "mighty miracles" (including those of healing) will be wrought by SDA church members (see EW 278; GC 612; 9T 126).

- (2) They also seem to contradict the historical record that miracles of healing were performed (some of them by EGW herself) in her own day, in answer to prayer (see EW 37).

- c. But the very next paragraph in MM 14 indicates that SDAs *are* to be involved in a work of healing, but that the Lord's *present* plan (in view of the prevalence of false--Satanic--miracles of healing) is to be done now through sanitariums and other similar institutions.

9. As with the written mode, so also with oral communication: an identical act may be interpreted widely (even wildly) differently by two different persons, who, taking identical data, come to divergent conclusions as to what was meant by the data.

- a. Illustration: A New Zealand motorist flashes his headlights at an oncoming American tourist who is coming toward him from the opposite direction. The tourist knows clearly what the other driver is *doing*; but he may not understand what the New Zealander *means* by the gesture. There are, actually, three possible meanings:

- (1) "You're driving on the wrong side of the road; get over to the other side, quickly, lest you cause a serious accident!"

- (2) "It's getting dusk; for safety's sake, turn on your headlamps immediately!"

- (3) "There's a police speed-trap down the road behind me (in the direction you are heading); slow down, now, or you'll get caught!"

- b. Illustration: the story of Moishe the Tailor (for the text, see *Anthology*, I:88/62, 63).

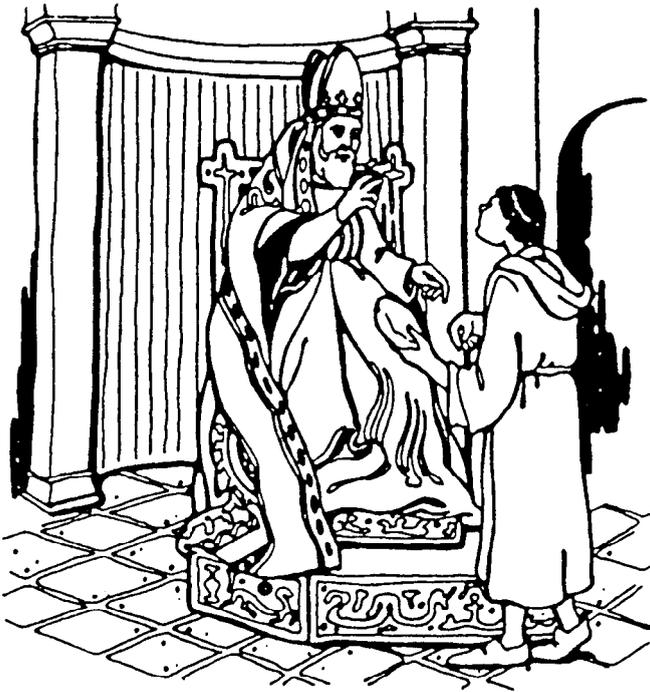
Conclusion

1. T. Housel Jemison, in his 1955 college prophetic guidance textbook, *A Prophet Among You*, (pp. 438-49), offers three rules for interpretation (hermeneutics), which apply equally well to all inspired writings—including those of Ellen White.
 - a. Each of the next three lectures will examine and apply, in a case-study approach, each of Jemison's three "rules."

Appendix A

The Story of Moishe the Tailor--A Parable

As Told By Roger W. Coon



A *Los Angeles Times* reporter several years ago told an after-dinner audience a story, probably apocryphal, that he heard from a Jewish rabbi. It aptly illustrates the hermeneutical problem in which two persons interpret the same data in radically different ways.

Pope Leo IX, who lived in the 11th century, reportedly was urged by his cardinals to rid Rome of the Jews. (Anti-Semitism is not an invention of the 20th century!)

"Well," said the pope, "I can't just do it out of hand; I'll have to give them a test first." So he informed the Jewish community in the Holy City that they should send a representative who would be asked three questions. If the respondent did not answer each of the questions correctly, the Jews must leave.

Understandably, this caused great consternation as the Jews assembled in their local synagogue. One voice spoke up, "Rabbi, you'll have to go." But the rabbi protested, "I'm just the rabbi of this congregation, while the pope is the head of the whole civilized world."

Someone else then said, "We'll have to send a Talmudic scholar. They're good at reasoning." But a scholar protested: "What do you mean? The pope has been educated by the greatest scholars of all time."

In the confusion a voice spoke from the back of the room.

Moishe, a tailor, declared, "I'll go. I've been answering foolish questions from Christians all my life. What's three more?"

It was ridiculous, absurd; but in the confusion, Moishe did indeed go. The pope explained the ground rules. Moishe nodded impatiently and said, "OK; get started."

The pope pointed a single finger at Moishe. Immediately, Moishe pointed two fingers back at the pope. The pope was impressed.

For the second question, the pope silently raised both of his arms above his head, forming a large circle. Moishe looked, then stabbed a finger toward the ground in a very determined way.

The pope, utterly astonished, said, "You know, that's right, too! It's most remarkable! But you've got to get the last question right, if your people are to be allowed to remain in Rome."

So the pope reached under his robes and pulled out an apple. Moishe took it in a glance, and promptly pulled out of his satchel some matzo—a flat piece of unleavened bread.

The pope responded, "You're absolute right. This is the most amazing thing I've ever seen. Your people may stay."

As Moishe left by one door, the cardinals entered by another. "Why did you let them off?" they complained. "You had a chance to get rid of these pesky, troublesome people. And you let them stay!"

But the pope defended himself, saying, "What could I do? It was quite a remarkable performance, really. I put out one finger, meaning that there is but one God. And he put out two, meaning that the Father and Son are as one.

"Then I formed a circle in the air, meaning there is unity only in heaven. And he said, by pointing to the ground, Yes, but the kingdom of God is on earth.

"Then I pulled out this apple, as an example of that terrible, pestilential heresy that the world is round. And he brought out a dull, flattened disc, proving that the world is flat!"

Meanwhile, Moishe returned to the temple, where all was in confusion. He cried, "Don't get so excited. We're staying."

The people were incredulous: "You mean you beat the pope?"

"Of course," Moishe responded. "You've got to know how to handle these Christians."

"What happened?" they demanded to know.

"Well," said Moishe, "he pointed one finger at me, meaning I'm going to poke out your right eye. So I pointed two fingers back at him, saying, I'm going to poke out *both* of yours.

"Then he made a circle with his arms, meaning, We're going to round up every one of you Jews, and get rid of you. And I said, We're staying right here.

"Then he took out his lunch, so I took out mine."

Hermeneutics – 2

EGW and Hermeneutics: Jemison's First Rule Take ALL That the Prophet Says Before Drawing Your "Bottom-Line" Conclusion

(Part II of Four Parts)

Roger W. Coon

Introduction

1. The telephone call came from a minister, a student of mine 20 years earlier, now a pastor in a Western state:
 - a. "Some of my members are having a hard time taking EGW seriously," he said.
 - b. Problem: she lived most of her life, and did most of her writing, in the 19th-Century "horse-and-buggy" era, while we today live in the 20th-Century space-age. "How can she hope to be relevant to me?," they were asking.
 - c. Well, of course, if you have a problem with EGW on *that* score, you have an infinitely greater problem with the prophets of the Bible: for the earliest of them wrote 3,500 years ago, and the latest is still 19 centuries in the past.
2. But the question is still a good one, and deserves a good answer. Happily we have one to offer!
 - a. Dr. T. Housel Jemison (1914-1963), SDA Bible teacher and textbook author (*A Prophet Among You* [1955] in prophetic guidance; *Christian Beliefs* [1959] in Bible doctrines), devoted an entire chapter in the former to hermeneutics, in which he offers three simple rules of interpretation of inspired writings.
 - b. Today we will examine Rule #1: Take ALL that the prophet has said, upon whatever subject is under investigation, before you draw your "bottom-line" conclusion.
3. To do so will help one to:
 - a. Achieve balance, and avoid distortion--the guiding purpose of hermeneutics (7BC 336, 337).
 - b. Avoid "going off on a tangent."
 - (1) For a single statement, taken alone, may lead only to an abstraction, thereby proving deceptive by not adequately explicating the prophet's position and intended message.
4. Some may technically argue that only the White Estate at present is able to take "all"--because "all" of her writings--upon any subject--are not yet completely available to the public, and won't be until the final CD-ROM version containing the unpublished, as well as the published writings (now under development), is completed, several years from now.

Hermeneutics/Part Two--2

- a. And, admittedly, they have a point.
- b. But it is equally true that the danger of distortion is inversely proportional to the degree to which all available data has been examined.
 - (1) The more one examines whatever counsel is available to him/her, the less likely he/she is to err in understanding and interpretation.

I. Background

1. There is a Biblical precedent undergirding this hermeneutical principle:
 - a. "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little" (Isa. 28:10; cf. v. 13).
2. For example, if one were to take the Fourth Commandment in isolation from the rest of what the Bible has to say about proper Sabbath-observance, the expression "Six days *shalt* thou labor and do all thy work . . ." (Ex. 20:9 KJV) might be taken to mean that the presence of that word "shalt" indicates an imperative obligation to work upon each and every one of those six days preceding the Sabbath.
 - a. But if one were to lay beside that text the counsel in Ex. 31:15 KJV ("Six days *may* work be done . . .), one would thereby avoid making a distortion in arriving at a correct understanding of the intent of Moses' teaching.
3. Now, upon some subjects, to take all of the available counsel will not be an arduous task, because on some themes the Bible (as, also, EGW) is either silent, or has comparatively little to say.
 - a. The Bible, for example, says absolutely nothing about the use of tobacco.

A. Topics Upon Which EGW Was Totally SILENT

1. **Cinema Films ("Movies") and Videos:** The first "Hollywood " feature film to be produced was D. W. Griffith's "The Birth of a Nation," in 1915, the year of EGW's death.
2. **Radio Programs:** The first commercial radio station to come on-line was Station KDKA, Pittsburgh, PA; and the first program broadcast was the Harding-Cox presidential election returns on Nov. 2, 1920.
3. **Television Programs:** The first program broadcast on commercial television was a speech by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which opened the 1939 World's Fair in New York City.
4. **Chemical/Mechanical Contraception ("Birth Control"):** Although the first serious scientific study of contraception was undertaken in 1882, commercially-available products were still decades in the future. Actually, the most widely employed methods used today were not introduced on the market until after 1960.
 - a. While EGW was concerned about limitation of family size (for various reasons, including preservation of the health of mother and child), the only effective method available in her day was periodic abstention from coitus.

Hermeneutics/Part Two-3

5. **Abortion:** This was not the pressing public-policy issue in her day that it has become today; and EGW remained totally silent upon the subject. (Also, there is only one reference to infanticide in her writing.). EGW simply did not "scratch" people where they did not "itch!"
6. **Cremation:** Again, the issue was not generally discussed in her day; and, again, she was totally silent upon it, pro or con.
7. **Organ Transplants:** This surgery was not available in her day; and she had nothing to say concerning either the procedure or the bioethical considerations involved.
 - a. John D. Rockefeller, I (1839-1937), creator of the Standard Oil empire, reportedly offered Dr. John Harvey Kellogg of the Battle Creek Sanitarium fame the sum of \$1 million if the latter could perform an operation and give the industrialist a new stomach; but Rockefeller was born a century too soon!

B. Topics Upon EGW Wrote Comparatively LITTLE

1. **Life Insurance:** There is only one statement from her pen on this subject, written in 1867, and today found in 1T 549-51.
 - a. For a correct understanding of what she did write, however, one must first employ Jemison's Rule #2--study the context, internal and external (to be discussed more fully in the next lecture)--in order fully to understand meaningfully the contemporary situation to which she wrote.
 - (1) The insurance industry in her day, you see, was almost totally corrupt and fraud-ridden, unregulated by any government agency. (Today, by contrast, it is probably the *most* regulated!)
 - b. (For a further helpful understanding on this issue, see the document "Seventh-day Adventists and Life Insurance" [March, 1989, 8 pp.], available at nominal charge from the White Estate.)
2. **Wedding Band:** Again, there is only one statement, written in 1892 just after EGW arrived in Australia, and today found in TM 180, 181.
 - a. And, again, Jemison's Rule #2 on context needs to be employed: what was the external contextual situation which called forth this counsel? To whom did she address her remarks: Australian SDAs? American missionaries then resident in Australia? American SDAs in America at that time? Or all three groups? And what specific counsel did she offer--to each group?
 - b. Because this subject generates much more heat than light in certain parts of the world, I devote an entire lecture in GSEM 534 to all aspects of the subject (see 22-page lecture outline on "The Wedding Band, EGW, and the SDA Church" [1987], available at nominal charge from the White Estate).
3. **The Two Special Resurrections of Jesus:**
 - a. On *Easter Sunday* (Matt. 27:51-53; Eph. 4:8; DA 785-87, 833, 834; EW 184, 185, 208; GC 18, 667; 1SM 304-8):

Hermeneutics/Part Two--4

- (1) Matthew and Paul, between them, give eight facts of information or identification concerning those who were raised.
- (2) EGW gives 10 *additional* facts (see Appendix A):
 - (a) Her contribution is "extra-Biblical" information--in addition to that found in the Bible.
 - (b) It, however, is not "anti-Biblical"--contrary to what the Bible reveals (and this distinction is crucial--it will be addressed again when we discuss how to validate a contemporary claimant of the prophetic gift).
- b. *Immediately Prior to the Second Coming*: (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 26:64; Rev. 1:7, 14:13; EW 285; GC 637):
 - (1) EGW identifies three categories of individuals, two of which will be brought back to life only temporarily. (Two groups are identified in Scripture; one is extra-Bibical.):
 - (a) SDAs who have died, since 1844, under the Third Angel's Message, keeping the Sabbath.
 - (b) The unsaved crucifiers of Jesus.
 - (c) The most violent opposers of Christ and His kingdom in all ages.

C. Topics Upon Which EGW Wrote MUCH

1. The Holy Spirit:

- a. *The Comprehensive Index* to the EGW writings list 38 sub-categories, in 59 columns of references, spread over 30 pages, in the first three volumes. (There are additional references in Vol. IV).

2. Jesus Christ:

- a. There are 50 different sub-categories, in 174 columns of references, spread over 87 pages, in the first three volumes of the *Comprehensive Index* (with additional references appearing in Vol. IV).

II. Case Study Approaches

A. The Wrath of God ("Does God Kill Sinners?")

1. A former licensed (though never ordained) SDA minister who presently operates a broadcast/publications "independent ministry" in the Pacific Northwest, a very well-known (and now-retired) Bible teacher in California, and a Christian writer in Australia (not Desmond Ford) have been in the forefront of promotion of the idea that God simply does not kill sinners.
 - a. Particularly upsetting to some SDA's is the fact that these men quote EGW in an attempt to support their views.
2. One in particular is fond of alleging her "approval" of his position in two published works:

Hermeneutics/Part Two--5

- a. "God destroys no man. Everyone who is destroyed will have destroyed himself" (COL 84:4; emphasis supplied).
 - b. "Like Israel of old *the wicked destroy themselves*. . . ." (GC 37:1; emphasis supplied).
3. The doctrine which deals with this subject is known among theologians as "The Wrath of God."
- a. The Bible clearly teaches that God has--and will, again--kill sinners.
 - (1) Isaiah speaks of it repeatedly:
 - (a) "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it" (Isa. 13:9).
 - (b) "For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. . . . (26:21).
 - (c) "For the Lord shall rise up . . . , He shall be wroth . . . , that He may do His work, His strange work, and bring to pass His act, His strange act" (28:21)
 - (2) Other Bible writers speak frankly and clearly about God's destruction of humans created in His image but who defied the Lord of heaven, in, among other examples:
 - (1) The flood of Noah's day.
 - (2) The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - (3) The breaking down of the walls and the destruction of the city of Jericho.
 - (3) And the Bible declares that He will destroy the living wicked at Christ's 2nd Coming, and *all* of the wicked after the 3rd Coming (at the end of the Millennium), in the executive phase of His judgment.
4. EGW ringingly affirms the clear testimony of Scripture:
- a. *The Flood*: In 1876 the question of whether or not God was responsible for the death of the wicked antediluvians was apparently raised in various SDA circles; and EGW wrote a seven-page manuscript ("The Days of Noah," Ms 5, 1876), the first two pages of which have been lost. But the last five which survive today leave no one in any doubt as to who was responsible for the Flood: "But God drowned the vast world!" (For the complete text, see **Appendix B**.)
 - b. *Jericho*: "God's judgments were awakened against Jericho. . . . The Captain of the Lord's Host [Jesus] Himself came from heaven to lead the armies of heaven in an attack upon the city" (3T 264:1).
 - c. *After the Close of Probation*:
 - (1) "The same destructive power exercised by holy angels *when God commands*, will be exercised by evil angels when He permits" (GC 614:2; emphasis supplied)
 - (2) "Then I was shown that the seven last plagues will be poured out, after Jesus leaves the sanctuary. Said the angel, '*It is the wrath of God and [of] the Lamb that causes the destruction or death of the wicked*'" (*Present Truth*, Nov., 1850; cited in 1 Bio 189:4; emphasis supplied)--

one of her earliest statements upon the subject.

5. How, then, do we explain the seemingly contradictory statements in COL 84:4 and GC 37:1?
 - a. We have already alluded to Jemison's Rule #2 (to be discussed in greater detail in the next lecture), but let us again refer to it here.
 - b. An examination of the *internal context* of these two statements quickly reveals that EGW was *not* there addressing the question of whether or not it is God who does the killing, but, rather, whether or not He can be considered guilty of murder, for doing acts that the Bible and EGW manifestly declare He has done before, and will do once again.
 - c. The thrust of her argument on these pages is: God is *not* guilty of *murder*, for in the case of murder the victim has no option, no choice, but to suffer the intent of the killer; in short, the victim has no alternative to death.
 - (1) But God freely offers life or death to each human being, upon certain clearly stated conditions--here the sinner *does* have an alternate choice, a way to avoid death.
 - (2) Now, if men deliberately embark upon a course of action which God has already decreed will bring them personal destruction, their punishment comes simply as a cause/effect consequence; and, *in that sense*, the sinners are themselves guilty of destroying themselves, because in the end they simply reap that which they themselves have sown.
 - (a) "In the laws of God in nature, effect follows cause with unerring certainty. The reaping will testify as to what the sowing has been" (COL 84:2).

B. Are Eggs to be Excluded from the Dietary of ALL SDAs?

1. In a sermon in the Battle Creek Tabernacle on Mar. 6, 1869, EGW raised the question of inconsistency in the practice of health reform vis-a-vis the daily living of the Christian life:
 - a. "You place upon your table butter, eggs, and meat, and your children partake of them, . . . and then you come to meeting and ask God to bless and save your children. How high do [you think] your prayers go?" (2T 362).
2. That same year she also wrote a letter to a "Brother and Sister E," in which she focused upon one particularly serious problem (among others) in the home involving their two adolescent sons ("Sensuality in the Young," 2T 390-411).
 - a. And in a simple declarative sentence of eight words she stated, flatly: "Eggs should not be placed upon your table." Why? "They are an injury to your children" (2T 400).
3. And this immediately raises a logical question: Is "your table" to be understood in the singular, referring specifically (and only) to the table of Brother and Sister E; or does "your table" refer, collectively, to the tables of *all* SDAs?

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- a. And you will find SDAs of equal intelligence, equal sincerity, and equal dedication on both sides of that question.
4. The application of Jemison's Rule #1 demonstrates that—at least for her day—the use of eggs was *not* banned across-the-board by the prophet; for, elsewhere, she wrote of a "beneficial" use of eggs. Note these additional balancing statements:
 - a. "In some cases the use of eggs is beneficial" (7T 135).
 - b. "In some cases of persons whose blood-making organs are feeble [e.g., aemia] . . . milk and eggs should not be wholly discarded" (MH 320).
 - c. "While warnings have been given . . . , yet we should not consider it a violation of principle to use eggs from hens that are well cared for and suitably fed. Eggs contain properties that are remedial agencies in counteracting certain poisons" in the body (9T 162).
5. What, then, precipitated this 1869 warning to Brother and Sister E?
 - a. An examination of the internal context (Jemison's Rule #2) reveals that both of the adolescent sons in the "E" family were unable to keep their sexual passions under control, and were practicing masturbation.
 - b. God had revealed to EGW—as today's sexual hygienists and sexual physiologists have since discovered through research—that eggs rank high in effectiveness on any scientifically-based inventory of aphrodisiacs (substances which tend to arouse human sexual desire).
 - c. And so EGW was saying, in effect: as far as the control of sexual appetite is concerned, if one has a problem here, he or she should not unnecessarily aggravate the situation by using substances which generally tend to do just that. In other words, if you are attempting to extinguish a fire, don't put gasoline on it; use water, instead!
6. Even more relevant for those of us living today, however, is the warning—with its promise—penned in 1901:
 - a. At the turn of the century there were in our midst sincere but misguided members who advocated health reform "in its most extreme form"—with the result that "harm" was being "done."
 - b. Attempting to bring in balance, EGW, while continuing to advocate the discontinuance of flesh-foods, tea, and coffee, nevertheless held that urging abstinence of dairy products (milk, cream, and butter) and poultry products (eggs) by all, was still going too far at that time.
 - c. She declared, further, that "the time will come" when we will need to discard from the diet *all* animal products; but "when the time comes . . . God will reveal this. No extremes in health reform are to be advocated" (Letter 37, 1901, in CD 358, 359).
7. She did not tell us *when* that time would come, nor *how* God would then reveal it to His people; but the implication is clearly left that intelligent persons, sincerely and earnestly desirous of doing God's will, will clearly understand when that time has fully come (see John 7:17).
 - a. Are we there yet? Opinions of equally intelligent, equally sincere individuals, within Adventism as well as without, presently differ on how

to interpret the data recently come to light through scientific inquiry within the past four or five years:

- (1) On the one hand, disturbing questions are raised about the safety of ingesting animal products, such as milk, vis-a-vis the high incidence of antibiotics and Monsanto's genetically-engineered growth hormone, bovine somatotropin (BST). (See, for example, "Udder Insanity," *Consumer Reports*, May, 1992, pp. 330-32; "Is Your Food Safe?," *48 Hours*, CBS News, Feb. 9, 1994, Transcript of Program 270; Sharon Begley, "The End of Antibiotics," (cover story) and Jerry, Adler, "The Age Before Miracles," *Newsweek*, Mar. 28, 1994, p. 46-52; and "Has the Time Come?," Loma Linda University scientist Dr. Richard W. Hubbard statement, "Letters to the Editor" column, *Pacific Union Recorder*, July 4, 1994, p. 31.)
 - (2) But, on the other hand, other equally-qualified scientists warn about over- [or wrongly-] generalizing from the data. (See, for example, Dr. Jim E. Riviere [Director, Cutaneous Pharmacology and Toxicology Center, North Carolina State University], "Stop Worrying and Eat Your Salad," in "My Turn" opinion column, *Newsweek*, Aug. 8, 1994; and "Evaluating the Buyer's Bible," *Time*, Feb. 20, 1995, pp. 64-670), which offer an alternate view on the alleged dangers from BST, by equally-prestigious scientific bodies.)
- b. So, has "the time" come? Since opinions differ, certainly this is a question that each one must settle for himself/herself, but not press one's own personal views upon others. "Let every man [and woman] be fully persuaded in his [her] own mind" (Rom. 14:5).
- (1) Pacific Union Conference President Tom Mostert, Jr., in his "President's Perspective" column (*Pacific Union Recorder*, May 2, 1994, p. 2), put it succinctly: "Has the time come to cease using all animal products? I can't make that decision for you. All I can do is share a sample of the counsel we have been given [which he did]. Whatever you decide, please remember this is a personal matter between you and God, not something to push on others. Nor should we judge another less faithful if they make a decision different from ours. And if you do decide to change, expect difficulty, 'For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature.' Gal. 5:17 NIV."

C. Is It a Sin to Eat Desserts?

1. In the matter of eating desserts at a meal, many of EGW's counsels focus upon two problems:
 - a. Excessive use of sugar:
 - (1) Far too much sugar is ordinarily used in our food preparation (CD 113).
 - (2) Sugar, when used "largely," is more injurious to the body than even ingestion of flesh-meats (2T 368-70).

(a) Because of the danger of excess-sugar use, EGW was opposed to the use of many pastries, again indicating the a meat-diet was the lesser of two evils (if one were forced to choose) because of potentially serious injury that could be caused by too-generous intake of sweet-cakes and pastries (CD 334, 410, 411).

b. Undesirable Combination of Certain Foods:

(1) Especially harmful, she added, were foods in which milk, eggs, and sugar were combined in preparation; and the "free use" of milk and sugar, especially, should be avoided (CD 311).

2. Many, upon reading these cautions and warnings, have concluded that the only safe approach should be a *total* ban on desserts at all meals.
3. But a careful survey of *all* that she wrote upon the subject brings to view balancing statements that help put all in perspective:
 - a. Plain, simple pie is an acceptable dessert (though eating two, or even three, pieces at the same meal, is quite another matter!).
 - b. While EGW eschewed a large use of sugar, she did not ban it totally from her table.
 - (1) Her own dish of applesauce was artificially sweetened ("as required") in the kitchen before it was brought to her table (CD 330).
 - c. A moderate amount of milk/sugar combinations is acceptable, as, also, plain cakes with raisins, and rice-pudding with raisins, which she recommended as an acceptable dessert (2T 383, 384).
 - d. Lemon pie, which requires an egg/sugar combination (and, in certain instances, even the addition of cream) was not forbidden as dessert for sanitarium-patient meals (CD 334).
 - (1) EGW herself occasionally ate lemon pie (CD 491); and a White family oral tradition handed down through the years intimates that lemon pie was EGW's favorite dessert--though, of course, always eaten in moderation.
4. She also strongly recommend that it was preferable that desserts be placed on the family table at the same time as the other main-course dishes, so that the eater might better gauge the total intake of food for the meal as a whole (CD 334).

D. The Human Nature of Christ

1. The issue: Was Christ's *human* nature like that of Adam:
 - a. Before the Fall ("pre-lapsarian")? or
 - b. After the Fall ("post-lapsarian")?
2. The subject has become hotly debated among SDA's (especially during the 1980's, and even into the 1990's), with two warring sides tending to develop.
 - a. The debate, unfortunately, has split some churches.

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- b. And the issue, for some, has been made into a litmus test of one's SDA orthodoxy.
3. In the interest of bringing the subject into focus, hopefully to promote greater understanding, the editors of *Ministry* devoted 14 pages of the June, 1985 edition (nearly half of that entire issue) to the presentation of two contrasting positions—which were printed in two parallel columns, divided by a bold vertical rule.
 - a. Dr. Herbert Douglass (under the pseudonym of "Kenneth Gage") held that Christ took Adam's "fallen" nature *after* the Fall.
 - b. Dr. Norman Gulley (under the pseudonym of "Benjamin Rand") claimed that Christ took Adam's *pre-fall*, unfallen nature.
4. Interestingly, both articles were the result of much serious scholarship, and both contained voluminous source references, most of them coming from EGW's pen!
 - a. And some wondered if she were like a "wax nose," that could be twisted and bent to suit the desire (and prove the point) of whichever author happened to examine her material at any given time.
 - b. Others concluded that she was talking out of both sides of her face, for it appeared that she supported both views (which seemed diametrically opposed to each other).
5. Dr. Robert W. Olson, then Secretary of the White Estate, did his own exhaustive research in the White Estate vault.
 - a. In the early 1980's he compiled a list of eight EGW statements which seemed to support a post-fall, "*sinful*" human nature of Christ; and another list of 11 EGW statements which seemed to indicate she believed in a pre-fall, "*sinless*" human nature.
 - b. Later, in 1989, he prepared a 32-page compilation (Pacific Press), on *The Humanity of Christ*.
 - (1) By this time he had concluded that a correct view of EGW's position required one to arrive at a third alternative:
 - (a) It is not an "either/or" dilemma, he declared.
 - (b) Rather, in certain respects Christ took Adam's pre-fall nature, and in certain other respects He took his post-fall nature.
 - (2) Morris L. Venden's *Faith That Works*, a 1980 daily devotional book (Review & Herald) arrived the same position (see, especially, pp. 348-50).

E. Personal Counselors: Is it Inappropriate for an SDA to Consult One For Help?

1. Before his untimely death in 1988, Dr. Garth Thompson, then Chair of the Department of Church Ministry at the SDA Theological Seminary, taught a course in Pastoral Counseling (CHMN 555).
2. At the first class meeting, students were handed a three-page compilation of EGW quotations entitled: "Counseling: Some Ellen White Materials, #1."

- a. The general tenor of the document (which contained 14 statements) seemed to place EGW unequivocally in the camp of those church members who strongly oppose SDA members visiting professional counselors.
 - b. And, predictably, before the close of that first class meeting, some student would raise his hand, inquiring, "Well, if EGW opposed seeking help from a professional counselor, why am I taking this class?"
 - c. To which Dr. Thompson smilingly replied, "Come tomorrow—I have another 'handout' with some more EGW quotations on the subject. And if, after reviewing *that* one, you still wish to drop the course, I will sign your drop voucher."
3. At the second meeting of the class Dr. Thompson presented his second document, also of three pages (with 17 quotations), entitled, "On Counseling for Christians: Some Ellen White Materials, #2."
- a. Interesting, these quotations seemed almost diametrically opposed to those in the previous day's "handout."
 - b. And the students were invited to remain for the rest of the quarter, during which the instructor spent much of his time attempting to show that genuine harmony actually existed between the two superficially-antagonistic compilations of Spirit of Prophecy counsels.
 - (1) (For a more detailed analysis of these statements, see RWC's "Ellen White on Personal Counseling," May 30, 1990, 13 pp., in *Sourcebook*, Sec. D-7.)

III. Other Topics Suitable For This Hermeneutical Approach

1. Was the *atonement* complete at the Cross (31 A.D.), or only the *sacrifice* of Christ?
2. What was the nature of the physical limitation placed upon Satan at Calvary?
3. Is it permissible for SDA women to wear "slacks" on appropriate occasions?
 - a. Or do they come under the Mosaic ban against women wearing anything that "pertaineth to a man" (Deut. 22:5)?
4. Does God really desert the willful sinner?
5. Since "cooking" [main meal preparation] on the Sabbath is discouraged by EGW, is it yet permissible to warm-up food on that day which was originally prepared upon the previous "preparation day" (Friday)?

List of Appendixes

- Appendix A: "The Special Resurrection on Easter Sunday"
- Appendix B: Ellen G. White Manuscript 5, 1876: "The Days of Noah," (Pages 3-7)

Appendix A

The Special Resurrection on Easter Sunday

I. BIBLICAL DATA: The Bible Gives Eight Facts of Information/Identification (in Matt. 27:51-53 and Eph. 4:8).

1. There was an earthquake, with great rocks dislodged, on Friday (v. 51).
2. Graves were opened (also on Friday) (v. 52).
3. "Many" arose from the dead—on Sunday (see point 5, below) (v. 52).
4. They were called "saints" (v. 52).
5. They came out of their graves "after" His resurrection (v. 53).
6. They then went into the "holy city" (Jerusalem) (v. 53).
7. They there "appeared unto many" local inhabitants and visitors (v. 53).
8. They ascended with Jesus to heaven, 40 days later (Eph. 4:8).

II. SPIRIT OF PROPHECY DATA: Ten Additional Facts of Information/Identification

1. **Service:** During their natural lifetimes they had been "co-laborers with God" (DA 786).
2. **Nature of Sacrifice:** "At the cost of their own lives" (DA 786) "they had borne their testimony unflinchingly for the truth" (ISM 304).
3. **Historical Era:** They represented "every age" of history, "from creation down to the days of Christ" (EW 184). [Note: Abel was the first martyr; John the Baptist was the last martyr of record before Calvary. Now, EGW does *not* say, explicitly, that Abel and John the Baptist, themselves, were included—though they may well have been; she says, simply, that their respective eras were represented.]
4. **Body Size:** They differed in stature and form, "some being more noble in appearance than others. . . . Those who lived in the days of Noah and Abraham resembled the angels in form, comeliness, and strength" (EW 184). [Adam was "more than twice" the height of men now living; Eve was a little shorter—her head came a little above Adam's shoulders (3SG 34).]
5. **Nature of New Life:** These were raised to immortality (ISM 304, 305), whereas the three raised from the dead by Christ before Calvary were only raised to mortality: they subsequently died again (DA 786).
6. **Benefactor:** It was Christ Himself who raised this large group ("many") to eternal life (ISM 304; DA786). [Though implied, this fact is not explicitly stated by Matthew.]
7. **Their New Work Now:** To witness to Christ's resurrection. They were witnesses whom the Jewish leadership could not silence, as they had done the bribed Roman soldiers (DA 786); indeed, their testimony contradicted the perjury of the bribed soldiers (ISM 305).
8. **Their Message:** The sacrifice for man is now complete. Jesus, whom the Jews crucified, is now risen from the dead (EW 184). The proof? We be risen with Him (EW 184; DA 786).
9. **Their Prophetic Significance:** They were the living fulfillment of the prophecy of Isa. 26:19 (ISM 305).
10. **Their Symbolic Significance:** Immediately following Passover was the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, on the second day of which the "wave-sheaf" of barley was presented to the Lord as the annual "first-fruits" offering (DA 77:1). Jesus died on Passover, and resurrection Sunday coincided with this festival. Jesus was the "firstfruits" of the dead (1 Cor. 15:20; DA 785:4); so, also these who rose that day (ISM 307:0).

Appendix B

Ellen G. White Manuscript 5, 1876, "The Days of Noah"

[Note: This manuscript, in double-spaced typewritten form, originally consisted of seven pages. The first two pages are no longer extant, having become lost. However, the surviving five pages are sufficient to place Ellen White clearly, unequivocally, on record as opposing the idea that God has not--and will not again--not kill sinners.]

Because of his holy integrity and unwavering adherence to God's commands, he [Noah] was counted singular indeed and made himself an object of contempt and derision by answering to the claims of God without a questioning doubt. What a contrast to the prevailing unbelief and universal disregard of His law!

Noah was tested and tried thoroughly and yet he preserved his integrity in the face of the world--all, all against him. Thus will it be when the Son of man shall be revealed. The saved will be few, as is represented by Noah and his family. The world might have believed the warnings; God's Spirit was striving with them to lead them to faith and obedience, but their own wicked hearts turned aside the counsel of God and resisted the pleadings of infinite love. They continued their empty ways as usual, eating, drinking, planting, and building, up to the very day Noah entered into the ark.

Men in Noah's day were not all absolute idolaters, but in their idolatry they professed to know God, and in the grand images they had created their plan was to represent God before the world. The class who professed to acknowledge God were the ones who took the lead in rejecting the preaching of Noah and through their influence leading others to reject it

To every one comes the time of test and trial. While Noah was warning the inhabitants of the world of the coming destruction, it was their day of opportunity and privilege to become wise unto salvation. But Satan had control of the minds of men. They set light and truth for darkness and error. Noah seemed to them to be a fanatic. They did not humble their hearts before God but continued their occupation the same as if God had not spoken to them through His servant Noah. But Noah stood like a rock amid the pollution and wickedness surrounding him, and wavered not in his faithfulness. He stood amid the scoffs and jeers of the world, an unbending witness for God, his meekness and righteousness shining brightly in contrast to the crime and intrigue and violence surrounding him.

Noah connected with God, and he was strong in the strength of infinite power. For one hundred and twenty years he daily presented God's warning in regard to events which, so far as human wisdom was concerned, could not take place. The world before the flood reasoned that for centuries the laws of nature had been fixed; the recurring seasons had come and gone in regular order. Rain had never yet fallen, but a mist or dew had fallen upon the earth, causing vegetation to flourish. The rivers and brooks had never passed their boundary, but had borne their waters safely to the great sea. Fixed decrees had kept the waters from overflowing their banks. The people did not recognize the hand that had stayed the waters saying, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther."

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Men began to feel secure and to talk of the fixed laws of nature. They reasoned then as men reason now, as though nature was above the God of nature, that her ways were so fixed that God Himself would not or could not change them, thus making God's messages of warning of none effect because, should His word be fulfilled, the course of nature would be disturbed. The men before the flood sought to quiet their consciences that the Spirit of God had aroused by arguing how impossible it was for the message of Noah to be true and a flood to deluge the world, which would turn nature out of her course. The same reasoning is heard today. "Why, the world will not be destroyed by fire." The siren song is sung, "All things continue as they were from the beginning." No need to pay any regard to this preaching that the world's history will close soon. Why, the laws of nature show the inconsistency of this." [But] He who is Lord of nature can employ it to serve His purpose, for He is not the slave of nature.

They reasoned that it was not in accordance with the character of God to save Noah and his family, eight persons only, in that vast world, and let all the rest be swept out of existence by the waters of the flood. Oh, no. There were great men and good men on the earth. If they did not believe as Noah did, Noah was deceived. It could not be otherwise. Here were the philosophers, the scientific men, the learned men. All could see no consistency in this message of warning. The fanciful doctrine was an illusion of the brain. If this was the truth the wise men surely would know something about it. Would all of these learned men perish from the face of the earth and Noah be found the only one worthy of being spared?

As they reasoned in Noah's day they reason today, when the warning message is proclaimed to fear God and keep His commandments for the wrath of God is soon to fall on all the sinful and disobedient and they will perish in the general conflagration. Professed servants of Christ who are unfaithful, who do not reverence God and with fear prepare for the terrible future event, will lull themselves to carnal security with their fallacious reasoning, as they did in Noah's day. God is too good and too merciful to save just a few who keep the Sabbath and believe the message of warning. The great men and the good men, the philosophers and the men of wisdom would see the Sabbath and the shortness of time, if it were true. They did not believe a merciful God who made men would consume them with fire because they did not believe the warnings given. This, they reason, is not in accordance with God.

But the days before the flood steal silently on as a thief in the night. Noah is now making his last effort in warnings, entreaty, and appeal to the rejecters of God's message. With tearful eye, trembling lip, and quivering voice he makes his last entreaty for them to believe and secure a refuge in the ark.

But they turn from him with impatience and contempt that he should be so egotistical as to suppose his family are the only ones right in the vast population of the earth. They have no patience with his warnings, with his strange work of building an immense boat on dry ground. Noah, they said, was insane. Reason, science, and philosophy assured them Noah was a fanatic. None of the wise men and honored of the earth believed the testimony of Noah. If these great men were at ease and had no fears, why should they be troubled?

God's love is represented in our day as being of such a character as would forbid His destroying the sinner. Men reason from their own low standard of right and justice. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." Ps. 50:21. They measure God by themselves. They reason as to how they would act under the circumstances and decide God

would do as they imagine they would do.

God's goodness and long forbearance, His patience and mercy exercised to His subjects, will not hinder Him from punishing the sinner who refuses to be obedient to His requirements. It is not for man--a criminal against God's holy law, pardoned only through the great sacrifice He made in giving His Son to die for the guilty because His law was changeless--to dictate to God. After all this effort on the part of God to preserve the sacred and exalted character of His law, if men, through the sophistry of the Devil, turn the mercy and condescension of God into a curse, they must suffer the penalty. Because Christ died they consider they have liberty to transgress God's holy law that condemns the transgressor, and would complain of its strictness and its penalty as severe and unlike God.

In no kingdom or government is it left to the lawbreakers to say what punishment is to be executed against those who have broken the law. All we have, all the bounties of His grace which we possess, we owe to God. The aggravating character of sin against such a God cannot be estimated any more than the heavens can be measured with a span. God is a moral governor as well as a Father. He is the Lawgiver. He makes and executes His laws. Law that has no penalty is of no force.

The plea may be made that a loving Father would not see His children suffering the punishment of God by fire, while He had the power to relieve them. But God would, for the good of His subjects and for their safety, punish the transgressor. God does not work on the plan of man. He can do infinite justice that man has no right to do before his fellow man. Noah would have displeased God to have drowned one of the scoffers and mockers that harassed him. but God drowned the vast world. Lot would have had no right to inflict punishment on his sons-in-law. But God would do it in strict justice.

Who will say God will not do what He says He will do? Let God be true and every man a liar [Rom. 3:4]. The Lord is coming in flaming fire to take vengeance on those sinners who know not God and obey not His gospel [2 Thess. 1:8]. And because, in His infinite mercy, He delays His coming to give the world a larger span for repentance, sinners flatter themselves He will never come. In the public press, in the haunts of sin, as well as in the schools of science so-called, there is one sentiment. They curl the lips with scorn and jest and ridicule at the warnings given them, and look upon the thousands who will not believe. Jests are uttered, witty paragraphs published at the expense of those who wait and look for His appearing and with fear, like Noah, prepare for the event. This is not new, but as old as sin. It is as false as the father of lies. When ministers, farmers, merchants, lawyers, great men and professedly good men shall cry, Peace and safety, sudden destruction cometh [1 Thess. 5:3]. Luke reports the words of Christ, that the day of God comes as a snare--the figure of an animal prowling in the woods for prey and lo, suddenly, he is entrapped in the concealed snare of the fowler [Luke 21:35].

[NOTE: These materials were released by the White Estate Trustees, piecemeal, over a period of years, through Manuscript Releases #816, #843, and #963.]

Hermeneutics – 3

EGW and Hermeneutics: Jemison's Second Rule Consider The Context: Internal and External (Part III of Four Parts)

Roger W. Coon

Introduction

1. Rule #1 calls for the researcher to take all--or as much as one can locate--of the prophet's declarations upon whatever subject is under investigation, before drawing one's "bottom-line" conclusion.
 - a. This will minimize the twin dangers of:
 - (1) Going off on a tangent, based upon one isolated statement.
 - (2) Making a doctrine out of an abstraction.
2. Rule #2 recognizes that after all of the available data have been gathered (Rule #1), a seeming inconsistency/discrepancy may appear to surface in some of the materials gathered--statements, initially at least, that do not seem to be in harmony with the general tenor of the counsels overall.
 - a. If such develop, one, then, needs to go further, and check the context of the particular statement that seems to perplex.
 - (1) *Internal Context*: (within the document itself): What did the writer say in the passage under scrutiny, either *just before*, or *just after*, the sentence(s) in question which perplex? (The problem is often solved at this point.)
 - (2) *External Context* (historical backgrounds):
 - (a) *When* was the statement written?
 - (b) *Where* was it written?
 - (c) *To whom* was it written?
 - (d) *Why* was it written?--what was the *background of circumstances* which prompted this message and called for this declaration?

I. Context and Meaning

1. Much of the meaning in one's own human experience is bound up with this interesting concept we call "context." (EGW seldom used this word, preferring, instead, "connection.")
 - a. I recently sorted through an old box of photographs, yellowed with age, taken more than a half-century ago, depicting people (most of whom I didn't recognize) wearing costumes whose fashion was long ago outdated.

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- (1) In one of them, I appeared as an infant-in-arms, with my mother and father (both now deceased).
 - (a) *That* photo, for me, had much meaning and value—I would never consider parting with it.
 - (2) Another depicted a small group of members attending an SDA camp meeting in Pennsylvania in the early 1930's.
 - (a) None were identified individually on the reverse side.
 - (b) As far as I know, my family and I are not included in the group.
 - (c) For me, *this* photo has neither meaning nor value, and I would not mind parting with it.
- b. A portrait of Andrew Jackson, 7th President of the USA, hangs upon the wall of many a school classroom (and other public buildings)—along with those of Washington and Lincoln.
- (1) When I walk past Jackson's portrait on the wall, I quickly recognize it for what it is, and my mind immediately goes on to other more pressing concerns.
 - (2) But let that very same portrait be incorporated into the total design of a particular piece of paper, 2-5/8" x 6-1/4", in which the numeral "20" appears prominently, in all four corners; and it will instantaneously stop me in my tracks, particularly if this \$20 currency note be found upon the floor!
 - (a) For me, money has immediate interest and value, wherever it may be found!
 - (b) Context: the place where this portrait appears makes all the difference in the world!

