

ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE

# 101 QUESTIONS ON THE SANCTUARY AND ON ELLEN WHITE

ROBERT W. OLSON



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# **101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White**

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**Ellen G. White**

**1981**

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Ellen G. White (1827-1915) is considered the most widely translated American author, her works having been published in more than 160 languages. She wrote more than 100,000 pages on a wide variety of spiritual and practical topics. Guided by the Holy Spirit, she exalted Jesus and pointed to the Scriptures as the basis of one's faith.

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by Robert W. Olson

## To The Reader

Questions have been raised by Desmond Ford, Walter Rea, and others with respect to two important doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These questions deal primarily with sanctuary-related issues and the gift of prophecy as manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White.

We have attempted to provide information in a form that will be useful, to most Seventh-day Adventist Church members. Our purpose has not been to present an exhaustive treatise where everything possible is said on every subject. Rather, we have endeavored to set forth the issues briefly and succinctly by means of a simple question-and-answer format.

This is not an official statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It has not been formally endorsed by any