2. Man's context makes a difference with God, too! (That thought may initially surprise you.)

- a. Ps. 87:4-6 tells us that when God writes up the final record of an individual's life, He will particularly note that "this man was born there" (while another was born elsewhere), in making His final divine assessment.
 - (1) In God's final judgment, context will make an important difference! Does that thought stagger you? It does me! *Context makes a difference with God!*
- b. Ps. 103:14 tells us that God knows our individual "frame," He "remembers" that we are but "dust." (And He "pities," accordingly!—v. 13):
 - (1) "Jesus knows us individually, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. He has at times given directions to His servants to go to a certain street in a certain city, to such a house, to find one of His sheep. Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died. The distress of every one touches His heart. . . He cares for each one as if there were not another on the face of the earth" (DA 479-80).
- c. Isa. 51:1 reminds us that God wants context to make a difference with us: *we* are to look to the rock from which we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which we were dug!

- d. Luke 12:48 gives Christ's own words to us that context counts with Him: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more."
- 3. EGW highlighted the importance of context in human experience in these words:
 - a. "Two people may engage in the same acts of outward worship, yet the service of one, when weighted in the golden scales of the sanctuary, may be found wanting, while the service of the other may be accepted [by God]. Only the service that is performed in sincerity, with a humble, contrite heart, is acceptable to God" (Letter 39, Feb. 28, 1903, in UL 73).
 - b. "When the leaders of God's people depart from principle, and bring dishonor on His cause, their sin is greater than the sin of those whose opportunities and privileges have been fewer" (Ms 119, Oct. 7, 1903, in UL 294).

II General Principles Regarding the Importance of Context

1. 1875: "That which can be said of men under certain circumstances cannot be said of them under other circumstances" (3T 470; reprinted in 5T 670).
2. 1884: (Note the two hermeneutical problems here identified:)
 - a. "In order to sustain erroneous doctrines or unchristian practices, some will seize upon passages of Scripture separated from the context, perhaps quoting half of a single verse as proving their point, when the remaining portion would show the meaning to be quite the opposite. With the cunning of the serpent they entrench themselves behind disconnected utterances construed to suit their carnal desires. Thus do many willfully pervert the word of God" (GC 521:1).
 - b. "Others, who have an active imagination, seize upon the figures and symbols of Holy Writ, interpret them to suit their fancy, with little regard to the testimony of Scripture as its own interpreter, and then they present their vagaries as the teachings of the Bible" (*ibid.*).
3. 1904: "God wants us all to have common sense, and He wants us to reason from common sense. Circumstances alter conditions. Circumstances change the relation of things" (3SM 217).
4. 1911: "Regarding the testimonies [of EGW], nothing is ignored; nothing is cast aside; but time and place must be considered" (1SM 57).
 - a. Please note that *two* separate, discrete categories are here brought to view; "*time*" and "*place*" are not synonymous terms!
 - (1) Some things may be true at one "*time*," that are not true at another "*time*."
 - (2) Just so, upon a given day, some things may be true in one "*place*," and yet may not be true, in another place, *on the very same day!*
 - (a) Some things eminently true in one context, may be entirely false in another context.

III. Case Studies in "Time"

A. "Not One in . . ." Statements

1. In 1893, EGW wrote that "not one in 20" of SDA members were ready to face their Creator in the final judgment (ChS 41).
2. In 1895, she wrote in similar vein: "Not one in 100" in the church were doing enough missionary work (8T 148).
3. And some in our midst, today, quote these (and similar statements) as if they were applicable today.
 - a. Now there are three possibilities, as regards present application:
 - (1) The situation today quite possibly could be identically the same as when the statement was uttered in the 1890's; and, if so, the statement would apply equally.
 - (2) The situation today, however, might (hopefully!) be a bit better than in the 1890's. (If so, the statement, then, would not apply today.)
 - (3) The situation today might conceivably be even worse than in the 1890's.
4. And there are perhaps two important considerations to be kept in mind as we think through this whole question:
 - (a) It would take the same divinely-inspired insights of the prophet, who, by revelation, uttered the original statement, to know whether or not the situation today is identical, better, or worse, than the time in which the statement was originally made; a non-prophet cannot know for sure.
 - (b) If the 1890's statements are true today, it certainly is *not* because they were ~~not~~ *then!*

B. The Time When Probation Closes

1. In Letter 20, Jan. 16, 1898, EGW wrote: "We are still in probationary time."
2. Is that statement true *today*--nearly a century later?
 - a. Some--and I am among them--hold that this is still true, that probation lingers yet.
 - b. Others would take exception:
 - (1) Jeanine Sautron, the French woman who claims to have been given EGW's prophetic gift, alleges that probation--for all SDA's--closed in the Spring of 1991!
3. But whether or not that declaration--that we are "still" in probationary time--is still true today, we *also* know that the time *is* coming when that which was true on Jan. 16, 1898, will *no longer* be true--because of subsequent intervening developments.
 - (1) Because "Michael" [Christ] will one day "stand up" (Dan. 12:1) and declare that those who are "unjust" and "filthy" will forever remain such, and that

all those deemed "righteous" and "holy" now, also have their eternal destiny irrevocably fixed, as well (Rev. 22:11).

C. Is the "Voice of the General Conference" to be Equated With the "Voice of God"?

1. Manifestly, some things true at one time, are not true at another time, as, witness, statements made by EGW concerning "the voice of God."
 - a. In 1875 she wrote, concerning the General Conference: "When the judgment of the General Conference, which is the highest authority that God has upon the earth, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be maintained, but be surrendered" (3T 492).

2. However, in the 1890's, two situations, in particular, began to develop; and the prophet now took a position diametrically-opposed to that of 1875:
 - a. 1895: "The voice of the General Conference has been [note: *past* tense!] represented as an authority to be heeded as the voice of the Holy Spirit. But when members of the General Conference Committee become entangled in business affairs and financial perplexities, the sacred, elevated character of their work is in a great degree lost" (Ms 33, 1895, in MR #1118).
 - (1) (Note that one of the two particular problems cited here is waning spirituality on the part of members of the GC Committee--and note, also, the stated cause.)
 - b. 1896: "The voice from Battle Creek which has been [again, note: *past* tense] regarded as authority in counseling how the work should be done, is no longer the voice of God" (Letter 4, July 1, 1896).
 - c. 1898: "It has been some years since I have considered the General Conference as the voice of God" (Letter 77, Aug. 26, 1898).

3. The GC Session of 1901, however, began to mark a further transition, back to the earlier, 1875, position.
 - a. It opened April 2 (and closed April 23), with 267 delegates, representing 75,000 church members (four-fifths of which lived in North America).
 - (1) And during this Session, EGW began to change her mind--again!--on the "voice-of-God" issue.
 - b. On April 1st--the day *before* the Session officially opened, EGW twice addressed church leaders who had gathered early for this landmark occasion. (And no change in the 1890's negative stance is yet discernable.)
 - (1) In a *morning* talk, in the Review & Herald Chapel, she said:
 - (a) "The people [in the church] have lost confidence in those who have the management of the work [G. C. leaders]. Yet we hear that the voice of the Conference is the voice of God. Every time I have heard this, I have thought it was almost blasphemy. The voice of the Conference ought to be [the ideal goal] the voice of God, but it is not, because [1] some in connection with it are not men of faith and prayer, they

are not men of elevated principle. . . . [2] Two or three voices are not to control everything in the [whole world] field" (Ms 37, April 1, 1901, pp. 1, 8). [Note the two problems identified: a lack of personal piety, and organizational deficiencies.]

[NOTE: When the GC Committee was created, in 1863, it consisted of but three members. Some 20 years later it increased to five. In 1887, seven; in 1889, nine; in 1893, 11; and by 1899, there were 13 members.

But, these 13 were widely scattered, and the full committee seldom met: six were "District Leaders" [today: Union Conference presidents], scattered across the USA; two were based overseas; and only five were resident in Battle Creek--plus the GC Secretary-Treasurer--and thus available to transact most of the business of the world church.]

- (2) In the *afternoon* meeting, speaking to leaders in the Battle Creek College library, she added: "In reference to our Conference, it is repeated o'er and o'er, that it is the voice of God. . . ." (But, from the context of the remarks which immediately followed, it is obvious that she thought that that time had now passed.) (Ms 43a, Apr. 1, 1901, p. 2)
- c. On April 2 (opening day), she addressed the delegates immediately after the first item on the agenda--the address of the GC President. And she was still very clearly in the 1890's mode of opposition:
 - (1) "That these men should stand in a sacred place, to be as the voice of God to the people, as we once believed [note, again: *past* tense] the General Conference to be, that day is past. What we want now is reorganization [the 2nd problem]. We want to begin at the foundation, and to build upon a different principle" (1901 GCB, p. 25, col. 1).
- d. By the afternoon of April 4, a "Committee on Plan and Organization" had not only been created, but was already beginning to report back initial proposals regarding line-and-staff structural change; and EGW warmly, enthusiastically approved:
 - (1) "I want to say, from the light given to me by God, there should have been, years ago, organizations such as are now [being] proposed" (*ibid.*, p. 68).
- e. When the Session finally closed, on April 23, with a "Missionary Farewell Service" at 3 p.m., EGW noted with amazement--and deep personal satisfaction:
 - (1) "Wrongs--serious wrongs--have been committed in Battle Creek. I did not know how we would get along at this meeting. The Lord gave me instruction regarding this. . . .
"Who do you suppose has been among us since this Conference began? Who has kept away the objectionable features that generally appear in such a meeting? Who has walked up and down the aisles of this Tabernacle?--The God of heaven and His

angels. . . . They have been among us, to work the works of God.

. . .

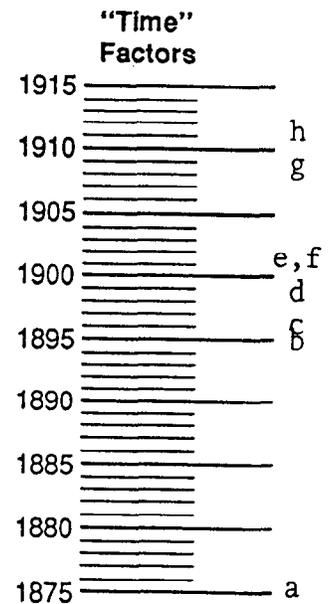
"Angels of God have been at work here. The Lord knew our needs, and sent us food, . . . showing us how we should work. We have been trying to organize the work in right lines. The Lord has sent His angels, . . . telling us how to carry the work forward.

"I was never more astonished in my life than at the turn things have taken at this meeting [Session]. This is not our work. God has brought it about. Instruction regarding this was presented to me [as the Session progressed], but until the sum was worked out at this meeting, I could not comprehend this instruction. God's angels have been walking up and down in this congregation. I want every one of you to remember this, and I want you to remember, also, that God has said that He will heal the wounds of His people" (*ibid.*, pp. 463, 464).

4. **Post-1901 Session:** With these changes--[1] in leadership personnel (many new leaders were re-elected; many former leaders were changed, or retired), and [2] in organizational machinery--it now becomes clear that EGW is reverting to her 1875 position, and now is opposed to the 1890's position (which she initially brought into the 1901 GC Session).
 - a. Only two months later (June, 1901), EGW became aware--and very concerned--that her eldest surviving son, Elder J. Edson White, was now--erroneously--taking pre-1901-Session statements of his mother, and misapplying them in the post-1901-Session milieu.
 - b. From what she wrote him, you see, the old statements no longer applied now, in the new, altered context:
 - (1) "Your course would have been the course to be pursued, if no changes had been made in the General Conference [Session just closed]. But a change has been made, and many more changes will [yet] be made [and they were, at the 1903 Session, and subsequently], and great developments will [yet] be seen. No issues are to be forced.
"It hurts me to think that you are using the words which I wrote prior to the Conference [to apply them now]. Since the Conference great changes have been made.
"A terribly unjust course has been pursued in the past. A want of principle has been revealed. But in pity to His people, God has brought about changes. . . . The course of action which before the Conference might have been a necessity is no longer a necessity, for the Lord Himself interposed to set things in order. . . ." (Letter 54, June, 1901).
5. **1909:** By this year, EGW is very clearly out of the 1890's mode, and very definitely back in the 1875 mode:
 - a. "God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference [Session], shall have authority" (9T 261).

6. 1911: And two years later, she added, finally:
 - a. "God has invested His church with special authority and power which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising, for he who does this despises the voice of God" (AA 164).
 - b. And she never changed her mind again--as far as the record evidences.

7. Thus, we note in summary, that "Time" factors do make a difference: In Fig. 1 notice that (a) in 1875 EGW took a position; (b) in 1895, (c) in 1896, (d) in 1898, and (e) in early 1901, she totally reversed the 1875 position. But after the 1901 GC Session (f) after significant changes had been made in both leadership personnel and operating machinery, she now reverted to the former 1875 position. And in 1909 (g) and in 1911 (h) she is clearly back in the 1875 mode, having abandoned the positions of the 1890's.



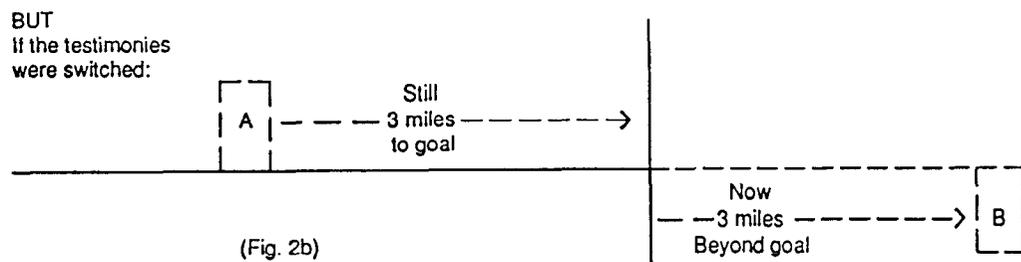
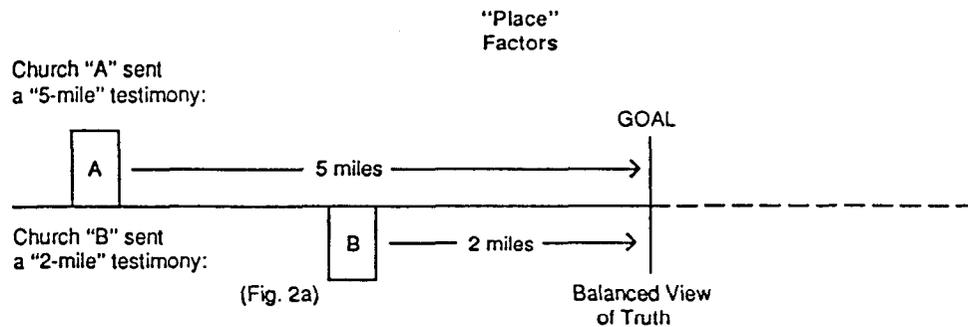
(Fig. 1)

8. "Time" factors are sometimes quite crucial--*when* a prophet says something may make a difference; for things true at one time may well not be true at another!

IV. Case Studies in "Place"

A. The Case of "Church A" and "Church B"

1. If we think of "Time" factors as being represented by a vertical dimension (as in Fig. 1, above), then we may also think of "Place" factors as being represented by a horizontal dimension (see Figs. 2a and 2b, at the top of the next page):
 - a. Figs. 2a and 2b depict two congregations, whom we will identify as "Church A," and "Church B."
 - b. And we will note that statements that factually apply to "Church A," upon a given day, may well not apply equally to "Church B"--on that very same day!
2. In Fig. 2a we note that:
 - a. The present spiritual condition of "Church A" (whom we will characterize as "Reluctant" and "Hesitant"), is some Five Miles distant from the "Goal" (which we will further identify as a "Balanced View of Truth").



- b. The present spiritual condition of "Church B," (whom we will characterize as "Eager" and "Zealous"), however, is only Two Miles distant from the same "Goal" (a "Balanced View of Truth").
3. Both churches need help from the Prophet; but, quite understandably, each congregation needs a somewhat different message in order to enable it to arrive at the same Goal.
 - a. So the Prophet writes a "Five-Mile" message to "Church A" ("Reluctant" and "Hesitant")--which, if followed faithfully, will bring it right up to the Goal (a "Balanced View of Truth"); but writes only a "Two-Mile" message to "Church B" ("Eager" and "Zealous")--which, if faithfully followed, will also bring them right up to the same Goal (a "Balanced View of Truth").
 - b. But a problem develops: the office secretary has two letters, and two addressed envelopes. But, unwittingly, inadvertently, she switches the letters, and mails them in the wrong envelopes!
 4. Both churches, thus, receive the "wrong" prophetic testimony; but both churches--believing in the prophet--strictly follow the message received. And Fig. 2b illustrates their final, respective position, vis-a-vis the Goal, after having taken corrective measures.
 - a. "Church A," which originally was Five Miles from the Goal (and, therefore, needed a Five-Mile Message), received--and followed--a Two-Mile Message; but it is still Three Miles from the Goal (a "Balanced View of Truth").
 - b. "Church B," however, originally only Two Miles distant from the Goal, received--and strictly followed--a Five Mile Message (intended for "Church

A"). And, now, "Church B" finds itself to be Three Miles *beyond* the goal (a "Balanced View of Truth")! And "Church B," thus, is now *farther* from a Balanced View of Truth than it was before it started its journey—it is now *more* unbalanced than it was before it started its journey toward the Goal! And that isn't good, either.

(1) Counseled the prophet in 1872: "We should be very cautious not to advance too fast, lest we be obliged to retrace our steps. In reforms we would better come one step short of the mark than to go one step beyond it. And if there is error at all, let it be on the side next to the people" (3T 21:0).

5. This was the problem to which James White alluded in his *Review and Herald* editorial of March 17, 1868. Speaking of his wife's unique ministry—which was often unnecessarily made more difficult—he said:

She works to this disadvantage, namely: she makes strong appeals to the people, which a few feel deeply, and take strong positions, and go to extremes. Then to save the cause from ruin in consequence of these extremes, she is obliged to come out with reproofs for extremists in a public manner. This is better than to have things go to pieces; but the influence of both the extremes and the reproofs are terrible on the cause, and brings upon Mrs. W. a three-fold burden. Here is the difficulty: What she may say to urge the tardy, is taken by the prompt to urge them over the mark. And what she may say to caution the prompt, zealous, incautious ones, is taken by the tardy as an excuse to remain too far behind. (For the complete text of James White's remarks, see *Sourcebook*, Sec. D-4.)

6. Thus we note that the proper identification of the *audience* to whom a particular prophetic message may be sent, may, contextually, be crucial to a correct understanding of the prophet's intended meaning for that particular message.

B. Other Topics in Which Context is Crucial

1. Assurance of Salvation:

- a. At the turn of the century, EGW wrote words that have perplexed more than one: "Those who accept the Saviour . . . should never be taught to say, or feel, that they are saved" (COL 155:1; cf. 1SM 314:2).
- b. Internal Context: EGW is here speaking within the framework of the false "Doctrine of Eternal Security" ("Once saved, always saved!"). (See COL 155:1-3.) There are, however, many other statements in her writings in which she makes it abundantly clear that if the Christian maintains a daily connection with the Lord, living up to known light, he/she may yet have confidence and assurance of their personal acceptance with God.

- (1) (See, additionally, 1SM 382:2, 392:1, and 394:1; COL 157:1-3; SC 64:1; 3SM 195:4-196:3; OHC 49; FE 135:2, from RH, Aug. 21, 1888; RH, May 12, 1896:4; and UL 320, for balancing statements.)

2. Whether Ministers Should Ever Use EGW's Words in the SDA Pulpit:

- a. EGW wrote, upon various occasions:
- (1) "The words of the Bible, and the Bible alone, should be heard from the pulpit" (PK 626, 1969).
 - (2) "In public labor do not make prominent, and quote that which Sister White has written. . . ." (3SM 29)
 - (3) "The Testimonies of Sister White should not be carried to the front. God's word is the unerring standard" (Ev 256).
- b. Do these words teach (or even imply)—as some within our midst presently strongly aver—that the writings of Ellen White should never be quoted from the pulpit? No!
- c. Internal Context:
- (1) Statement #1, above, is addressed to the nominal Christian churches of our world—not to SDA preachers!—and she here draws a contrast between preaching the philosophy and traditions of man vs. the inspired word of God.
 - (2) Statements #2 and #3, above, were specifically addressed to *SDA evangelists*, in the context of their need to prove the doctrines they were teaching from the Bible, rather than from the Spirit of prophecy writings—since God's Word is where SDA's obtained them in the first place!
- d. Another statement, purportedly from EGW's pen, but not yet authenticated by the White Estate (which believes it to be spurious), and which is sometimes used to "prove" that EGW herself said that her writings should never be quoted from the SDA pulpit, allegedly appeared in "The Proper Use of the Testimonies," pp. 4, 5, of "The Greatest Thing in the World," p. 5. But there is no documentary proof that EGW ever wrote this probably-apocryphal statement.
- e. Nowhere does EGW even intimate it would be improper to mention her, or her writings, from an SDA pulpit.
- (1) Now, *how* a thing is done may well be even more important than *what* is done—we must always, of course, be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."
 - (2) And it may be instructive to note that the collective title of the largest multi-volume series of EGW writings is known as the *Testimonies for the Church!*
 - (a) (For a more detailed study of this issue, see RWC's "The Use of the EGW Writings in the SDA Pulpit," in *Sourcebook*, Sec. D-6.)

3. Interracial Relationships Between Caucasians and African-Americans in SDA Churches:

- a. With regard to interracial marriage, EGW, in 1896, advised against this step, since it would invariably, inevitably, result in "controversy," "confusion,"

"bitterness," and "hindrance" (Ms 7, 1896; cf. Letter 36, 1912, cited in 2SM 343, 344).

b. With regard to general race relationships within the church, EGW wrote in a 1903 letter to her son and daughter-in-law, Edson and Emma, who were doing evangelistic work among the ex-slaves in the Southern U.S.:

(1) "We cannot lay down a definite line to be followed in dealing with the subject. In different places, and under different circumstances, the subject will need to be handled differently. In the South, where the race prejudice is so strong, we could do nothing in presenting the truth [there] were we to deal with the color-line question as we deal with it in the North" (Letter 202, Sept. 11, 1903; cited in 4MR 22, 23, and in "The Color Line," 9T 213-22).

(2) "I think I have already written that the colored people should not urge that they be placed on an equality with white people" (4MR 23).

c. Internal Context:

(1) EGW was not a bigoted racist, as some might infer from a superficial reading of some of her pronouncements. (For balancing statements, which demonstrate her warm, gracious acceptance of the equality of all mankind, see "The Brotherhood of Mankind," Appendix 3, 2SM 485-88, 3rd printing.)

(2) There is nothing intrinsically, inherently, wrong in a man and women of different racial ancestry joining in marriage. Moses' wife, Zipporah [Ex. 2:21], was a "Cushite" [probably an Ethiopian, and undoubtedly a woman of a different racial background] (Num. 12:1).

(a) But there are potentially serious--even disastrous--practical, social problems in daily living involved in interracial marriages--particularly as they affect the emotional health of the children born into such a union. And this was one of EGW's strong, almost over-riding prime concerns, as she spells them out in "Important Factors in Choosing a Life Companion," (Appendix 2, 2SM 481-84, 3rd printing).

(1) For a particularly moving 1st-person account of what it is like to grow up in America today as a person of mixed racial descent (and as a most remarkable contemporary testimony attesting the legitimacy of EGW's concerns), see Linda Mahdesian, "It's Not Easy Being Green," "Rostrum" [personal opinion column], *U.S. News & World Report*, Nov. 23, 1987. p.).

(3) EGW pragmatically was also concerned with the difficulties of promoting the work of her church in the context of existing social prejudices, especially in the Southern United States.

(a) In areas where this prejudice was strong, she well knew that to mix the races in public meetings and social occasions would automatically preclude success in effort to reach those so

afflicted with the gospel (which they especially needed, to overcome this unChristlike disposition!).

d. External Context:

- (1) At the time these lines were penned, there also were state laws prohibiting social mingling between whites and blacks in most of the Southern U.S. states, which sometimes even extended to prohibition of marriage between races (miscegenation laws).
 - (a) Concerning such social mores and legal enactments, EGW cautioned her church to "avoid entering into contention" (9T 213); they were told, repeatedly, not to agitate the question publicly (pp. 209, 211, 215), and to say as little as possible about the subject (p. 206), although she personally found such laws and customs to be exceedingly repugnant.
 - (b) The anti-miscegenation laws were not declared unconstitutional, and voided, by the U.S. Supreme Court, until 1967 (in South Africa, the apartheid laws survived into the 1990's).
- (2) It is interesting, and even worthy of noting here, that EGW took an entirely different position toward SDA compliance with the U.S. fugitive slave laws of 1787, 1793, and 1850 (which legally required U.S. citizens to return any runaway slaves to their lawful owners). She was in total harmony with some of the Northern personal liberty laws (which prohibited state and local officers from complying with the odious national laws); and she participated in "underground railway" operations, and encouraged SDA members not to obey the federal fugitive-return laws.
 - (a) For a more detailed overall account of this subject, see Ronald D. Graybill, *E. G. White and Church Race Relations* (RH: 1970, 128 pp.); also, his biography of J. Edson White, and Edson's work among freed slaves from his riverboat *Morning Star*, is told in *Mission to Black America* (PP: 1971, 144 pp.).

V. The Question of Compilations

1. The question of the legitimacy and acceptability of preparing thematic compilations of the EGW writings is frequently raised because of the admittedly substantial potential for misrepresenting her views by quoting them out of original context.
 - a. Some well-intentioned SDA's have gone so far as to say, publicly, "I will read her writings only in books *that she wrote as books*; I will never read any compilation."
 - b. This extreme position is illogical, unsound, unwarranted, and potentially dangerous.
 - (1) *The Desire of Ages* was not "written as a book" (Chapter 1, then Chapter 2, then Chapter 3, etc.); it was a compilation of Mrs. White's writings, prepared by chief literary assistant Marian Davis, and personally supervised by EGW, in the 1870's, 1880's, and 1890's (see Robert W. Olson, *How the Desire of Ages Was Written* (White

Estate, May 23, 1979, 47 pp.; in *Sourcebook*, Sec. H-6). [We will return to this subject in the lecture on EGW's Use of Literary Assistants.]

(2) *Christ's Object Lessons*, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings*, *Education*, and *The Ministry of Healing* also were compilations, prepared during her lifetime, and under her personal supervision.

2. EGW was herself conscious of the substantial potential for misrepresentation of her views in compilations—especially those prepared by private individuals with personal theological axes to grind. And during her lifetime she, at times, forbade some individuals, who had requested her permission to prepare and publish such privately-prepared works, from pursuing such activity.

a. To a church member who wrote, asking such permission, she expressed her misgivings forthrightly:

I can see plainly that should every one who thinks he is qualified to write books, follow his imagination and have his productions published, insisting that they be recommended by our publishing houses, there would be plenty of tares sown broadcast in our world. Many from among our own people are writing to me, asking with earnest determination the privilege of using my writings to give force to certain subjects which they wish to present to the people in such a way as to leave a deep impression upon them.

It is true that there is a reason why some of these matters should be presented; but I would not venture to give my approval in using the testimonies in this way, or to sanction the placing of matter which is good in itself in the way which they propose.

The person who makes these propositions, for ought I know, may be able to conduct the enterprise of which they write in a wise manner; but nevertheless I dare not give the least license for using my writings in the manner which they propose. In taking account of such an enterprise, there are many things that must come into consideration; for in using the testimonies to bolster up some subject which may impress the mind of the author, the extracts may give a different impression than that which they would were they read in their original connection.—*The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies to the Church*, pp. 25, 26, as cited in 1SM 58.

3. Do these words, then, mean that EGW was unalterably opposed to the making of *any* compilations of her writings, apart from her own personal supervision? No.

a. In preparing her Last Will and Testament (which document subsequently provided the legal basis for the creation of the White Estate after her decease), EGW gave her five designated Trustees three duties or tasks to perform after she was gone:

(1) To promote her writings in the language in which she wrote them—English.

- (2) To foster the translation and publication of those writings into other, foreign, languages.
- (3) To prepare thematic compilations of her writings, upon various subjects, as a need might conceivably arise within the church.
 - (a) The text of her will is reproduced as Appendix Q in Francis D. Nichol's *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, pp. 674-78.
- 4. Mrs. White wanted her writings to continue to be published, following her death, in whatever format would be most useful and helpful to her church.
 - a. But, recognizing the dangers inherent in the enterprise, and the great potential for misrepresenting her views by presenting them out of original context, she seems to have wanted that this work—as far as practicable—be done by those best-acquainted with those writings overall.
- 5. Many privately-prepared compilations, today, admittedly are thinly-disguised covert vehicles for the dissemination of private viewpoints—the grinding of personal axes.
 - a. And, as such, they are unreliable and untrustworthy at best, and downright misleading at worst.
 - b. There will always be a place for what we might refer to as "official" compilations (those prepared either in the White Estate office, or by individuals of special competence who have done their research and work thoroughly, and, hopefully, with the blessing—and even oversight—of the White Estate).
 - c. White Estate staff, in such preparatory work, diligently take precautions against quoting out of context, and observe other precautionary measures, to insure that that which appears in print faithfully mirrors the known position and counsels of EGW. Generally:
 - (1) All original sources are appended to respective quotations.
 - (2) A well-rounded representative sampling of her views is presented.
 - (3) Others especially familiar with her writings examine the finished product before ever it is sent to the publishers.
 - (4) And the White Estate will even loan a copy of any original document in its files to any correspondent who writes in, feeling a statement has been reproduced out of context, to allow such reader to judge for himself/herself as to whether or not that belief may be valid.
- 6. But to refuse to read a compilation of EGW writings, simply because it is a compilation, is an illogical, unsound, unwarranted, and potentially dangerous position.

Conclusion

- 1. EGW waged a life-long fight against the misuse of her writings, especially the practice of removing them from their original context.
 - a. During her lifetime some well-intentioned members misquoted and

misconstrued, making it appear that she taught things which, in actuality, were positions against which she was unalterably opposed.

2. For a representative sampling of her vehement protests against the distortion of her views, particularly in her theological, and health writings, see **Appendix A**.
 - a. For an example of how one statement in particular has been distorted by wrongful generalization, in an attempt to make to cover *all* instances, see **Appendix B**.

List of Appendixes

Appendix A: EGW Protests Against Distortion and Misuse of Her Writings

Appendix B: How the Expression "The Words I Employ" Has Been Distorted

Appendix A

EGW Protests Against Distortion and Misuse of Her Writings

A. In Her Theological Writings

In 1893, A. W. Stanton of Battle Creek published a pamphlet (*The Loud Cry of the Third Angel's Message*) in which he alleged that the SDA Church had now become Spiritual Babylon. He sought to "prove" the veracity of his position interweaving with his own materials EGW statements which he had lifted from their original contextual setting. In so doing, he virtually changed her position 180 degrees. Her response, originally published in four *Review and Herald* articles (Aug. 22 to Sept. 12, 1893), now appears in TM 32-62. Below are relevant extracts:

Without my consent, they have made selections from the testimonies, and have inserted them in the pamphlet they have published, to make it appear that my writings sustain and approve the position they advocate. In doing this they have done that which is not justice or righteousness. Through taking unwarrantable liberties they have presented to the people a theory that is of a character to deceive and destroy. In times past many others have done this same thing, and have made it appear that the testimonies sustained positions that were untenable and false--TM 32, 33.

I wrote a private letter to one of our ministers,, and in kindness, thinking that it might be a help to Brother S., this brother sent a copy of it to him; but instead of regarding it as a matter for his personal help, he prints portions of it in the pamphlet as an unpublished testimony, to sustain the position he has taken. Is this honorable? There was nothing in the testimony to sustain the position Brother S. holds; but he misapplied it, as many do the Scriptures, to the injury of his own soul and the souls of others. God will judge those who take unwarrantable liberties and make use of dishonorable means in order to give character and influence to what they regard as truth. In the use of a private letter sent to another, Brother S. has abused the kindly efforts of one who desired to help him--TM 33.

Those who receive the pamphlets advocating these false positions, will receive the impression that I sustain these positions, and am united with these workers in proclaiming what they term the "new light." I know that their message is mingled with truth, but the truth is misapplied and wrested by its connection with error--TM 33, 34.

The Lord has given His people appropriate messages of warning, reproof, counsel, and instruction, but it is not appropriate to take these messages out of their connection and place them where they will seem to give force to messages of error--TM 36.

In compiling this work, they have used my name and writings for the support of that which I disapprove and denounce as error. The people to whom this pamphlet will come will charge the responsibility of this false position upon me, when it is utterly contrary to the teachings of my writings and the light which the Lord has given me--TM 36.

It will be found that those who bear false messages will not have a high sense of honor and integrity. They will deceive the people, and mix up with their error the testimonies of Sister White, and use her name to give influence to their work. They make such selections from the testimonies as they think they can twist to support their positions, and place them in a setting of falsehood, so that their error may have weight and be accepted by the people. They misinterpret and misapply that which God has given to the church to warn, counsel, reprove, comfort, and encourage those who shall make up the remnant people of God. Those who receive the testimonies as the message of God will be helped and blessed thereby; but those who take them in parts, simply to support some theory or idea of their own, to vindicate themselves in a course of error, will not be blessed and benefitted by what they teach--TM 42.

By this misusing of the testimonies, souls are placed in perplexity, because they cannot understand the relation of the testimonies to such a position as is taken by those in error; for God intended that the testimonies should always have a setting in the framework of truth--TM 42, 43.

From such turn away, have no fellowship with their message, however much they may quote the testimonies and seek to entrench themselves behind them. Receive them not, for God has not given them this work to do. The result of such work will be unbelief in the testimonies, and, as far as possible, they will make of none effect the work that I have for years been doing.

Almost my whole lifetime has been devoted to this work, but my burden has often been made heavier by the arising of men who went forth to proclaim a message that God had not given them. This class of evil workers have selected portions of the testimonies, and have placed them in the framework of error, in order by this setting to give influence to their false testimonies. When it is made manifest that their message is error, then the testimonies, brought into the companionship of error, share the same condemnation; and people of the world, who do not know that the testimonies quoted are extracts from private letters used without my consent, present these matters as evidence that my work is not of God, or of truth, but falsehood. Those who thus bring the work of God into disrepute will have to answer before God for the work they are doing--TM 51, 52.

Those who have proclaimed the Seventh-day Adventist Church as Babylon, have made use of the testimonies in giving their position a seeming support; but why is it that they did not present that which for years has been the burden of my message--the unity of the church?--TM 56.

In 1845 a man by the name of [Eli] Curtis did a similar work in the State of Massachusetts. He presented a false doctrine, and wove into his theories sentences and selections from the testimonies, and published his theories in the *Day Star*, and in sheet form. For years these productions bore their baleful fruit, and brought reproach upon the testimonies that, as a whole, in no way supported his work. My husband wrote to him, and asked him what he meant by presenting the testimonies interwoven with his own words, in support of that which we were opposed to, and requested him to correct the impression that his work had given. He flatly refused to do so, saying that his theories were truth, and that the visions ought to have corroborated his views, and that they virtually

did support them, but that I had forgotten to write out the matters that made his theories plain.

Ever since the beginning of the work, one after another has risen up to do this kind of work, and I have had to go to the trouble and incur the expense of contradicting these falsehoods—TM 57.

Do not seek to misinterpret, and twist, and pervert the testimonies to substantiate any such message of error. Many have passed over this ground, and have done great harm—TM 60.

B. In Her Health Writings:

EGW also had a serious problem with people who would take her writings on health subjects out of context. In the two following selections she reproaches those who misuse her works thus:

1. 1881:

They select statements made in regard to some articles of diet that are presented as objectionable—statements written in warning and instruction to certain individuals who were entering or had entered on an evil path. They dwell on these things and make them as strong as possible, weaving their own peculiar, objectionable traits of character in with these statements and carry them with great force, thus making them a test, and driving them where they do only harm

We see those who will select from the testimonies the strongest expressions and, without bringing in or making any account of the circumstances under which the cautions and warnings are given, make them of force in every case. Thus they produce unhealthy impressions upon the minds of the people.

There are always those who are ready to grasp anything of a character which they can use to rein up people to a close, severe test, and who will work elements of their own characters into the reforms. This, at the very outset, raises the combativeness of the very ones they might help if they dealt carefully, bearing a healthful influence which would carry the people with them. They will go at the work, making a raid upon the people. Picking out some things in the testimonies they drive them upon every one, and disgust rather than win souls. They make divisions when they might and should make peace. . . .

These evils, so prevalent, led me to make the statements that I have made. The special reproofs were presented in warning to others; thus they come before other families than the very individuals corrected and reproofed. But let the testimonies speak for themselves. Let not individuals gather up the very strongest statements, given for individuals and families, and drive these things because they want to use the whip and to have something to drive—3SM 285-87, from Ms. 5, March 23, 1881.

2. 1886:

There will be some who will not leave the best and most correct impression upon minds. They will be inclined to narrow ideas and plans, and have not the least idea of what constitutes [true] health reform. They will take the testimonies which have been given for special individuals under peculiar circumstances, and **make these testimonies general and to apply to all cases, and in this way they bring discredit upon my work and the influence of the testimonies upon health reform—3SM 288, from Letter 57, 1886.**

Appendix B

How the Expression "The Words I Employ" Has Been Distorted

In RH, Oct. 8, 1867 (see 1SM 37; 3SM 275-79), EGW wrote: "Although I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, yet the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own, unless they be those spoken to me by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation" (1RH 73).

A highly-vociferous critic of EGW in the early 1980's, who removed these words from their original internal context, alleged that this sentence was intended by EGW to cover her total and entire literary corpus—when the exact opposite is the case. For EGW did *not always* place quotation marks (or, as the British style them, "inverted commas") around material taken from other sources—nor did she ever so claim.

The immediate context of this statement will help to explain what she meant—here—by what she said. In this particular edition of the *Review and Herald* there appeared a column headed "Questions and Answers," in which EGW responded to inquiries from various of the readership. In this edition, "Question 2" dealt with an apparent discrepancy as one would compare various of EGW's prior pronouncements dealing with what she considered to be the appropriate length for an SDA woman's skirt: (1) In 1864, she suggested raising the skirt from the floor "an inch or two, . . . to clear the filth of the streets." (1T 424). (2) But in 1867, she suggested, rather, that the ideal skirt should be "reaching about to the top of a lady's gaiter boot" (1T 464). Finally, (and later that same year) she (3) declared that "nine inches" was about the right distance—based upon an interview with her angel (1T 521).

And the clear (if not impatient) implication in the correspondent's query to the *Review* was: "Those 'nine inches'—were these *your* words, or were they the words of the *angel*?" (It apparently made quite a difference to the reader!)

In her reply, EGW said, in effect, the expression, "nine inches," were *my* words. If they'd been the words of the angel, I would then have placed them within quotation marks. Then she went on to explain the background of how she had happened to arrive at that precise measurement:

In vision, three groups of women passed before her. Group #1 were wearing the then-fashionable ultra-long skirts of the day, which, literally, "swept" the sidewalks and streets, and in the process caught up the filth outdoors, bringing it into the home. And the angel's reaction? Too long! Group #2, on the other hand, were wearing skirts actually above the kneecap. (Who said miniskirts were an invention of the 20th Century?) The angel's reaction: too short! Group #3 were wearing a skirt-length that was both modest and practical; and the angel indicated that this was about right. The angel, you see, did not, in so many words, specify an exact skirt-length, in terms of inches. So Ellen took an especially careful look at this particular representation, which the angel had indicated as being ideal, so that she might accurately reflect the angel's counsel. And, to her, this ideal distance appeared to measure about nine inches from the ground.

It was in this context, then, that EGW's statement about "always" putting the words of others (human or angelic) in quotation marks when they were being directly quoted was made. This expression was never intended by her to represent her unflinching, unvarying practice, throughout her entire literary career—as the critic incorrectly alleged. For him to claim such, actually distorts what the woman meant by what she said, and is thus an incorrect generalization by means of which to describe her regular literary practice.

Hermeneutics – 4

Hermeneutics: Jemison's Third Rule-- Is the Counsel a Principle or a Policy? (Part IV of Four Parts)

Roger W. Coon

Introduction

1. **Rule #1:** Take all (or as much as you can obtain) of what the prophet has written concerning the subject under research before drawing your "bottom-line" conclusion.
2. **Rule #2:** Check the context--both external as well as internal--of any statement that seems to suggest the existence of a problem.
3. **Rule #3:** Recognize that every time the prophet is giving *counsel*, he/she is either stating a principle, or applying a principle to a situation in a statement of policy

I. Definitions, Characteristics, Applications

A. Principle

1. *Definition of:* A principle is an unerring, unchanging rule of human conduct or behavior.
2. *Characteristics of:* a principle is--
 - a. Universal: a principle applies to *all* men and women in all places--the horizontal aspect.
 - b. Eternal: a principle applies to all historical time periods; principles never change--the vertical aspect.

B. Policy

1. *Definition of:* A policy is the application of some eternal principle to a particular contextual situation.
2. *Characteristics of:* Policies--unlike the principles upon which they are grounded--*may* change, as the circumstances which call them forth may change.
 - a. If we decide that a particular declaration of a prophet is a policy, rather than a principle, then we have not concluded our task until we dig down under

the policy to determine the identity of the principle upon which the prophet based it.

- (1) Because that undergirding principle *will* have a *contemporary* application--though it may quite a different one from the one enunciated by the prophet.

II. EGW Distinguishes Between Principles and Policies

A. Principles

1. A frequently-recurring theme in the EGW writings is a call to principled living.

a. As early as 1869-70, she would write:

- (1) "Every Christian will have to learn to . . . be controlled by principle . . . , controlled by the principles of God's word. . . ." (2T 347, 459).

b. Typical is this appeal, written in 1899:

- (1) "There are practical lessons in the Word of God. . . . That Word teaches living, holy principles which . . . men . . . are to bring into the daily life here, and carry with them to the school above. . . . We need the Word of God revealed in living characters. What pure, excellent language is found in the Word of God! What elevating, ennobling principles!" (Ms 96, July 20, 1899, cited in UL 215)

c. And, 10 years later, in 1909, she would further amplify upon this theme:

- (1) "The great conflict is right at hand in which all will take sides. In it the whole Christian world will be involved. Daily, hourly, we must be actuated by the principles of the Word of God. Self must be sanctified by the principles of righteousness, the mercy, and the love of God.

"At every point of uncertainty, pray, and earnestly inquire, 'Is this the way of the Lord?' With your Bibles before you, consult with God as to what He would have you do. Holy principles are revealed in the Word of God" (Letter 94a, June 6, 1909, cited in UL 171).

B. Policies

1. EGW recognized that the Bible contains policies, as well as principles, *both* of which play a significant role in our deciding on how God would have us to live.

a. And in 1896, she wrote:

- (1) "By studying the Word of God, and carrying out its precepts in all their business transactions, men [and women] may carefully discern the spirit that controls the actions. In the place of following human impulse and natural inclination, they may learn, by diligent study, the principles that should control the sons and daughters of Adam.

"The Bible is the guidebook that is to decide the many difficult problems that rise in minds that are selfishly inclined. It is a reflection of the wisdom of God, and not only furnishes great and important principles, but supplies practical lessons [policies] for the

life and conduct of man toward his fellow man. It gives minute particulars [policies] that decide our relation to God and to each other. It is a complete revelation of the attributes and will of God in the person of Jesus Christ, and in it is set forth the obligation of the human agent to render wholehearted service to God, and to inquire at every step of the way, 'Is this the way of the Lord?' (Letter 22, 1896, cited in UL 187).

2. To summarize, then:

- a. The **Goal** for every Christian: to follow the way and will of the Lord.
- b. The **Method**: to study both principles and policies, as found in the inspired writings, applying both in hermeneutically appropriate ways.

III. Case Studies

A. Teaching Girls to "Harness and Drive" Horses

1. In 1903, EGW's inspired counsel to young women: girls who "could learn to harness and drive a horse . . . would be better fitted to meet the emergencies of life" (Ed 216, 217).
2. Now, that counsel is either a principle or a policy.
 - a. And that counsel is today universally ignored on SDA campuses on all six continents.
 - (1) And, doubtless, some in our midst would take this fact as "evidence" that the SDA educational system has again "abandoned the blueprint," and thus "bowed the knee to Baal."
 - (2) We respectfully disagree.
 - (a) EGW never once used either the word "blueprint," nor the concept, as a way to characterize the nature of her writings.
 - (b) EGW never gave her church a "blueprint" for anything--for a blueprint spells out in specific detail everything required in a construction project--and this she consistently refused to do, either for institutions, or for individuals.
 - (3) The CD-ROM disc lists the word "blueprint" twice--and both times it is a supplied word, one never used by EGW herself:
 - (a) John A. Burden (1862-1942), the original compiler of *Loma Linda Messages*, inserted it in an editorial sectional subtitle ("Divine Instruction the 'Blue-Print' Through the Inspired Pen of Ellen G. White") on the title page (p. 3).
 - (b) Donald E. Mansell, then-associate secretary of the White Estate, supplied it as a section heading for MR #883 ("Blueprint for SDA Health-Care Institutions"), (p. 11, cited in 11MR 187).
 - (c) Unfortunately, both usages may, quite unintentionally, prove to be misleading.

Hermeneutics/Part Four--4

3. Rule #2 requires us to examine context in examining potentially troublesome statements. So what about girls harnessing and driving horses?
 - a. *Internal Context:* It quickly becomes apparent that EGW here is urging girls, as well as boys, to obtain a practical education (the principle), in order better to be fitted to meet life's emergency situations.
 - b. *External Context:* In 1903, when these words were first published, many if not most SDAs in North America lived in isolated rural communities.
 - (1) Rural electrification had begun to appear in some places.
 - (2) Rural telephones were still at least three decades in the future.
 - (3) If the husband/father were to become injured or seriously ill, it might be imperative for the wife/mother to remain at his side to render first-aid.
 - (a) If the daughter did not know how to "harness and drive" a horse, the summoning of a physician might be impossible, and the patient die unnecessarily, prematurely.
4. Application today:
 - a. Pacific Union College's Industrial Education Department offers women students an elementary-level course in auto mechanics, listed in the college *Bulletin* as "Powder-Puff Mechanics."
 - (1) The rudimental elements of auto care, maintenance, changing a tire, even minor engine tune-ups, are here taught.
 - b. While this provision does not meet the *letter* of EGW's counsel--her policy, it admirably meets the spirit--and principle--in a splendid manner!
5. And it may well be worth noting at this point that EGW's concern for practical education extended as well to boys, who--in this same chapter--were urged to learn how to wash their own clothes, cook, and perform other necessary household duties!

B. The Propriety of Varied Physical Postures in Prayer

1. One Sabbath morning EGW was sitting on the platform of the Battle Creek Tabernacle as a minister was about to lead the congregation in the morning prayer.
 - a. As he seemed to intend remaining standing, EGW, calling him by name, whispered hoarsely, "Get down upon your knees!"
 - b. And in reporting this experience, later, she added, immediately, "This is the proper position always" (2SM 311).
 - (1) Does this mean, then, that it is never appropriate to sit, or to stand, while prayer is being offered?
 - (2) EGW's use of that little word "Always" would seem to indicate just that--at least to some extremely conscientious SDAs.
 - (3) But--very respectfully--Does "always" always mean "always"?
2. Jemison's Rule #1 calls for the assembling of all available data upon the subject before making a final conclusion. So let us begin by attempting to do just that:
 - a. "Both in public and private worship, it is our privilege to bow on our knees before the Lord when we offer out petitions to Him" (GW 178).

- (1) The internal context is "public and private worship."
 - (2) The presence of the expression "it is our privilege," and the absence of that word "always," are interesting, and may even be helpful; do they allow a little leeway in the matter?
 - b. "There is no time or place in which it is inappropriate to offer up a petition to God. . . . In the crowds of the street, in the midst of a business engagement, we may send up a petition to God. . . . We should have the door of the heart open continually and our invitation going up that Jesus may come and abide as a heavenly guest in the soul" (SC 99:1).
 - (1) "Crowded streets" and "business engagement" might suggest that kneeling, here at least, might be not only inappropriate, but even potentially dangerous to personal safety!
 - c. "We may commune with God in our hearts. . . . When engaged in our daily labor, we may breathe out our heart's desire, inaudible to any human ear . . ." (GW 258).
 - (1) Again, the thought of a silent prayer while working does not appear to include the necessity of kneeling for this particular form of prayer.
 - d. "We must pray constantly, with a humble mind and a meek and lowly spirit. We need not wait for an opportunity to kneel before God. We can pray and talk with the Lord wherever we may be" (Lt 342, 1906, cited in 3SM 266).
 - e. "You cannot always be on your knees in prayer, but your silent petitions may constantly ascend to God for strength and guidance" (CH 362:2, from *Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 15, pp. 11-15, June 3, 1907).
 - f. "It is not always necessary to bow upon your knees in order to pray" (MH 510, 511).
 - (1) And now, superficially at least, we are faced with an apparent contradiction:
 - (a) In 2SM 311: "This is the appropriate position always."
 - (b) But, in MH 510, 511: "It is not always necessary to bow upon your knees. . . ."
 - (2) Does "always" always mean always? (Does "only" only mean only?)
 - (3) And we answer, YES--*within an immediate context*.
3. An examination of Scripture will prove helpful at this point:
- a. The unconverted Pharisees apparently were not the only ones who, upon occasion, would "pray standing" (Matt. 6:5).
 - b. Solomon, at the dedication of his Temple:
 - (1) Knelt, for a prayer of confession (1 Kings 8:54).
 - (2) Yet he also stood, for certain other prayers, including certain "blessings," and for the benediction (vv. 14, 22, 23, 55).
4. An examination of EGW's own personal experience in offering public prayers reveals she employed different bodily postures:
- a. In one prayer, she and the congregation knelt, after first standing in consecration (RH, Mar. 11, 1909, cited in 3SM 267).

- b. Upon another occasion, in Europe, she instructed the people to remain seated for the prayer (Diary, Feb. 20, 1887, cited in 1SM 147 and 3SM 267, 268).
 - c. Upon at least three other occasions, she stood, and invited the people to stand with her:
 - (1) Mar. 7, 1908, at Oakland, CA (3SM 268, 269).
 - (2) Feb. 8, 1909, also at Oakland (3SM 269).
 - (3) May 18, 1909, at a GC Session in Takoma Park, MD (3SM 269, 270).
 - d. D. E. Robinson, one of EGW's secretaries (1902-15), wrote on Mar. 4, 1934, "I have been present repeatedly at camp meetings and General Conference Sessions in which Sister White herself has offered prayer with the congregation standing, and she herself standing" (3SM 267, footnote).
 - e. And EGW's grandson, Arthur L. White, helpfully adds:
 - (1) "That Ellen White did not intend to teach that on every prayer occasion we must kneel is made clear both by her words and her example. To her there was no time or place where prayer was not appropriate. Her family testified that in her home those at the dining table bowed their heads and not their knees. She was not known to kneel for the benediction at the close of services she attended. The earnest counsel on kneeling would seem to have its principal application in the worship services in the house of God and private devotions at home. In public ministry there were times when she stood for prayer" (3SM 270, footnote).
5. From various of her writings, at least two principles appear to emerge contextually from the data:
- a. *Reverence for God*: "There should be an intelligent knowledge of how to come to God in reverence and godly fear with devotional love. There is a growing lack of reverence for our Maker, a growing disregard of His greatness and His majesty" (Ms 84b, 1897, cited in 2SM 312).
 - b. *Dependence upon God*: "Both in public and private worship it is our duty to bow down upon our knees before God when we offer our petitions to Him. This act shows our dependence upon God" (2SM 312).
 - (1) In her personal diary she finally makes her intended meaning explicit: On Feb. 13, 1892, in Melbourne, Australia, she mentions of having to be carried up a long stairway to a meeting hall in the arms of her son and a layman, because of being "compassed with infirmities" [rheumatism, and possibly arthritis]. And she lamented:
 - (a) "I was not able to bow my knees in the opening prayer or when I entered the desk [pulpit] as I usually do, *but the form is not the essential part*. My heart went up to God in earnest prayer and He did help me and I believe gave me a decided message for the people assembled" (Ms 29, 1892, emphasis supplied).
6. It becomes clear, then, that it is not a violation of principle to stand for certain prayers (such as an invocation, benediction, or even a consecration prayer), or to sit for certain other prayers (an offertory, and even a consecration prayer).
- a. Another important factor: certain cultures demonstrate respect/reverence in different ways:

- (1) In Eastern Europe and the republics of the former USSR, Slavic congregations generally stand--not only for the pastoral prayer, but also for the reading of God's Word. This is how, in their particular culture, they manifest deference, respect, reverence.
- (2) In certain parts of Africa, if an African wears Western costume (business suit, shoes, etc.) to church, he will walk straight into the sanctuary, to take his seat in the pew. But if he is wearing national costume, he will first remove his sandals at the door, and leave them neatly in pairs on the vestibule floor (after the manner of Moses, at the burning bush), before taking his seat.
 - (a) For further study, see:
 - (1) "The Propriety of Varying Postures in Prayer," 3SM 266-70.
 - (2) W. E. Read (GC Field Secretary, 1945-58) seven-page monograph, "Our Posture in Prayer," undated, White Estate Document File DF 568s; cf. also Q/A File, 25-D-1.

C. School-Entrance Age of SDA Children

1. In 1872, EGW wrote her first major treatise upon Christian education ("Proper Education").
 - a. A 30-page document, it was first published in 3T 131-60.
 - b. And in it she used the word "only" twice--in the same paragraph.
 - (1) "Parents should be the only teachers of their children until they have reached eight or ten years of age."
 - (2) "The only schoolroom for children from eight to ten years of age should be in the open air amid the opening flowers and nature's beautiful scenery" (3T 137:1).
2. Some 30 years later, this counsel was taken so literally by SDA school administrators ("from Maine to California, and from Manitoba to Florida," lamented her son, Willie), that he could not enroll his children (who were EGW's grandchildren) in the SDA elementary school at St. Helena, CA, after returning from Australia.
3. W.C. White called a meeting of the local church school board for Thursday morning, Jan. 14, 1904, to which he brought his mother, the prophet (whose words, in 1872, had caused all this stir in the first place).
 - a. A verbatim transcript of the proceedings of this meeting (lost for years in an unmarked box in a GC warehouse storeroom, and only fairly recently recovered), is today published in 3SM 214-26.
4. During this meeting, EGW expressed praise and appreciation for certain schools at the kindergarten level in Battle Creek, in which children under the age of eight were students.
 - a. And, contextually, it would seem that the principle was not a particular age-limit, but, rather, that parents and teachers should do that which is best

for the individual child under any given circumstance.

(1) Some children develop motor co-ordination skills earlier than others.

(2) And there may be certain family situations in which it is actually more desirable for children to be in a school, rather than at home with the mother as teacher.

(a) Where the mother is not professionally competent, or emotionally qualified, to teach her own children, it may be better to have her child in a schoolroom.

(b) Where both parents are forced to seek employment outside of the home, it would be far better to have the child under the discipline of the controlled environment of the school, rather than alone, unsupervised at home.

5. What principles are here involved? At least two:

a. Doing "the very best possible" to achieve the "harmonious development" of the individual child (see **Appendix A**).

b. The exercise of "common sense." During this session with the school board, EGW said:

(1) "God wants us all to have common sense, and He wants us to reason from common sense. Circumstances alter conditions. Circumstances change the relation of things" (3SM 217).

c. EGW often stated an "ideal" goal toward which we should strive, but also recognized that sometimes we fall short of the ideal because of circumstances.

(1) For further study, see:

(a) Betty S. Nelson's extremely interesting and useful Andrews University research paper, "Ellen G. White's 'Eight-to-Ten' Statements: Principles and Early Usage," unpublished monograph, Summer, 1981, 32-pp., White Estate Q/A File 28-A-1 (also available in AU Heritage Room).

(b) "In a Class of Their Own," *Newsweek*, Jan. 10, 1994, p. 58.

D. Vegetarianism vs. Flesh Diet

1. EGW was a 17-year-old Sunday-keeping pork-eater when she received her first vision, in Dec., 1844.

a. Yet the light on Sabbath did not come until April 3, 1847, nearly two and one-half years later. (EW 32).

b. And the light on vegetarianism was not given until some 18-1/2 years later, on June 6, 1863 (RH, Oct. 8, 1863, cited in CD 481, #1).

(1) Because she was a "great" meat-eater, she then had a "special battle to fight" against appetite (2T 371, 371).

(2) But "I accepted the light on health reform as it came to me" (Ms 50, 1904, cited in CD 482, #3); and "I broke away from everything at once" (2T 371).

2. For the next 30 years, however, she would occasionally depart, temporarily, from her habitual practice of excluding flesh articles from her diet, in at least three

categories of "emergency" situations:

- a. Problems in travel, where it was especially difficult in those days to obtain a vegetarian, non-flesh diet.
 - b. Therapeutic use in certain medical situations.
 - c. Transition periods in her extended family, between the departure of a cook who knew how to cook vegetarian, and the training of the replacement cook.
 - (1) See RWC's *Ellen G. White and Vegetarianism: Did She Practice What She Preached?* [Pacific Press, 1986, 30 pp.] in *Anthology*, I: 86/64-71; a brief synopsis appeared in *Ministry*, April, 1986, pp. 4-7. 29.
3. Despite these temporary departures from habitual vegetarianism, EGW claimed ever to have followed "principle" in the matter of her diet:
- a. 1870: "I have not changed my course a particle since I adopted the health reform. I have not taken one step back since the light from heaven upon this subject first shone upon my pathway. . . . I left off these things from principle. I took my stand on health reform from principle. And since that time, brethren, you have not heard me advance an extreme view of health reform that I had to take back. I have advanced nothing but what I stand to today" (2T 371., 372, cited in CD 483, 484, #5).
 - b. 1897: "I present these matters before the people, dwelling upon general principles" (Ms 29, 1897, cited in CD 493,#24).
 - c. 1904: At the age of 76, she reported she was experiencing better health than "I had in my younger days;" and she attributed this improvement in health to following "the principles of health reform" (Ms 50, 1904, cited in CD 482, 33).
 - d. 1908: "It is reported by some that I have not lived up to the principles of health reform, as I have advocated them with my pen. But I can say that so far as my knowledge goes, I have not departed from those principles" (Letter 50, 1908, cited in CD 491, 491, #23).
 - e. 1909: "It is reported by some that I have not followed the principles of health reform as I have advocated them with my pen; but I can say that I have been a faithful health reformer. Those who have been members of my family know that this is true" (9T 158, 159).
4. Vegetarianism, *per se*, is *not* a principle—though principles, and moral issues, are certainly involved.
- a. Vegetarianism, itself, cannot be a principle, because principles, by definition, are unchanging, unvarying rules of human behavior and conduct that apply to all peoples in all ages.
 - b. If vegetarianism, itself, were a principle, it would have been wrong for the followers of Jehovah in Old Testament times, and of Christ in New Testament times, to have eaten meat and fish.
 - (1) Abraham fed veal to Christ and His two accompanying angels, under the oak at Mamre (Gen. 18:7, 8).
 - (2) Christ instructed Moses to command all Israel to eat roast Passover lamb on the night of the Exodus, and annually thereafter (Ex 12:1-14).

- (3) And Christ and His disciples, in addition to eating Passover lamb annually, repeatedly ate fish from Galilee--even after the resurrection! (John 21:9, 10).
5. While vegetarianism, itself, is not a principle; it *is* a divinely-inspired policy--and, remember, policies are just as binding upon Christians as are principles, when they find themselves in the same contextual situations which called forth the prophetic application initially.
6. And vegetarianism is a policy, based upon certain eternal principles of health:
 - a. Eat and drink to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31; cf. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20).
 - b. Practice temperance in all things; total abstinence from all that is hurtful and harmful, and moderation in the use of that which is healthful (PP 562; Te 138).
 - c. Promote and maintain life and good health:
 - (1) "Preserve the best health" (YI, May 31, 1894, cited in CD 395, #700).
 - (2) "We are, as it were, under bonds to our Maker to preserve our bodies in the very best condition of health that we may in our lives render to God perfect service (19MR 314; cf. 14MR 222; YI, Nov. 8, 1900; MYP 69; MH 130; 3T 63).
 - (3) "Eat that food which is most nourishing" (9T 163).
 - d. Sometimes emergency situations require emergency solutions. Sometimes we may, indeed, be required to choose between the lesser of two acknowledged undesirable practices; but we should always do the very best possible under every circumstance in life (see Appendix A).

E. The "Bicycle" Testimony

1. The Counsel: After an 1894 vision in Battle Creek, EGW wrote--
 - a. There seemed to be a bicycle craze. Money was spent to gratify an enthusiasm. . . .A bewitching influence seemed to be passing as a wave over our people there. . . .Satan works with intensity of purpose to induce our people to invest their time and money in gratifying supposed wants. This is a species of idolatry. . . . There were some who were striving for the mastery, each trying to excel the other in the swift running of their bicycles.--8T 51, 52.
2. External Context:
 - a. Toward the end of the last century the American people were swept with a consuming passion which left them with little time or money for anything else. . . . What was this big new distraction? For an answer the merchants had only to look out the window and watch their erstwhile customers go whizzing by. America had discovered the bicycle and everybody was making the most of the new freedom it brought. . . . The bicycle began as a rich man's toy. Society and celebrity went awheel.
The best early bicycle cost \$150, an investment comparable to the cost of an automobile today. . . . Every member of the family

wanted a "wheel," and entire family savings were used up in supplying the demand.—Frank Tripp, "When All the World Went Wheeling," *The Reader's Digest*, December, 1951, pp. 121-23.

3. Principles Involved:

- a. Stewardship.
- b. Avoidance of competition and rivalry.
- c. Avoidance of strife for supremacy.

4. Commentary:

- a. Because of rapid strides in technology and manufacturing, in a few years the bicycle became the most economical means of transportation.
- b. Under the new circumstances, the 1894 testimony would not stand in the way of a proper use of this now-inexpensive vehicle.

F. Certain Practices Involved in Sabbath-Keeping

1. Although EGW's counsels pertaining to the "nitty-gritty" specifics of proper Sabbath-observance (e.g., 6T 349-68; 2T 701-5) are widely ignored in Adventism today, three in particular arise to trouble conservative Adventists who genuinely seek to follow her counsels:

- a. No "cooking" during the Sabbath hours—do it all the day previously, on the Preparation Day (6T 357:3; 355:3).
- b. The "baths" should be taken before sunset on Friday (6T 355:3).
- c. "Shaving" should not be done "after the beginning of the Sabbath" (ST, May 25, 1882:7)

2. **Cooking Upon the Sabbath:**

a. The Counsels:

- (1) "Cooking upon the Sabbath should be avoided" (6T 357:3).
- (2) "On Friday let the preparation for the Sabbath be completed. See that . . . all the cooking is done" (6T 355:3).

b. The Context:

- (1) In EGW's day "simple" cooking was itself a very complex, time-consuming, labor-intensive activity.
 - (a) Thermostat-free wood stoves, without automatic timing devices, required labor-intensive, total personal attention by the cook --and that wood had to be fetched into the kitchen at regular intervals, to keep the fire going.
 - (b) Even "simple" cooking required "work;" and work was eschewed on the Sabbath.
- (2) Therefore, the main--basic--food preparation for the Sabbath should be done on Friday.
- (3) It was, however, permissible, to heat-up food prepared the day previously, since God did not require Sabbath-keepers to eat cold food upon His special day (6T 357:3).

c. The Principle(s):

- (1) Nothing that could be done on the previous six working days should be left to Sabbath hours (6T 354:3).

(2) All unnecessary "work" should be avoided.

d. Application of the Principle(s):

(1) Today's housewives, however, have self-timing ovens that can be electronically programmed to bake, without the personal attendance of the cook, while she worships at church.

(a) Today, she also has microwave ovens, which do the work of hours within a few seconds of time.

(b) Cooking is no longer altogether the time-consuming, labor-intensive chore of yesteryear.

(2) Whatever preparation that can be done on Friday should still be done on Friday.

(3) But the use of modern, labor-saving devices does have a mitigating, extenuating bearing upon the counsels developed to meet earlier, substantially different, conditions.

3. Sabbath Baths:

a. The Counsel:

(1) "On Friday let the preparation for the Sabbath be completed. See that all clothing is in readiness and that all the cooking is done., Let the boots be blacked and the baths taken" (6T 355:3).

b. The Context:

(1) There were no hot water heaters in those days--all water had to be heated on a wood-burning stove in the kitchen, with all of the attendant disadvantages (including, again, bringing in the wood).

(2) Houses had no bathrooms such as we have today; baths were taken in the kitchen, in large "missionary-size" tubs on the floor.

(a) The water, first, had to be hand-pumped from the well; then hauled indoors, one bucket at a time; then it had to be heated; then carried from the stove, one bucket at a time, to the tubs; then removed again, as wastewater, and thrown outdoors. This involved *lots* of work!

(b) Multiply all these tasks by the number of persons scheduled to take baths, and you begin to get some idea of the magnitude of the operation!

(3) Understandably, many (if not most) persons only one bath per week (whether they needed it or not!).

(a) Sunday-keepers typically took their weekly bath on Saturday nights.

(b) And Sabbath-keepers--in this context--were urged by the prophet to take theirs Friday afternoons, before the beginning of the Sabbath.

c. The Principle(s):

(1) SDAs were to greet the Sabbath with clean bodies--and the "work" of bathing was to be done before the beginning of Sabbath hours.

d. Application of the Principle(s):

(1) Today most houses have bathrooms, automatic thermostatically-controlled hot-water heaters, and showers in which hot water is instantly available.

- (2) A shower can be completed in five minutes, generally.
- (3) And many (if not most) Americans are accustomed to taking a daily shower, just as they clean their teeth daily.
- (4) Now, if one is doing work that gets him/her dirty on Friday, the counsel concerning taking the bath before sunset still equally applies.
- (5) But the taking of a daily morning shower on Sabbath, as upon the other six days of the week, need not be interdicted by the counsels as given.

4. "Shaving" Upon the Sabbath:

a. The Counsel:

- (1) There is only one such reference to this on the CD-ROM disk: "The violation of the fourth commandment is not confined to the preparation of food. Many carelessly put off the blacking of their boots, and shaving, until after the beginning of the Sabbath. This should not be. If any neglect to do such work on a working day, they should have respect enough for God's holy time to let their beards remain unshaven, their boots rough and brown, until the Sabbath is past. This might help their memory, and make them more careful to do their own work on the six working days" (ST, May 25, 1882:7).

b. The Context:

- (1) EGW, clearly, is here using the word "shaving" as a synonym for the "trimming" of a beard regularly worn, day-in, day-out.
 - (a) In 1882 the clean-shaven look was not in vogue; and most men did not shave daily, as they do today.
- (2) The intended analogy, today, would be to getting a haircut on the Sabbath, not to the eradication of a one-day crop of whiskers, to make one's face appear clean-shaven again for the new day, as upon all other days of the week.

c. The Principle(s): (same as above).

d. The Application to Today:

- (1) It is not wrong for a man to shave his face on Sabbath, assuming he does so every other day of the week.
 - (a) It would be no different from daily cleaning one's teeth, or taking a daily shower in the morning, to freshen-up for the new day.

Conclusion

1. We have, in this series of presentations, examined Jemison's three rules of interpretation.
 - a. For a recapitulative case study, see **Appendix B** on how to interpret Paul's statements that women should keep silent in the churches.

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2. "Common sense," which the prophet urged upon us, that we might not only "have" it, but also "reason from" it, is still all too uncommon in our midst.
 - a. But we should continue to strive to develop, maintain, and employ it.
3. Balance is the goal to be achieved; distortion is the enemy to be avoided.
4. And we should avoid the pitfall, in the making of distinctions between principles and policies, to feel that prophet-applied policies are not as important as prophet-enunciated principles, and that such policies can be neglected with impunity.
 - a. Policies have equal weight with principles, in the context in which prophets apply them.
5. In spelling out the details of His plan for our lives, God would have us understand that:
 - a. Our obedience to His stated commands is not to be viewed as a sort of penance:
 - (1) "Earnestly and untiringly are we to strive to reach God's ideal for us. Not as penance are we to do this, but as the only means of gaining true happiness. The only way to gain peace and joy is to have a living connection with Him who gave His life for us, who died that we might live, and who lives to unite His power with the efforts of those who are striving to overcome" (HP 33:4).
 - b. His commands are not to be observed in any legalistic manner:
 - (1) "We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter. We are to understand its spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life" (6T 353:4).
6. As an Epilogue to this series on Hermeneutics, we offer McLandburgh Wilson's lines on the "Optimist and Pessimist" (c. 1915), which are so appropriate in this context:
 - a. "Twixt the optimist and the pessimist
The difference is droll:
The optimist sees the doughnut,
But the pessimist sees the hole."
 - b. And it was doubtless from these words that the autograph-album-wisdom of the 1930's and 1940's developed:
"As you travel through life,
Whatever be your goal:
Keep your eye upon the doughnut,
And not upon the hole!"

List of Appendixes

- Appendix A:** EGW's Principle of "Doing the Very Best Possible" in Every Given Circumstance
- Appendix B:** Paul's Counsel That Women Should Remain Silent in the Church: A Case Study in Hermeneutics

For Further Study

In addition to many articles too numerous to mention in the two *Anthologies* on hermeneutics, the following, appearing in the *Sourcebook*, are worthy of note:

- | | | |
|-----|--|--------|
| D-1 | "Ellen G. White as an Interpreter of Scripture
Robert W. Olson, White Estate, May 25, 1983. | 16 pp. |
| D-2 | "Hermeneutics--Guiding Principles in the Interpretation of the Bible and the Writings of Ellen G. White." | 20 pp. |
| D-3 | [857] <i>Bible Words That Have Changed in Meaning</i>
Luther A. Weigle, New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1955. | 10 pp. |
| D-4 | "Ellen G. White and the Cause of Reform"
James White, "To a Brother at Monroe, Wis.,"
<i>Review and Herald</i> , March 17, 1868. | 3 pp. |
| D-5 | "Did EGW Ever Change a Doctrinal Position?"
Roger W. Coon, White Estate, May 30, 1990. | 3 pp. |
| D-6 | "The Use of the EGW Writings in the SDA Pulpit"
Roger W. Coon, White Estate, May 30, 1990. | 9 pp. |
| D-7 | "Ellen G. White on Personal Counseling"
Roger W. Coon, White Estate, May 30, 1990. | 15 pp. |

Appendix A

EGW's Principle of "Doing the Very Best Possible" in Every Given Circumstance

- 3T 63 "God requires us to . . . preserve physical health . . . , preserve health and prolong life."
- MH 130: "The requirements of God must be brought home to the conscience. Men and women . . . need to be impressed with the fact that all their powers of mind and body are a gift of God, and are to be preserved in the best possible condition for His service."
- HP 60:3: "We are to place ourselves in the very best possible condition to do His service."
- MYP 69:2: "We are to co-operate with God by keeping the body in the very best possible condition of health" (also see *Bible Echo*, Oct. 15, 1900:7; *Youth's Instructor*, Nov. 8, 1900:7).
- 14MR 222:1: "We are to place ourselves in the very best possible position for health and for clear, bright spirituality."

Appendix B

Paul's Counsel Against Women Speaking in the Churches: A Case Study in Hermeneutics

1. Application of Jemison's Rule #1: Take All That the Prophet Has Written--

- a. *1 Tim 2:12, NASB*: "I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet."
- b. *1 Cor. 14:34, NASB*: "Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak...."

2. Application of Jemison's Rule #2: Check the Context, Internal and External--

a. Internal Context:

- (1) Paul was concerned with the maintenance of reverence in public places of Christian worship. Obviously this was a problem in Ephesus (to which the First Epistle to Timothy was directed) and in Corinth (to which his First Epistle to the Corinthians was directed).

b. External Context: Paul faced three problems--

- (1) *Irreverence* in the service of worship (women, in their new freedom in the gospel, were calling out questions--something totally forbidden in the Jewish synagogue, where they had to remain unnoticed, in segregated seating, behind a curtain or veil).
- (2) *Sexual immorality*: in Corinth, the Temple of Aphrodite had 1,000 priestess-prostitutes who plied their trade under the guise of religion; in Ephesus, their counterparts served in the Temple of Diana, and went by the name *Melissae*. Paul did not want pagans, entering a Christian house of worship for the first time, to misunderstand the role and function of women who might be taking a prominent part in leading out in the services!
- (3) *Culture*: In the First Century A.D., Greek and Hebrew culture both agreed upon one thing: the place of women was very restricted. For Paul to have attempted to override and fly in the face of contemporary convention (such as preaching a sermon against slavery--see AA 459:3-460:0) would have endangered the very existence of the nascent church.
 - (a) For commentary, see William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, rev. ed. [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975], p. 134; and his *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, rev. ed. [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975], pp. 66-69.

3. Application of Jemison's Rule #3: Is the Prophet's Counsel a Principle or a Policy?--

- a. Paul's counsel could *not* have been a *principle*, for it would then have applied to all time and in all places--including today:
 - (1) When Joseph and Mary brought the infant Jesus into the Temple at Jerusalem, Anna--a prophetess--spoke right out, publicly, concerning the future role of the baby Jesus, right there in the Temple (Luke 1:25-38).

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- (a) Had this counsel been a principle, the male priest present would surely have reprimanded her; but there is no Biblical evidence in the record that anyone considered her behavior reproachable, or that she was scolded.
- (2) Four women are specifically mentioned by name as serving as prophetesses in the Old Testament, at least one of whom (Miriam) led the choir, right out in front of the whole congregation! (Ex. 15:20, 21).
- (3) Philip the Evangelist had four daughters, all of whom were prophetesses (Acts 21:9).
 - (a) And Paul even gave instruction concerning the appearance of women who prayed in public (1 Cor. 11:5, 6)—something he manifestly would not have done had this been condemned Scripturally!
- (4) No, logic and consistency compel me to believe that Paul's counsel against women speaking in a church was a policy, not a principle.
- b. Paul's (temporary) policy against women speaking in Christian churches was based upon at least five *Pauline* principles, explicated elsewhere in his writings:
 - (1) *1 Cor. 14:40*: "let all things be done decently [Paul was concerned with decency], and also with order [he was likewise concerned with reverence in God's house]."
 - (2) *1 Thess. 5:22*: Christians should abstain not only from the substance of evil, but also even from the appearance of evil.
 - (3) *1 Cor. 8:9; Rom. 14:13, 21*: Don't place a stumbling block in front of a weak brother or sister.
 - (4) *1 Cor. 6:12*: Among some things that in and of themselves are inherently lawful—permissible, there are some that are sometimes not expedient to perform.
 - (5) *1 Tim. 2:9*: Modesty is to be cultivated by all women—as well as by men!
- c. Paul's *principle* in this matter?
 - (1) *Gal. 3:27, 28*: ". . . there is neither male nor female . . ."
(See Roger W. Coon's continuing education course on Hermeneutics in *The Journal of Adventist Education*, Summer, 1988, Section III, pp. 16-30; in *Anthology*, I:88/60-75.)

SDA Doctrine

**Ellen G. White and Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines:
Her role in the development of our distinctive beliefs⁽¹⁾**

Denis Fortin

Introduction

- **God's Three Apparent Priorities Regarding the Visions of Ellen White During the First Twenty Years of Her Ministry (1845-65)**

1. The Decade of the 1840s (1848-50): *Priority One*: Formulation of the Basic Doctrinal Framework of the SDA Church

a. The writings of:

(1) Joseph Bates.

(2) Owen R.L. Crosier (Crozier).

(3) James White

b. The "Sabbath/Sanctuary Conferences" of 1848-50: here the doctrinal framework was hammered out.

(1) By Dec. 13, 1850, EGW could finally write: "We know [now] that we have the truth" (Letter 30, 1850).

c. Subsequent "fine-turning" would, of course, continue to the present day:

(1) A formal statement of belief on our position on the doctrine of the Trinity would not, for example, appear until as late as 1980 (though most SDAs, generally, had believed in it for years).

2. The Decade of the 1850s (1850-60): *Priority Two*: "Gospel Order"--the Formal Organization of the SDA Church

a. It would require the entire decade to bring this to full fruition:

(1) The first vision on "gospel order" came on 24 December 1850--only 11 days after EGW had expressed her conviction that now "we have the truth" (Letter 30, 1850).

(2) But the very first steps in formal organization would not come for a full decade:

(a) The first church body "legally" organized: Parkville, MI, 13 May 1860.

(b) The corporate name "Seventh-day Adventists" was formally adopted on 1 October 1860, at Battle Creek.

(c) The first institution organized: "The Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association", 1 October 1860, Battle Creek.

(3) The General Conference itself was organized 21 May 1863, at Battle Creek.

3. The Decade of the 1860s (1863-65): *Priority Three*: Development of the SDA Health Message:

a. Although two earlier messages (1848, 1854) included health concerns (among others), the first *comprehensive* "health-reform" vision was not given until Friday, 6 June 1863.

(1) This was a mere 16 days after the GC itself was organized (21 May).

b. The second *major* "health-reform" vision (but the fourth dealing with the subject, overall), came Christmas Day 1865, in Rochester, NY.

4. While vision content during roughly the first 20 years was not limited exclusively to these three categories, there does nevertheless seem to be a preponderant emphasis, as far as priorities are concerned, in the decades of the 1840s, the 1850s, and the 1860s.

B. Ellen White and Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines

1. Contemporary questions concerning the existence and nature of EGW's doctrinal and prophetic "authority" continue to be raised:

a. Before this subject can fruitfully be addressed, however, one must first consider:

(1) How, where, and in what manner SDA doctrines originated.

(2) The role of the Holy Spirit, through EGW, in that process.

2. The average SDA generally suspects (and may even be mildly embarrassed by the "fact") that SDA doctrines find their genesis in the visions of EGW.

a. Typical of nonSDA opinion is that of G. H. Shriver, author of the article on "Seventh-day Adventism" in the *Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions* (1981):

(1) "The source of authority for belief is the Bible, but the writings of Ellen White are held in such high esteem that for all practical purposes it is the Bible as interpreted by Ellen White" (p. 672).

3. Many are quite surprised (and even relieved!) upon learning that her visions are *not* the source of our doctrinal beliefs.

a. This is not to say that she did not have a substantial role to play in the process--for she did.

b. But her role in doctrinal formation *after* 1850 was significantly different from that of before 1850, when the basic doctrinal framework was hammered out.

4. Her role *after* 1850, after the doctrines had been basically established, may be summarized as follows:

a. She explains, clarifies, amplifies meaning (and sometimes even defines):

(1) Sometimes exegetically.

(2) More often homiletically.

b. She interprets prophetic symbols.

c. She shows inter-relationships between various passages of Scripture (that we might not otherwise link together).

d. She provides extra-biblical (though not anti-biblical) detail.

e. She does *not* "exhaust" the meaning of Scripture:

(1) Her position on the meaning of a text does not, necessarily, preclude other positions--if they are non-contradictory (see "The inspiration and authority of the Ellen G. White writings," *Ministry*, August 1982.)

5. Her role *before* 1850, before the doctrines were basically established, was largely to serve as a channel through which God, in a strikingly supernatural manner, directly corrected errors and confirmed truth through her to the believers concerning that which He wanted them to know.

a. And in this special process she could not comment or elaborate when not in vision.

I. Why doctrinal formation had to be the First priority in the 1840s

1. Arthur L. White has drawn a contrast between the "scattering time" and the subsequent "gathering time:"

a. "In the perspective of time by which we are advantaged, what may not have been so easily seen by the pioneers through the years 1845 to 1850--"the scattering time"--may now be easily seen as the time of the development of the doctrinal structure, a time when the body of truth was being firmly fitted together, piece by piece. It was a time when those involved would have been ill-prepared to herald a message not yet understood in its fullness and its interrelationships. The "scattering time"--when attempts to spread the truth accomplished little--allowed the painstaking, thorough Bible study and the confirming work of the Spirit of God through the visions, which resulted in the invulnerable structure of truth to present to the world" (1Bio 190).

2. The ex-Millerites had to develop their position for two cogent reasons: on October 23, 1844:

a. They had no *message*.

b. They had no *audience*.

A. The Ex-Millerites had NO MESSAGE After October 22, 1844

1. Miller *had* had a message in earlier days:

a. Its characteristics:

- (1) Simple. (4) Distinctive
- (2) Concise (5) Decisive
- (3) Clear-cut (6) Decision-demanding

b. Its content:

(1) A specific *event*: Jesus is coming back to earth, the righteous will be saved and taken to glory, and the earth ("sanctuary") will be "cleansed" by fire.

(2) A specific *time*--successively:

- (a) "About 1843" (c) Autumn, 1844
- (b) Spring, 1844 (d) October 22, 1844

2. After October 22, the ex-Millerites were:

- a. Disappointed, hurt, dispirited, disheartened.
- b. Totally lacking in energy for further public labor.
- c. Confused, theologically, in their thinking.

3. A substantial amount of time would be required before some ex-Millerites (those who would become the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist church) would develop understanding in three theological categories:

a. The Disappointment:

(1) The continuing study of the newly developing ideas regarding the heavenly sanctuary and Christ's priesthood would eventually clarify that their date was right, but their event was wrong.

b. The 3rd Angel's message:

(1) The continuing study of the new Sabbath truth would gradually lead them to an understanding and eschatological interpretation of the "beast," "image," and "mark" of Rev. 13 and 14.

- (a) The Sabbath would unlock the mystery of the 3rd Angel's message.

c. The need for further evangelism:

(1) Initially, many Millerites (including Miller) believed that probation had closed on October 22 for all non-Millerites (the "shut door" issue).

(2) It would take years of study and reflection before they came to understand that the probationary "door" was shut only for *some* on October 22.

4. Before these ex-Millerites could hope to go out with any degree of effective preaching, they must first have a new, *augmented* message; and before they could hope to achieve that, they faced a threefold task:

a. Slow, painstaking Bible study:

(1) To penetrate the mysteries and uncertainties which shrouded them.

(2) To apprehend fully and further the inter-relationships between various doctrines - a body of truth had to be fitted together, like a jigsaw puzzle.

b. Understanding the threefold work of the Holy Spirit through EGW's visions:

(1) To confirm Biblically-correct conclusions arrived at through:

(a) Prayer.

(b) Diligent study of the Word.

(c) Fasting.

(2) To correct, when they were wrong.

(3) To suggest new initiatives, new directions, for further fruitful discovery, when at an impasse.

c. The writing out and publishing of conclusions reached from study:

(1) No one really, fully, understands a concept until he/she can clearly explain it to another.

(2) The very act of writing forces the author to crystalize his/her ideas and viewpoints.

(3) Our pioneers had to progress through this slow (and often painful) process before they could develop a new, augmented message for the public at large.

(a) Bates with his Sabbath tracts, pamphlets, books.

(b) Edson-Crosier-Hahn, with their sanctuary position.

(c) James White on various doctrines, in his *Present Truth* and *Review and Herald*.

5. And it was not until 13 December 1850, that EGW could finally write: "We know [now] that we have the truth" (Lt 30, 1850).

B. The Ex-Millerites Had NO AUDIENCE After Oct. 22, 1844

1. The DISAPPOINTED were not at all ready to receive *any* message, even from within their own ranks, initially.

a. Most were totally preoccupied with managing very strong emotional feelings:

(1) Crushing disappointment.

(2) Acute social embarrassment and mortification.

(3) Anger at God, for "misleading" or "deceiving" them.

(4) Distrust of their own reasoning powers and processes.

b. They were now very wary and determined, above all, never again to be so "duped," and "taken in."

c. Some went into wild fanaticism, strange "experiences," and false doctrines (including setting new dates for the Second Advent).

(1) *They* weren't ready to listen to others, only to talk out their own strange ideas.

2. The REJECTERS of Miller's message, initially, were unapproachable after October 22:

a. The non-appearance of Jesus on October 22 served only to confirm and reinforce their unbelief or disbelief.

b. Their scorn and ridicule for the ex-Millerites now only increased.

c. The public, for several years, was totally unprepared to consider *any* revision of Millerite thinking with an attitude even approaching serious, respectful consideration.

3. The Millerites, first, had to "get their act together."

II. The Role of the "Sabbath/Sanctuary" Conferences

1. Historically, the term "Sabbath Conferences" refers to a series of 22 meetings held between April, 1848, and December, 1850, usually spanning long weekends, and generally located in New York, New England and Canada East.

a. Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell, retired professor of church history, holds, however, that they should, instead, be designated as "Sabbath/Sanctuary" Conferences, because equal emphasis was placed upon both doctrines in these meetings.

b. Six were held in 1848 (with JW/EGW believed to have attended all six).

c. Six were held in 1849 (with JW/EGW believed to have attended at least three).

d. Ten were held in 1850 (with JW/EGW believed to have attended eight).

2. First 1848 conference:

a. Held: April 20-24, 1848.

b. Locale: "Large, unfinished chamber," Albert Belden home, Rocky Hill, Connecticut.

c. Attendance: about 50.

d. Main addressed by: James White; Joseph Bates, on law of God (2SG 93).

3. Second 1848 conference:

a. Held: August 18, 1848.

b. Locale: David Arnold's barn, Volney, NY.

c. Attendance: 35 ("all that could be collected in that part of the state").

d. Attitudes: Upon arrival, "hardly any two agreed" on any theological point.

(1) Greater doctrinal discord than at 1st conference.

(2) Not surprising: these people came out from the Millerite Movement, one of the first authentically ecumenical movements in 19th Century USA.

e. Doctrinal differences: Some held that

(1) The millennium is already in the past.

(2) The 144,000 were those raised Easter Sunday by Christ in 31 AD.

(3) The Lord's Supper should be held only once annually, since it was the NT counterpart of the Passover.

(4) Christ had already returned, spiritually.

(5) Nothing happened in 1844.

f. Effect on EGW: she fainted, under intense emotional pressure and stress from discord; some thought her dead, but she revived. She was then taken into vision, where the Lord revealed:

(1) Some of the errors held by those present.

(2) God's truth, in contrast with those errors.

g. Upon departure: unity of understanding prevailed ("Our meeting ended victoriously. Truth gained the victory." 2SG 96-99).

4. Remaining 1848 Conferences:

a. Port Gibson, NY (Aug). c. Topsham, ME (Oct).

b. Rocky Hill, CT (Sept). d. Dorchester, MA (Nov).

5. What produced the remarkable transformation from widespread theological disunity to Christian unity at these meetings? The activities of the participants--almost non-stop, and sometimes all night long:

- a. Prayer for guidance and understanding ("so much prayer"-UL 152).
- b. Hard, diligent, exhaustive Bible study ("such earnest searching of the Scriptures"-*ibid.*)
- c. Earnest discussion.
- d. Fasting.

6. Three results from these conferences:

- a. They tended to establish those already in the truth.
- b. They tended to awaken many not yet fully decided for the truth.
- c. Development of consensus statements on doctrinal positions.

(1) As all present contributed, all felt free to use the end-product freely when explicating the consensus positions adopted thereby.

(2) These meetings brought general agreement among Sabbatarian Adventists (probably still numbering only several hundred) on eight doctrines:

(a) An imminent, personal, premillennial Second Advent.

(b) The two-apartment High-Priestly ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, whose cleansing had commenced in 1844.

(c) The seventh-day Sabbath is biblical and binding upon Christians.

(d) God's special supernatural enlightenment of Ellen G. White.

(e) The duty to proclaim the Three Angels' Messages of Rev. 14.

(f) Conditional immortality: death is a dreamless sleep.

(g) The timing of the Seven Last Plagues (after the Close of Probation).

(h) The final, complete, annihilation of the wicked at the close of the millennium. (Richard Schwarz, *Lightbearers to the Remnant*, 69.)

7. Role of the Holy Spirit through EGW, in this discovery-of-truth process:

a. What it *was*: "to establish a people." The visions tended to

(1) Confirm/corroborate, when they were on the right track.

(2) Correct, when they were on the wrong track.

(3) Suggest new initiatives, when they were at an impasse, unable to go further.

b. What it was *not*:

(1) A Substitute for hard work, study, prayer, individual initiative.

(2) Generally, EGW did not initiate, taking the lead as far as doctrine was concerned.

III. Three Reasons Why Post-Millerites Tended to Accept the Authenticity of Ellen White's Prophetic Gift

A. Physical Phenomena Occurring When Ellen White Was in Vision

1. It was dramatically impressive; it grabbed attention in a most effective manner.

a. When in vision, EGW:

(1) Invariably did not breathe.

(2) Upon at least five occasions, she held a large, heavy Bible in an unsupported, outstretched hand.

2. As in apostolic times, the divine purpose was to play a special role in confirming the supernatural origin of the phenomenon until sufficient time had elapsed for fruitage to develop.

3. **A Caution:** physical phenomena, while indeed an "evidence" of supernatural activity, is still not "proof" that the person is an authentic prophet of the Lord!

a. It does not validate its origin: whether it is from the Holy Spirit or from the devil.

(1) Satan can, does, and will yet manifest supernatural miracles.

(2) EGW has warned that supernatural miracles will especially be employed in the very end-time in an attempt to prove that error is truth.

(a) Margaret Rowen, an SDA false prophet in the 1920s, did not breathe while in vision--and that one thing probably convinced more SDAs that she was a true prophet than any other single factor.

b. *Physical phenomena is an "evidence" that something supernatural is happening; it is not "proof" that what is happening comes from God.*

B. The Content of the Visions: Two Chief Characteristics

1. The visions were *relevant*: the content dealt with urgent problems immediately at hand which required urgent solutions.

2. The visions were also *helpful*: they were not only relevant, but they also tended to provide viable solutions needed to resolve these immediate problems.

C. The Mental State of Ellen White at the Conferences When She Was Not in Vision

1. During these meetings, which spanned a three-year period of time, when EGW was not in vision, she was totally unable to enter into the theological discussions as to what the true position was, or even the meaning of her own vision content!

a. She reported "My mind was locked" (1SM 207).

2. She could relate only that which she had seen and heard, and no more.

a. She could not explain, clarify, amplify, or answer questions upon any point.

b. She could not enter into the discussions of the group as to what the vision might mean.

3. This condition continued (during the actual time of the meetings) for a three-year period, "until all the principal points of our faith were made clear."

a. At age 77, in retrospect, she characterized this experience as "one of the greatest sorrows of my life"--not to be able to enter into the group discussions as our doctrines were being developed and formulated.

4. But--precisely because of this singular situation--"the brethren... accepted as light direct from heaven the revelations given" (1SM 207).

a. And this special manifestation of the Holy Spirit brought unity into the ranks of Advent Sabbath-keepers.

IV. Ellen G. White's relationship to the six "pillar" doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Following the Minneapolis General Conference session she wrote this commentary on what happened then:

"In Minneapolis God gave precious gems of truth to His people in new settings. This light from heaven by some was rejected with all the stubbornness the Jews manifested in rejecting Christ, and there was much talk about standing by the old landmarks. But there was evidence they knew not what the old landmarks were. There was evidence and there was reasoning from the word that commended itself to the conscience; but the minds of men were fixed, sealed against the entrance of light, because they had decided it was a dangerous error removing the "old landmarks" when it was not moving a peg of the old landmarks, but they had perverted ideas of what constituted the old landmarks."

"The passing of the time in 1844 was a period of great events, opening to our astonished eyes the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven, and having decided relation to God's people upon the

earth, [also] the first and second angels' messages and the third, unfurling the banner on which was inscribed, "The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." One of the landmarks under this message was the temple of God, seen by His truth-loving people in heaven, and the ark containing the law of God. The light of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment flashed its strong rays in the pathway of the transgressors of God's law. The nonimmortality of the wicked is an old landmark. I can call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks. All this cry about changing the old landmarks is all imaginary." (Mss 13, 1889 in CW 30-31)

1. Ellen White variously identified the "pillar," "landmark," "foundation" doctrines of the SDA Church as:

- a. The Second Coming of Christ.
- b. The Heavenly Sanctuary (including Christ's high-priestly ministry therein).
- c. "Soul Sleep" (conditional immortality; the non-immortality of the wicked).
- d. The Seventh-day Sabbath.
- e. The Three Angels' Messages.
- f. The Spirit of Prophecy (see CW 28-32).

2. What was her personal relationship to these doctrines? What was her role in their origin and development?

- a. Was she and her visions the source of our doctrines?
- b. No! Our doctrines did *not* originate in either her visions or in her writings!
- c. Her role, largely--as we shall note in detail, below--was to come after those pioneers which had more prominently popularized them, and set the *imprimatur* of heaven upon them.

A. The Second Advent of Christ

1. Ellen White heard William Miller preach this doctrine in Portland, ME, in 1840, and again in 1842, when she was a child of 12 and 14 years, respectively.

- a. She, with her parents, accepted this doctrine as taught solely from Scripture.
- b. And they were subsequently disfellowshipped from the Methodist Church because of their stand.

2. Ellen White's role as a "special messenger," vis-à-vis this doctrine, was largely that of validating the prior Biblical teaching of Miller, Joshua V. Himes, Charles Fitch, Josiah Litch, Joseph Bates, and others who promulgated it.

- a. The doctrine of Christ's Second Advent hardly originated with EGW!

B. The Heavenly Sanctuary

1. Ellen White's first written statement upon this subject came about a year after the conclusions of Hiram Edson, O.R.L. Crosier, and Dr. Frederick Hahn had been written out by Crosier and published in the *Day-Star*, and *Day-Dawn*.

a. Her role was largely to validate the conclusions of these brethren, not to initiate.

2. She repeatedly urged our members to read articles upon this subject written by the pioneers of the Advent Movement.

a. In 1983, Paul A. Gordon, then associate secretary of the White Estate, collected 400+ articles (the Table of Contents itself runs 16 pp.) on the Sanctuary doctrine (plus related topics: Dan. 8:14; the Judgment; the 2300-Days; the Year-Day Principle, and the Atonement) published between 1846 and 1905; and he produced an anthology of 1,009 pages (still in print and available from the White Estate).

b. Although EGW received 11 visions on the subject of the heavenly sanctuary between 1845-51, she always referred church members to the articles by the pioneers.

(1) And, interestingly, *not one of the pioneers appealed to these 11 visions* as "proof" of the validity of this doctrine! EGW *was not even* mentioned in their articles!

(2) Their evidence and arguments were drawn solely from the Scriptures!

(3) Uriah Smith appealed to these very same articles to refute critics and to "prove"--from the Bible, and the Bible alone--the validity of this doctrine, never to EGW.

C. "Soul-Sleep" (Conditional Immortality; the Non-Immortality of the Wicked)

1. George Storrs [1796-1879], a Methodist minister who became a Millerite preacher in 1842, was the first in Millerism to write in advocacy of the unconscious state of humans in death.

a. He coined the expression "soul-sleep."

b. In 1841 he wrote *An Enquiry: Are the Souls of the Wicked Immortal? In Three Letters*.

(1) He revised it the next year (1842), with a slightly different subtitle.

2. Storrs' ideas influenced Eunice Harmon, Ellen White's mother, who shared them with daughter Ellen (about 1842), when the latter was about 15 years of age.

a. Ellen's initial reaction was one of strong disapproval; but after a careful study of the Biblical evidence, she accepted it (1T 39, 40).

b. After entering upon her prophetic ministry, she became a strong advocate of Storrs' "Soul-Sleep" doctrine of conditional immortality, and she considered it to be one of the half-dozen "pillar" doctrines of the SDA Church (Ms. 13, 1889; cited in CW 30, 31).

c. Her role in promoting it, however, was largely in the nature of endorsing Storrs' views; she did not break any "new ground."

D. The Sabbath

1. The doctrine of the Sabbath.

a. This doctrine was first brought to the attention of ex-Millerites by Joseph Bates (who would later--with EGW and JW--be considered one of the three co-founders of the SDA Church).

(1) Bates, in turn, was strongly influenced by studying the work of T.M. Preble, and in discussions with Rachel Oaks-Preston (a Seventh Day Baptist) and Frederic Wheeler.

b. When Bates first approached EGW on the Sabbath doctrine, her initial reaction was negative (as was, also, Bates' initial reaction when first told that she had been given a genuine prophetic gift!)

(1) Both, however, changed their respective opposition, on the basis of coercive Bible-based evidence.

2. The observance of the Sabbath.

a. James and Ellen White initially observed the Sabbath on the basis of their study of the Bible, *not* because she had had a vision on the subject showing it to be the right day!

b. A copy of Bates' tract on the Sabbath was given to them about the time of their marriage, Aug. 30, 1846. They accepted the Sabbath on the basis of Bible proof alone.

c. The first vision dealing with the sacredness of the 7th-day Sabbath (and also of the existence of the heavenly sanctuary) was given April 3, 1847, *seven months after* the Whites had commenced its observance on the basis of Bible evidence alone (cf. Lt 2, 1874; cited in EW 323-35).

3. The time to begin the observance of the Sabbath.

a. This issue was not settled among Sabbatarian Adventists until November 1855.

b. Four views coexisted among them during the 1840s and early 1850s:

(1) The Sabbath begins at sunrise Saturday morning (based upon a misinterpretation of Mat 28:1, which they interpreted to mean that Sunday begins at sunrise Sunday morning).

(2) The Sabbath begins at midnight Friday night-"legal time."

(3) The Sabbath begins at 6 p.m. Friday ("equatorial time"), a position favored by sea-captain Bates, who knew that the sun rises daily at 6 a.m., and sets daily at 6 p.m., upon the equator.

(4) The Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday; the Seventh Day Baptist position.

c. John Nevins Andrews, then only 26 years of age (but a scholar who could readily read the original Hebrew of the OT and the Greek of the NT) was commissioned by church leaders to study the matter

out from Scripture, and write a research paper to be read at a General Conference gathering in Battle Creek in November 1855.

(1) On the basis of 11 OT texts and 2 in the NT, Andrews concluded that the proper time to begin the Sabbath was sunset on Friday (his sermon is recorded in the RH, 4 December 1855).

d. Bates initially held out for "equatorial time," and EGW initially sided with Bates.

e. That night, however, EGW received a vision correcting her position, which she subsequently shared with the other believers at the early morning service the following day (Arthur L. White, *Messenger to the Remnant*, 36; 1T 116).

E. The Spirit of Prophecy

1. Ellen Harmon (later, White) was God's *third choice* for the office of prophet among the remnant people in the 1840s--and, truly, the most improbable candidate in the entire history of the prophets (Loughborough characterized her as "the weakest of the weak").

a. God's first-known choice was William Ellis Foy, a Black American (1842). (See Delbert Baker's 1988 biography, *The Unknown Prophet*.)

b. God's second-known choice was Hazen Foss, Ellen White's brother-in-law (the brother of Samuel Foss, who married Mary Harmon). (See Lt 37, 22 December 1890 to Mary Foss, cited in T. Housel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You*, 489; cf. 1 Bio 65-67).

F. The Three Angels' Messages of Revelation 14

1. Miller and his associates preached only the First Angel's Message (1839-44).

a. They never really went beyond it in any major way.

2. Charles Fitch seems to have been the first to attempt to preach the Second Angel's Message, on 26 July 1843, some 15 months before the Great Disappointment. It never really "caught on" among Millerite preachers, however.

a. Previously, Protestants had tended to identify the Church of Rome with Spiritual Babylon as identified in the Book of Revelation.

b. Fitch broadened the category to include contemporary Protestants who had turned from the doctrine of an imminent Second Advent, or were merely "warmly" in favor of it. (See LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 4: 543, 544; EGW incorrectly dates the first preaching of this message to the summer of 1844, in GC 389.)

3. James White was probably the first SDA minister to preach the 3rd Angel's Message (in *Present Truth*, April 1850).

4. Ellen White's role, basically, was to endorse the preaching of all three messages as presented by other previous speakers and writers.

Conclusion

1. O. R. L. Crosier did not appeal to Hiram Edson's "illumination" in the corn field in the early morning hours of 23 October 1844, at Port Gibson, NY, in writing his article for *Day-Dawn* and *Day-Star*, to "prove" the existence of the heavenly sanctuary; and EGW did not refer to her visions to "prove" the validity of the SDA doctrines which she espoused and taught.

2. She did, however, have this to say about those foundational "pillar" doctrines:

a. "The past fifty years have not dimmed one jot or principle of our faith as we received the great and wonderful evidences that were made certain to us in 1844, after the passing of the time. The languishing souls are to be confirmed and quickened according to His Word.... Not a word is to be changed or denied. That which the Holy Spirit testified to as truth after the passing of the time, in our great disappointment, is the solid foundation of truth. [The] pillars of truth were revealed, and we accepted the foundation principles that have made us what we are--Seventh-day Adventists, keeping the commandments of God and having the faith of Jesus" (Letter 326, 4 December 1905; cited in UL 352).

b. "We are to stand firm as a rock to the principles of the Word of God, remembering that God is with us to give us strength to meet each new experience. Let us ever maintain the principles of righteousness in our lives, that we may go forward from strength to strength in the name of the Lord. We are to hold as very sacred the faith that has been substantiated by the instruction and approval of the Spirit of God from our earliest experience until the present time..." (Letter 66, 28 August 1911; cited in UL 254).

1. This lecture outline is adapted with permission from Roger W. Coon's lecture outline, "Ellen G. White and SDA Doctrine-Part I: God's FIRST Priority in the First 20 Years," April 18, 1995.

EGW / Authority

Ellen G. White and Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines: The Issue of Prophetic Authority⁽¹⁾

Denis Fortin

Introduction

1. The concept of authority has become one of the most controversial notions of modern times. Baby Boomers and Gen Xers have openly challenged established authority as much in secular society as in religious institutions. It is no wonder that the authority of God's prophets, and what they have to teach, has also been subject to challenge.

2. But even before these two generations began their challenge of authority in general, in his book *The Spirit of Protestantism* (chapter 14), Robert M. Brown discussed the challenge of authority among Protestants.

a. He believes that Protestantism has an Achilles' heel, it is located in the Protestant understanding of authority. Protestants will readily agree that the Bible is where one finds the will of God, that it is the ultimate authority.

b. However, when hard-pressed to define what this means, what this authority consists of, all kinds of answers appear.

c. This is the Achilles' heel of Protestantism: it does not agree on the role of Scripture as God's authority on earth, it does not really agree on what the authority from God is and what it means.

3. In the SDA Church today there are also some who challenge the authority of Scripture. Our understanding of God's revelation in Scripture has become our *Achilles' heel*.

4. Authority is even more so a contemporary issue within Adventism as far as Ellen G. White's writings are concerned. Two issues are raised in various places, and with varying frequency:

a. Some do not wish to give Ellen White doctrinal authority.

b. And some others do not wish to give doctrine any authority. (See Appendix B : "Does Doctrine Matter Today?")

5. The Bible gives examples of prophets whose authority was challenged by some of their contemporaries.

a. Moses' prophetic authority was challenged by Korah, Dathan, Abiram and their supporters (Num 16:3-33).

(1) Their charge was : "You [Moses and Aaron] have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the Lord's assembly?" (v.3)

(2) Moses' analysis of the situation was that "You Levites have gone too far!" (v.7) and that these people were opposing the Lord himself (v.11).

(3) Moses did not claim to have this authority or to perform his tasks of his own. The Lord had vested him with authority (v.28).

(4) The Lord was displeased with this rebellion and severely judged and punished the guilty people (v.32-35).

(5) Ellen White equated the opposition of her critics with that of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram's opposition of Moses (5T 66,67).

b. Moses' prophetic authority was challenged by Aaron and Miriam (Num 12:1-10).

(1) Their charge was : "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?" they asked. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?"

c. Christ's authority was challenged by the ecclesiastical leaders of his day (Matt 21:23):

(1) Their charge was : "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this authority?"

(2) This charge had to do with the *nature* and the *specific source* of Christ's authority.

6. Ellen White had to meet challenges to her authority during her lifetime. How she handled the issue is worthy of note in today's climate. It may just give a clue as to an appropriate direction for the church to take today.

7. The challenges to Ellen White's authority today are largely (but not totally) in the area of *doctrinal* authority.

a. Her authority in areas of spiritual discernment and homiletical application of Scripture are usually not challenged.

8. The issue of prophetic authority must be viewed in the context of our first lecture on Ellen G. White and the development of SDA Doctrines and, specifically, how we arrived at our basic doctrines. To Seventh-day Adventists, Scripture is our only rule of faith and practice.

9. Yet, if we claim that Ellen White is the messenger of the Lord, what doctrinal authority do her writings have?

I. MODELS OF AUTHORITY

A. The concept of authority

1. But, first of all, what is authority?

a. Bernard Ramm defines authority as "that right or power to command action or compliance, or to determine belief or custom, expecting obedience from those under authority, and in turn giving responsible account for the claim to right or power." (*The Pattern of Authority*, p. 10)

2. Kinds of authority

Ramm mentions various expressions of authority, such as :

a. Imperial authority : king, general, principal of a school. It is based on a superior position.

b. Delegated authority : closely related to imperial authority. It is granted by imperial authority : captain, vice-president, viceroy.

c. Veracious authority (authority of truth) : a person, a book, a principle.

d. Functional authority : teacher.

e. Authority of custom.

3. Recognition of authority

a. An authority becomes authoritative to a person only as that person accepts the authority through personal decision. All authority must be personally recognized.

b. However, an authority may be authoritative without being able to function as such because the person has not accepted it. If the Scriptures are the truth of God, they are authoritative whether they are personally accepted or not; but the Scriptures function as an authority only to the believer. (Ramm, p. 14)

4. Authority in Religion

a. Bernard Ramm comments, "When one turns to the question of authority in religion the basic problem immediately arises: *is there anything in religion which demands that a man think a certain way about religion and not another? Is there a man, a society, a principle, or a document which has the right to prescribe religious belief?*

"Nothing could be more *foolish* in religion than the rejection of an authority which contained the truth of the living God; and nothing could be more *tragic* than the substitution of the voice of man for the voice of God" (*Pattern of Authority*, p. 16).

5. Authority of God in Christianity

a. We agree that God is *the supreme and absolute* authority in the universe (imperial authority). But God is in heaven (transcendence), and we are on earth, therefore, how does God express his authority to us?

b. God's authority is intimately related to the concept of revelation. God expresses his authority to humankind through divine self-revelation. He takes the initiative to reveal himself.

c. God revealed himself to special key persons (patriarchs, prophets, apostles, etc.) and from them to larger groups of people.

d. Rather than speaking a divine word to every believer, God spoke his word (will) to these special persons, and all believers enjoyed the divine word through them. A prophet was such a spokesperson of divine revelation, and spoke with a delegated authority. His authority was not of his person, but resided in the word of God he/she spoke.

e. Furthermore, because God is truth, genuine and has no shade of evil in him, the word he reveals is also truthful and genuine. It has veracious authority. Thus the utterances of the prophets have both delegated and veracious authority.

f. God intended also that the central and representative part of this divine revelation be preserved, and the Holy Spirit further guided the prophets in writing the revelation. The written revelation has the same status as the inspired utterances of the prophets. The written word has both delegated and veracious authority.

g. Thus, to disobey the prophetic utterance of the prophet was to disobey God, and to disbelieve the utterance was to disbelieve God.

(1) 2 Peter 1:19-21 : "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

(2) The actual authority of the Old Testament, according to Peter, was the Holy Spirit speaking the revealed word through the prophet.

h. Ramm concludes, "The Bible is not the authority for the Christian because it was written by religious geniuses. Nor is it the Christian's authority because it has been pragmatically verified through the centuries, nor because it inspires great religious experience. *The Bible is binding upon the Christian because it is part of the organism of divine revelation.* It is authoritative because *it shares in revelation.* It is a divine revelation in written form in various literary genres" (p. 38).

"The Bible is authoritative because it is the *Word of God*.... Through the Holy Spirit it possesses delegated imperial authority and veracious authority in all matters in which it *intends* to teach. All other reasons for giving the Bible the supreme role in religious authority are defective. The content of the Bible is given by the double action of special revelation and divine inspiration, and therefore it is for the Christian the revealed word of God" (p. 38).

B. The biblical model

1. God has supreme prophetic authority:

a. Daniel 2:27,28,47 : "Daniel replied, `No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come.'"

b. Isaiah 42:9 : "See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you."

c. Isaiah 46:9,10 : "Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please."

2. God's role in prophetic authority:

a. To commission the prophet (See 1 Samuel 3).

b. To empower (See Isa 6:6,7).

c. To communicate (See Jer 1:4 : "The word of the Lord came to me saying...").

3. Prophet's role in prophetic authority:

a. To hear what God says to him/her.

b. To warn God's people (Ez 2:5-7; 3:11,17-21; 33:7-9).

(1) "I am again and again reminded that I am not to try to clear away the confusion and contradiction of faith and feeling and unbelief that is expressed. I am not to be depressed, but am to speak the words of the Lord with authority, and then leave with Him all the consequences. I am instructed by the Great Physician to speak the word that the Lord gives me, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. I am told that I have nothing to do with the consequences, that God, even the Lord Jehovah, will keep me in perfect peace if I will rest in His love and do the work He has given me...." (UL 279; Letter 146, 1902).

4. Man's role in prophetic authority:

a. To hear what God says through the prophet:

(1) "Whosoever hears my words...." (Matt 7:24).

(2) "My sheep hear my voice" (John 10:16).

b. To obey God:

(1) "... and puts them into practice..." (Matt 7:24).

(2) "Not everyone who says to me..." (Mat 7:21).

(3) Which of the two sons did the will of his father? (Mat 21:31).

(4) "To obey is better than sacrifices" (1 Sam 15:22).

(a) "It is our work to obey God--to learn and obey the laws of His kingdom" (UL 341).

(b) "God has made known His will, and it is folly for man to question that which has gone out of His lips. After Infinite Wisdom has spoken, there can be not doubtful questions for man to settle, no wavering possibilities for him to adjust. All that is required of him is a frank, earnest concurrence in the expressed will of God. Obedience is the highest dictate of reason as well as of conscience" (AA 506).

C. Ellen G. White's perception of her authority

1. With regard to her own attitude toward authority, and her understanding of her unique role and commission from God, the following statement summarizes her view :

During the night season I was specially moved upon by the Spirit of God. My soul had been drawn out in earnest supplication to God. I was distressed on account of the backsliding of His people.

While lying in bed, unable to sleep because of the burden resting upon me, I was pleading with the Lord. I fell asleep, and in the night season I was taught of God. My guide said, "I have a work for you to do. You must speak the words given you by the Lord. After these words have been spoken, your duty here is done. You are not required to enter into details before individuals, whatever may be their position or work, if they do not recognize the voice of God in the message He gives you to bear in His name. All your efforts to remove their doubts will be of no avail if they gather the clouds of darkness about their souls. If you enter into particulars, you weaken the message. It is not you speaking, but the Lord speaking through you. Those who want to know the will of God, who do not desire to follow their own will and judgment, will be easily entreated. They will be ready to discern the right way.

The whys and wherefores are concealed from you; yet speak the words I give you, however painful it may be to you. The ways in which God leads His people are generally mysterious. You have asked to know God's way. Your supplication has been answered. God knows better than you do what is good and essential for His children. He never leads them otherwise than they would wish to be led, if they were able to see as clearly as He does what they must do to establish characters that will fit them for the heavenly courts.

The people whom God is leading must venture out upon His word. They must walk forward by faith. Truths have been committed to them which they must obey. The work of God is aggressive. No one can stand in a neutral position and yet be a soldier in the Lord's army. God has commands for His people, and if they keep in close connection with Him, they will hear His voice, and will keep in step with their Captain. They will go forward in the conflict to fight the battles of the Lord. But those who place themselves in an indifferent, noncommittal position will gain no victories. (Manuscript 29, November 21, 1890, "Diary," vision dated Nov. 29, 1890. In *Upward Look*, p. 339)

(Note: the continuation of this manuscript is found in MR #1596.)

You are to act your part, and then leave the rest to God. You will have startling, surprising messages to bear, but if those who hear cannot see the import of these messages, explanations from you will not lead them to understand any more clearly. They have ears, but they hear not. Satan takes control of their unsanctified reason, and leads them to misunderstand and misapply.

Before you enter into private counsel to give the details of your message, be sure that the Lord would have you do this. After the message from God is given, you will feel that you have risked much, that there are those who have not faith enough to appreciate the message because they have not kept the way of the Lord, but have walked in the sparks of their own kindling. You feel a remorse which they should feel, and wish you had not spoken.

God desires the pure gospel to be preached to His people. Selfishness will appear in many ways. The despondency which you feel after bearing a plain testimony comes not because you have erred in bearing this testimony. If you do not bear the message given you, God will send it to His people through some other channel.

(See also Appendix A : "Ellen White's Perception of Her Role: A Summary Synthesis.")

II. Ellen G. White's perception and attitude regarding her role in defining doctrine

A. Her perception of her message and ministry

1. Her message : "One stood by my side and said, `God has raised you up and has given you words to speak to the people ... as He has given to no other one ... now living" (5T 667, 668).
2. Her ministry : "God has not given to my brethren the work He has given me" (5T 667).

B. Instances where she did NOT have special light from God

1. There are instances where EGW did not have any special light from God. Examples of such instances include the issues of :

- a. The "law" in Galatians (6BC 1109, 1110; R.W. Olson, *101 Questions*, p. 56, 57.)
- b. The "daily" (1SM 164; R.W. Olson, *101 Questions*, p. 42.)
- c. The identity of the 144,000
- d. The identity of the king of the North
- e. Issues of divorce and remarriage.

2. Her counsel was simple :

a. "You have the Bible. Study it for yourself.... The divine mind will guide those who desire to be led" (TDG, 188; Letter 207, 1904).

3. Her counsel follows her understanding that our doctrines come from Scripture alone. Some secondary points of doctrines did not necessarily need to be clarified by her.

C. Instances where she DID have light from God

1. Ellen White dealt with doctrinal issues. In these instances, her writings confirmed and emphasized some biblical truths that were set aside or denied by some Seventh-day Adventists.

a. Semi-Arian views of some early Adventists :

(1) Uriah Smith, "The Mind of Christ," *RH*, 16 March 1897, p. 168.

(2) E.J. Waggoner : "There was a time when Christ proceeded forth and came from God, from the bosom of the Father (John 8:42; 1:18), but that time was so far back in the days of eternity that to finite comprehension it is practically without beginning" (*Christ and his righteousness* (1890), 21-22).

(3) "In Him [Christ] was life original, unborrowed, underived" (DA 530).

b. Pantheistic views of J.H. Kellogg (*Living Temple*, 1890) and E.J. Waggoner (GCB 1897, 1899, 1901).

(1) "God's handiwork in nature is not God Himself in nature. The things of nature are an expression of God's character; by them we may understand His love, His power, and His glory; but we are not to regard nature as God.... So, while nature is an expression of God's thought, it is not nature but the God of nature that is to be exalted" (8T 263).

(2) "The theory that God is an essence pervading all nature is one of Satan's most subtle devices.... Pantheistic theories are not sustained by the word of God. The light of His truth shows that these theories are soul-destroying agencies" (8T 291). (See also 1SM 193-208; 8T 255-328.)

c. "Holy Flesh" movement of fanatical SDAs in Indiana, 1900 :

(1) See 2SM 31-36.

d. Albion F. Ballenger's views about the sanctuary which denied the fulfillment of prophecy in 1844 and ministry of Christ in the investigative judgment, (1900-1905) :

(1) Ellen White repeatedly reaffirmed that the SDA sanctuary doctrine was given under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and God never contradicts Himself.

(2) "I have been pleading with the Lord for strength and wisdom to reproduce the writings of the witnesses who were confirmed in the faith and in the early history of the message. After the passing of the time in 1844 they received the light and walked in the light, and when the men claiming to have new light would come in with their wonderful messages regarding various points of Scripture, we had, through the moving of the Holy Spirit, testimonies right to the point, which cut off the influence of such messages as Elder [A.F. Ballenger] has been devoting his time to presenting. This poor man has been working decidedly against the truth that the Holy Spirit has confirmed.

"When the power of God testifies as to what is truth, that truth is to stand forever as the truth. No after suppositions contrary to the light God has given are to be entertained. Men will arise with interpretations of Scripture which are to them truth, but which are not truth. The truth for this time God has given us as a foundation for our faith. He Himself has taught us what is truth. One will arise, and still another, with new light, which contradicts the light that God has given under the demonstration of His Holy Spirit. A few are still alive who passed through the experience gained in the establishment of this truth. God has graciously spared their lives to repeat, and repeat till the close of their lives, the experience through which they passed even as did John the apostle till the very close of his life. And the standard bearers who have fallen in death are to speak through the reprinting of their writings. I am instructed that thus their voices are to be heard. They are to bear their testimony as to what constitutes the truth for this time.

"We are not to receive the words of those who come with a message that contradicts the special points of our faith (1SM 160-161; cf. Letter to Bro. Burden, 11 December 1905).

2. Dealing with these doctrinal issues and others, her counsel was:

a. "I was enabled clearly to define what is truth and what is error" (GW 302).

b. "... instruction that the Lord has given me ... to correct specious error and to specify what is truth" (3SM 32; cf. Letter 127, 1910).

c. "When the power [Spirit] of God testifies as to what is truth, that truth is to stand forever as the truth. No after suppositions contrary to the light God has given me are to be entertained" (1SM 161).

d. "Over and over again I was taken off in vision and the Spirit of God instructed me in the relation of Scripture to Scripture" (3SM 38).

e. "The instruction contained in my books establishes present truth for this time" (Letter 50, 1906; cf. Letter to W.W. Simpson, 30 January 1906).

f. "In my writings there is one straight chain of truth, without one heretical sentence" (3SM 52; cf. Letter 329a, to Mabel White, 16 November 1905).

IV. Special issues within contemporary Adventism

1. "The Bible and the Bible Only."

a. How did she use this term? How did she *not* use it? (See Arthur L. White, "The position of "the Bible, and the Bible only" and the relationship of this to the writings of Ellen G. White," January 1971.)

2. The "Greater Light"/"Lesser Light" Dichotomy:

- What did EGW mean to teach by this analogy/metaphor?
- What did she intend *not* to teach by it? (Degrees of inspiration? Degrees of authority?)

3. Did (as some allege) Ellen G. White teach doctrinal error? She would reply :

a. "The Bible must be your counselor. Study it and the testimonies God has given; for they never contradict His word" (3SM 32).

b. "There is one straight chain of truth, without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written" (3SM 52).

4. "New Light" versus "Old Light":

- Will Seventh-day Adventists continue to receive "new light"? (Yes, of course.)
- Does "new light" ever contradict "old light"? (No, never)
- How is "new light" to be validated?

5. What is the precise nature and extent of EGW's doctrinal authority?

a. Robert W. Olson's Twelve Points are particularly helpful (See *101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White*, p. 41-44) (See Appendix D).

6. There are some in our Church today who are utterly appalled at the existence of doctrinal controversies in our midst, and feel that they are not only inappropriate but, in the end, unnecessary.

a. Their credo: Just love everybody, and forget about doctrine.

(1) Doctrines don't matter.

b. Appendix B explores this question in terms of:

(1) How Christ viewed doctrine and doctrinal differences, why doctrine is a significant factor in the life of the Church.

(2) How the Apostles viewed doctrinal difference and divergence.

(3) And how a modern theologian (O.F. Blackwelder) sees the matter in contemporary terms.

7. In Appendix C we examine how Ellen White herself felt about:

a. Those who suggested she merely presented her own ideas.

b. The motivation of most of her uninspired critics.

c. And her frank appeal, and warning, to those self-appointed judges who would sit in "Moses' seat."

Conclusion

1. Does Ellen G. White have doctrinal authority? The answer to this question needs to be kept in the context of all we have studied thus far in this course.

2. Yes, she does have doctrinal authority.

a. In the last days, God has promised to guide his remnant people through the maze of doctrinal errors and false prophets, in preparation for Christ's second coming. Ellen G. White's doctrinal authority resides in this divine promise and never supercedes that of Scripture.

b. We believe that evidences show that the Holy Spirit led in her life and ministry. We have the evidences to support this claim.

c. Since God has revealed to her his will and has asked her to write it, her written word is therefore authoritative, it has delegated and veracious authority from God.

d. However, we consider her ministry to be similar to that of a non-canonical prophet. Her authority is, thus, secondary to the Scriptures.

e. Only the Scriptures are the ultimate delegated and veracious authority of God on earth.

f. Her ministry has been and is one of pointing us to the Scriptures as the only rule of faith and practice.

3. For those who believe and accept the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the foundation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and in the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White, then her writings have authority, but not superceding that of Scriptures. James White even argued in 1856, that once the writings of Ellen White had become authoritative in a person's life, they become "a test [of fellowship] to those

who believe them [to be] from Heaven" (*Review and Herald*, 14 February 1856).

4. For those who do not yet believe in the authenticity of her prophetic gift, the Bible is still the only rule of faith and practice and is to be used to support all doctrines.

5. One expression of the Seventh-day Adventist beliefs in Ellen White's doctrinal authority is Fundamental Belief #17 : *One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.*

For Further Study

Roger W. Coon. "Ellen White's disturbing disclaimer of 1904: Did she really deny her prophetic gift?", *Sourcebook*, C-5.

----- "The inspiration and authority of the Ellen G. White writings," *Ministry*, August 1982 and February 1983.

Robert W. Olson. "God's true Church today," *Sourcebook*, B-3.

----- "Pluralism--How much?", *Sourcebook*, B-4.

----- "Ellen G. White as an interpreter of Scripture," *Sourcebook*, D-1.

----- *One Hundred and One Questions on The Sanctuary and on Ellen White* (Washington, D.C., Ellen G. White Estate, 1981).

Arthur L. White. "The position of "the Bible, and the Bible only" and the relationship of this to the writings of Ellen G. White," January 1971.

1. For parts of this lecture I am indebted to Roger W. Coon's lecture outline, *Ellen G. White and S.D.A Doctrine--Part II: The Issue of Prophetic Authority*, April 19, 1995.

Ellen G. White and Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines: Was Ellen G. White a theologian?

Denis Fortin

Introduction

Since the beginning of Ellen G. White's prophetic ministry within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, people have reacted differently toward her writings and authority.

The official position of the Church is that her writings are both a source of inspiration for godly living in preparation for Christ's second coming and an authoritative source of doctrinal truth which provides the church with comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction.

Many church members have, however, rejected Ellen White's doctrinal authority and consider her writings only as a valid source of spiritual guidance and inspiration.

One reason given for the rejection of her doctrinal authority is that, supposedly, Ellen G. White was strongly influenced by her friends, pioneer church leaders and early Adventist theologians. It is contended that her writings were simply a reflection of other Adventist writers in her entourage who wrote extensively on various doctrines. Given these assumptions, she is not considered as a doctrinal authority nor as a significant theological influence.

It is my personal belief that such was not the case but that she was a free, independent theological thinker of her own, guided by the Holy Spirit in her prophetic ministry. I believe she was able to articulate and define doctrines within a particular system of thought (i.e. the great controversy theme), that she was able to sort out doctrinal difficulties and problems, and that she was able to write articles and manuscripts on theological issues that were at variance with some of her most trusted and appreciated friends.

To illustrate this, we will study her understanding of the doctrine of atonement in the 1860s and compare it with the writings of her trusted friends, J.H. Waggoner and Uriah Smith, on the same doctrine. I believe this comparison will be very enlightening.

I. Early Seventh-day Adventist understanding of Atonement

A. J. H. Waggoner (1820-1889)

- Series of articles and books on Atonement
 - In 1863, J.H. Waggoner prepared a series of articles for the *Review and Herald* titled: "The Atonement; an examination of the remedial system in the light of nature and revelation."
 - This series was reprinted in a book form under the same title in 1868.
 - A third publication of the series appeared in the *Signs of the Times* in 1876.
 - The last reprinting in book form took place in 1884. (In this edition, the revisions from the original 1863 presentation are of no theological consequences; the theology is

identical.)

- Waggoner's theological understanding of Atonement
 - Arian view of Christ's nature
 - Waggoner accepts the divinity of Christ, yet he is not placing Him on the same level with God.
 - He believes trinitarianism "degrades the atonement, resting it solely on a human offering as a basis" (166) [All quotes are taken from the 1884 edition.]
 - Trinitarianism holds the view that Christ had two natures, that he came to the cross only as a human, and that his divine nature was not involved since, as divinity, it could not die.
 - For Waggoner, Christ's divine nature was subordinate to the divinity of the Father and, therefore, it also died on the cross.
 - The death of Jesus on the cross implied that his total nature died as a sacrifice for humanity not only his human nature.
-
- Atonement is more than a sacrifice
 - Atonement involves more than the salvation of mankind, it "is a vindication of justice by an offering to a broken law" (180).
 - Christ suffered the full penalty of the law in his death on the cross. But Christ's death as the sacrificial victim is different from the atonement.
 - The atonement was, in the Old Testament, an activity performed by the priesthood (184).
 - From his analysis of the Old Testament on the atonement, Waggoner saw three steps leading to a complete Atonement:
 - The sinner laid his hands on the offering.
 - The sinner killed the offering.
 - The priest then made the atonement in the sanctuary.
 - Waggoner saw a complete distinction between the offering of the sacrifice and the atonement.
 - While on earth, Jesus was a descendant of David, not of Aaron.
 - Therefore, he could fulfil the office of a king, but not of a priest.
 - It is only after his ascension into heaven, according to Hebrews, that Jesus took on also the office of priest after the order of Melchizedek.
 - Christ's death is preparation for atonement
 - Since Christ was killed by sinners, his death was only preparatory for the atonement.
 - The atonement is what Christ is doing with the merits of his own shed blood.
 - Atonement is made by the application of the benefits of the sacrifice of Christ which made salvation possible.
 - Waggoner believed that Christ died for all men,
 - but feared that if the sacrifice and the atonement were the same thing,
 - then atonement is also for all men, and all would have to be saved (universalism).
 - "The cleansing of the sanctuary, and the making of the atonement, mean precisely the same thing; for the atonement was made by the high priest sprinkling the blood upon the mercy seat and the altar, and cleansing them from the sins of the people. Hence, the expression of Daniel 8:14 is equivalent to saying, 'Unto two thousand three hundred

days, then shall the atonement be made" (212).

- "The judgment of the saints, the blotting out of sin, the making of the atonement, and the cleansing of the sanctuary, are identical" (220).

B. Uriah Smith (1832-1903)

- Long time editor of the *Review and Herald*, Uriah Smith held views on the atonement very similar to those of J.H. Waggoner.
 - In his editorial of January 30, 1894, "The Atonement. Not Made On the Cross - In Process Now," he explained the difference between the sacrifice of the victim and the atonement made by the priest in the sanctuary.
 - During a week of prayer in Battle Creek sometime before, his presentation on the Atonement touched on some of the common errors and misunderstandings on the subject of the sanctuary.
 - "Among these errors is the idea that the atonement was made upon the cross."
- The sanctuary service is an object-lesson on the process of the forgiveness of sin.
 - The daily services:
 - "The repentant sinner brought his offering to the door of the sanctuary;
 - he confessed over it his sin, and thus transferred the sin from himself to the victim;
 - the victim thus bearing the sin was then slain, and his blood ministered by the priest in the sanctuary."
 - The yearly service:
 - "At the end of the year, the priest with another offering,
 - went into the most holy place, the second apartment of the sanctuary,
 - and sprinkled the blood upon the mercy-seat, beneath which reposed the law of God, the transgression of which made men sinners,
 - and thus atoned for the sins which had accumulated in the sanctuary during the year,
 - and bore them from the place, to be sent away on the head of the scapegoat, and to perish with him in the wilderness.
 - This day was therefore called "the day of atonement;" and with this service, and with this day, the yearly round of ministration came to an end."
- Christ and his work are the antitypes of all ancient offerings and services.
 - "He acts in the capacity both of offering and priest.
 - He is the antitype of the expiring victim,
 - as well as the antitype of the ministering priest.
 - **but not both at the same time.**" (emphasis added)
- Distinction between the sacrifice and priesthood of Christ.
 - "When he [Christ] stood as the antitypical victim, the great sacrifice for sin, he was not acting as priest.
 - But it is the priest only who makes the atonement, not the victim.
 - And what part of his work was it that Christ did upon the cross?
 - He there gave his life as the great *offering* for sin, the *sacrifice* on which the sins of all the world were laid.
 - But he was not then acting as *priest*."
 - "No part of his priestly work is performed on this earth."

- "On the cross he bore the sins of the world, as *the offering for sin*. In heaven, having provided the offering, he pleads his blood, as *priest*, for all those who will come to God through him for pardon. These two positions should not be confounded. On the cross Christ offered himself as the *sacrifice*; in heaven he pleads his blood as *priest*, and makes atonement."

II. Ellen G. White's Understanding of Atonement

- Around the same time as J.H. Waggoner was publishing his series of article on the Atonement, Ellen White was also publishing in Testimonies 17 a testimony titled: "The Sufferings of Christ" (Today it is found in *Testimonies* 2:200-215).
- From this testimony and other parts of her writings, we find that her view on the atonement was not in total agreement with the views of J.H. Waggoner and U. Smith we have just outlined.

A. "The Sufferings of Christ"

- Definition of atonement
 - The word "atonement" appears three times in this testimony (200, 213, 215).
 - Atonement is first defined as the whole plan of salvation: "In consequence of limited ideas of the sufferings of Christ, many place a low estimate upon the great work of the atonement. The glorious plan of man's salvation was brought about through the infinite love of God the Father. In this divine plan is seen the most marvelous manifestation of the love of God to the fallen race" (200).
 - This testimony discusses only the sufferings of Christ from his incarnation to his death on the cross (including Gethsemane).
 - *It never makes any reference to the heavenly ministry of Jesus.*
 - In this testimony, atonement is explained only in reference to the life, sufferings and death of Jesus.
- The Nature of Christ
 - She declares Christ is equal to the Father: "This Saviour was the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person. He possessed divine majesty, perfection, and excellence. He was equal with God" (200).
- The effects of the atonement, or Why did Jesus die on the cross?
 - Various subjective and objective theories have been given to explain the reasons for the atonement and the death of Jesus on the cross. Ellen White addresses all the major ones in this testimony. This indicates that her view on atonement was very broad and included a wide understanding of the plan of salvation.
 - **Demonstration of the love of God for humanity:**
 - "In this divine plan is seen the most marvelous manifestation of the love of God to the fallen race" (200).
 - "Who can comprehend the love here displayed. . . . All this in consequence of sin! Nothing could have induced Christ to leave His honor and majesty in heaven, and come to a sinful world, to be neglected, despised, and rejected by those He came to save, and finally to suffer upon the cross, but eternal, redeeming love, which will ever remain a mystery" (207).
 - **Christ is our example:**

- In reference to Christ's prayer life, she said, "He is our example in all things. He is a brother in our infirmities, but not in possessing like passions" (202).
- "He is our example. If we could remember this, and imitate Him, we would be much stronger in God" (202).
- **Christ's death morally influences humanity to do right:**
 - "Eternal interests are here involved. Upon this theme it is sin to be calm and unimpassioned. The scenes of Calvary call for the deepest emotion. Upon this subject you will be excusable if you manifest enthusiasm. . . . The contemplation of the matchless depths of a Saviour's love should fill the mind, touch and melt the soul, refine and elevate the affections, and completely transform the whole character" (213).
 - "Reflections of Calvary will awaken tender, sacred, and lively emotions in the Christian's heart. . . . Pride and self-esteem cannot flourish in the hearts that keep fresh in memory the scenes of Calvary" (212).
- **Vindication of God's character, law and government:**
 - "His death did not make the law of non effect; it did not slay the law, lessen its holy claims, nor detract from its sacred dignity. The death of Christ proclaimed the justice of His Father's law in punishing the transgressor, in that He consented to suffer the penalty of the law Himself in order to save fallen man from its curse. The death of God's beloved Son on the cross shows the immutability of the law of God. . . . The death of Christ justified the claims of the law" (201).
- **Victory over the powers of evil and Satan:**
 - "He was about to ransom His people with His own blood. He was paying the just claims of God's holy law. This was the means through which an end was to be finally made of sin and Satan, and his host to be vanquished" (209).
 - "Satan was then defeated. He knew that his kingdom was lost" (211).
- **Substitution of suffering and of death penalty:**
 - "Christ consented to die in the sinner's stead, that man, by a life of obedience, might escape the penalty of the law of God" (200-201).
 - "The sins of the world were upon Him. He was suffering in man's stead as a transgressor of His Father's law" (203).
 - "The sins of a lost world were upon Him and overwhelming Him. It was a sense of His Father's frown, in consequence of sin, which rent His heart with such piercing agony and forced from His brow great drops of blood" (204).
 - "We can have but faint conceptions of the inexpressible anguish of God's dear Son in Gethsemane, as He realized His separation from His Father in consequence of bearing man's sin. He became sin for the fallen race" (206).
 - The glorious Redeemer of a lost world was suffering the penalty of man's transgression of the Father's law" (209).
 - "When men and women can more fully comprehend the magnitude of the great sacrifice which was made by the Majesty of heaven in dying in man's stead, then will the plan of salvation be magnified" (212).
- **Christ's death reconciled humanity to the Father:**

- "What amazing love! that brought the Son of God to earth to be made sin for us, that we might be reconciled to God, and elevated to a life with Him in His mansions in glory" (211-212).
- **Appeasing the just wrath of God:**
 - "The wrath that would have fallen upon man was now falling upon Christ" (203).
 - "Could mortals have viewed the amazement and the sorrow of the angelic host as they watched in silent grief the Father separating His beams of light, love, and glory from the beloved Son of His bosom, they would better understand how offensive sin is in His sight. The sword of justice was now to awake against His dear Son" (207).
 - "But bodily pain was but a small part of the agony of God's dear Son. The sins of the world were upon Him, also the sense of His Father's wrath as He suffered the penalty of the law transgressed. It was these that crushed His divine soul" (214).

B. From other writings

- Atonement accomplished at the cross
 - a. "The brightness of the Father's glory, and the excellence and perfection of His sacred law are only understood through the atonement made on Calvary by His dear Son; but even the atonement loses its significance when the law of God is rejected." (*Signs of the Times*, August 25, 1887, 500)
 - b. "Jesus refused the homage of His people until He had the assurance that His sacrifice had been accepted by the Father. He ascended to the heavenly courts, and from God Himself heard the assurance that His sacrifice for the sins of men had been ample, that through His blood all might gain eternal life." (*Desire of Ages*, 790)
 - c. "The death of Christ upon the cross made sure the destruction of him who has the power of death, who was the originator of sin. When Satan is destroyed, there will be none to tempt to evil; the atonement will never need to be repeated; and there will be no danger of another rebellion in the universe of God." (*Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1889, 786)
 - d. "In the councils of heaven the cross was ordained as the means of atonement. This was to be God's means of winning men to Him. Christ came to this earth to show that in humanity He could keep the law of God." (MS 165, 1899)
 - e. "He planted the cross between heaven and earth, and when the Father beheld the sacrifice of His son, He bowed before it in recognition of its perfection. 'It is enough,' he said, 'the atonement is complete.'" (*Review and Herald*, September 24, 1901, 615)
- The atonement in the heavenly sanctuary
 - a. "The great sacrifice had been offered and had been accepted, and the Holy Spirit which descended on the day of Pentecost carried the minds of the disciples from the earthly sanctuary to the heavenly, where Jesus entered by His own blood, to shed upon His disciples the benefits of His atonement." (*Early Writings*, 260)

b. "Our Saviour is in the sanctuary pleading in our behalf. He is our interceding High Priest, making an atoning sacrifice for us, pleading in our behalf the efficacy of His blood." (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 370)

c. "Thank God that He who spilled His blood for us lives to plead it, lives to make intercession for every soul who receives Him We need to keep ever before us the efficacy of the blood of Jesus." (Letter 87, 1894)

- Christ was both sacrifice and priest on the cross

a. "As the high priest laid aside his gorgeous pontifical robes, and officiated in the white linen dress of a common priest, so Christ emptied Himself, and took the form of a servant, and offered the sacrifice, Himself the priest, Himself the victim." (*Southern Watchman*, August 6, 1903, 298)

b. "While He took upon Himself humanity, it was a life taken into union with Deity. He could lay down His life as priest and also as victim. He possessed in Himself power to lay it down and take it up again. He offered Himself without spot to God." (MS 92, 1899)

c. "He fulfilled one phase of His priesthood by dying on the cross for the fallen race. He is now fulfilling another phase by pleading before the Father the case of the repenting, believing sinner, presenting to God the offering of His people." (MS 42, 1901)

- Atonement made for all mankind

a. "As the high priest sprinkled the warm blood upon the mercy seat while the fragrant cloud of incense ascended before God, so while we confess our sins and plead the efficacy of Christ's atoning blood, our prayers are to ascend to heaven, fragrant with the merits of our Saviour's character. Notwithstanding our unworthiness, we are to remember that there is one who can take away sin, and who is willing and anxious to save the sinner. With His own blood He paid the penalty for all wrong-doers." (*Review and Herald*, October 29, 1896, 614)

b. "Christ made satisfaction for the guilt of the whole world, and all who will come to God in faith, will receive the righteousness of Christ." (*Selected Messages*, 1:393)

c. "Christ suffered without the gates of Jerusalem, for Calvary was outside the city walls. This was to show that He died, not for the Hebrews alone, but for all mankind. He proclaims to a fallen world that he is their redeemer, and urges them to accept the salvation He offers." (*Southern Watchman*, September 1906, 547)

Conclusion

Was Ellen G. White a theologian?

I believe she was a theologian of her own. Her doctrinal writings are articulated around a major theme, the great controversy between good and evil. This theme gives a sense of meaning and significance to salvation history. Her thoughts on atonement conveyed a breath of meaning that was by far more comprehensive than her contemporary Adventist friends and theologians. Although she agreed with many of their concepts on atonement, she had her own marked differences.

Her testimony on "The Sufferings of Christ," written at the same time as J.H. Waggoner published his first book on atonement, indicates that the sufferings and death of Christ were also part of the atonement process. This Waggoner categorically denied. In many other parts of her writings she also emphasized how atonement was much more than the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, although she believed it certainly included this ministry. For Ellen White, atonement is synonymous to the entire plan of redemption. It is a process in time which parts cannot be divorced from one another.

Literary Assistants

Ellen G. White as a Writer
Part I - The Use of Literary Assistants

Roger W. Coon, with revisions
and additions by Jerry Moon

I. Introduction

A. During her lifetime, Ellen White employed some 20 paid or unpaid individuals to help her in preparation of her letters and manuscripts for a mailing or publication.

1. Categories of work performed included:

- a. Stenography: taking down oral material in shorthand.
- b. Simple copying by hand or typewriter: up to 10 carbon copies were made of some documents.
- c. Minor "copy editing": correcting spelling, grammar, improving sentence structure, etc.
- d. Major editorial compilation of books: reserved for a select few of her most trusted helpers.

2. Ellen White used the term "editing" with reference to the work of some of her most trusted assistants. However, there were two important differences from the common use of that term:

a. Ellen White's helpers were to remove imperfections without changing the thought. They were absolutely forbidden to alter Ellen White's concepts or intrude any personal ideas of the assistant into the manuscript (W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, May 7, 1900; cited in Jerry Moon, *W. C. White & Ellen G. White: The Relationship Between the Prophet and Her Son* [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993], p. 224; hereinafter abbreviated WCW).

b. Even Ellen White's vocabulary was not to be changed. Fannie Bolton was discharged partly because she substituted her own style and vocabulary for that of Ellen White (Letter, E. G. White to W. C. White, Oct. 21, 1892, in WCW, 222).

B. The existence of this group is very significant for quite different reasons

1. Critics have exploited Ellen White's use of literary help in 2 ways:

a. They have asserted (as did Canright) that anything written by a true prophet should be absolutely perfect in first draft and need no improvement. Implicit assumption: dictation-verbal inspiration.

b. They have sometimes claimed that Ellen White's helpers were the real authors of her works. Fannie Bolton once claimed to have written *Steps to Christ*. A little time on the CD-ROM, however, will demonstrate that *Steps to Christ* *actually* began as a compilation and that much of it existed in other Ellen White writings long before Fannie Bolton joined Ellen White's staff.

c. The fact that Ellen White counseled with church leaders regarding the publication of her works is cited as evidence that she was manipulated or "influenced"-in some way controlled by those around her. One purpose of my dissertation was to discover whether there was any truth at all to the allegations of J. H. Kellogg and others that Ellen White was manipulated by her son, W. C. White. The charge appears to have been an excuse manufactured by those who did not want to believe that her writings were inspired or authoritative.

2. On the positive side, Ellen White's use of secretaries, editorial assistants, and editorial advisors, has three important implications for understanding her and interpreting her writings.

a. She obviously did not adhere to a dictation-verbal concept of inspiration. She held that "Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thought. But the words receive the impress of the individual [human] mind" (1SM 21). We will deal more with this matter in a later presentation.

b. Her willingness, even her insistence, that nothing be published without first receiving a critical reading from the best qualified people available, shows her humility, her good sense, and the total absence of any illusions of infallibility. She not only formally disclaimed infallibility (1 SM 37) but she live in harmony with that disclaimer.

c. The degree of trust she placed in the virtually unknown Christians who made up her staff, as well as in denominational leaders whom she invited to read and evaluate her writings shows that while she had an unshakable conviction of her divine call, and of the authority of the divine revelations made to her, she did not consider herself beyond the possibility of making mistakes, or above benefitting from constructive criticism. At the same time she was secure enough in her basic self-identity to invite criticism of her work.

"I have all my publications closely examined. I desire that nothing shall appear in print without careful investigation. Of course I would not want men who have not a Christian experience, or are lacking in ability to appreciate literary merit, to be placed as judges of what is essential to come before the people, as pure provender thoroughly winnowed from the chaff. I laid out all my manuscript on Patriarchs and Prophets and on vol. IV [Great Controversy] before the book committee for examination and criticism. I also placed these manuscripts in the hands of some of our ministers for examination. The more criticism of them the better for the work." E. G. White W. H. Littlejohn, Aug. 3, 1894, (Letter 49, 1894, cited in 10 MR, 12-13).

C. Before we examine the work of Ellen White's literary assistants, let us look first at Scripture and see if there is any biblical precedent for a true prophet's utilizing the services of secretarial or editorial help in writing.

II. BIBLICAL PRECEDENTS

A. Old Testament

1. Jeremiah: More than any other prophet, he speaks-repeatedly- of his receiving "the word of the Lord" (1:2, 4, 9, 12, 14, 17ff).

a. Identity of his secretary: a man named "Baruch" (36:4-6, 17, 18, 27, 32).

b. Necessity: "I am shut up" (20:2, 36:5)-the context suggests imprisonment.

c. Public concern over Baruch's role: "How did you do it?" (36:17).

d. Probable role:

- (1) Transcription of oral dictation.
- (2) Possibly collected, edited, preserved materials of the book.
- (3) Possibly contributed from research to biographical narratives in the book (4BC 343).

e. Background of Baruch:

(1) His position as a "scribe" suggests he was well-educated.

(2) He came from a distinguished family in Judah (his brother was Zedekiah's quartermaster who went with the king into Babylonian exile).

(3) His high character and influence are evidence by:

(a) Accusations by the party favoring flight to Egypt that Baruch had influenced Jeremiah against them.

(b) A collection of spurious writings was later issued under Baruch's own name (one, the book of Baruch, is today found in the Apocrypha- 4BC 343).

B. New Testament

1. Paul

a. Employed a number of secretarial helpers:

(1) Romans: Tertius (Rom. 16:22).

(2) 1 Corinthians: Sosthenes (?) (1 Cor. 1:1).

(3) 2 Timothy: Luke-

(a) "These words [in 2 Timothy], dictated by Paul just prior to his death, were written by Luke for our profit and warning" (4T 353:1).

b. Necessity for using secretaries:

(1) Imprisonment (?).

(2) Bad eyesight (?)-possibly Paul's "thorn" (2 Cor. 12:7-9; Gal. 4:15).

(3) Hands suffering permanent injury from torture by persecutors (?) (2 Cor. 11:24-27; 6BC 987).

(4) It was *not*, however, because of Paul's limited facility in Greek; he many well have attended the University of Tarsus; he did attend Gamaliel's rabbinical school in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3).

(a) NOTE: This may well, however, have been a reason motivating both Peter and John- see below.

c. "How did you do it?"- We can, of course, only conjecture at this point how Paul employed his secretaries.

(1) In certain instances he may have given his helper an outline or a rough draft. If Paul wrote Hebrews, then the work of the literary assistant went beyond secretarial to actual editorial work.

(a) Evidence: rhetorical quality (as distinguished from inspired truth) varies from epistle to epistle. Stylistic differences, structural differences, etc., are seen in Paul's various epistles. (Was Heb. 11, originally a sermon of Paul's?).

(b) Such reasoning, however, in no way diminishes the quality of inspiration of these epistles/NT books.

2. Peter:

a. Identity of secretary: Silvanus [Silas] (1 Peter 5:12).

b. Necessity for using secretaries:

(1) Imprisonment (?).

(2) Limited formal education in the Greek language/rhetoric (?).

(a) 1 Peter: written in a finely-polished style of Greek composition.

(b) 2 Peter: written in a very crude form of Greek, lacking in certain stylistic areas (but *not* lacking in purity of truth, clarity, accuracy).

(c) Possible explanation of the difference: Silvanus "polished" the first letter; the second may have been written just before Peter's martyrdom, without literary assistance.

c. "How did you do it?" Again, we can only conjecture:

(1) In 1 Peter, the apostle may have written or dictated to Silvanus an overall plan or rough draft and then trusted his amanuensis to choose the vocabulary, idioms, etc.

3. John:

a. Identity: According to a tradition of the Greek Orthodox Church, Prochorus, one of the 1st seven deacons (Acts 6:5) volunteered to share John's exile on Patmos.

b. "How did you do it?" Possibly John saw things in vision which he then dictated to Prochorus, who then wrote them down. If so, Prochorus' role was that of a stenographer, but we can only conjecture. There appears to be no corroboration of the identity of John's helper, nor the method employed, in any inspired work.

C. Conclusion

1. In both OT and NT there is extensive evidence that Bible writers repeatedly used the assistance of literary helpers, and probably in a number of different ways.

2. In view of this established precedent, it should be neither surprising nor yet worthy of blame, if Ellen White literary assistants.

III. WHY ELLEN WHITE NEEDED LITERARY ASSISTANTS

A. Limited Formal Education

1. Because of her accident, Ellen White had less than 4 years of formal education.
2. However, she had other sources of education:
 - a. Wide reading
 - b. Extensive travel
 - c. Close association with other people who were more highly educated and gifted in other ways.
 - d. Study of Scripture, which she regarded as the true "higher education"
 - e. Approximately 2,000 dreams and visions, in which she conversed with Jesus, angels, and others. She considered this a true higher education.

"With the light communicated through the study of His word, with the special knowledge given of individual cases among His people under all circumstances and in every phase of experience, can I now be in the same ignorance, the same mental uncertainty and spiritual blindness, as at the beginning of this experience? Will my brethren say that Sister White has been so dull a scholar that her judgment in this direction is no better than before she entered Christ's school, to be trained and disciplined for a special work? Am I no more intelligent in regard to the duties and perils of God's people than are those before whom these things have never been presented? I would not dishonor my Maker by admitting that all this light, all the display of His mighty power in my work and experience, has been valueless, that it has not educated my judgment or better fitted me for His work" (5T, 686, cited in WCW, 217).

3. However, her limited formal education did leave her with one group of limitations regarding literary skill: she was never strong in the technical aspects such as spelling and punctuation. Through the "life education" factors listed above, she developed into a very articulate speaker, but spoken English doesn't require spelling and punctuation skills. Likewise as a writer, she could be eloquently articulate in her expressions, but without skill in spelling and punctuation and similar technical matters.

B. Limitations From The Circumstances In Which She Wrote

1. After receiving a vision or dream, Ellen White usually wrote very rapidly, anxious to get it all down on paper while it was fresh in her mind.
2. Much of her first draft composition possesses a unique "stream of consciousness" aspect, the result of much haste in writing.
3. Limitations from working while weary or burdened with anxiety. Her deep concern and involvement with people and their problems often weighed her down.
4. Limitations from attempting to portray difficult material. Her personal diary entries for Jan. 10 and 11, 1873, and letter 67, 1874, show her anxiety, frustrations, and feelings of personal inadequacy (3SM 90).

C. Effective Time Management

1. Ellen White juggled the roles of wife, mother, speaker, writer, and counselor to many people. In order to keep up with all her obligations, she hired cooks, housekeepers, and nannies for her children, so why not secretaries?
2. The volume of her correspondence alone would often have been more than a full-time job had she done her own typing. In addition, she was involved in producing books, articles, and sermons.
3. A large part of editorial skill is mastery of the technical aspects of written language. It is a far greater gift to create concepts and ideas than to correct spelling and grammar. Ellen White was not incapable of editing her own writing (as one can see by the frequent interlineation of further comments in her typed letters and manuscripts). But she was not trained for that role, and she had more important things to do. So she hired others to perform those functions.

IV. CATEGORIES OF LITERARY HELPERS

A. Family Members

1. Husband, James White (1840-1870s)

a. He was educated as a schoolteacher, although like his wife, the bulk of his real education was "life education."

b. Helped with the *Spiritual Gifts*, Vols. I-IV series (1858-64).

c. Ellen White wrote out her thoughts during the daytime (while James was engaged in pastoral/evangelistic responsibilities):

(1) At night they would sit together by candlelight at the table.

(2) James White would particularly:

(a) Correct grammatical errors

(b) Eliminate needless/excessive repetition (1SM 50).

d. Ellen White did not regard his judgment as "infallible," nor his words "inspired;" "but I have ever believe him better qualified for this work than any other one of our preachers because of:

(1) "His long experience, and because."

(2) "I have long seen he was especially called and adapted to the work . . ." by the Lord (1T 612, 6123).

2. Niece, Mary Clough (1876, 1877)

a. Daughter of Ellen's eldest sister, Caroline Clough; father a Methodist clergyman.

b. Only non SDA known to have been so employed.

(1) Literary talent was in the genes of the Harmon family.

(a) Mary Clough had written for newspapers.

(b) Franklin E. Belden, son of sister Sarah, wrote perhaps 600 gospel songs.

(c) Ellen White's son James Edson wrote both books and religious music; with cousin Frank Belden collaborated on first SDA hymnal, *Hymns and Tunes* (1886).

c. Ellen White had a twofold ulterior motivation in so employing her niece:

(1) She hoped for Mary's conversion to the remnant church.

(2) Through Mary, she hoped to reach her sister Caroline, for the SDA message.

3. Daughter-in-law, Mary Kelsey White (1874-1890).

a. First wife of W. C. White (April 20, 1857 - June 18, 1890). Died of tuberculosis contracted in Basel, Switzerland while she, W. C. White, and Ellen White were in Europe, 1885-87 (WCW, 22, 89).

b. Willie and Mary met in Battle Creek where Mary was a French major at BCC and a typesetter and proofreader at the Review and Herald.

c. When the Whites went to California in 1875 to found the Signs of the Times and the Pacific Press, Mary went along as a press worker. In 1876 she was elected treasurer of the Press, appointed managing editor of the Signs and married to W. C. White. J. H. Kellogg had been Willie's rival for her hand, and never fully forgave Willie for taking her to Europe where she caught the tuberculosis that she died of.

d. Mary wrote a number of editorials and articles for the Signs during 1875-76 (WCW, 22-25). As a member of Ellen White's staff, she helped prepare for the printer Testimonies vols. 1-5, as well as other projects. (See Moon, WCW, 22-25, 119-129.)

4. Son, James Edson White (1895-1896)

a. Edson's great contribution to the cause was his evangelistic work among African-Americans in the Southern USA from 1894 to 1909. (See Ron Graybill, Mission to Black America.)

(1) He wrote a Gospel Primer which served the dual purpose of a basic reading textbook and an introduction to the gospel.

(2) His stern-wheeled riverboat Morning Star included living quarters, staterooms for other workers, chapel, library, photographic darkroom, kitchen, and a printshop, where he printed.

(a) Extracts from the Gospel of John.

(b) Christ Our Saviour (158 pp.)-selected chapters from Ellen White's "Life of Christ" manuscript which would be published in 1898 as Desire of Ages. For Christ Our Saviour, Edson rewrote the DA chapters in basic English suitable for beginning readers.

b. In 1900, Marion Davis reworked Edson's 158-page work to 182 pages, and it was republished as The Story of Jesus, a children's book still in print.

c. Ellen White not only supplied Edson with advance drafts of the chapters of the "Life of Christ" manuscript, but strongly encouraged his project of rewriting them in simplified English.

"Edson, you are at liberty to select from my writings the matter that is needed for the proposed simple tracts and booklets for the southern field . . . You will know how simple to make the truth so as to be understood and what portions to select . . . All that can be done should be done for the southern field." (Letter 86, 1895, in PM 209).

5. Son, W. C. White

- a. Third of James and Ellen's 4 sons; younger of the 2 surviving sons (Moon, WCW, xii).
- b. Of all the White family, Willie White was the most like his mother in temperament, viewpoints, lifestyle, and agreement with her on all major issues. She came to trust him implicitly (WCW, 58-59, 66).
- c. Ellen White began involving him in secretarial and perhaps editorial responsibilities when he was 19 (WCW, 63).
- d. After the death of his father, W. C. White became his mother's most trusted confidant.
- e. By 1881, when he was 27, he was acting as general supervisor of Ellen White's editorial staff (WCW, 112-113). He went with her to Europe and to Australia. She appointed him as the one primarily responsible for the custody of her writings after her death, and he headed the White Estate from 1915 till his own death in 1937 (See WCW, 451-456).

B. In-House Salaried Staff

1. At any given time, Ellen White would have between 6 and 12 employees working in her publishing enterprise.

a. They would come, work for a period of time, then leave, and their places would then be taken by other newcomers.

(1) Yet-significantly- Ellen White's literary style remained consistently unique through the years, though there was a normal, gradual evolution in her style over her lifetime.

(2) But this consistency in style is one of the evidences that Ellen White (and not her literary helpers) indeed was the author of the books which bore her name.

b. Their salaries were paid from the customary publishers' royalties paid to Ellen White for her book manuscripts.

2. Some have wondered why so many helpers were needed at one time:

a. Many (if not most) served in typist/copyist positions, in that era long before computers and photocopy machines were available.

b. Also, in those days Ellen White was responsible for many responsibilities now assumed by publishers and their respective staffs:

(1) Copy reading.

(2) Proofreading.

(3) Reference checking

(4) Commissioning of illustrative art work.

c. Ellen White was even responsible for providing the publishers with the metal plates used in the printing process of the day.

d. Consequently, her royalties from book sales were substantially larger than those paid to authors today, because her expenses were correspondingly much greater.

3. Identity of some of her helpers:

a. Marian Davis [1847-1904]; employed 25 years [1879-1904], and one of the longest serving.

(1) Ellen White called her "my chief worker" and "my bookmaker." "Her work is of a different order altogether" (3SM 91).

(a) She directed the "Life of Christ" (*Desire of Ages*) project as chief assistant.

(b) She also did major work in compiling MH and Ed.

(2) For biography see:

(a) Eileen M. Lantry, *Miss Marian's Gold*; PPPA, c1981, 80 pp.

(b) SDAE [1976]: 376, 377.

b. Other workers (during Ellen White's lifetime) included:

(1) Adelia Patten, who later married I. D. Van Horn, an evangelist, entered the White home in 1861 to help care for the boys and assist Ellen White in preparing her writings for publication. Patten edited the Youth's Instructor (1864-1867) and served as editor of and contributor to the 1864 composite work Appeal to the Youth. She wrote the biographical sketch of the life and death of Henry White that preceded an edited compilation of Ellen White's letter to her sons (See WCW, 3, 9 n. 1, 38 n. 4, and SDA Encyclopedia, art. Van Horn, Isaac Doren).

(2) Miss E. J. Burnham.

(3) Miss Sara Peck [1868-1968], SDAE [1976]: 1085.

(4) Miss Maggie Hare.

(5) Dores E. Robinson [1879-1957], SDAE [1976]: 1224.

(6) Miss Minnie Hawkins.

(7) "Sister Tenney" (wife[?] of George C. Tenney [1847-1921], SDAE [1976]: 1470.

(8) Miss Frances ("Fannie") E. Bolton [1859-1926]: see Ron Graybill, *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, White Estate, April, 1982, 122 pp.

(9) Mrs. W. F. Caldwell.

(10) Charles C. Crisler [1877-1936], SDAE [1976]: 358, 359.

C. Professional Colleagues Acting as Consultants.

1. Some read manuscripts and made suggestions on how to explain complex theological ideas in simplified form; rearranged ideas, did minor rewording:

- a. J. H. Waggoner [1820-89], SDAE [1976]: 1563, 1564.
- b. J. N. Loughborough [1832-1924], SDAE [1976]: 815, 816.
- c. H. Camden Lacey [1871-1950], SDAE [1976]: 757.
- d. Edwin R. Palmer [1869-1931], SDAE [1976]: 1070, 1071.

2. Some read manuscripts on health-related subjects-not to determine their veracity, but, rather, to see if they could rephrase matters in ways more acceptable with contemporary medical professionals as well as educated laymen:

- a. J. H. Kellogg, see preface to Christian Temperance & Bible Hygiene (1890).
- b. Dr. David Paulson [1868-1916], (SDAE [1976]: 1084) helped with MH, ca. 1905.

3. Some did assigned research on specific topics:

- a. W. W. Prescott [1855-1944]: Education

(1) Commissioned to provide substitute *historical* quotations for 1911 ed. GC, to replace similar quotations in 1888 (and earlier) editions from now out-of-print.

(2) He also presumed to submit a list of suggested changes for *theological* "errors" which presumed to find in earlier editions of GC.

(3) Ellen White accepted all of his historical suggestions, and rejected all of his theological suggestion!

(a) See biographical sketch SDAE [1976]: 1148-49; Gilbert M. Valentine, "W. W. Prescott; SDA Educator," Ph.D. dissertation, AU (1982, 2 vols, 659 pp.); portion reproduced in *The Shaping of Adventism* (AU Press, 1992, 307 pp.); Arthur L. White shelf document, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White (April 6, 1915): A Statement," June 15, 1981, 41 pp.

IV. Role of the Literary Helpers

A. Literary Staff/General Assistants

1. Clerical:

- a. Represented about 75% of the total work in the office.
- b. Consisted of:

- (1) Typing of first handwritten draft for EGW to hand-edit.
- (2) Typing of subsequent draft.
- (3) Typing multiple copies of correspondence to meet various needs.

2. Book-Editing Basic-Tasks Performed:

- a. Correction of grammatical errors.
- b. Elimination of unnecessary repetition.
- c. Internal transpositions: grouping sentences/paragraphs/sections in best arrangement order.
- d. Clarification of expressed ideas: if EGW believed to have been vague, her wording clarified/improved.
- e. External transpositions (limited to senior workers of long experience): transposition of sentences/paragraphs/sections from one manuscript to another, when an identical thought might be more perspicuously stated.
- f. Preparation of the book index.

3. Prohibitions to the Staff; They were forbidden to-

- a. *Change the meaning* of anything EGW had originally written.
- b. *Add any new ideas/thoughts* originating with the staff.

(1) On April 23, 1900, Marian Davis wrote to GC President G. A. Irwin, denying categorically that literary helpers had written the EGW books (letter reproduced in *Sourcebook*, H-6/41 and 42).

(2) On August 9, 1897 Marian Davis wrote W. C. White concerning the impossibility of an editor writing the original text (letter reproduced in *Sourcebook*, H-6/33 and 34).

B. Marian Davis's Role ("My bookmaker," whose work was "of a different order"--3SM 91)

1. Planning

- a. General-the object and plan of the volume:
 - (1) Who the book would serve: its audience.
 - (2) How much space to devote to each subject.
 - (3) The best relationship between topics.
- b. Specific:
 - (1) Chronology of events re Harmonies of the Gospels.

(2) Scope/content of each chapter.

(a) Some suggestions accepted by EGW.

(b) Some suggestions not accepted by EGW.

2. Gathering: Preparation of 30 "scrapbooks:"

- a. From books (half-dozen bound volumes, chiefly).
- b. From unpublished manuscripts.
- c. From letters/correspondence: paragraphs, even isolated sentences.
- d. From sermon transcripts.
- e. From diaries/journal entries.

3. Arranging-clarifying/grouping:

- a. Rough topical categories.
- b. Everything on a given subject.

4. Transpositions:

- a. Chapter juxtaposition.
- b. Reworking of chapter opening-sentences to avoid diary/travelogue "flavor."

5. Minor Word Substitution:

a. Marian was hesitant/reluctant to make even minor changes which she was fully authorized to make (Letter 64a, 1889, p. 1; in *Sourcebook*, H-6/22).

6. Deletions:

- a. Needless or repetitive words.
- b. Extra-biblical detail, or anything that-superficially-might appear to contradict the Biblical record (to avoid needless prejudice of non SDA readers).
- c. "I saw" expressions in books that are now to be circulated among non SDA public.

7. Conferring/Checking Back With EGW:

- a. Suggestions as to additional lessons to be brought out in a given chapter.
- b. Suggestions for additional amplification/clarification felt to be needed.
- c. Suggestion of "bridging" material to close "gaps" in narrative.

8. No Original Writing:

- a. She did not undertake to compose original materials in text.

9. EGW's Evaluation of Her Work

- a. Marian, my helper, faithful and true as the compass to the pole in her work, is dying. . . .

I am leaving tomorrow for Battle Creek, yet my soul is drawn to the dying girl who has served me for the last 25 years. We have stood side by side in the work, and in perfect harmony in that work. And when she would be gathering up the precious jots and titles that had come in papers and books and present it to me, "now," she would say, "there is something wanted. I cannot supply it." I would look it over, and in one moment I could trace the line right out.

We worked together, just worked together in perfect harmony all the time. She is dying. And it is devotion to the work. She takes the intensity of it as though it were a reality, and we both have entered into it with an intensity to have every paragraph that shall stand in its right place, and show its right work.-Ms 95, Oct. 25, 1904, p. 1; cited in 3SM 93.

V. Was EGW the Author of the Books Which Bore Her Name?

1. A recurring theme among critics of EGW is the suggestion that she is not the *real* author of the books which bear her name.

- a. Various "reasons" have been offered to support this conjecture (and that is exactly what the charge is-unsupported allegation):

- (1) In her earlier years: her limited education allegedly precluded the possibility of writing the sophisticated works attributed to her (which church leaders were supposed to have ghost-written).

- (2) In her latter years: senility is said to have set in, and she was alleged to be totally incapable of phrasing an intelligent sentence because of the infirmities of advancing age.

- b. Interestingly, the critics have failed to bring forward hard, coercive evidence to back up these ingenious speculations (and, of course, the burden of proof rests with the critic).

2. An examination of the objective data suggests the total fallacy of this line of reasoning.

- a. Let us now examine:

- (1) The internal evidence.

- (2) the external evidence.

A. The Internal Evidence

1. Literary Style: A careful rhetorical analysis of stylistic elements in the corpus of the EGW writings (which covered six decades) points to the obvious conclusion that these are all the literary productions of one and the same author.

a. There is, over the years, a recognizable evolution in literary style (as there is with any writer of literature):

(1) Sentence structure-and length-in the earliest writings tend to be simple, with much use of compound-complex sentences.

(2) Vocabulary tends toward the simplest, most basic words.

(3) Paragraphs tend, generally, to be inordinantly long.

(a) And *Early Writings* is a classic example of these manifestations.

b. In later years, unsurprisingly, a maturity in development of style is observed:

(1) Sentence and paragraph length varies from page to page.

(2) Vocabulary is more sophisticated.

(3) And there is an aesthetic beauty in much of the prose not often witnessed in the earliest writing.

c. There is an evolution of style: but it is an evolution in the style of one writer, not an evidence of multiple-authorship, as some critics aver.

(1) Some of EGW's literary helpers stayed for long tenures: Marian Davis worked for her 25 years.

(2) But perhaps the more common experience was a fairly short tenure-helpers came and went, while EGW continued to labor with her pen.

(a) You see, if her helpers were the "real" authors of those works, then there should be marked-even abrupt-changes in the established literary style over the decades.

(b) But an examination of those writings does not support the assertion of the critics; and the evidence forces the conclusion that we deal with works of a single author.

3. We note in passing that these arguments have much in common with those raised against the authorship of various Biblical books.

a. Evangelical scholars reject these groundless assumptions and assertions for the same reasons that we reject allegations against EGW's authorship of the books which bear her name.

2. Method of Writing:

a. The first practical typewriter was marketed in 1874; 11 years later (in 1885, when EGW was 58), she purchased these machines for her office staff-she was a progressive who wanted the latest, most up-to-date equipment for her helpers.

b. That EGW herself, however, never learned to operate a typewriter is fortunate for researchers today, because the first draft of all her manuscripts was written in longhand-indisputable evidence, today, that she was, indeed, the author!

(1) She, therefore, perhaps tended to need more literary helpers than might otherwise have been the case.

(2) and the task of many of her helpers was simply to reduce to typewritten form the handwritten ("autograph") manuscript so that the editing process might be advanced.

c. And there is an evolution not only in literary style, but also in EGW's handwriting.

(1) The late Arthur L. White, Secretary of the White Estate for nearly a half-century, was so familiar with the original manuscripts that he would often astound visitors to the vault by asking them to select one at random, then hold a hand over the date, and allow him to guess the date of origin. (He seldom missed by more than a year or two!)

B. The External Evidence

1. The Testimony of EGW Herself: Mrs. White claimed to be the author of her books:

a. In a letter to Dr. David Paulson, June 14, 1906, she referred to GC.

(1) This book first appeared in print in 1884 under the title, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 4.

(2) In 1888, it came out under the more familiar present title.

(3) And in 1911, under the careful (and very direct) supervision of its author, GC was revised into its present form.

b. And twice in one paragraph of this letter she refers to "my introduction," and "my statement" which was contained within that introduction:

(1) "In my introduction to *The Great Controversy* you have no doubt read my statement regarding the Ten Commandments and the Bible, which should have helped you to a correct understanding of the matter under consideration.-ISM 24, 25.

c. And in a 1900 letter to GC President G. A. Irwin (1897-1901) from Australia, EGW referred to the literary production of DA, with particular reference to the role of Marian Davis, in these words:

(1) "The books are not Marian's productions, but my own, gathered from all my writings. Marian has a large field from which to draw, and her ability to arrange the matter is of great value to me. It saves my pouring over a mass of matter, which I have no time to do.-Letter 61a, April 23, 1900; cited in 3SM 91.

2. The Testimony of Marian Davis: In a letter to W. C. White, Aug. 9, 1987, Marian Davis, chief project co-ordinator of the "life of Christ" (DA) Project team, referred to a letter received from C. H. Jones, long-time manager and president of the Pacific Press, who had been "hounding" her to get the DA manuscript in to him immediately, as he had an exceedingly tight production schedule at that publishing house and wanted to fit this book into it. Note, especially, the trenchant concluding sentence, which must forever dispel any ideas of Marian's authorship of DA:

a. "I received notice from C. H. Jones that it was planned to publish "Desire of Ages" in the spring of '98, and in order to do this, all the copy must be in the hands of the printers as early as September, '97.

From what I learned of the artist's work, I cannot believe that the printers will be ready for the manuscript by September. They have now 25 chapters, as finally revised. Twenty-five more we're prepared to send, but a few changes will have to be made in them, as I finish the later chapters. For this I am holding them. . . .

Sister White is constantly harassed with the thought that the manuscript should be sent to the printers at once. I wish it were possible to relieve her mind, for the anxiety makes it hard for her to write and for me to work. . . . Sister White seems inclined to write, and I have no doubt she will bring out many precious things. I hope it will be possible to get them in the book. There is one thing, however, than not even the most competent editor could do—that is prepare the manuscript before it is written—cited in *Sourcebook*, pp. H-6/33, 34.

3. Internal and external evidence attests to the authorship of EGW's books by the author whose name appears thereon.

VI. Ellen White as Author: Her Role in the Production of *The Desire of Ages*

A. Sources of Information/Data

1. Prophetic dream/visions, from God; especially "Great Controversy" vision of March 14, 1858.

2. The Bible.

3. Non-inspired literary works:

a. Reference books:

(1) "Harmonies of the Gospel."

(2) "Bible histories."

(3) Bible dictionaries.

b. Biographies of Christ.

c. General devotional literature.

B. Writing Task

1. Evolution of book Format:

a. 1858: *Spiritual Gifts* Book One: of the 219 pp., 50+ devoted to the life of Christ.

b. 1876, 1877: *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Books II and III: 640 pp. On the life of Christ.

c. 1890's: three books emerge:

(1) DA (1898): 835 pp.: basic biography of Jesus.

(2) MB (1896): 152 pp.: major commentary on the Sermon on the Mount.

(3) COL (1900): 421 pp.: major commentary on Christ's parables.

- d. Thus: 50+pp. became 640+ pp. became 1,408 pp. in three books.
2. "Ingredients" brought together in the compilation process:
 - a. Incidental references to Christ in Ellen White correspondence with the field.
 - b. Periodical articles on Christ's life/teachings.
 - c. Book chapters.
 - d. Transcripts of sermons Ellen White preached.
 3. Revising/Developing Tasks:
 - a. Review of topical collections of thematic material.
 - b. Corrections, as needed.
 - c. Additional writing: basically "insertions" and "add-ons."
 - (1) Amplification.
 - (2) Clarification.
 - (3) Expansion.
 - (4) "Bridging" materials, to plus existing "gaps" in narrative.
 4. Authority/Command: EGW assumed full responsibility/supervision.
 - a. Suggestions for revisions from literary helpers were examined re suggestions for editing of original EGW manuscripts.
 - (1) Some suggestions were accepted, and adopted.
 - (2) Others were rejected, equally forthrightly.
 - (a) EGW was in total charge of the project, from first to last.
 - b. Final approval of the final edition of the manuscript before it was sent to the publishers.
 - c. Choice of book title, from suggestions made by the publisher:
 - (1) "The Desire of All Nations" (Haggai 2:7) finally became *The Desire of Ages*.
 5. Subsequent revision for later editions of the book.

VII. The 1888 and 1911 Revisions of *The Great Controversy*

A. English Edition

1. The book we know today as *The Great Controversy* was initially published in 1884 as *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. IV.

a. In 1888, and again in 1911, EGW initiated and personally supervised significant major revisions of the 1884 edition.

2. The nature of the changes undertaken:

a. Time references updated: "1800 years" since Christ came are now adjusted to read "1900 years."

b. Historical quotations cited in the 1884/1888 editions from books no longer in print were replaced with similar statements from other contemporary historical accounts.

c. Some references to Roman Catholics were adjusted to avoid pejorative connotations ("popish" became "papal," etc.).

d. Approximately three pages of text were removed from the chapter entitled "Snares of Satan" because the matter, originally intended for SDA eyes, would not be appropriate to a broader, non SDA audience:

(1) Some of the deleted matter (which subsequently appeared in TM) might unnecessarily offend some Roman Catholic readers.

(2) EGW defended the deletion (which some uninformed SDAs today feel should not have been made), citing the precedent of Christ:

There are matters in the *Testimonies* that are written, not for the world at large, but for the believing children of God, and it is not appropriate to make instruction, warning, reproof or counsel of this character public to the world. The world's Redeemer . . . presented some matters of instruction, not to the world, but to His disciples alone. While He had communications designed for the multitudes that thronged His steps, He also had some special light and instruction to impart to His followers which He did not impart to the great congregation, as it would neither be understood nor appreciated by them. . . .

The Lord Jesus thought it necessary to make many things clear to His disciples which He did not open to the multitudes. . . .-TM 34, 35.

(a) For a more complete statement on the situation, see ALW's monograph, "The 1911 Edition of The Great Controversy," p. 10ff.

B. Spanish Edition

1. The Spanish edition of GC was based upon a translation by Eduardo Francisco Forga made about 1907 or 1908.

a. A prior translation, made by two Presbyterian clergy and another non SDA scholar, was deemed unacceptable in South America because it had an "American Spanish" flavor, and was held to be poorly executed.

b. Forga, a new convert with exceptional linguistic ability and literary talent, made the new Spanish translation of GC, which was published in 1913 (and reflected the changes effected by EGW herself in the 1911 English edition).

(1) Earlier, Forga had been banished from his native Peru for opposing the Roman Catholic hierarchy there.

(2) He later married into the White family (his wife, Margaret Lacey, was a sister May Lacey White, wife of W. C. White).

2. Forga's Spanish translation differed from its English from its English counterpart in two respects:

a. At Forga's instance (and with EGW's approval) it contained an additional chapter on the Spanish Reformation ("The Awakening in Spain"), written by Clarence C. Crisler (one of EGW's secretaries) and H. H. Hall, and translated by Forga.

(1) It appears as Chapter 13 in the Spanish GC.

b. Unfortunately Forga's translation of passages dealing with the RC Church and the Papacy were phrased much more stridently than they appear in the English version; and the highly-pejorative manner of Forga's expressions would later create unfortunate new problems in South America.

(1) Elbio Pereyra (a Washington, DC-based Uruguayan associate secretary in the White Estate in the 1980s) characterized Forga's stance as "a strongly anti-Catholic position" in his monograph: "Eduardo Francisco Forga: The Forgotten Pioneer From the "Neglected continent" (White Estate, Nov., 1987, pp. 16, 25; White Estate Document File DF 33).

(2) J. W. Westphal, missionary leader in charge of SDA work in South America, early expressed fears of "criticisms I have heard of his strong way of putting things" (*ibid.*, pp. 73, 74).

3. In the middle 1970s, Argentina (where the Spanish edition of GC was published, in Buenos Aires) was controlled by a Roman Catholic military dictatorship.

a. The government promulgated an anti-defamation decree which prohibited publication of any literature that disparaged or used offensive language against any religious body—a thinly-veiled law to prevent circulation of anti-Catholic literature in Argentina.

b. SDA leaders in Buenos Aires felt that, in harmony with EGW's counsel in GW 468, they should soften some of the more strident expressions in the Spanish edition, to bring it more into harmony with EGW's more moderate statements in the original English edition. She had written:

The worker in foreign fields will come in contact with all classes people and all varieties of minds, and he will find that different method of labor are required to meet the needs of the people. A sense of his own inefficiency will drive him to God and to the Bible for light and strength and knowledge.

The methods and means by which we reach certain ends are not always the same. The missionary must use reason and judgement. Experience will indicate the wisest course to follow under existing circumstances. It is often the case that the customs and climate of a country make a condition of things that would not be tolerated in another country. Changes for the better must be made, but it is best not to be too abrupt.—GW 468.

4. Some Hispanic workers, familiar with the Buenos Aires revised version, feel that those who produced it not only softened some of Forga's more harsh and strident statements, but that they also, in the process, deleted for the Spanish edition important theological material as well.

a. This newly-revised Spanish edition was sold not only in Argentina but in other Hispanic nations in Central and South America.

b. Strong opposition to this alleged deletion of theological materials eventually led to the discontinuance of sales of this newer version, and the original Forga translation was again the only version marketed (Interview with Juan Carlos Viera, White Estate, June 24, 1992).

VIII. Role of White Estate Literary Helpers Since EGW's Death (1915)

1. New EGW books have been developed in the past two decades in an attempt to meet the previously unmet needs of different groups as we enter the late 20th-Century and beyond:

a. **"Simplified" Books:** The original EGW text is paraphrased in a much more simplified basic English vocabulary, to meet the needs of:

(1) Readers generally unfamiliar with the English language, but who possess a basic vocabulary of about 600 English words.

(2) The blind (who generally read English at about a 5th-grade level).

(3) The deaf (who also generally read at a 5th-grade level).

(4) Children.

b. **"Condensed" Books:** the original EGW text is retained, but substantially edited ("boiled-down") to reduce the total bulk by up to one-third the number of words in the original.

(1) Many who live in new "Video-Age" are unwilling to attempt to read large book; *The Desire of Ages*, with its 800 + pages, would frighten them away entirely.

(2) A need was felt to adapt these large books to changing conditions, and to prepare a literature that would be contemporary, inviting, and appealing.

c. **"Abridged" Books:** The original EGW text is retained, but some passages (ranging from a paragraph to a page to an entire chapter) are excerpted from the larger EGW works, and placed in small-book format.

Conclusion

1. There is ample evidence in both OT and NT that Bible writers employed literary assistants in the production of their respective inspired books.

2. EGW did so, too; and in so doing, she places herself squarely in the center of the Biblical tradition and precedent.

a. Her practice, thus, need not cause concern or alarm by SDAs today.

3. EGW herself initiated, and personally supervised, from beginning to end, the revision of 1884, 1888, and 1911 editions of GC, in an ongoing attempt to develop a book more acceptable to the non SDA public-at-large.

a. The fact that in this process some statements were modified, and others were deleted entirely, need cause no alarm today.

(1) There has been no sinister conspiratorial plot to destroy her writings by church leadership.

(2) And EGW herself personally initiated and supervised all changes made.

b. The 1911 edition represented a substantially large outlay in time, money, and personnel.

c. And it is clear that it was this edition (and not the earlier ones) which EGW wished to have circulated among the non SDA public once it became available.

d. Contemporary efforts now to continue the circulation of the 1884 and 1888 editions (ostensibly because the 1911 edition is alleged to have been perverted and polluted by unconsecrated, unbelieving SDA leaders) is patently as false as it is absurd.

4. During her lifetime EGW approved the paraphrasing of chapters of DA into a more simple, basic-English presentation by her son Edson, for his use in evangelistic work among newly-freed, largely-illiterate African-American slaves in the post-Civil War South.

a. Paraphrases of her "Conflict of the Ages" series of five works today for specialized audiences would unquestionably meet with her total approval and strong support.

Plagiarism

Ellen G. White as a Writer Part II - The Editorial Process⁽¹⁾

Jerry Moon
(Revised and adapted by Denis Fortin)

Introduction

The purpose of this lecture is to present the various aspects of the editorial process of the many types of writings of Ellen White, especially during the time her son, W.C. White, was her assistant from 1881 to 1915.

- Ellen White's earliest writing
 - In Ellen White's second vision (late December 1844 or early January 1845), she was directed to tell others what she had seen (2SG 35).
 - In another vision in late spring or early summer 1845, she was directed for the first time to write out what she had seen (2SG 60).
 - Her first published writing was a letter written December 20, 1845 to Enoch Jacobs, an Adventist editor. At the end of the letter she emphasized "This was not written for publication; but for the encouragement of all who may see it." Jacobs, however, promptly published it in the next issue of the *Day-Star*, January 24, 1846. When Ellen saw her letter in the *Day-Star* she wrote again.

"My vision which you published in the *Day-Star* was written under a deep sense of duty, *to you*, not expecting you would publish it. Had I for once thought it was to be spread before the many readers of your paper, I should have been more particular and stated some things which I left out" (E.G. Harmon to Enoch Jacobs, February 15, 1846, in *Day-Star*, March 14, 1846, emphasis supplied).

These two letters highlight the fact that from the moment she began to write, she clearly sensed that writings intended for publication needed to receive "more particular" preparation than writings for merely private communication.

- **Early editorial assistance**
 - By James White

As Ellen Harmon's friendship with James White blossomed into marriage, it was only natural that she should share with him her concerns about preparing her writings for publication. Years later their third son, Willie, recalled the early editorial process that took place between his parents. Ellen White would often read aloud to James what she had just written. "If her husband discovered weaknesses in the composition, such as faulty tenses of verbs, or disagreements between subject, noun, and verb, he would suggest grammatical corrections. These she would write into her manuscript and then read on."⁽²⁾

Willie's first glimpses of the decisions involved in publishing also came in the home. "Sometimes after Mother had read to her husband an important personal testimony, the question would arise, 'What shall we do with it?'" Besides the person for whom it was first written, "the instruction it contains will be of service to many others," he recalled his mother saying. "How shall we get it before them?"⁽³⁾

- By other early leaders

Not only James White, but others as well, were asked for their counsel regarding the most effective way to use the material written. W.C. White reported his mother as "often" saying to James, "I have done my part in writing out what God has revealed to me. You and your associates who are bearing the burden of labor for our people at large, must decide what use shall be made of it." At other times she and James would "consult with" some of the "leading brethren" regarding "the best manner" of publicizing the instruction given.

"In the early days of this cause, if some of the leading brethren were present when messages from the Lord were given, we would consult with them as to the best manner of bringing the instruction before the people. Sometimes it was decided that certain portions would better not be read before a congregation. Sometimes those whose course was reproved would request that the matters pointing out their wrongs and dangers should be read before others, that they, too, might be benefited" (SM 1:51).

Thus there are very early precedents for Ellen White's inviting suggestions from respected associates regarding the editing and publication of her writings. So it was natural for her to entrust similar responsibilities to Willie as he grew up.

- By W.C. White

W.C. White's adult involvement in his mother's publishing work went back at least to July 1874, when, she began enlisting him in secretarial and perhaps editorial aspects of her work. They worked together on a thirty-two-page tract entitled *The Sufferings of Christ*. She explained to James: "Willie has helped me, and now we take it to the office for Uriah [Smith] to criticize it" (E.G. White to James White, July 17, 1874).

The following spring, at age 20, Willie was appointed acting business manager of the fledgling Pacific Press. His involvement in the publishing aspects of his mother's work continued in connection with his managerial responsibilities at the Pacific Press. She sent him articles to publish in the *Signs of the*

Times, saying that Uriah Smith wanted them for the *Review and Herald* but that she preferred for the *Signs* to have them first. Six days later she wrote to Willie again.

"If you do not want them, I will let Uriah publish them. He wants them. Let me know at once if you feel any reluctance and had rather they would appear in [the] *Review* first, all right just express yourself freely" (E.G. White to W.C. White, July 20, 1875).

It appears that it was immaterial to her which periodical published the material first. She may well have wanted to give her editor son the opportunity to "scoop" the other magazine, but if for any reason he did not want to publish her articles immediately she would let Uriah Smith have them for the *Review*. In this case, she allowed both White and Smith to publish immediately or postpone publication at their own discretion.

In 1878-1879 she gave him considerably broader authority in the preparation of *Testimonies* 28 and 29 (now in *Testimonies* 4:271-383 and 4:384-522). She authorized him to select what material to publish in No. 28, and what material to hold over for No. 29. In adapting personal testimonies for publication to a wider audience, she specifically directed him to make minor changes as necessary to protect the identity of the individuals originally addressed: "All very personal [references] such as names must be left out" (E.G. White to M.K. White and W.C. White, January 6, 1879). She asked him not to shorten the material merely for space considerations, but did authorize him to "abridge" if "the composition would be helped by so doing."

"We would say to you, Make what corrections you deem necessary, but Father and I thought you should not abridge unless the composition would be helped by so doing. That [which] we have received and read is all right we think. We shall have more matter soon for the second testimony, No. 29, to follow immediately [after] No. 28."

The final product would be safeguarded by her practice of receiving advance proofs for her approval before publication (E.G. White to W.C. White and M.K. White, January 2, 1879).

She also asked him and Mary to gather materials for her to use in her writing (E.G. White to W.C. White and M.K. White, October 30, November 7, 1880).

While the extent of W.C. White's editorial involvement in his mother's work during this period was small, he had already begun most of the editorial functions that he would perform later.

- W.C. White's position after James White's death

During the year following James White's death in August 1881, the twin blows of grief and physical illness brought his widow so low that she expected her life to end soon. In this state of ill health she decided to attend the camp meeting held from October 5 through 17, 1882, in Healdsburg. According to several corroborating accounts, she experienced sudden healing, visible to all, as she stood before the congregation (see Moon, *W.C. White and Ellen G. White*, 72).

Shortly afterward, Ellen had a night vision in which she was told of God's provision for someone to assist her with her work in the absence of her husband.

The Mighty Healer said, "Live. I have put my spirit upon your son, W.C. White, that he may be your counselor. I have given him the spirit of wisdom, and a discerning, perceptive mind. He will have wisdom in counsel, and if he walks in My way, and works out My will, he will be kept, and will be enabled to help you bring before My people the light I will give you for them. . . . I will be with your son, and will be his counselor. He will have wisdom to defend the truth; for I will take charge of his mind, and will give him sound judgment in the councils that he attends in connection with the work. . . . Your son will be perplexed over many matters that are to come before my people, but he is to wait and watch and pray, and let the words of God come to the people, even though he cannot immediately discern the purpose of God" (E. G. White to G. I. Butler, October 30, 1906).

In another description of the same experience, she wrote that she had been "shown" in 1882 that "my son, W.C. White, should be my helper and counselor, and that the Lord would place on him the spirit of wisdom and of a sound mind." The terms "helper" and "counselor" would encompass a growing list of responsibilities as the years went by.

- The editorial staff⁽⁴⁾

1. W. C. White acted as the general supervisor of Ellen White's editorial staff, beginning at least by 1881, with Mary K. White and Marian Davis working under him.

a. Others included: Joseph H. Waggoner, Sara McInterfer, and Jenny Ings.

b. Others not connected with Ellen White's personal staff, but who were occasionally asked to help, included:

Uriah Smith, editor of the *Review and Herald*

C. H. Jones, manager of the Pacific Press

E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, co-editors of the *Signs of the Times*

J. H. Kellogg, medical superintendent of the Battle Creek Sanitarium

- W. C. White's responsibilities
 - Included assigning tasks to the different staff members (at least when Ellen White was away) and supervising the editorial process from general concepts to details of wording.
 - Trusted editorial assistants, like Mary K. White and Marian Davis, were given the responsibility to edit minor details. On occasion, Ellen White indicated that Marian Davis was too reluctant to assume responsibility for even minute details without receiving specific authorization from herself or W.C. White on every individual word. Early in 1889, while W.C. White was interim president of the General Conference, Ellen White described the situation in a letter to his wife,

Mary K.:

Willie is in meeting early and late, devising, planning for the doing better and more efficient work in the cause of God. We see him only at the table. Marian will go to him for some little matters that it seems she could settle for herself. She is nervous and hurried and he so worn he has to just shut his teeth together and hold his nerves as best he can. I have had a talk with her and told her she must settle many things herself that she has been bringing Willie. Her mind is on every point and the connections, and his mind has been plowing through a variety of difficult subjects until his brain reels and then his mind is in no way prepared to take up these little minutia [sic]. She must just carry some of these things that belong to her part of the work, and not bring them before him nor worry his mind with them. Sometimes I think she will kill us both, all unnecessarily, with her little things she can just as well settle herself as to bring them before us. Every little change of a word she wants us to see. I am about tired of this business (E.G. White to Mary K. White, [March 1889]).

- **There is a hierarchy of responsibility in the editorial process:**

- (1) Minute editorial details were decided by assistants.**
- (2) Larger questions were submitted to W.C. White, and to Ellen White as she had time.**
- (3) Final approval was given by Ellen White when the assistants' work was completed.**

D. The editorial task during W.C. White's assistance

- **In order to grasp the scope of the editorial work of W.C. White, it is necessary to understand something of the process by which Ellen White's handwritten drafts became typewritten letters or published articles and books.**
 - **The first level of editorial work was the transcription of Ellen White's first-draft handwritten document into an acceptable grammatical form.**
 - **The second level of editorial work involved rearranging, assembling, and compiling Ellen White's typewritten material (diary, letter, or manuscript) into a new literary work (article, pamphlet, or book).**
 - **The editorial process sometimes included both levels at the same time.**

- **Letters**

The perennial task of Ellen White's staff was the preparation of letters, which could involve much more than merely typing the handwritten manuscript. W.C. White mentioned to his mother how the staff handled the preparation of one long letter. "Yesterday we received your letter accompanied by a long one for Bro. A. C. B[ourdeau]. Mary [White] will try to fix it as she has strength. I had not the heart to give it to Marian [Davis]. She is worn out with this sort of work and it is a great burden to her to take these very long manuscripts, and decide how to fix them" (W.C. White to E. G. White, November 22, 1886; the letter referred to [E. G. White to A. C. Bourdeau, November 20, 1886] was some 4000 words long, making 11 typewritten pages).

The kind of work Ellen White expected of her staff is shown in the instruction she gave about the preparation of another letter, written from England and sent to her staff in Basel, Switzerland. "I send you this letter and want you to have it copied and send me a copy at once to read to Mrs. Green. Do with it as your judgment shall indicate." The last sentence is an obvious reference to the editorial process. She indicated that her staff in Basel should edit the letter according to their own judgment, type it, and send it back to her in England as soon as possible, where she would personally read it to Mrs. Green (E. G. White to Children, July 20, 1887).

- Sermons and periodical articles
 - One of the sources of periodical articles was the sermons Ellen White presented on a regular basis. In a letter from Basel, she described the process by which her sermons were placed in writing. Sara McInterfer "writes out the discourses I have given which she has taken in shorthand." She explained that Mary K. White was also engaged in "preparing" for publication "morning talks" that Ellen White had given "in Battle Creek and other places" (E. G. White to Edson and Emma, January 19, 1887). These sermons were frequently published in periodicals, in both the *Review and Herald* and the *Signs of the Times*.
 - During the European period, there were times when her limited staff could not keep up with this demand. It was decided that the staff should concentrate their efforts on the publication of *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 1 (forerunner of *Patriarchs and Prophets*).
 - In order to save time, W. C. White proposed to C.H. Jones, manager of the Pacific Press, a different method of handling the preparation of periodical articles. Ellen White would depend on the editors of the respective papers to prepare the manuscripts for publication.

"Mother has notified the editors of the Review that she will furnish them with manuscript if they will prepare it for the paper. The larger part of the sermons which mother has delivered over here have been reported and written out and we can furnish you with a good supply of them, if you have someone there who can prepare them for the paper. It is not reasonable for us to attempt the work here. Mother will gladly furnish this manuscript without charge if we are released from the task of preparing them for the papers" (W. C. White to C. H. Jones, December 5, 1886).

This arrangement highlights the trust she placed in those editors to make careful use of her materials, since the articles would appear in print without the possibility of her final inspection.

- This confidence is also explicit in a letter she wrote to Uriah Smith six years later from Australia.

"You have written to me in regard to what shall be done with the article addressed to the Battle Creek Church. I answer, Do with it as you think best, using it as you judge it will best serve the cause of God. Please follow your own judgment as to the disposal of any thing I may write from henceforth, unless I give special directions concerning it. After it serves the special purpose for which it was written, you may drop out the personal matter and make it general, and put it to whatever use you many think best for the interests of the cause of God. As you say, we are far separated, and two or

three months must pass before communications can be answered however important may be their character, therefore it is best not to wait my decisions on matters of this kind, especially when your judgment is evidently in harmony with what is best, and something to which I could have no objection (E. G. White to U. Smith, September 19, 1892).

Here she gave Smith a wide latitude to adapt her testimonies by deleting "personal matter" and then to reuse them as he felt would "best serve the cause of God." The conservative approach that Smith and other denominational editors took regarding such editing may be a reason why the periodical articles are often rougher in style than the books in which these articles were later reused by Ellen White.

- Books

Most of Ellen White's books were produced in whole or in part by compilation.

- Marian Davis' work of compilation

Ellen White referred to Marian Davis as "my bookmaker" and described her work of compilation in detail.

She gathers materials from my diaries, from my letters, and from the articles published in the papers. . . . She has been with me for twenty-five years, and has constantly been gaining increasing ability for the work of classifying and grouping my writings (E. G. White to Brother and Sister [J.A.] Burden, January 6, 1903).

She takes my articles which are published in the papers, and pastes them in blank books. She also has a copy of all the letters I write. In preparing a chapter for a book, Marian remembers that I have written something on that special point, which may make the matter more forcible. She begins to search for this, and if, when she finds it, she sees that it will make the chapter more clear, she adds it.

The books are not Marian's productions, but my own, gathered from all my writings. Marian has a large field from which to draw, and her ability to arrange the matter is of great value to me. It saves my poring over a mass of matter, which I have no time to do (E. G. White to G. A Irwin, April 23, 1900).

When Marian had brought together her compilation of Ellen White's writings on a topic, she would present the compiled materials to Ellen White. Ellen White would look it over and write additional material as required to unite the material compiled from her previous writings (E. G. White, "A Tribute to Marian Davis," MS 95, 1904).

Others were also involved in the work of compiling materials for Ellen White's books.

b. J. H. Kellogg helped in the compilation of *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene* (1890). Kellogg explained in the preface that the book was "a compilation, and in some sense an abstract, of the

various writings of Mrs. White upon this subject," with the addition of several articles by James White. "The work of compilation has been done under the supervision of Mrs. White, by a committee appointed by her for the purpose, and the manuscript has been carefully examined by her" (*Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, iv).

c. W.C. White's involvement in book compilation

The scope of W.C. White's editorial activities also included decisions regarding the general format and chapter arrangement for his mother's books. This aspect of his editorial role was clearly seen in the planning of the volumes that would eventually be known as *Patriarchs and Prophets* and *Prophets and Kings*. In 1888, *Patriarchs and Prophets* was nearly complete. Ellen White had mentioned the possibility that she might someday write a second volume on Old Testament history, but the suggestion was still tentative and the contents of the proposed volume had not been definitely planned.

W.C. White, viewing the matter from a publishing standpoint, realized the need to plan both volumes at the same time in order to obtain uniformity in size and format. "If Mother really intends that this [first volume] shall be followed with the rest of the Old Testament history," he wrote to Marian Davis, then the best place to divide the narrative would be between the reigns of David and Solomon.

He provided two reasons.

(1) First, he argued that to include the story of Solomon's reign in the first volume (as it had been in the first volume of *Spirit of Prophecy*) would make *Patriarchs and Prophets* too large. Unless Ellen White should write a great deal of new material for it, the second volume would be disproportionately smaller. To end the first book with David and save the section on Solomon to start off the second would keep them about the same size.

(2) Second, White observed that "as the sins of Solomon prepared the way for the subsequent apostasy and the division of the kingdom, it would seem that the building of the temple and Solomon's reign" would be an appropriate introduction for the volume dealing with Israel's captivity. That White's suggestion was accepted by his mother is shown by the present chapter arrangement of the two volumes (W. C. White to M. A. Davis, August 12, 1888).

- W.C. White's thoughts on the editorial claims of Fannie Bolton⁽⁵⁾
 - One of Ellen White's editorial assistants was Fannie Bolton. After leaving Ellen White's employ, Bolton made claims that she had largely authored some of the writings that went out over Ellen White's signature. Specifically, she claimed that a letter of reproof to A.R. Henry of Battle Creek had been outlined by Ellen White for Fannie to compose entirely. The allegations have since been refuted, but at the time they sounded plausible to some who were unfamiliar with Ellen White's writings.
 - These allegations led W.C. White to write a letter to G.A. Irwin in which he made some pointed comments about the methods of Ellen White's editorial staff (W. C. White to G.

A. Irwin, May 7, 1900). The following are some excerpts from this letter.

- "I have been very familiar with mother's work for many years, and with the work that is required of her copyists, and editors, and I never knew of any such request made by my mother, or of any such work being attempted by any of her workers. I do not know of any one who has ever been connected with her work [except Bolton], but would as quickly put their hand into the fire and hold it there, as to attempt to add any thoughts to what mother had written in any testimony to any individual."
- "In his own time and manner, the Lord reveals to her precious truths and facts regarding the movements and dangers, and privileges of the church, and of individuals. These things she writes out as she has time and strength, often rising at a very early hour, that she may write while the matter is fresh in her mind, and before there is liability of interruption in her work.

"As many matters are revealed to her in a very short space of time, and as these matters are sometimes similar, and sometimes different; so she writes them out, sometimes many pages on one subject, and sometimes dealing with many subjects in a few pages. In her eager haste to transfer to the written page the thought[s] that have been pictured to her mind, she does not stop to study grammatical [sic], or rhetorical forms, but writes out the facts as clearly as she can, and as fully as possible."

- "Sometimes, when mother's mind is rested, and free, the thoughts are presented in language that is not only clear and strong, but beautiful and correct; and at times when she is weary and oppressed with heavy burdens of anxiety, or when the subject is difficult to portray, there are repetitions, and ungram[m]atical sentences.

"Mother's copyists are entrusted with the work of correcting gram[m]atical errors, of eliminating unnecessary repetition, and of grouping paragraphs and sections in their best order. If a passage is not fully understood, the copyist asks [Ellen White to explain] its full meaning and proper connection. When corrected and plainly copied with the typewriter or the pen, the manuscripts are all carefully examined by mother, and corrected, wherever correction is required, and then copied again, if the corrections are numerous. This is done with many manuscripts, not only because corrections are made in the work of the copyist, but because mother sees a way to express the thought a little more clearly, or more fully.

"Often mother writes out a matter the second time, because she feels that it is very difficult to put in writing the scene, or events, as they are presented to her."

- "Mother's workers of experience, such as sisters Davis, Burnham, Bolton, Peck, and Hare, who are very familiar with her writings, are authorized to take a sentence, paragraph, or section, from one manuscript where the thought was clearly and fully expressed, and incorporate it with another manuscript, where the same thought was expressed but not so clearly. But none of mother's workers are authorized to add to the manuscripts by introducing thoughts of their own. They are instructed that it is [only] the words and thoughts that mother has written, or spoken, that are to be used."

- **"Those who have been entrusted with the preparation of these manuscript[s], have been persons who feared the Lord, and who sought him [sic] daily for wisdom and guidance, and they have shared much of His blessing, and the guidance of His Holy Spirit in understanding the precious truths that they were handling. I, myself, have felt the same blessing, and heavenly enlightenment in answer to prayer for wisdom to understand the spiritual truths in these writings, that I have in studying the Bible. This was a sweet fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit as a teacher and guide, in understanding the word. And in answer to prayer, my memory has been refreshed as to where to find very precious statements amongst mother's writings, that brought in connection with the manuscript at hand, would make a useful article.**

"However thankful the copyist may be for this quickening of the mind and memory, it would seem to me to be wholly out of place for us to call this 'inspiration,' for it is not in any sense the same gift as that by which the truths are revealed to mother.

"It is right here that S[iste]r Bolton is in great danger of being deceived and of leading others astray. The blessing of a clear mind, and an active memory, she has called an inspiration, and the unwise use of the term has led those who know less of the work . . . to come to wrong conclusions about what she has done."

F. Conclusion

- 1. From the time of Ellen Harmon's earliest writings, she recognized the need of careful editing of material that was to be published.**
- 2. Consequently, she asked family members and other trusted colleagues to make editorial suggestions for improving the spelling, grammatical expressions, and sentence structure of her manuscripts before publication.**
- 3. At least by 1881, she had begun to employ full-time "literary assistants" to help with typing and editing her manuscript.**
- 4. A major premise that informed the role Ellen White gave to her editorial assistants was her concept of inspiration. She believed that divine *revelation* did not (usually) dictate the prophet's words but rather supplied the prophet's mind with "thoughts" (1 SM, 21). *Inspiration* then guided the prophet as communicator, not only in the initial formulation of thoughts into words, but also in the subsequent improvement of those expressions by herself or with the help of others. Working on this premise, Ellen White employed literary assistants who did various levels of editorial work under her supervision and subject to her final approval (*W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 150-151).**
- 5. Another motivation was her goal to make her writings as perfect as possible so that educated readers might not be repelled by deficiencies of grammar and syntax. For this reason, Ellen White's most experienced and trusted workers were authorized to rearrange the sequence of words and sentences and even incorporate clarifying passages from other Ellen White manuscripts in order to improve clarity and readability.**
- 6. However, the work of Ellen White's literary assistants differed from ordinary "editing" in two important respects.**
 - a. Her helpers were absolutely *forbidden to alter Ellen White's concepts* or to intrude any of their own personal ideas into the manuscript (*W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 224).**

b. Even Ellen White's distinctive *writing style* and *vocabulary* were to be altered only as necessary for clarity and grammatical correctness. Fannie Bolton was discharged partly because she substituted her own style and vocabulary for that of Ellen White's (ibid., 222).

1. This document is taken from Jerry Moon, *W.C. White and Ellen G. White: The Relationship Between the Prophet and Her Son* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993) and GSEM534 lecture outline "Ellen G. White as a Writer - 1, The Editorial Process," April 10, 1996. The Appendices are from Jim Nix, "From Vision to Printed Page," May 19, 1998.

2. W.C. White, "How Ellen White's Books Were Written: Addresses to Faculty and Students at the 1935 Advanced Bible School, Angwin, California, Part I-June 18, 1935," p. 3, SD, EGWRC-AU.

3. Ibid., 5.

4. The next two sections are taken or adapted from *W.C. White and E.G. White*, 112-122.

5. This section is taken and adapted from *W.C. White and Ellen G. White*, 221-225.

**Ellen G. White as a Writer:
Case Studies in the Issue of Literary Borrowing**

Denis Fortin

Of the many "problem" issues regarding the writings of Ellen G. White one, in particular, has been quite successful in destroying confidence in, and the credibility of, Ellen G. White, as a true, authentic prophet of the Lord, than any others. It is the so-called "plagiarism" charge.

One of the best documents addressing this issue is Roger W. Coon's lecture outline, "Ellen G. White and the So-Called 'Plagiarism' Charge: An Examination of Five Issues," (April 30, 1999). In this document, Coon draws a distinction between plagiarism and literary borrowing. His conclusion is that Ellen White is not guilty of the former and only used literary borrowing in the production of some of her writings.

Coon argues that in agreement with Ellen White's own admission of literary borrowing in the *Great Controversy*, literary borrowing "occurs when one writer utilizes and employs - "borrows" - the ideas, or words, of another, for his own personal ends, for the purpose of making a particular point.... The question of the identity of the original author is not, here, the germane issue (as it is in plagiarism). And the practice of literary borrowing does not, *ipso facto*, constitute plagiarism. Literary law recognizes what it defines as the "fair use" by one writer, of the ideas and even of the words of another, and of converting them to serve the particular purpose of the second writer (apart, of course, from pretending to be the original author - *that's* plagiarism!). And literary law specifically exempts such "fair use" practice from the arena of plagiarism" (p.4).

In her introduction to the *Great Controversy*, Ellen White openly admitted this practice.

"The great events which have marked the progress of reform in past ages are matters of history, well known and universally acknowledged by the Protestant world; they are facts which none can gainsay. This history I have presented briefly, in accordance with the scope of the book, and the brevity which must necessarily be observed, the facts having been condensed into as little space as seemed consistent with a proper understanding of their application. In some cases where a historian has so grouped together events as to afford, in brief, a comprehensive view of the subject, or has summarized details in a convenient manner, his words have been quoted; but in some instances no specific credit has been given, since the quotations are not given for the purpose of citing that writer as authority, but because his statement affords a ready and forcible presentation of the subject. In narrating the experience and views of those carrying forward the work of reform in our own time, similar use has been made of their published works." (GC, xi-xii)

One of the best ways to understand the levels and types of literary borrowing in her writings is to consider some case studies. Two of the best known examples of literary borrowing are found in her 1883 book *Sketches From the Life of Paul* on the experiences of Paul in Ephesus and her Manuscript 24, 1886 on the subject of inspiration as found today in *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 19-21. Needless to say that her critics have considered these two examples as flagrant cases of plagiarism but a close comparative study

between the source documents and her writings will show how she used her sources and adapted them to fit her thought and spiritual applications.

Before we begin looking at Ellen White's use of other writers' works, John Wesley also admitted to doing the same type of borrowing as she did.

"It was a doubt with me for some time, whether I should not subjoin to every note I received from them the name of the author from whom it was taken; especially considering I had transcribed some, and abridged many more, almost in the words of the author. But upon further consideration, I resolved to name none, that nothing might divert the mind of the reader from keeping close to the point of view, and receiving what was spoken only according to its own intrinsic value." (*Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, Preface, quoted in F.D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, p. 406.)

I. The Life of Paul

In writing her commentary on the life of Paul, Ellen White borrowed many expressions and descriptions from one book found in her library: W.J. Conybeare and J.S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*. Covering similar themes and historical events as her own book, this book contains descriptions and analyses of the historical context and culture of the Middle East as it relates to the life and ministry of the apostle Paul. This book was well known among Adventists and was in fact recommended as good reading.

In the February 22, 1883 edition of the *Signs of the Times* an advertisement appeared on page 96 about Conybeare and Howson's book. Ellen White endorsed this book with the following comment: "The Life of St. Paul by Conybeare and Howson, I regard as a book of great merit, and one of rare usefulness to the earnest student of the New Testament history."

This study will compare two chapters in each book: chapters 14 (pp.382-395) and 16 (pp.427-440) in Conybeare and Howson's *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, and chapters 13 (pp.128-140) and 14 (pp.140-149) in White's *Sketches From the Life of Paul*. The similarities in thought and wording are obvious between these two books. Sometimes Ellen White used or borrowed similar thoughts by using key words and expressions from Conybeare and Howson's book and then paraphrased their thoughts; other times she borrowed directly from them changing only a few words in some sentences. The literary borrowing was almost entirely limited to historical information and backgrounds, and was often rearranged by White to fit her thought and chapter outline. Whereas Conybeare and Howson give very little spiritual application of and commentary on the events Paul encountered, White attends to the spiritual lessons to be gained from these events and does not borrow from Conybeare and Howson when it comes to the spiritual applications of the stories and events from the life of Paul.

In two letters to L.E. Froom (January 8, 1928 and December 13, 1934), now found in *Selected Messages*, book 3, W.C. White shared how her mother used some of the historical materials she found in other books.

"The great events occurring in the life of our Lord were presented to her in panoramic scenes as also were the other portions of *The Great Controversy*. In a few of these scenes chronology and geography were clearly presented, but in the greater part of the revelation the flashlight scenes, which were exceedingly vivid, and the conversations and the controversies, which she heard and was able to narrate, were not marked geographically or chronologically, and she was left to study the Bible and history, and the writings of men who had presented the life of our Lord to get the chronological and geographical connection."

"Another purpose served by the reading of history and the *Life of Our Lord* and the *Life of St. Paul*, was that in so doing there was brought vividly to her mind scenes presented clearly in vision, but which were through the lapse of years and her strenuous ministry, dimmed in her memory."

"Many times in the reading of Hanna, Farrar, or Fleetwood, she would run on to a description of a scene

which had been vividly presented to her, but forgotten, and which she was able to describe more in detail than that which she had read. (*Selected Messages* 3:459, 460)

In some of the historical matters such as are brought out in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, and in *Acts of the Apostles* and in *Great Controversy*, the main outlines were made very clear and plain to her, and when she came to write up these topics, she was left to study the Bible and history to get dates and geographical relations and to perfect her description of details. (*Selected Messages* 3:462)

In the following pages, one will find two parallel columns placing side by side many paragraphs or sentences from the chapters studied in these two books. Words underlined represent direct wording from authors used by White.

<p style="text-align: center;">Ellen G. White Sketches from the Life of Paul</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">W.J. Conybeare and J.S. Howson The Life and Epistles of St. Paul</p>
<p>The Jews, now widely dispersed in all civilized lands, were generally expecting the speedy advent of the Messiah. In their visits to Jerusalem at the annual feasts, many had gone out to the banks of the Jordan to listen to the preaching of John the Baptist. From him they had heard the proclamation of Christ as the Promised One, and on their return home they had carried the tidings to all parts of the world. (129)</p>	<p>Many Jews from other countries received from the Baptist their knowledge of the Messiah, and carried with them this knowledge on their return from Palestine.... But in a position intermediate between this deluded party and those who were travelling as teachers of the full and perfect gospel there were doubtless many among the floating Jewish population of the empire whose knowledge of Christ extended only to that which had been preached on the banks of the Jordan. (385-386)</p>
<p>On his arrival at Ephesus, Paul found twelve brethren, who, like Apollos, had been disciples of John the Baptist, and like him had gained an imperfect knowledge of the life and mission of Christ. (129)</p>	<p>Apollos, along with twelve others who are soon afterward mentioned at Ephesus, was acquainted with Christianity only so far as it had been made known by John the Baptist. (385)</p>
<p><u>The city was famed for the worship of the goddess Diana and the practice of magic.</u> (134)</p>	<p><u>This city was renowned throughout the world for the worship of Diana and the practice of magic.</u> (392)</p>
<p>Here was the great temple of Diana, which <u>was regarded by the ancients as one of the wonders of the world.</u> Its vast extent and surpassing magnificence made it the pride, not only of the city, but of the nation. Kings and princes had enriched it by their donations. The Ephesians vied with one another in adding to its splendor, and it was made the treasure-house for a large share of the wealth of Western Asia. (134)</p>	<p>This was the temple of Artemis or Diana, which glittered in brilliant beauty at the head of the harbor, and <u>was reckoned by the ancients as one of the wonders of the world....</u>The national pride in the sanctuary was so great that when Alexander offered the spoils of his Eastern campaign if he might inscribe his name on the building, the honor was declined. The Ephesians never ceased to embellish the shrine of their goddess, continually adding new decorations and subsidiary buildings, with statues and pictures by the most famous artists. (429-430)</p>
<p>The idol enshrined in this sumptuous edifice was a rude, uncouth image, declared by tradition to have fallen from the sky. (134)</p>	<p>If the temple of Diana at Ephesus was magnificent, the image enshrined within the sumptuous enclosure was primitive and rude. (431)</p>
<p>Upon it were inscribed mystic characters and</p>	<p>Eustathius says that the mysterious symbols called</p>

symbols, which were believed to possess great power. When pronounced, they were said to accomplish wonders. When written, they were treasured as a potent charm to guard their possessor from robbers, from disease, and even from death. Numerous and costly books were written by the Ephesians to explain the meaning and use of these symbols. (134-135)

'Ephesian Letters' were engraved on the crown, the girdle, and the feet of the goddess.... When pronounced they were regarded as a charm, and were directed to be used especially by those who were in the power of evil spirits. When written they were carried about as amulets.... The study of these symbols was an elaborate science, and books, both numerous and costly, were compiled by its professors. (392)

As Paul was brought in direct contact with the idolatrous inhabitants of Ephesus, the power of God was strikingly displayed through him. The apostles were not always able to work miracles at will. The Lord granted his servants this special power as the progress of his cause or the honor of his name required. Like Moses and Aaron at the court of Pharaoh, the apostle had now to maintain the truth against the lying wonders of the magicians; hence the miracles he wrought were of a different character from those which he had heretofore performed. As the hem of Christ's garment had communicated healing power to her who sought relief by the touch of faith, so on this occasion, garments were made the means of cure to all that believed; "diseases departed from them, and evil spirits went out of them." Yet these miracles gave no encouragement to blind superstition. When Jesus felt the touch of the suffering woman, he exclaimed, "Virtue is gone out of me." [italics hers] So the scripture declares that the Lord wrought miracles by the hand of Paul, and that the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified, and not the name of Paul. (135)

This statement throws some light on the peculiar character of the miracles wrought by Paul at Ephesus. We are not to suppose that the apostles were always able to work miracles at will. An influx of supernatural power was given to them at the time and according to the circumstances that required it. And the character of the miracles was not always the same. They were accommodated to the peculiar forms of sin, superstition, and ignorance they were required to oppose. Here, at Ephesus, Paul was in the face of magicians, like Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh; and it is distinctly said that his miracles were 'not ordinary wonders,' from which we may infer that they were different from those which he usually performed A miracle which has a closer reference to our present subject is that in which the hem of Christ's garment was made effectual to the healing of a poor sufferer and the conviction of the bystanders. So on this occasion garments were made the means of communicating a healing power to those who were at a distance, whether they were possessed with evil spirits or afflicted with ordinary diseases. Yet was this no encouragement to blind superstition. When the suffering woman was healed by touching the hem of the garment, the Saviour turned round and said, 'Virtue is gone out of me.' [italics theirs] And here at Ephesus we are reminded that it was God who 'wrought miracles by the hands of Paul' (v.11), and that 'the name,' not of Paul, but 'of the Lord Jesus, was magnified' (v.17). (393)

Sorcery had been prohibited in the Mosaic law, on pain of death, yet from time to time it had been secretly practiced by apostate Jews. At the time of Paul's visit to Ephesus, there were in the city certain Jewish exorcists, who, seeing the wonders wrought by him, claimed to possess equal power. Believing that the name of Jesus acted as a charm, they determined to cast out evil spirits by the same means which the apostle had employed. (136)

The stern severity with which sorcery was forbidden in the Old Testament attests the early tendency of the Israelites to such practices.... This passage in Paul's latest letter [2 Tim. 3:13] had probably reference to that very city in which we see him now brought into opposition with Jewish sorcerers. These men, believing that the name of Jesus acted as a charm, and recognizing the apostle as a Jew like themselves, attempted his method of casting out evil spirits. (393-394)

An attempt was made by seven brothers, the sons of one Sceva, a Jewish priest. Finding a man possessed

One specific instance is recorded which produced disastrous consequences to those who made the

with a demon, they addressed him, "We adjure thee by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth." But the evil spirit answered with scorn, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" and the one possessed sprang on them with frantic violence, and beat and bruised them, so that they fled out of the house, naked and wounded. (136)

attempt, and led to wide results among the general population. In the number of those who attempted to cast out evil spirits by the 'name of Jesus' were seven brothers, sons of Sceva, who is called a high priest... But the demons, who were subject to Jesus, and by his will subject to those who preached his gospel, treated with scorn those who used his Name without being converted to his truth. 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?' was the answer of the evil spirit. And straightway the man who was possessed sprang upon them with frantic violence, so that they were utterly discomfited, and 'fled out of the house naked and wounded.'" (394)

The discomfiture and humiliation of those who had profaned the name of Jesus, soon became known throughout Ephesus, by Jews and Gentiles. Unmistakable proof had been given of the sacredness of that name, and the peril which they incurred who should invoke it while they had no faith in Christ's divine mission. Terror seized the minds of many, and the work of the gospel was regarded by all with awe and reverence. Facts which had previously been concealed were now brought to light. In accepting Christianity, some of the brethren had not fully renounced their heathen superstitions. The practice of magic was still to some extent continued among them. Convinced of their error by the events which had recently occurred, they came and made a full confession to Paul, and publicly acknowledged their secret arts to be deceptive and Satanic. (136-137)

This fearful result of the profane use of that holy Name which was proclaimed by the apostles of all men soon became notorious, both among the Greeks and the Jews. Consternation and alarm took possession of the minds of many, and in proportion to this alarm the name of the Lord Jesus began to be revered and honored. Even among those who had given their faith to Paul's teaching, some appear to have retained their attachment to the practice of magical arts. Their conscience was moved by what had recently occurred, and they came and made a full confession to the apostle, and publicly acknowledged and forsook their deeds of darkness. (394)

Many sorcerers also abjured the practice of magic, and received Christ as their Saviour. They brought together the costly books containing the mysterious "Ephesian letters," and the secrets of their art, and burned them in the presence of all the people. When the books had been consumed, they proceeded to reckon up the value of the sacrifice. It was estimated at fifty thousand pieces of silver, equal to about ten thousand dollars. (137)

The fear and conviction seem to have extended beyond those who made a profession of Christianity. A large number of the sorcerers themselves openly renounced the practice which had been so signally condemned by a higher power, and they brought together the books that contained the mystic formularies and burnt them before all the people. When the volumes were consumed they proceeded to reckon up the price at which these manuals of enchantment would be valued.... Hence we must not be surprised that the whole cost thus sacrificed and surrendered amounted to as much as two thousand pounds of English money. (394-395)

The month of May was specially devoted to the worship of the goddess of Ephesus. The universal honor in which this deity was held, the magnificence of her temple and her worship, attracted an immense concourse of people from all parts of the province of Asia. Throughout the entire month the festivities were conducted with the utmost pomp and splendor. ... The officers chosen to conduct this grand

The whole month of May was consecrated to the glory of the goddess.... The Artemisian festival was not simply an Ephesian ceremony, but was fostered by the sympathy and enthusiasm of all the surrounding neighborhood ... so this gathering was called 'the common meeting of Asia.' ... [They enjoyed] the various amusements which made the days and nights of May one long scene of revelry. ...

<p>celebration were the men of highest distinction in the chief cities of Asia. They were also persons of vast wealth, for in return for the honor of their position, they were expected to defray the entire expense of the occasion. The whole city was a scene of brilliant display and wild revelry. Imposing processions swept to the grand temple. The air rung with sounds of joy. The people gave themselves up to feasting, drunkenness, and the vilest debauchery. (141)</p>	<p>About the time of the vernal equinox each of the principal towns within the district called Asia chose one of its wealthiest citizens, and from the whole number thus returned then were finally selected to discharge the duty of <i>asiarchs</i>. ... Receiving no emolument from their office, but being required rather to extend large sums for the amusement of the people and their own credit, they were necessarily persons of wealth. (435)</p>
<p>It had long been customary among heathen nations to make use of small <u>images or shrines</u> to represent their favorite objects of worship. Portable statues were modeled after the great image of Diana, and were <u>widely circulated</u> in the countries along <u>the shores of the Mediterranean</u>. Models of the temple which enshrined the idol were also eagerly sought. Both were regarded as objects of worship, and <u>were carried</u> at the head of <u>processions, and on journeys and military expeditions</u>. <u>An extensive and profitable business had grown up at Ephesus from the manufacture and sale of these shrines</u> and images. (142)</p>	<p>One of the idolatrous customs of the ancient world was the use of portable <u>images or shrines</u>, which were little models of the more celebrated objects of devotion. They <u>were carried in processions, on journeys and military expeditions</u>, and sometimes set up as household gods in private houses. ... From the expression used by Luke, it is evident that <u>an extensive and</u> lucrative trade <u>grew up at Ephesus from the manufacture and sale of these shrines</u>. Few of those who came to Ephesus would willingly go away without a memorial of the goddess and a model of her temple; and from the <u>wide circulation</u> of these works of art over <u>the shores of the Mediterranean</u> and far into the interior it might be said, with little exaggeration, that her worship was recognized by the 'whole world'. (431-432)</p>
<p>Those who were interested in this branch of industry found their gains <u>diminishing</u>. All united in attributing the unwelcome change to Paul's labors. Demetrius, a manufacturer of silver shrines, called <u>together the workmen</u> of his craft, and by a violent appeal endeavored to stir up their indignation against Paul. (142)</p>	<p>Doubtless, those who employed themselves in making the portable shrines of Diana expected to drive a brisk trade at such a time, and when they found that the sale of these objects of superstition was seriously <u>diminished</u>, and that the preaching of Paul was the cause of their merchandise being depreciated.... A certain Demetrius, a master-manufacturer in the craft, summoned <u>together the workmen</u>, ... and addressed to them an inflammatory speech. (436)</p>
<p>He represented that their traffic was endangered, and pointed out the great loss which they would sustain if the apostle were allowed to turn the people away from their ancient worship. He then <u>appealed</u> to their ruling superstition.... (142)</p>	<p>Demetrius <u>appealed</u> first to the interest of his hearers, and then to their fanaticism. He told them that their gains were in danger of being lost, and, besides this, that 'the temple of the great goddess Diana'... was in danger of being despised.... (437)</p>
<p>This speech acted as fire to the stubble. The excited passions of the people were roused, and burst forth in the cry, "<u>Great is Diana of the Ephesians!</u>" (143)</p>	<p>Such a speech could not be lost when thrown like fire on such inflammatory materials. The infuriated feeling of the crowd of assembled artisans broke out at once into a cry in honor of the divine patron of their city and their craft - '<u>Great is Diana of the Ephesians!</u>' (437)</p>
<p>A report of the speech of Demetrius was rapidly circulated. The uproar was terrific. The whole city seemed in commotion. An immense crowd soon collected, and a rush was made to the workshop of Aquila, in the Jewish quarters, with the object of</p>	<p>The excitement among this important and influential class of operatives was not long in spreading through the whole city. The infection seized upon the crowds of citizens and strangers, and a general rush was made to the theatre, the most obvious place of</p>

<p>securing Paul. In their insane rage they were ready to tear him in pieces. But the apostle was not to be found. His brethren, receiving an intimation of the danger, had hurried him from the place. Angels of God were sent to guard the faithful apostle. His time to die a martyr's death had not yet come. Failing to find the object of their wrath, the mob seized two of his companions, Gaius and Aristarchus, and <u>with them hurried on to the theater</u>. (143)</p>	<p>assembly. On their way they seem to have been foiled in the attempt to lay hold of the person of Paul, though they <u>hurried with them into the theatre</u> two of the companions of his travels, Caius and Aristarchus, whose home was in Macedonia. (437)</p>
<p>Several of the most honorable and influential among the magistrates sent him an earnest request not to <u>venture</u> into a situation of so great peril. (144)</p>	<p>Some of the asiarchs ... sent an urgent message to him to prevent him from <u>venturing</u> into the scene of disorder and danger. (437-438)</p>
<p>The tumult at the theater was continually increasing. "Some cried one thing, and some another; and the more part knew not wherefore they had come together." From the fact that Paul and some of his companions were of Hebrew extraction, the Jews felt that <u>odium</u> was cast upon them, and that their own safety might be endangered. (144)</p>	<p>It was indeed a scene of confusion, and never perhaps was the character of a mob more simply and graphically expressed than when it is said that 'the majority knew not why they were come together' (v.32). At length an attempt was made to bring the expression of some articulate words before the assembly. This attempt came from the Jews, who seem to have been afraid lest they should be implicated in the <u>odium</u> which had fallen on the Christians. (438)</p>
<p>He [the recorder of the city] bade them consider that Paul and his companions had not profaned the temple of Diana, nor outraged the feelings of any by reviling the goddess. He then skillfully turned the subject, and reprov'd the course of Demetrius ... He closed by warning them <u>that such an uproar</u>, raised without apparent cause, might subject the city of Ephesus to the censure of the Romans, thus causing a restriction of her present liberty, and intimating that there must not be a repetition of the scene. Having by this speech completely <u>tranquilized</u> the disturbed elements, the recorder dismissed the assembly. (145-146)</p>	<p>Then he [town-clerk] bids them remember that Paul and his companions had not been guilty of approaching or profaning the temple, or of outraging the feelings of the Ephesians by calumnious expressions against the goddess. And then he turns from the general subject to the case of Demetrius.... And, reserving the most efficacious argument to the last, he reminded them <u>that such an uproar</u> exposed the city to the displeasure of the Romans; for, however great were the liberties allowed to an ancient and loyal city, it was well known to the whole population that a tumultuous meeting which endangered the public peace would never be tolerated. So, having rapidly brought his arguments to a climax, he <u>tranquilized</u> the whole multitude and pronounced the technical words which declared the assembly dispersed. (438-439)</p>
<p>His heart was filled <u>with gratitude</u> to God that his life had been preserved, and that Christianity had not been brought into disrepute by the tumult at Ephesus. (146)</p>	<p><u>With gratitude</u> to that heavenly Master who had watched over his [Paul's] life and his works (439)</p>
<p>God had raised up a great magistrate to vindicate his apostle, and hold the tumultuous mob in check. (146)</p>	<p>Thus, God used the eloquence of a Greek magistrate to protect his servant, as before he had used the right of Roman citizenship and the calm justice of a Roman governor. (439)</p>

II. Thoughts on Inspiration

Our second case study compares Ellen White's thought on the issue of inspiration in her Manuscript 24, 1886 (in *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 19-21) and Calvin E. Stowe's *Origin and History of the Books of the Bible, Both the Canonical and the Apocryphal, Designed to Show What the Bible Is Not, What It Is, and How to Use It* (Hartford, Ct: Hartford Publishing Company, 1867), pp.13-20.

In 1971, William S. Peterson asserted that Ellen White took not just fine language and historical information from other authors, but ideas as well. He mentions that Ellen White borrowed not only Calvin Stowe's words; but also his ideas when she wrote Manuscript 24, 1886 (See *Spectrum*, Autumn, 1971, pp. 73-84). When David Neff (now general editor of *Christianity Today*) was a Seminary student at Andrews University in 1973, he responded to Peterson's assertion with a carefully researched 29-page paper in which he compares and contrasts Stowe and Ellen White line by line and word by word.

According to Neff:

"We have evidence of her writing most of the ideas which are common to her and Dr. Stowe at a time prior to the writing of this manuscript. Indeed, some of these references antedate any possible awareness on her part of Dr. Stowe's book. In addition to the common theological material, there are several points at which the two authors diverge or have distinctively different emphases. These are of sufficient importance for us to conclude that in writing *Manuscript 24, 1886*, Mrs. White was not "appropriating the ideas of another man." (*Ellen White's Alleged Literary and Theological Indebtedness to Calvin Stowe*, p. 25).

This study prompted Robert Olson to conclude that "Neff's findings fully support Ellen White's position that her basic concepts or ideas came, not from human sources, but from God" (*Ellen G. White's Use of Sources*, p. 10, 11).

In this second case study, much more than in the first one which dealt mainly with historical information and background, Ellen White's thought and theology are clearly different from Stowe's arguments on the concept of inspiration. This comparison shows that at the end of the manuscript Ellen White leaves out some key words from Stowe's text. These left out words set Ellen White's theology of inspiration in a completely different direction. Had she kept all of Stowe's words she would have adopted a theology of inspiration similar to that of Karl Barth or Emil Brunner.

The left column gives the integral text of Ellen White's manuscript as published in *Selected Messages*, book 1, and the right column gives the parallel passages in Stowe's book. The spacing in the left column has been formatted to allow sufficient space in the two columns to run the parallel accounts.

(See Jim Nix, "From Vision to Printed Page," May 19, 1998.)

<p style="text-align: center;">Ellen G. White Manuscript 24, 1886 (Selected Messages, 1:19-21)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Calvin E. Stowe Origin and History of the Books of the Bible</p>
<p><u>Human minds</u> vary. The minds of different education and thought receive different impressions of the same words, and it is difficult for one mind to give to one of a <u>different temperament, education, and habits of thought by language exactly the same idea</u> as that which is clear and distinct in his own mind. <u>Yet</u> to honest men, right-minded men, he can be so simple</p>	<p>Moreover, <u>human minds</u> are unlike in the impressions which they receive from the same word; and it is certain that one man seldom gives to another, of <u>different temperament, education, and habits of thought, by language, exactly the same idea</u>, with the same shape and color, as that which lies in his own mind; yet, if men are honest and right-minded they</p>

<p>and plain as to convey his meaning for all practical purposes. If the man he communicates with is not honest and will not want to see and understand the truth, he will turn his words and language in everything to suit his own purposes. He will misconstrue his words, play upon his imagination, wrest them from their true meaning, and then entrench himself in unbelief, claiming that the sentiments are all wrong.</p>	<p>can come near enough to each other's meaning for all purposes of practical utility. (17)</p>
<p>This is the way my writings are treated by those who wish to misunderstand and pervert them. They turn the truth of God into a lie. In the very same way that they treat the writings in my published articles and in my books, so do skeptics and infidels treat the Bible. They read it according to their desire to pervert, to misapply, to willfully wrest the utterances from their true meaning. They declare that the Bible can prove anything and everything, that every sect proves their doctrines right, and that the most diverse doctrines are proved from the Bible.</p>	
<p>This is the way my writings are treated by those who wish to misunderstand and pervert them. They turn the truth of God into a lie. In the very same way that they treat the writings in my published articles and in my books, so do skeptics and infidels treat the Bible. They read it according to their desire to pervert, to misapply, to willfully wrest the utterances from their true meaning. They declare that the Bible can prove <u>anything and everything</u>, that every sect proves their <u>doctrines right</u>, and that <u>the most diverse doctrines are proved from the Bible</u>.</p>	<p>Here comes in the objection that the Bible can be made to mean <u>everything and anything</u>, all sects build upon it, <u>the most diverse doctrines are derived from it</u>. (17)</p>
<p>The writers of the Bible had to express their ideas in human language. It was written by human men. These men were inspired of the Holy Spirit. Because of the imperfections of human understanding of language, or the perversity of the human mind, ingenious in evading truth, many read and understand the Bible to please themselves. It is not that the difficulty is in the Bible. Opposing politicians argue points of law in the statute book, and take opposite views in their application and in these laws.</p>	<p>This infelicity it shares with everything else that has to be expressed in human language. This is owing to the imperfection, the necessary imperfection of human language, and to the infirmity and the perverse ingenuity also of the human mind. It is not anything peculiar to the Bible. Hear two opposing lawyers argue a point of statute law in its application to a particular case. Hear two opposing politicians make their diverse arguments in reference to the true intent and force of a particular clause in the United States Constitution. (17)</p>
<p>The Scriptures were given to men, not in a continuous chain of unbroken utterances, but piece by piece through successive generations, as God in His providence saw a fitting opportunity to impress man at sundry times and divers places. Men wrote as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost. There is "first the bud, then the blossom, and next the fruit," "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in</p>	<p>The Bible is not one unbroken chain of books, chapters, and verses, representing one unbroken series of divine utterances from beginning to end. (13) Look for no such thing as this when reading the Bible, but rather the contrary. The Scriptures were given to men piecemeal, throughout many ages, as God saw the right opportunities - <i>at sundry times and</i></p>

<p>the ear." This is exactly what the Bible utterances are to us.</p>	<p><i>in divers manners</i> - this is what the Bible says of itself; and not all at once, as if you must have bud, blossom and fruit, all in the same hour. The analogy here between nature and word, as in everything else, holds perfectly. <i>First the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear</i>; this is what the Bible says of itself, and this is just what we find it to be. (13)</p>
<p>There is not always perfect order or apparent unity in the Scriptures. The miracles of Christ are not given in exact order, but are given just as the circumstances occurred, which called for this divine revealing of the power of Christ. The truths of the Bible are as pearls hidden. They must be searched, dug out by painstaking effort. Those who take only a surface view of the Scriptures will, with their superficial knowledge, which they think is very deep, talk of the contradictions of the Bible, and question the authority of the Scriptures. But those whose hearts are in harmony with truth and duty will search the Scriptures with a heart prepared to receive divine impressions. The illuminated soul sees a spiritual unity, one grand golden thread running through the whole, but it requires patience, thought, and prayer to trace out the precious golden thread. Sharp contentions over the Bible have led to investigation and revealed the precious jewels of truth. Many tears have been shed, many prayers offered, that the Lord would open the understanding to His Word.</p>	<p>There is but little of external unity in the Bible, it makes no pretensions to any such thing; you need not be at all shaken by the clamors of those who would make this obvious fact an objection to the authority of the Scriptures. As well might it be objected to the miracles of Christ that they are not given in philosophical order, beginning with the less and going on to the greater, with just so many and only so many of each kind. The unity of Scripture is not an external, it is an internal, a spiritual unity, the unity of one grand idea running through the whole.... (13)</p>
<p><u>The Bible is not given to us in grand superhuman language.</u> Jesus, in order to reach man where he is, took humanity. The Bible must be given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect. Different meanings are expressed by the same word; there is not one word for each distinct idea. The Bible was given for practical purposes.</p>	<p><u>The Bible is not given to us in any celestial or superhuman language.</u> If it had been it would have been of no use to us, for every book intended for men must be given to them in the language of men. But every human language is of necessity, and from the very nature of the case, an imperfect language. No human language has exactly one word and only one for each distinct idea. (15) This much is sufficient for all practical purposes, and it is for practical purposes only that the Bible was given. (18)</p>
<p>The stamps of minds are different. All do not understand expressions and statements alike. Some understand the statements of the Scriptures to suit their own particular minds and cases. <u>Prepossessions, prejudices, and passions</u> have a strong influence to <u>darken</u> the understanding and <u>confuse</u> the mind even in <u>reading the</u> words of Holy Writ.</p>	<p>Yet <u>prepossessions, prejudices and passions</u> come in so plentifully to <u>darken</u> and <u>confuse</u> men's minds, when they are <u>reading the</u> Bible. <i>He opened their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures.</i> [Luke 24:45] Men in these times need to have their understandings both opened and straightened out, that they may understand the Scriptures. (18)</p>
<p>The disciples traveling to Emmaus needed to be disentangled in their interpretation of the Scriptures. Jesus walked with them disguised, and as a man He</p>	

talked with them. Beginning at Moses and the prophets He taught them in all things concerning Himself, that His life, His mission, His sufferings, His death were just as the Word of God had foretold. He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. How quickly He straightened out the tangled ends and showed the unity and divine verity of the Scriptures. How much men in these times need their understanding opened.

The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers.

It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.

The Bible is not a specimen of God's skills as a writer, showing us God's mode of thought, giving us God's logic, and God's rhetoric, and God's style of historic narration. How often do we see men seeking out isolated passages of Scripture, and triumphantly saying that such expressions are unworthy of God, and could not have proceeded from Him. They are unskillful, the mode of thought is faulty, they are illogical, in bad taste, the reasoning is not conclusive, the narrative is liable to exception. God has not put himself on trial before us in any way in the Bible.... It is always to be remembered that the writers of the Bible were 'God's penmen, and not God's pens.' (18)

It is not the words of the Bible that were inspired, it is not the thoughts of the Bible that were inspired; it is the men who wrote the Bible that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words, not on the man's thoughts, but on the man himself; so that he, by his own spontaneity, under the impulse of the Holy Ghost, conceives certain thoughts and give utterance to them in certain words, both the words and the thoughts receiving the peculiar impress of the mind which conceived and uttered them, and being in fact just as really his own, as they could have been if there had been no inspiration at all in the case. The birth and nature of Christ afford an exact illustration. The Holy Infant in the womb of the Virgin, though begotten of God directly without any human father, ... this infant lived by his mother's life, and grew by the mother's growth, and partook of the mother's nature, and was just as much her child as he could have been if Joseph had been his father, the human and the divine in most intimate and inseparable conjunction. It is this very fact of the commingled and inseparable union of the human and divine, which constitutes the utility, which makes out the adaptedness to the wants of men, both of the incarnation of Christ and of the gift of the word. Inspiration generally is a purifying and an elevation, and an intensification of the human intellect subjectively, rather than an objective suggestion and communication; though suggestion and communication are not excluded. (19)

The Divine mind is, as it were, so diffused through the human, and the human mind is so interpenetrated with the Divine, that for the time being the utterances of the man are the word of God. (19-20).

Health Message

Ellen G. White and the SDA "Health" Message: God's THIRD Priority for the First 20 Years of Visions

Roger W. Coon

Introduction: God's Apparent Priorities for Vision-Content (1845-65)

1. **Priority #1: Formulation of the Doctrinal Framework--The Decade of the 1840s:**
 - a. The role of the "Sabbath Conferences" (1848-50).
 - b. Dec. 13, 1850: "We know [now] that we have the truth" (Letter 30, 1850).

2. **Priority #2: Church Organization of the SDA Denomination--The Decade of the 1850s:**
 - a. Dec. 24: 1850: the first vision on "gospel order," 11 days after EGW's declaration on doctrinal certitude.
 - b. First three steps in organization, taken in 1860:
 - (1) May 13: first "legally-organized" church body, at Parkville, MI.
 - (2) Oct. 1: SDA name adopted.
 - (3) Oct. 1: first institution (publishing house) organized, at Battle Creek.
 - c. The General Conference organized, May 21, 1863, at Battle Creek.

3. **Priority #3: Development of the "Health"/Lifestyle Message--The Decade of the 1860s:**
 - a. The first *major* health-reform vision was given June 6, 1863, a mere 16 days after the General Conference was organized.
 - (1) The first-known vision relating to health concerns was given in the Autumn of 1848.
 - (2) A second, limited, view was presented on Feb. 12, 1854.
 - (3) The third (and 1st major) vision was given Friday evening, June 6, 1863, at Otsego, MI, in the home of layman Aaron Hilliard, during a family Sabbath vespers worship fellowship.
 - (4) The last of the first four (and 2nd major) health-reform visions would come two years later, on Christmas Day, 1856, in the church at Rochester, NY, in a service especially called to pray for the restoration of James White's deteriorating health condition.

I. The Need for a "Health"/Lifestyle Message

A. The Need at Mid-19th Century

1. A survey of obituaries of SDAs in the RH (1857-63) reveals that American life-expectancy was extremely short--and SDAs were no exception:
 - a. Age of SDAs at death:

- (1) Slightly more than one-fourth (26.5%) died during the first seven years of life.
- (2) Another one-fourth (22.5%) died between the ages of 10 and 29.
- (3) Thus, virtually half (49%) of all SDA recorded deaths in this period came before the individual attained his or her 30th year of life.
 - (a) (U.S. Government statistics for this period today are sketchy at best; but a published study of mortality rates in Massachusetts indicates that SDAs were no better or worse off than the general population.)
- b. Death frequently came with unexpected suddenness.
- c. Causes of death: overwhelmingly from communicable diseases--
 - (1) Nearly half (46 of 101 victims) perished from pulmonary diseases (tuberculosis was then generally known as "consumption").
 - (2) Typhoid was the second most-frequently reported cause (16 of 101 victims).
 - (3) And diphtheria came in third (7 of 101 victims).
- d. "Domino"-phenomenon: one family member would become ill, die suddenly, and contagion would quickly take many of the remaining family.
 - (1) Nursing the ill was almost a passport to death for the care-giver; and families were decimated in an unbelievably short period by multiple deaths.
- e. Death was no respecter of persons: families of church leaders were afflicted, suffering incredible losses, as often as those of lay members.
- f. Frequently the funeral services for the deceased were conducted without the presence of a minister.
- g. In short, death was a common, frequent, and most unwelcome intruder in every SDA family.

B. The Need Today

1. While mortality rates have been materially lowered in the last sesquicentennial, the health condition of the average American is still seriously at risk:
 - a. America still ranks a dismal 40th in the World Health Organization's roster of the nations.
 - b. Every 30 seconds an American is diagnosed with cancer, and every 55 seconds an American dies of one form or another of this deadly killer (at the rate of 1,400 per day!).
 - c. During 1995, more than 145,000 women learned they had breast cancer; and almost one-third of male deaths in this period were caused by either colon or prostate cancer.
 - d. Diabetes costs the U.S. \$13 billion yearly, with a new diabetic diagnosed every 50 seconds!
 - e. Every 25 seconds someone in American experiences a heart attack, and every 45 seconds there is a heart disease-related death!
 - (1) Heart disease alone claims more casualties annually than all American military deaths during the war in Vietnam.

2. All of the latest research points to the typical American diet as the major culprit in the nation's deteriorating health.
 - a. While, admittedly, American eating habits have made major shifts in the last century, yet sugar consumption has risen by 250% in the same period.
 - b. A century ago, 75% of our protein intake came from plant foods; but today 75% is derived from animal sources.
 - c. In his or her lifetime, the average American today will consume:
 - (1) 15 cows.
 - (2) 24 hogs.
 - (3) 12 sheep
 - (4) 900 chickens.
 - (5) 1,000 lbs. of fish and game.
 - (6) 26,250 lbs. of dairy products--375 lbs. per year!
 - d. This type of diet is high in protein and fat, low in fiber and complex carbohydrates, and deficient in many trace minerals, vitamins, and phytochemicals--a sure prescription for early disease and untimely death.
3. The tragic fact is that many (if not the majority) of these cases of disease and death are unnecessary, and are readily preventable!
 - a. Dr. Suhma Palmer, Georgetown University: "A healthy diet could dramatically reduce your chances of getting cancer of the colon, prostate, and breast."
 - b. American Medical Association: "A vegetarian diet can prevent 97% of our coronary occlusions."
 - c. Dr. Gio Gori, National Cancer Institute: "The dietary factors responsible for cancer are principally meat and fat intake."
 - d. Dr. Hans Diehl, director, Cardiovascular Health Improvement Program, Loma Linda, CA: "The main villain in diabetes is the enormous amount of fat in our diet."

(Columnist Dane Griffin, "Wellth Watch: Have You 'Herd' What We're Eating?," *The Inside Report* [Frederick, MD: Amazing Facts], June, 1995, p. 13)
4. Ironically, the very "health"/lifestyle message that would have prevented millions of untimely and unnecessary deaths was proclaimed nearly a century and a half ago, by a remarkable, then little-known, lady who had completed less than four years of elementary/primary school education!

II. Seven Reasons Why God Gave SDAs a "Health" Message

A. That Seventh-day Adventists Might Live Longer

1. For an historical survey of the appalling health conditions which obtained in 19th-Century America, when Ellen White gave much of her instruction in health-related matters, see Roger W. Coon, "The Good Old Days," *Adventist Review*, Feb. 25, 1993, pp. 1, 10-12.
2. The typical life-span in the patriarchal period (Adam to Noah) was nearly 1,000 years (CD 117; 1SM 230).

3. Its decrease was especially rapid after the Flood (4 SG-a 121), and has continued to decline from generation to generation ever since (CH 19; EW 184).
4. Causes of a shortened life-span are identified as:
 - a. Man's sinful course (PP 68; SR 49) in disregarding the laws of life (3T 140) and nature (CH 41).
 - b. The misuse of the body (CH 41), particularly in:
 - (1) Self-indulgence (4T 343).
 - (2) Misuse of one's physical powers (COL 346; ML 134; MYP 235).
 - (3) Overtaxing one set of mental organs (3T 34).
 - (4) Overtaxing the stomach (CD 131), especially in eating flesh food (4SG-a 121).
5. And one may, today, prolong his/her longevity by a "careful supervision" of one's own habits of living (CD 162), especially by the promotion of a cheerful spirit (MH 241).

B. That Seventh-day Adventists Might Enjoy the Years That They Do Have

1. What a God is our God! He rules over His kingdom with diligence and care, and He has built a hedge—the Ten Commandments—about His subjects to preserve them from the results of transgression. In requiring obedience to the laws of His kingdom, God gives His people health and happiness, peace and joy. He teaches them that the perfection of character He requires can be attained only by becoming familiar with His Word.—CT 454.

C. That SDAs Might Be Enabled to Render Service to God Longer, More Efficiently

1. The God of heaven has given us reasoning powers and intellect, and He wants us to use them. He has given us this body which he wishes us to preserve in perfect health so that we can give Him perfect service.—Ms 6a, June 27, 1886; cited in UL 192:4).
2. Again, I exhort you to take good care of the habitation which God has given you. Let not sin reign in your mortal body, and do not waste the physical powers God has given you, but cherish your strength, putting your whole trust in a perfect Saviour. He wants you to be victorious and wear a jeweled crown at last.

Heaven, sweet heaven, is the saint's eternal home. We shall rest by and by. Let us, then, so use our powers as not abusing them, that God may increase and sanctify them and make them of the highest service.—Lt 16, Feb. 21, 1879; cited in TDWG 60:2,3.
3. That perfection of character which the Lord requires is the fitting up of the whole being as a temple for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. God will accept nothing less than the service of the entire human organism. It is not enough to bring into action certain parts of the living machinery.

All parts must work in perfect harmony, or the service will be deficient. It is thus that man is qualified to cooperate with God in representing Christ to the world. Thus God desires to prepare a people to stand before Him pure and holy, that He may introduce them into the society of heavenly angels.--RH, Nov. 12, 1901; cited in HC 265:1.

4. We have been entrusted with the most solemn message ever given to our world, and the object to be kept plainly and distinctly before our minds is the glory of God. Let us take care that we do nothing which will weaken physical, or mental, or spiritual healthfulness, for God will not accept a tainted, diseased, corrupted sacrifice. Care must be exercised in eating, in drinking, in dressing, and in working, lest we detract from our efficiency and fail of doing our most exalted work in the best manner, in order that the results of our labor may be as lasting as eternity.

It is our duty to train and discipline the body in order that we shall render to the Master the highest possible service. Inclination must not control us. We are not to pamper the appetite and indulge in the use of that which is not for our good, simply because it gratifies the palate; neither are we to seek to live by the starvation plan, with the idea that we shall become spiritually-minded, and that God shall be glorified.

We must use the intelligence that God has given in order that we may be perfect in body, soul, and spirit, that we may have a symmetrical character, a well-balanced mind, and do perfect work for the Master.--Ms 60, 1894; cited in HC 265:2, 3.

5. . . . We are God's property. The sacred temple of the body must be kept pure and uncontaminated, that God's Holy Spirit may dwell therein. We need to guard faithfully the Lord's property; for any abuse of our powers shortens the time that our lives could be used for the glory of God. Bear in mind that we must consecrate all--soul, body, and spirit--to God. All is His purchased possession, and must be used intelligently, to the end that we may preserve the talent of life. By properly using our powers to their fullest extent in the most useful employment, by keeping every organ in health, by so preserving every organ that mind, sinew, and muscle shall work harmoniously, we may do the most precious service for God.--YI, April 7, 1898:9; cf. Letter 103, 1897, cited in HC 265:4.
6. Any course of action that weakens your physical or mental power unfits you for the service of your Creator. We are to love God with all our hearts, and if we have an eye single to His glory we shall eat, drink, and clothe ourselves with reference to His divine will. Everyone who has a realizing sense of what it means to be a Christian will purify himself from everything that weakens and defiles. All the habits of his life will be brought into harmony with the requirements of the Word of truth, and he will not only believe, but will work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, while submitting to the molding of the Holy Spirit.--RH, March 6, 1888; cited in TMK 115:4.
7. We are not our own. We have been purchased with a dear price, even the sufferings and death of the Son of God. If we could understand this, and fully realize it, we would feel a great responsibility resting upon us to

keep ourselves in the very best condition of health, that we might render to God perfect service. But when we take any course which expends our vitality, decreases our strength, or beclouds the intellect we sin against God. In pursuing this course we are not glorifying Him in our body and spirits which are His, but are committing a great wrong in His sight.--2T 354:2.

D. That SDAs Might Be a Good Advertisement for the Remnant Church

1. God, by exhibiting His chosen people who are specimens of good health, hopes to attract the attention of the nonSDA public, to create a favorable impression.
 - a. We might characterize this as His "public-relations reason!"
2. Nothing will open doors for the truth like evangelistic medical missionary work. This will find access to hearts and minds, and will be a means of converting many to the truth.--Ms 58, 1901; cited in Ev 513:1.
3. "Medical missionary work" is characterized as "a great entering wedge" (CH 535, 1893) and "the right, helping hand of the gospel" (Ms 58, 1901; cited in Ev 513:1; cf. 7T 59, 1902), that "will break down prejudice as nothing else can" (9T 211, 1909).
 - a. A warning against a disproportionate over-emphasis upon health was sounded in correspondence with General Conference President O. A. Olsen and Dr. John Harvey Kellogg. In a letter to the latter, EGW wrote:
 - (1) I have been shown that you also are in danger of making serious mistakes. You feel a deep interest in the circulation of the health publications, and this is right; but that special branch is not to be made all-absorbing. The health reform is as closely related to the third angel's message as the arm to the body; but the arm cannot take the place of the body. . . . The presentation of health principles must be united with this message, but must not be independent of it, or in any way take the place of it.--Lt 57, May 27, 1896; cited in 16MR 332:1.
4. I have been instructed by my guide that not only should those who believe the truth practice health reform, but they should also teach it diligently to others; for it will be an agency through which the truth can be presented to the attention of unbelievers. They will reason that if we have such sound ideas in regard to health and temperance, there must be something in our religious belief that is worth investigation.--Lt 1, 1875; cited in Ev 514.

E. That SDAs Might Help NonSDAs Find the Benefits/Blessings of Good Health

1. In every place the sick may be found. . . . Workers for Christ should be . . . prepared to give those who are sick the simple treatments that will relieve them, and then pray with them.--MM 320, 1911).
2. As the medical missionary works upon the body, God works upon the heart. The comforting words that are spoken are a soothing balm, bring

assurance and trust.--Ms 58, 1901; cited in Ev 517.

3. Many have lost the sense of eternal realities, lost the similitude of God, and they hardly know whether they have souls to be saved or not. They have neither faith in God nor confidence in men. As they see one with no inducement of earthly praise or compensation come into their wretched homes, ministering to the sick, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and tenderly pointing all to Him of whose love and pity the human worker is but the messenger--as they see this, their hearts are touched. Gratitude springs up. Faith is kindled. They see that God cares for them, and they are prepared to listen as His Word is opened.--RH, Aug. 3, 1905; cited in Ev 517.

F. That SDAs Mental Perceptions Might Be Sharpened to Better Understand Secular (as Well as Spiritual) Truth

1. You need not go to the ends of the earth for wisdom, for God is near. It is not the capabilities that you now possess or ever will have that will give you success. It is that which the Lord can do for you. We need to have far less confidence in what man can do and far more confidence in what God can do for every believing soul. He longs to have you reach after Him by faith. He longs to have you expect great things from Him. He longs to give you understanding in temporal as well as in spiritual matters. He can sharpen the intellect. He can give tact and skill. Put your talents into the work, ask God for wisdom, and it will be given you.--COL 146:4.
2. God gave Daniel and His companions "knowledge and skill in *all* learning and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams" (Dan. 1:17). . . . God cooperates with human effort. . . . God can give you skill in *all* your learning. He can help you to adapt yourselves to the line of study you shall take up. Place yourself in right relation to God. Make this your first interest. . . . It rests with you to say whether you will have knowledge and skill.--Ms 13, Feb. 2, 1900; cited in UL 47 (emphasis supplied).
3. Truth constantly enriches the receiver. The minds of those who receive the truth increase in activity. As they exercise their talents, seeking to improve every capability, their mental and spiritual powers strengthen, for when there is spiritual life, there is development and growth. . . . And not only will the minds of those helped be impressed, but the mind of him who is doing the work will be quickened by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through the cooperation of the power that comes from God alone, he will be enabled to make the truth so plain that it will vibrate in other minds.--Ms 88, July 10, 1898; cited in UL 205:3.
4. If all would make the Bible their study, we should see a people who were better developed, who were capable of thinking more deeply, who would manifest greater intelligence than those who have earnestly studied the sciences and histories of the world, apart from the Bible. The Bible gives the true seeker for truth an advanced mental discipline, and he comes from the contemplation of divine things with his faculties enriched; self

is humbled, while God and His revealed truth are exalted.--BEcho, Oct. 1, 1892:4

G. That SDAs Might Attain Greater Spiritual Growth and Development

1. The Lord desires that we excel in mental development as regards spiritual truth, as well as secular truth; and He wishes us to thereby be better enabled to withstand the temptations of Satan.
2. The sacred temple of the body must be kept pure and uncontaminated, that God's Holy Spirit may dwell therein.--Lt 103, 1897; cited in HC 265:4.
3. All who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical and mental power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own Spirit, and the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in heart and mind. The grace of God enlarges and multiplies their faculties, and every perfection of the divine nature comes to their assistance in the work of saving souls. Through cooperation with Christ they are complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence.--DA 827:3.
4. Do not, because you are among unbelievers, become careless in your words, for they are taking your measure. If you sit at their table, eat temperately, and only of food that will not confuse the mind. Keep yourself from all intemperance. Be yourself an object lesson, illustrating right principles. If they offer you tea to drink, tell them in simple words [of] its injurious effect on the system. Tell them also that you do not use spirituous drinks of any kind, because you desire to keep your mind in such a condition that God can impress it with the sacred truths of His Word, and that you cannot afford to weaken any of your mental and physical powers, lest you shall be unable to discern sacred things. Thus you can sow the seeds of truth, and lead out upon the subject of keeping soul, body, and spirit in such a condition that you can understand eternal realities.--Ms 23, Nov. 24, 1890; cited in UL 342:1

III. Characteristics of the "Health" Message

A. Source of

1. EGW declared that her health message was given--
 - a. By divine initiative; and, also,
 - b. By direct revelation:
 - (1) I have had great light from the Lord upon the subject of health reform. I did not seek this light; I did not study to obtain it; it was given to me by the Lord to give to others.--Ms 29, 1897; cited in CD 493.

B. Purpose of

1. This message was given for practical/pragmatic reasons.

C. Uniqueness of

1. Where EGW's "health"/lifestyle message was *not* unique:

- a. SDAs were not always the earliest--and, therefore, the first--to teach certain aspects of healthful living (though it is nevertheless true that, in certain areas, EGW was well in advance of the general thinking of her day.

- b. EGW is *not* proven to be a true prophet simply because of her advanced health/lifestyle counsels:

- (1) **Brigham Young**, the Mormon leader who took his Latter Day Saints west to Utah in 1846, taught many of the same health principles that EGW taught--and, in some instances, a number of years before she wrote!

- (2) **Clara Barton** (1821-1912), known as "The Angel of the Battlefield" during the American Civil War (1861-63) and later founder of the American Red Cross, also reportedly taught some of the same truths as EGW--and, in certain instances, possibly earlier than EGW.

- c. Priority in the time of utterance neither qualifies nor disqualifies one as a *prophet*.

- (1) A prophet is proven true or false by whether or not his/her teachings--taken as a whole, and especially their theological teachings--harmonize with the Word of God (Isa. 8:20).

- (a) See Roger W. Coon, "Were Ellen White's Health Writings Unique?: Does a Prophet Have to Say It First?," *Adventist Review*, April 8, 1993, pp. 16, 17.

2. Where EGW's "health"/lifestyle message *was* unique:

- a. *Philosophical/Theological Uniqueness*:

- (1) EGW linked the Christian's physical condition and the spiritual experience in a cause-effect relationship.

- (a) She made healthful living a *religious* obligation, part of "present truth," as J. H. Waggoner pointed out in the RH of Aug. 7, 1866 (where he, too, made the point that SDAs were not always the earliest/first to teach certain health practices).

- (2) In addition to SDAs, the only other religious bodies to make health concerns a *religious* and *moral* concern are:

- (a) The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons).

- (b) Islam--the religion of the Moslems.

(Karl Menninger, *What Ever Became of Sin?* [1973], p. 142.)

- (3) As noted above, the "health"/lifestyle message was likened to the "right arm" of a human body; but it was not to be viewed as the entire body itself.

b. *Historical/Rhetorical Uniqueness:*

(1) Dr. John Harvey Kellogg wrote the Preface for *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene* (1890), the only book co-authored by James and Ellen White, in which he invited "the reader's attention to a few facts of interest," in which he enumerated certain points:

1. At the time the writings referred to first appeared, the subject of health was almost wholly ignored, not only by the people to whom they were addressed, but by the world at large.

2. The few advocating the necessity of a reform in physical habits, propagated in connection with the advocacy of genuine reformatory principles the most patent and in some instances disgusting errors.

3. Nowhere, and by no one, was there presented a systematic and harmonious body of hygienic truths, free from patent errors, and consistent with the Bible and the principles of the Christian religion. . . .

It certainly must be regarded as a thing remarkable, and evincing unmistakable evidence of divine insight and direction, that in the midst of confused and conflicting teachings, claiming the authority of science and experience, but warped by ultra notions and rendered impotent for good by the great admixture of error,—it must be admitted to be something extraordinary, that a person making no claims to scientific knowledge or erudition should have been able to organize, from the confused and error-tainted mass of ideas advanced by a few writers and thinkers on health subjects, a body of hygienic principles so harmonious, so consistent, and so genuine that the discussions, the researches, the discoveries, and the experience of a quarter of a century [1865-1890] have not resulted in the overthrow of a single principle, but have only served to establish the doctrines taught.—pp. iii, iv.

D. Practicality of

1. The EGW "health"/lifestyle message is not merely a philosophical/theoretical subject for intellectual discussion and debate (though it does stand up quite well in such!).
 - a. It is, rather, a practical way-of-life, with tangible, demonstrable benefits for the faithful adherent.
2. In 1895, Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, before his final apostasy, recruited Dr. David Paulson to come and work with him as a professional colleague in the Battle Creek Sanitarium.
 - a. During the interview Kellogg asked Paulson if he know how the former—with the "San," generally—managed to stay five years ahead of the medical profession. Paulson did not know, and Kellogg added:

When a new thing is brought out in the medical world, I know from my knowledge of the Spirit of Prophecy whether it belongs in our system or not.

If it does, I instantly adopt it, and advertise it, while the rest of the doctors are slowly feeling their way; and when they finally adopt it, I have five years' start of them.

On the other hand, when the medical profession is swept off their feet by some new fad, if it does not fit *the light we have received*, I simply do not touch it. When the doctors finally discover their mistake, they wonder how it came that I did not get caught.—Ellen G. White Estate, *A Critique of the Book Prophetess of Health* (1976), pp. 16, 17.

E. Breadth/Scope of

1. The "health"/lifestyle message is more than vegetarianism (though it includes it).
 - a. It is more, even, than the more broad question of diet/nutrition (though it includes these, too).
 - b. It embraces a *total* concept of—and program for—wellness, including (among other things) physical exercise and mental hygiene.
2. It is concerned with the prevention of disease, not merely its cure.
 - a. And it embraces the maintenance of good health, as well as its recovery.

F. Universality of

1. Because it is based upon broad, far-reaching principles, as well as the application of those principles in specific instances, EGW's "health"/lifestyle message finds a practical, helpful, utilitarian application in every country, and in every culture.

G. Evangelistic Utility of

1. Fitness, wellness, wholeness, healing through natural means, are all "in" topics of contemporary interest on the part of the majority in many parts of the world today.
2. SDAs do well to capitalize upon this interest, and exploit it to the fullest for soul-winning ends, by means of promoting:
 - a. Interest in vegetarianism.
 - b. Cooking schools.
 - c. Stop-smoking programs.
 - d. Alcohol and substance-abuse emphasis in drug-recovery and prevention seminars.
 - e. Weight-loss programs.
 - f. Exercise classes.
 - g. Stress-management programs.
 - h. Healthful living classes.

3. The "health"/lifestyle message provides an excellent opportunity to make a first-introduction of EGW to nonSDAs, as a valuable and effective "entering wedge," by bringing into focus her amazing contribution in this area of near-universal interest, and showing her advance concepts from a positive perspective.
4. Example of:
 - a. George Vandeman, on his Nov. 4, 1984, "It Is Written" telecast, offered viewers a free booklet, *The Stuff of Survival*, which produced the largest single viewer-response in its then 28-year history:
 - (1) Some 8,000 telephoned a toll-free number (at Andrews University).
 - (2) An additional 3,000 either telephoned a local number, or wrote program producers directly.

H. Three Ironies In

1. The "health"/lifestyle message is, by its very nature, concerned with matters of scientific inquiry.
 - a. Of all of the categories in which EGW wrote, there has been more corroboration from non-church, secular--indeed, "scientific"--sources than for any other category.
 - b. Yet, the area of the scientific is also precisely the arena in which so many critics choose to criticize, ridicule, and condemn.
2. While there is an amazing, delightful, and wholesome balance (not to mention saneness) in the EGW "health"/lifestyle writings, yet it is precisely at this point that a large number of adherents, who swear allegiance to her ideas in general, themselves become the most unbalanced in holding and propagating extreme--and even bizarre--views and aberrations.
3. Some Adventists, particularly leaders in our health-care institutions, today appear increasingly willing to tend toward "abandonment of clearly presenting our historic health principles at the [very] same time that the world['s] scientists and ecologists are proving that the[se] principles represent the very best diet!"
 - a. "Science is supporting less meat, less fat, less sugar, more fiber, more grains and vegetables, no smoking, alcohol, or other illicit drugs, while we [often] drag our feet in speaking clearly to others about these facts predicted over 100 years ago!" (Gary A. Moore, M.D., "Where is Medicine Headed in the Nineties?," *FOCUS, The Andrews University Magazine*, Summer, 1993, p. 34).
 - b. Unfortunately, an increasing number of SDA health care institutions are now serving (or proposing to serve) a non-vegetarian cuisine to all patients and staff/employee personnel; whereas, formerly, flesh foods were available only to patients upon the presentation of a physician's prescription!

IV. The "Health" Message Defined--"The 'Ten Commandments' of Good Health"

1. **There is a significant link between the Christian's physical condition and the spiritual experience:**
 - a. God intends our bodies to be spiritual "temples" for the indwelling of His Holy Spirit.
 - (1) God "owns" these "buildings" by right both of original creation and subsequent redemption by purchase-back, at a staggering personal cost to Heaven.
 - (2) He, therefore, cares, deeply, about how they are treated (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).
 - b. As the "Owner," God has every legal and ethical right to decide how His personal property is treated (and He wants, above all, to get His "money's worth!).
 - (1) As "tenant," man has no right to do as he pleases with Someone else's property--"this wonderful house the Lord has given us" (Lt 85, 1888; cited in 7MR 224).
 - (2) We have a sacred obligation to maintain these "dwellings" in an a condition of optimum health. (EGW often uses the expression "sacred duty.")
 - (3) Men and women are to honor and to glorify God in their bodies, by not defiling them.
 - (a) To shorten one's life-span, "by disregarding nature's laws," is viewed as being "guilty of robbery toward God." (RH, Dec. 1, 1896; cited in CH 41).
 - (b) God will punish severely all who desecrate their "body-temple."
 - c. Mankind was originally created by Christ in "the image of God" (Gen.1:27).
 - (1) Through Adam and Eve's sin this image was subsequently marred (in some, nearly obliterated); the entire creation was affected.
 - (2) The great goal of Christianity, theologically speaking, is "redemption"--the restoration of what once was, back, ultimately, to its original state (Ms. 161, July 1, 1903; cited in UL 196:2; GH, Oct. 1, 1899:2).
 - d. "All should have an intelligent knowledge of the human frame, that they may keep their bodies in the condition necessary to do the work of the Lord" (RH, Dec. 1, 1896; cited in CH 41).
2. **The body, in general, and the mind (with its central nervous system), in particular is the only medium through which God can communicate with human beings (MH 130). (This, indeed, may be the most important concept in the entire "health"/lifestyle message!)**
 - a. This may explain, then, Satan's concerted efforts to pollute, defile, and destroy--if possible--both mind and body.
 - b. And this is why we, as Christian human beings, have a "sacred duty" to resist, and to prevent--with God's help, of course--this sabotage (CD.44:3; 101:1; 257:2).

3. In the act of obeying Nature's health laws and basic health principles, the Christian "earns" nothing toward his salvation and eternal life (4SG-a 148, 149).
 - a. The laws of health are *not* placed by God at the *same level* as are the 10 Commandments.
 - b. God has given us health rules, not as an arbitrary exercise in order to "show man who is boss;" but, rather, being able to foresee the end results of undesirable practices, He knew we would be healthier--and, thus, happier--if we avoided the harmful, and clung, instead, to the good:
 - (1) God requires obedience, not for the purpose of showing His authority, but that we may become one with Him in character.--Ms 126, Nov. 29, 1905; cited in UL 347:4.
 - c. Informed Christians observe true health principles, not in order to be saved, but, rather, because they *have been* saved; and they are motivated by love to do God's expressed will for their lives, as far as they know it.
 - d. "A clear mind enables us to understand God's will; a strong body enables us to do it" (*SDA Encyclopedia* [1976]: 574).
 - e. But salvation, itself, is not a matter of eating and drinking (see Rom. 14:17); and salvation does not come to us at the end of a knife, fork, or spoon!
 - (1) (While we cannot eat our way into God's kingdom, we certainly can eat our way *out*!)
4. The Christian, in every act of life, seeks to be guided by two great principles:
 - a. To promote and maintain life and good health:
 - (1) "Preserve the best health" (CD 395).
 - (2) "Eat that food which is most nourishing" (9T 163; CD 353).
 - b. "Do the very best possible" in every circumstances in which we find ourselves (HP 60; MH 69; MR #1115 and 1409).
 - (1) Ironically, following this principle, at times, may oblige and force the Christian to choose between the lesser of two acknowledged evils!
5. Authentic Christians will strive for the mastery, following "true temperance:"--which is defined as:
 - a. A "judicious" moderation in the use of all that is good and health-producing; and
 - b. "Total abstinence" from all that harms and hurts (PP 562).
6. The Body-Temple can be polluted, defiled, and ultimately destroyed, through various bad health-habits:
 - a. Ingestion of all deleterious food/drink/and hurtful substances.
 - b. Insufficient (or a lack of the right kind of) physical exercise (ML 138; 2T 432, 525, 697; 3T 158; 7T 247).
 - c. Overwork--often coupled with insufficient rest/relaxation (1T 618).
 - (1) I know from the testimonies given me from time to time for brain workers, that sleep is worth far more before than after midnight. Two hours' good sleep before 12 o'clock is worth more than four hours after 12 o'clock.--Lt 85, May 10, 1888; cited in 7MR 224.

- (2) Physical, as well as mental, workers should take much longer time to eat than they generally allow; then one hour [should be] spent after eating upon matters which are of little more consequence than to interest or amuse, before they subject themselves to hard labor again.--*Ibid.*; cited in 7MR 225.
 - d. Feeding the mind upon impure thoughts (2T 408, 470; 5T 593).
 - (1) Paul's counsel is appropriate: "Whatsoever things are true...honest...just...pure...lovely...of good report...think on these things (Phil. 4:8).
 - e. Improper posture (Ed 198).
 - f. Abuse of bodily organs by:
 - (1) Over-eating (Te 283)--or eating too rapidly (CD 136; CH 577).
 - (2) Too much liquid-intake at mealtime (CD 105, 420; CH 120; MH 305).
 - (3) Irregularity in meal times (CD 182).
 - (4) Snacking in-between meals (MH 303; Ms 15, 1889; cited in 16MR 173:2).
 - (5) Physical over-exertion, straining, or constriction of organs.
 - g. Failure to employ natural remedies--or in sufficient amount.
7. God's church has an obligation to establish health care centers which are to serve two purposes:
- a. Provide healing for those afflicted with illness/disease.
 - b. Propagate preventive methods (1T 489; Ms 1, 1863, p. 6).
8. Wherever possible, healing should be accomplished through natural remedies, the preferred therapeutic agencies:
- a. Natural remedies identified: [acronym: New Start]
 - (1) Nutrition (proper diet). (1) Pure air.
 - (2) Exercise. (2) Cleanliness.
 - (3) Water (pure). (3) Purity of life.
 - (4) Sunlight. (4) Firm trust in God (5T 443).
 - (5) Temperance (abstemiousness).
 - (6) Air (pure, fresh).
 - (7) Rest.
 - (8) Trust in Divine power (MH 127).
 - b. Poisonous drugs/substances should be avoided whenever and wherever possible (MM 85; Te 88; 2SM 296; 5T 195; 9T 175).
 - c. There is a legitimate place for *some* categories of drugs:
 - (1) Anesthetics.
 - (2) Vaccination/immunizations against disease; prophylaxis against malaria, etc. (2SM 279-84 [especially footnote, p. 282]; 303, footnote).
 - (3) Judicious use of X-rays [technically, not a drug] (2SM 303).
9. The original Edenic vegetarian diet (fruits, nuts, grains, vegetables) is still the ideal diet today.
- a. Flesh foods (meat, fish, poultry) and certain dairy and poultry products are increasingly undesirable and unsafe for:

- (1) Physiological reasons:
 - (a) Disease in the animal/fish itself.
 - (b) Possible chemical/radioactive contamination.
- (2) Spiritual reasons:
 - (a) Animal products have a cause-effect relationship to one's spiritual experience.
- b. When flesh articles are removed from the diet, adequate nutritional substitutes must be sought, and provided (9T 161, 162; SD 352).
- c. Meals served must be characterized as:
 - (1) "Simple."
 - (2) "Palatable" (CD 471).
 - (3) "Appetizing" (CD 312, 313).
 - (4) "Attractive" (CD 471; CT 312, 313; 6T 357; MR #1115).
- d. Sabbath meals should "provide something that will be regarded as a treat"-- "something the family do not have every day" (6T 357).

10. In seeking to effect reform, attitude is as important as idea.

- a. The greatest patience, kindness, courtesy, tact, and discretion must be exercised by the health-reformer at all times, if he/she is to be truly effective in exercising a positive influence for good (9T 161; 7T 113; CD 493, 495).
- b. "Balance" (6T 291) and "common sense" (2T 535) are imperatives.
- c. If one is to err, it is "better to come one step short of the mark than to go one step beyond it" (thus being obliged to retrace one's footsteps); "and if there is to be error at all, let it be on the side next to the people" (3T 21; see also 6T 120-23).

V. The Source and Scope of the First Four Health Reform Visions

A. Vision of Autumn, 1848 [JW in RH, Nov. 8, 1870, p. 165; cited in D[ores] E[ugene] Robinson, *The Story of Our Health Message* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1965), 3rd ed., pp. 65-70.

1. Injurious effects of:

a. Tobacco:

- (1) Subject first noted in Autumn, 1848, vision in Connecticut: people to discard.
- (2) First writing on subject: Lt 5, 1851: a "filthy weed," an "idol" that must be given up; the "frown of God" upon users.
- (3) 1864: characterized as "most deceitful and malignant" (4SG-a 128).
- (4) Revised shortly thereafter: "a slow, insidious, and most malignant poison" (MH 327:1).

b. Tea.

c. Coffee.

2. Corroboration:

a. Tobacco:

- (1) Alton Oschner, MD, professor of thoracic surgery, Tulane University Medical School, New Orleans: produced cinema film, "One in 20,000" (with a production grant from GC Temperance Dept.); believed to be the first major scientist to directly link cigarettes with lung cancer. Lung cancer deaths in USA in 1954: 20,000, hence film title.
- (2) EGW's choice of adjectives significant:
 - (1) "Slow:" it takes about 20 years to fully incubate a full-blown case of lung cancer.
 - (2) "Insidious:" if you wait until you have symptoms of lung cancer to get medical help, you have waited too long; those only who are saved are those who get lung X-rays with periodical medical check-ups, catch it in time.
 - (3) "Most malignant:" the jury is no longer out on whether or not cigarettes are the principle cause of lung cancer.

b. Coffee:

- (1) Research at Harvard University Medical School, 1981: coffee is the predisposing cause of cancer of the pancreas; while the chief chemical culprit is not yet identified, it cannot be caffeine, because as many drinkers of decaffeinated coffee get this disease as those who drink the straight, unadulterated beverage.
- (2) Scientific study, Norway, 1984: coffee-drinkers have 2-1/2 times increase in heart attack (myocardial infarcts) as non-drinkers.
- (3) Scientific study, Canada, 1993: a study of 331 Canadian women showed that drinking three cups of coffee daily during pregnancy more than doubled the statistical risk of miscarriage.
 - (a) Despite another recent study, which appeared to suggest that consumption of moderate amounts of coffee had no deleterious effect, the U.S. Food & Drug Administration was so concerned by the Canadian study results that it advised expectant mothers to reduce amount of caffeine intake (see *Time* Jan. 3, 1994, p. 28).
 - (b) The Canadian study was reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA), Dec. 22/29, 1993, pp. 2940-2943 ("Fetal Loss Associated With Caffeine Intake").
 - (c) In the same issue, an editorial appeared, based upon the findings of this study ("Caffeine During Pregnancy: Cause for Concern?," pp. 2973, 2974).
 - (d) In another study of coffee/caffeine: one-third of all bladder cancer caused by coffee-drinking!
 - (e) For a report on scientific research on caffeine-intake, see Galen C. Bolsey, "Is Adventist Health Reform Scientific?," *Ministry*, April, 1987, pp. 26-28; in *Anthology* I: 87/7-9.

B. Vision of Feb. 12, 1854, Brookfield, NY (Ms. 1, 1854)

1. Content:

a. Health-related issues:

- (1) Adultery among church members.
- (2) Lack of bodily cleanliness among Sabbath-keepers.
- (3) Control of appetite needed.

b. Other topics disclosed:

- (1) Profanity.
- (2) Parental neglect of their children.
- (3) Unwise youthful marriages.

C. Vision of June 6, 1863 (Ms. 1, 1863)

1. Background:

a. General Conference organized just 16 days earlier at Battle Creek.

b. JW/EGW visiting evangelistic campaign by R.J. Laurence and M.E. Cornell at Otsego, MI over a weekend.

c. Stayed in home of layman Aaron Hilliard: 45-min. vision given Fri. evening during sunset vespers at family worship; eyewitness account of teenage Martha Amadon extant.

(1) Calendar date: June 5; EGW dated as June 6, because of Bible method of reckoning time: new day begins at sunset.

d. Counsels given for recovery of JW's health and also for church at large.

e. For an account of this First major health-reform vision: see Roger W. Coon, *The Great Visions of Ellen G. White*, Vol. I [RH, 1992], Chapter 7 ("The Health Reform Vision: 'The Cure'"), pp.90-107.

2. Content: emphasized earlier reforms, introduced new ones; 10 emphases--

a. **Care of health a religious duty:**

- (1) God requires us to glorify Him in our bodies.
- (2) *We earn nothing*, thereby, however, toward salvation/eternal life.

b. **Most disease caused by a violation of the laws of health.**

c. **Wide-ranging attack on various forms of intemperance (not merely alcoholic form, though this was included):**

- (1) "Stimulating" drinks.
- (2) Tobacco "in whatever form."
- (3) Highly-spiced foods.
- (4) Overwork: "intemperance in labor."
- (5) "Indulgence of base passion" (not otherwise identified): context seems to focus upon intemperate sexual relations within marriage (not, however, an attack on legitimate coitus enjoyed in moderation).

d. **Vegetarianism advocated for the first time:**

- (1) "Flesh" (meat, poultry, fish) in general, pork in particular, contraindicated in ideal diet.

e. **Proper dietary habits necessary to control appetite: 2 dangers identified--**

- (1) Eating too much.
- (2) Eating in-between meals.

f. Control of the mind essential:

- (1) Many illnesses originate in a diseased mind, rather than from organic/viral cause.

g. Natural remedies preferred over drug medication:

- (1) Those identified in this vision:
 - (a) Pure air.
 - (b) Pure water--for both internal/external use.
 - (c) Sunshine.
 - (d) Physical exercise.
 - (e) Adequate rest.
 - (f) Fasting for brief periods, to rest stomach.
 - (g) Proper nutrition.

- (2) Another added in 1885 (22 years later):

- (a) "A firm trust in God," "trust in divine power."

h. Personal cleanliness (originally raised in 1854 vision; reiterated here):

- (1) Now broadened to include:

- (a) Body.
- (b) Clothing.
- (c) Living environment.

- (2) Personal cleanliness placed on the level of "purity of heart" for all Christians.

i. Environmental Concerns:

- (1) Remove decaying vegetation from immediate proximity of houses.
- (2) Wherever possible, construct houses on high ground; avoid allowing water to settle in close proximity.

j. Health education urged:

- (1) For the first time, education of the public raised to the level of "duty."
- (2) Need further re-emphasized in the 4th health-reform vision of Dec. 25, 1865, at Rochester, NY.

3. Significance of this vision: for the first time--

- a. A link established between one's physical condition and spiritual experience.
- b. Vegetarianism advocated as ideal goal; pork completely contraindicated.
- c. Duty of church to engage in public-health education made explicit.

D. Vision of Dec. 25, 1865, Rochester, NY (1T 485-95)

1. Background:

- a. Special service in SDA Church, not to celebrate Christmas, but, rather, to pray for the recovery of James White's deteriorating health.

2. Content:

- a. SDAs should establish health-care institutions to provide two needs:
 - (1) Care and cure for those already ill.
 - (2) Teach methods of preventive medicine.

V. The Case for Vegetarianism Mounting contemporary evidence of pollution in both animals and meat-packing plants vindicates early advocacy of non-flesh diet.

A. Meat Indicted

1. Dean Ornish, M.D.

a. One of the foremost advocates of vegetarianism in the medical world today.

b. Professional pedigree:

(1) Asst. clinical prof. of medicine, Univ. of Calif. San Francisco School of Medicine.

(2) Attending physician, Pacific Presbyterian Medical Center, San Francisco.

(3) President and Director, Preventive Medicine Research Institute, Sausalito, CA.

c. Research findings:

(1) In three studies, spanning 17 years (to 1993), Ornish proved that his program of a strict low-fat vegetarian diet, combined with moderate aerobic exercise, abstinence from smoking, and stress management training not only retarded heart disease but actually demonstrated statistically-significant "measurable regression" [reversal] in cases of severe heart disease (Dean Ornish, M.D., "Can Lifestyle Change Reverse Coronary Atherosclerosis?," *Hospital Practice*, May 15, 1991).

(a) As a result, Mutual of Omaha--the nation's largest provider of health care insurance for individuals--announced in early August, 1993, that it will reimburse patients who volunteer for this alternative therapy.

(b) Ornish's program costs \$3,500 a year, "about one-tenth the price of conventional coronary care" (*Health: Holistic Healing*, "U.S. News & World Report", Aug. 9, 1993, p. 20).

(2) A 1990 report in *USA Today*, International Edition ("For a Better Life, Don't Eat Any Beef," Dec. 19, 1990, p. 5-A) revealed:

(1) "Even severely blocked arteries began to unclog in the majority of heart patients when they stopped eating animal products and made simple lifestyle changes" in the Ornish program. Atherosclerosis was not merely retarded; it was reversed!

(2) A Dec. 13, 1990, study reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* provides persuasive new evidence that the more red meat and animal fat women ate, the more likely they were to get colon cancer. Harvard's Dr. Walter Willett, chief director of the study, declared: "The optimum amount of red meat you should eat should be zero."

(3) Dr. T. Colin Campbell, Cornell University, directed a landmark study of 6,500 persons in mid-1990, finding that "the more meat they ate, the more likely they were to die prematurely from coronary heart disease, colon cancer, breast cancer, prostate cancer, and lung cancer, among others."

- (4) "Many athletes are foregoing the pregame steak for foods high in complex carbohydrates, because they find that eating less meat often increases their endurance."
- (5) Most beef is "still very high in fat. And cholesterol. Studies also indicate that meat protein and perhaps other substances in beef raise the risk of cancer and heart disease."
- (6) Ornish was reported as saying: "Eating meat makes you fat." And in a take-off on the early 1990's slogan of the American Beef Association ("Beef. Real Food for Real People"), Ornish quipped, "Meat. Real Food for Real Death!"

2. Prime Time Live, ABC News, April 30, 1992:

- a. Reported on a four-month undercover investigation of the nation's largest meat-packing plants in TE, CO, KS, and NE, concluding: "Beef may pose a real danger to consumers."
- b. Investigators found "entire sides of beef covered with dirt, hairballs mixed in with cuts of meat," and even shotgun pellets buried inside a carcass, "all ready for sale to unsuspecting customers."
- c. Weary and frustrated federal government meat inspectors themselves finally blew the whistle on the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture itself--their employer!--because, they declared, "the health of the nation is at risk. And many other meat inspectors themselves reported that they and their families no longer ate government-inspected meat" (Transcript, Program 243, "The Unkindest Cut," pp. 1, 4-6).

3. Prime Time Live, ABC News, Nov. 5, 1992:

- a. In an expose of operating practices of the Food Lion grocery chain six months later, investigative reporters, ABC News further charged Food Lion with "doctoring and selling spoiled meat."
- b. Findings: "Spoiled green pork was thrown in a sausage grinder. Slimy chicken got a coat of barbecue sauce and was sent to the meat case. Stinking fish was soaked in bleach, and then put back on sale" (*USA Today*, Nov. 11, 1992, p. 1-A).

4. Forty-Eight Hours CBS News, Feb. 9, 1994:

- a. In a report entitled "Is Your Food Safe?," the results of earlier studies on meat, poultry, and fish, were confirmed.
- b. But this time investigative reporters expanded their concerns to include dangers from the presence of pesticides on fruits and vegetables--illegal for application in the USA, but legal abroad--on produce imported from foreign countries (Transcript, Program 270, pp. 1-28).

B. Poultry Indicted

1. 60 Minutes, CBS News, March 29, 1987 (Rebroadcast: Sept. 6, 1987):

- a. In a segment entitled "One in Three," reporters found that "if you buy a chicken at any supermarket, the chances are still better than one out of three that

the chicken you pick out will be carrying salmonella bacteria, which this year will kill hundreds of people, and cause thousands more to come down with a kind of flu, or appendicitis, or even a perforated colon."

- b. The report concluded with the finding that "the USDA graders and inspectors say that they're being forced to send out chickens no one should have to eat" (Transcript, pp. 2, 10-14).

2. *CBS Evening News, July 11, 1994:*

- a. "Each year Americans consume seven billion pieces of poultry, but over one million consumers will become seriously ill from contaminated turkey and chicken," according to CBS News health correspondent Dr. Bob Arnot.
- b. "Today the Dept. of Agriculture proposed new regulations [due to take effect in early 1995] aimed at making meat safer to eat: . . . anti-microbial rinses to wash away bacteria, an extra inspection point to examine internal organs and the goal of removing all visible fecal matter from raw poultry during inspection."
- c. But the government is already running into a "storm of controversy" from critics, some charging "a half-hearted approach from an administration already accused of having ties to the poultry industry," and others that the proposed reforms "missed the most important step, a microscopic examination for bacteria after the poultry clears the inspection line."
- d. Charged Bob Robinson, of the General Accounting Office: "Relying on visual inspection to detect microbial contamination simply will not work."
- e. Added Dr. Michael Osterholm, Minnesota Dept. of Health: "Unfortunately, today's announcement really is based much more on politics than it is [on] science. . . . We are still going to have substantial problems in terms of disease associated with eating contaminated poultry" (Transcript, pp. 5, 6).

C. Fish Indicted

1. *Consumer Reports, Feb., 1992 ("Is Our Fish Fit to Eat?," pp. 103-114):*

- a. A six-month investigation of fresh fish and shellfish "raises serious questions about their quality:"
 - (1) 29% of samples purchased in stores were already spoiled from "total bacteria;" another 9% were "beginning to spoil; another 4% were graded "barely acceptable;" and only 58% were labeled "acceptable."
 - (2) With regard to infection from fecal coliform bacteria, 15% were judged "potentially hazardous;" 7% raised "cause for alarm;" another 22% were judged "contaminated;" and only 56% were judged "acceptable."
 - (3) 43% of salmon contained PCBs, a potential carcinogen and reproductive hazard.
 - (4) 90% of swordfish contain heavy-metal mercury contamination, which may hard the nervous system; 25% of swordfish contained PCBs.
 - (5) Catfish were found occasionally to contain residues of pesticides DDT, DDE, and DDD, which can affect reproduction in mammals.
 - (6) Some samples of clams were high in lead, which can impair behavioral development in young children.

(7) 50% of lake whitefish contained PCBs, and some pesticide traces.

(8) Of flounder and sole, 55% had no detectible residues--that means that 45% *did*, even if at minimum levels!

b. In addition to this 12-page cover story, CR followed it with an additional five-page article on "Canned Tuna" (pp. 116-20).

c. Two of the three major American weekly newsmagazines thought the research sufficiently significant to devote a quarter-page in comment--each of which unwittingly garbled the statistical findings they reported:

(1) *U.S. News & World Report*, Jan. 27, 1992, p. 14.

(2) *Time*, Jan. 27, 1992, p. 252.

2. *Time*, June 29, 1992 ("Is Your Fish Really Foul?," pp. 70, 71):

a. Despite criticism from some sources of limited sampling of only two cities and allegedly using questionable testing procedures, *Time* concluded that the Feb. *Consumer Reports* findings were *not* seriously flawed.

b. It went on to highlight the particular dangers in eating fish by citing George Washington University environmental-health expert Jeffrey Foran:

(1) All in all, "if you're pregnant or nursing, you should probably avoid most kinds of fish."

(2) "You can drink the polluted Great Lakes waters over a lifetime and not get as much chemical contamination as you'd get from eating one fish meal."

c. The Genessee County (MI) Medical Society "has taken the extraordinary step of warning" that fish in the Great Lakes "can be so heavily contaminated with PCBs and other chemicals . . . that the stuff should not be eaten by 'children or by men or women who ever plan to have children.'"

d. Some 300 of the nation's professional chefs have banded together to sound the alarm of the dangers in the nation's fish markets, and they have formed an organization with the acronym CHEFS: "Chefs Helping to Enhance Food Safety."

D. Milk Warning

1. *Consumer Reports*, May, 1992 ("Udder Insanity," pp. 330-32):

a. Since "farmers produce more milk than U.S. consumers can use," CR took the dairy industry to task for adding hormones to dairy feed in order "to produce still more milk."

b. Two concerns were explicated:

(1) "There is now no adequate Government program to ensure that antibiotic levels in milk will not rise as a result of [hormone] bGH use, changes in veterinary practices, or other factors. The FDA's new National Drug Residue Milk Monitoring Program, designed to search for antibiotics in milk, is checking only 250 samples of milk a year, far too few to represent the varied national milk supply adequately. In addition, the program tests milk for only a dozen or so antibiotics, a modest fraction of those now in use."

- (2) "A second, more fundamental problem is that for many antibiotics—including some picked up by our screening tests—there are no reliable ways to verify residues at the levels likely to occur in the milk supply. The law requires drug makers to develop analytical methods for detecting residues before a drug can be approved for use in animals. The FDA has not enforced that requirement stringently in the past, and the agency is now struggling, with limited resources, to come up with 'state of the art' tests for the most important antibiotics in milk."

E. Summary

1. For further particulars, see Roger W. Coon, "More Than Meats the Eye: The Weight of Evidence," *Adventist Review* cover story, August 31, 1995, pp. 1, 12-14.

VII. Does the EGW "Health" Message Make a Difference?: The Testimony of Science

A. Foreign Studies

1. Norway: A 17-year follow-up study of Norwegian SDAs by nonSDA government researchers:
 - a. Concluded that Norway's national budget for health-care could be substantially reduced if the general population were as motivated to take care of themselves as Adventists are.
 - b. Demolished two points of criticism of the earlier Rolland Phillips/Loma Linda study [1974] of 50,000 SDAs in California (#1: SDAs belong to a rather high socioeconomic group in the population who thereby enjoy better health and run considerably less risk of being stricken by certain diseases associated with lifestyle; and #2: SDAs living in California are a geographically select group of SDAs and not representative of church members living in other places) by showing that:
 - (1) Norwegian SDA subjects of their study were *not* as well educated on the average as people of the same age and sex (educational status is the most common measure of socioeconomic level).
 - (2) Almost without exception, Norwegian SDAs studied had settled in those areas having the highest incidence of the major diseases related to lifestyle.
 - c. The study was highly publicized on national radio and television, and in the official journal of the Norwegian Medical Association ("Norwegians Study SDAs," *Adventist Review*, June 25, 1981, p. 32).
2. Denmark:
 - a. Copenhagen's Cancer Registration Office tracked 750 Danish SDA males for 35 years, discovering that one in 10 had developed some form of cancer, while

the rate for the general Danish population was one in four, in the same time period.

- b. The risk among SDAs of developing cancer was 70-80% less than the general Danish population.
- c. The risk for SDAs of developing lung or bladder cancer was even less: about one-tenth that for the general population ("Danish Research Supports SDA Life Style," *Adventist Review*, Dec. 2, 1982, p. 23).

B. American Studies

1. Longevity studies statistically prove that SDAs live significantly longer than do nonSDAs, and have fewer deaths from diseases--particular cancers:
 - a. Walter S. Ross, a *Reader's Digest* Roving Editor and also editor of *Cancer News*, pinpointed SDAs by name in the very first three words of his article in the *RD*, Feb., 1983, pp. 78-82: "At Last, An Anti-Cancer Diet." He reported:
 - (1) According to studies made in different parts of the world, the incidence of breast, colon, and prostate cancer is significantly lower among people who eat lots of vegetables. This "startling finding," says Walter Troll, professor of environmental medicine at New York University, "suggests that vegetables contain substances capable of inhibiting cancer in man."
 - b. Gary Fraser identified 206 published studies in scientific literature from the early 1950s through the Spring of 1991 which deal with the health status of SDAs ("Epidemiological Studies of Adventists," *SCOPE*, July-Sept., 1991, pp. 50-55 (in *Anthology*, II:91/72-77).
 - c. Phillips' California Health Study of 50,000 SDAs (1974) received a \$6 million research grant from the National Institutes of Health, and brought some unexpected findings:
 - (1) Persons consuming beans and vegetable protein products more than four times weekly had only one-fifth the risk of pancreatic cancer.
 - (2) There appears to be a relationship between eating nuts and the reduction of blood cholesterol, providing protection against developing both fatal and non-fatal heart disease. ("At a Glance: California Adventist Health Study," *SCOPE*, April-June, 1991, p. 28; in *Anthology*, II:91/47).
 - d. Jan W. Kuzma surveyed longevity studies of SDAs from 1958 to 1989 in reports published in two SDA periodicals:
 - (1) "Lifestyle and Life Expectancy of Seventh-day Adventists," *Adventist Review*, June 29, 1989, pp. 15-19 (in *Anthology*, II:89/96-100).
 - (2) "Why Adventists Live Longer," *Ministry*, Sept., 1989, pp. 24-27 (in *Anthology*, II:89/101-4).
 - e. The most recent study found was reported by Larry Kidder, "Health Study Finds New Dietary Key to Lower Coronary Heart Disease Risk," *Pacific Union Recorder*, Nov. 1, 1993, pp. 6,7.
2. Scientific studies on the relationship between mind and body--a link established by EGW as early as 1863--include:
 - a. The first known scientific study demonstrating that prayer often is associated with medical healing by Randolph C. Bird was published in the prestigious

Southern Medical Journal ("Positive Therapeutic Effects of Intercessory Prayer in a Coronary Care Unit Population"), July, 1988, pp. 826-29.

- b. A more recent report, Beth Baker's "The Mind Connection: Scientists Finding More Evidence of Link Between Mind and Health," appeared in the *American Association of Retired Persons Bulletin*, Oct., 1993, pp. 2, 9.

Conclusion

1. Ellen White continually appealed to her followers to "judge from the [preponderant] weight of [the] evidence," in matters related to the validity and veracity of her prophetic gift (5T 675, 676).
2. While the jury may admittedly still be "out" on some matters related to her ministry, the jury is no longer "out" on the basics--and on much of the detail--of her "health"/lifestyle message.
3. Two eminent, world-famous nonSDA scientists have judged from the weight of the evidence, and have cast their vote in favor of EGW's "health"/lifestyle message:
 - a. Norman M. Kaplan, M.D.:
 - (1) Professional pedigree:
 - (a) Professor of Internal Medicine and Head, Hypertension Section, University of Texas Southwestern Medical School, Dallas.
 - (b) Considered by many peers to be one of the world's foremost authorities on hypertension (high blood pressure)--if, indeed, not the World's Number One authority!
 - (2) Occasion: Dr. Kaplan addressed 1,000+ health care professionals attending a "Lifestyle Medicine" convention at Loma Linda University's School of Public Health, held during the summer of 1983.
 - (a) A number of nonSDA professionals were in his audience, a fact he recognized when, in the midst of his presentation, he asked them to excuse him while he spoke a parenthetical word to his SDA hosts:
 - (3) Personal testimony:

You as Adventists may have espoused a certain dietary lifestyle on the basis of faith, in the past; but now you can practice it on the basis of scientific evidence. Hopefully you will not [go back and re-]join the mainstream, but [rather] adhere to your health heritage!--(Reported in Far Eastern Division *Outlook*, August, 1983, p. 12).

 - (a) Did you catch that? The world's leading scientific authority on hypertension telling Adventists that they no longer needed any faith to believe EGW's "health"/lifestyle message--it had all been already proven sound by scientific inquiry!

b. William Herbert Foege, M.D., M.P.H.:

(1) Professional pedigree:

- (a) Director, Center for Disease Control, U.S. Public Health Service, Atlanta; then,
- (b) Asst. U. S. Surgeon-General, and Special Assistant for Policy Development, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services (at the time of his Loma Linda appearance); and, now,
- (c) Executive Director and Fellow for International and Domestic Health, The Carter Center, Emory University, Atlanta (since Summer, 1986). [This consortium of nonprofit organizations seeks "to alleviate conflict, reduce suffering, and promote better understanding among peoples of the world."]

(2) Occasion:

- (a) As Dr. Kaplan the year previously, Dr. Foege addressed another scientific convocation at Loma Linda University School of Health--this one titled: "Update"--eight months after Dr. Kaplan's visit.
- (b) And he, too, chose to address the SDAs in his audience, with these words:

(3) Personal testimony:

"You Seventh-day Adventists are now the role model for the rest of the world!"

For Further Study

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Five Undergirding Principles in the Health Message of Ellen G. White

Roger W. Coon

1. There are at least five undergirding principles which reoccur frequently in the health writings of Ellen G. White.

I. The Health Message is “Progressive”

1. The diet reform should be progressive” (MH 320, 321).
 - a. As our environmental conditions change, our diet should correspondingly reflect those adjustments.
 - b. Particularly as disease in the animal world increases, our dietary use of animal products will become progressively more and more restrictive (MH 320, 321).
 - c. In a letter to a physician—Dr. S. Rand--written in 1901, EGW indicated that:
 - (1) The time had now come for all SDAs to discard the use of **flesh meats** completely.
 - (2) “Soon” we will need to discard **butter**.
 - (3) “After a while” the use of **milk** would need to be discontinued.
 - (4) And “the time will come when there will be no safety in using **eggs, milk, cream, or butter**” (Lt 14, Jan. 22, 1901, p. 3; cited in 8MR 384:2 and 21MR 206:2).
 - d. “Milk, eggs, and butter should not be classed with flesh meat” (7T 135:0) probably because:
 - (1) The time had already come to discontinue the eating of flesh-meats; and
 - (2) The time had not yet come (in her day) to eliminate eggs and dairy products from the diet.

II. Personal “Safety”/Well-Being is of Paramount Concern

1. Our physical bodily “safety” was a paramount and continuing concern which undergirded her counsels in diet:
 - a. She repeatedly uses such expressions as:
 - (1) “No safety in . . .” (Lt 14, Jan. 22, 1901).
 - (2) “Unsafe . . .” (MH 320, 321).

III. “Balance” and Avoidance of Extreme Positions is Required to Correctly Apply Health Counsels

1. SDAs have been told: “You must not bring yourself to a time of trouble beforehand, and thus afflict yourself with death” (9T 162:3; RH, March 3, 1910:14).
 - a. For example, while, generally, the time would come when it would be desirable to discontinue the use of eggs, yet “eggs contain properties which are remedial agencies in counteracting [certain] poisons. . . . We should not consider it a denial of principle to use eggs of hens which are well cared for and suitably fed” (Lt 37, 1901; cited in CD 204:2; 358:4; 367:1).
 - b. “In some cases the use of eggs is beneficial” (7T 135:0).
 - c. “Balance” will help us avoid taking extreme positions, and thus negating the credibility of her counsels:
 - (1) To one who was going to extremes, she addressed these words of counsel:
 - (a) “I do hope that you will heed the words I have spoken to you. It has been presented to me [by God] that you will not be able to exert the most successful influence in health reform unless in some things you become more liberal to yourself and to others” (Lt 37, 1901; cited in CD 204:2; 358:4; 367:1; and MM 287:5).

IV. Trust in God to Lead You in Difficult Circumstances

1. When perplexing circumstances arise, “wait till the Lord prepares the way before you” (9T 162:3; RH, March 3, 1910:4).
 - a. “We know that when it [a difficult time] does come, the Lord will provide. . . . God will prepare food for His people. . . . God will set a table in the wilderness” (Lt 151, 1901; cited in CD 359:2).

V. Context Will Often Govern Application of Counsels

1. Exceptionally adverse local conditions will often modify general counsels:
 - a. “In teaching health reform, as in all other gospel work, we are to meet the people where they are.”
 - b. Certain counsels would not apply to some living in difficult, dire circumstances of a geographical or financial nature.
 - (1) “There are poor families whose diet consists largely of bread and milk. They have little fruit, and cannot afford to purchase the nut foods.”
 - (a) Such should not be forced to give up flesh food and milk in their diet.
 - c. No article that provides nourishment is to be arbitrarily excluded from anyone’s diet until an acceptable substitute can be found that is:
 - (1) “Nourishing.”
 - (2) “Palatable.”
 - (3) “Inexpensive” (7T 135:0, 1).

**Sacred /
Common**

Ellen G. White as a Prophet:

Part II: The "Sacred" and the "Common"⁽¹⁾

Denis Fortin

I. Introduction

A. The Issue:

In 1906, Dr. David Paulson wrote to Ellen White that "I was led to conclude and most firmly believe [from my early training] that *every* word that you ever spoke in public or private, that every letter you wrote under *any* and *all* circumstances, was as inspired as the ten commandments." (Quoted by Ellen White in RH, August 30, 1906; 1SM 24)

Did Ellen White's call to prophetic ministry and her reception of prophetic revelation through visions means that every word subsequently spoken by her was inspired?

1. The answer to this question is No; but the answer raises a whole new set of questions.

a. Let us notice:

(i) Evidence that this answer is technically 'correct.'

(ii) Evidence that the question may be misleading.

b. The answer is evidently correct, because to claim that prophets never speak uninspired words would be to suggest that they never make mistakes, and this would be making them infallible as individuals.

(i) Biblical prophets made mistakes and even sinned in their speech, so obviously the prophetic gift does not impart personal infallibility.

"Abraham deceived, Moses lost his patience and spoke hasty words, David instructed Joab how to have Uriah killed, Nathan agreed with David's plans to build a house for the Lord, and then had to reverse his statement. All of these men were prophets, but the possession of the prophetic gift did not mean moment-by-moment direction of all their words and acts.

If all they said was not inspired, how much was given by divine direction?"⁽²⁾

Nowhere in the Bible is there a clear statement on this subject.

2. Ellen White's writings were not all of the same kind.

a. Her son, W.C. White, to whom she entrusted the care of her writings after her death, contributed the following to a discussion that took place at the 1913 Autumn Council in Washington, DC.

"Mother never made the claim, as some have said, that everything she ever wrote at any time was inspired. I told them that Mother, like every other prophet of God, had her own private life, and she spoke and wrote about matters of finance, about her household, her farm, her chickens, her

horses, and her dairy, and that there was no claim that she was speaking regarding these matters with the voice of inspiration."⁽³⁾

b. Ellen White herself explained the difference between two major categories of communication.

[In response to God's call,] "I gave myself, my whole being, to God, to obey His call in everything, and since that time my life has been spent in giving the message, with my pen and in speaking before large congregations. It is not I who controls my words and actions at such times. "But there are times when common things must be stated, common thoughts must occupy the mind, common letters must be written and information given that has passed from one to another of the workers. Such words, such information, are not given under the special inspiration of the Spirit of God." (1SM 39) (See Appendix B)

c. Here she makes a distinction between the sacred and the common, between that which is directly inspired by the Holy Spirit and that which is of common origin. Evidently not every word written or spoken by Ellen White on every occasion, was in the line of 'giving the message' she had received by revelation.

3. This position, however, is not without its dangers.

a. How are we to safely and certainly distinguish between 'sacred' and 'common' writings?

b. If we should erroneously categorize some inspired material as uninspired, would we not thus reject God's counsel for us, fail to profit by it, and fail to fulfill His purpose in giving it?

c. Even to suggest that some part of the writings might be uninspired or non-authoritative opens the possibility that one might apply the same judgment to *any* of the writings.

d. Thus *all* the writings would be robbed of their power, because one's obedience would be given only to those instructions that appealed to one's own reason, mind, and emotions. Thus each individual would become the self-arbiter of what is inspired.

e. If one of God's major purposes through the Spirit of prophecy is to rebuke, correct, and instruct persons precisely in areas where they are *not* aware of any need, in areas that go contrary to their personal views, beliefs, understanding of Scripture, and personal preferences, then what power has God in reserve to reach them?

"What voice will you acknowledge as the voice of God? What power has the Lord in reserve to correct your errors, and show you your course as it is? What power to work in the church? You have, by your own course, closed every avenue whereby the Lord would reach you. Will He raise one from the dead to speak to you?" (3SM 69)

"What reserve power has the Lord with which to reach those who have cast aside His warnings and reproofs, and have accredited the testimonies of the Spirit of God to no higher source than human wisdom? In the judgment, what can you who have done this, offer to God as an excuse for turning from the evidences He has given you that God was in the work?" (3SM 70; TM466)

B. The purpose of this lecture is to discover principles that will enable us to make a right use of the varieties of writing that make up the Ellen White corpus.

C. Basic principle: "The testimonies will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scripture is explained by scripture" (1SM 42).

The question of 'sacred' versus 'common' is to be settled, not by external criteria or analysis, but by the internal testimony of the writings themselves.

II. Biblical Parallels

A. Did the Bible writers ever include in their inspired writings, materials not based on revelation?

1. Autobiographical statements based on memory

1 Cor 1:14-16

2 Tim 4:14-18

Gal 1:13-20; 2:1 ff

2. Personal communications to friends

2 Tim 4:9-13, 19-21

3. Counsels not based on immediate direct revelation, but on trustworthy inspired judgment

1 Cor 7:10-12, 25

B. Do these invalidate the inspiration of the Pauline epistles?

No.

1. On the contrary, we treasure these parts of Paul's epistles because in them we see that Paul was a real human being. These and similar references enable us to not only admire his theological wisdom, but love him as a fellow pilgrim in the way of Christ.

2. These are the kind of material content that have come to be referred to in the Ellen White writings under the term "the 'sacred' and the 'common.'"

III. Distinguishing the 'Sacred' and the 'Common'

How are we to related to the different categories of content in the writings of Ellen White?

A. Unwarranted distinctions that we are warned not to make.

1. God vs. Sister White

"You have talked over matters as you viewed them, that the communications from Sister White are not all from the Lord, but a portion is her own mind, her own judgment, which is no better than anybody else's judgment and ideas. This is one of Satan's hooks to hang your doubts upon to deceive your soul and the souls of others who will dare to draw the line in this matter and say, this portion which pleases me is from God, but that portion which points out and condemns my course of conduct is from Sister White alone, and bears not the holy signet. You have in this way

virtually rejected the whole of the messages, which God in His tender, pitying love has sent to you to save you from moral ruin. . . ." (3SM 68-69)

2. Revelation vs. opinion

"In the testimonies sent to Battle Creek, I have given you the light God has given to me. In no case have I given my own judgment or opinion. I have enough to write of what has been shown me, without falling back on my own opinions. You are doing as the children of Israel did again and again. Instead of repenting before God, you reject His words, and attribute all the warnings and reproof to the messenger whom the Lord sends." (3SM 70)

3. Divine vs. human

"I have my work to do, to meet the misconceptions of those who suppose themselves able to say what is testimony from God and what is human production. If those who have done this work continue in this course, satanic agencies will choose for them. . . ." (3SM 70)

4. Inspired vs. uninspired

"Those who have helped souls to feel at liberty to specify what is of God in the Testimonies and what are the uninspired words of Sister White, will find that they were helping the devil in his work of deception. Please read Testimony No. 33, page 211 [Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 682], "How to Receive Reproof." "(Letter 28, 1906; 3SM 70)

B. Basis for understanding: The content of the writings themselves.

Examples:

1. Inspired like the Ten Commandments? (Appendix A)

a. Ten Commandments are "of divine, and not of human, composition."

b. The Bible "represents a union of the divine and the human."

c. The writings of Ellen White are also a union of the divine and the human; "God was speaking through clay."

2. Forty rooms? (Appendix B)

3. "Common everyday topics" (Letter 201, 202, 1903, in Appendix C).

4. Not by commandment (Letter 129, 1897, in Appendix C).

5. Biographical information based on memory (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2).

C. Another way of looking at this issue:

In most of the examples cited above, the difference between 'sacred' and 'common' is not a matter of truth vs. error, but a difference in function. When Paul tried to recall exactly whom he had baptized in Corinth, the function, the purpose, of that information was not to document his work record in Corinth. No, the purpose was to show that he had baptized comparatively few, in support of his assertion that the focus of his ministry was not on accumulating personal disciples; his focus was on preaching the gospel (1 Cor 1:11-17). For that purpose it *did not matter* whether he baptized two or six or a dozen. Similarly, the exact number of rooms (the 40 rooms could be seen as a 'round number' that was accurate to the nearest ten) in the Paradise Valley Sanitarium did not effect Ellen G. White's counsel to the administrators on how the institution should be operated.

IV. Conclusion

Why is it so dangerous to confuse the 'sacred' and the 'common,' i.e. discard or devalue inspired writings because of the presence of some 'common' elements?

A. Regardless of whether she wrote or spoke of revealed or common themes, she remained the chosen messenger of God, in private as well as public.

1. EGW often wrote private letters on common topics.
2. She sometimes expressed unaided human opinions.
3. But she always remained a prophet.

B. "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Why? Because God watches over His word to fulfill it.

C. Only safe course: accept the writings in their entirety as the prophet's total testimony, but use the various parts according to the purposes for which they were given.

List of Appendices

Appendix A: "Correct View Concerning the Testimonies"

Appendix B: "The Sacred and the Common"

Appendix C: "Common or Uninspired Writings"

1. Much of the text of this lecture outline is indebted to Jerry Moon, "The 'Sacred' and the 'Common' in the Ellen White Writings," Lecture outline for GSEM534, April 24, 1997, and Roger W. Coon, "Distinguishing Between the 'Sacred' and the 'Common,'" Lecture outline for GSEM534, May 11, 1995.

2. T.H. Jemison, "Inspiration and the Ellen G. White Writings," in *The Spirit of Prophecy Treasure Chest* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1960), 63.

3. W.C. White to J.W. Watt, March 7, 1915, quoted in Jerry Moon, *W.C. White and Ellen G. White*, 414.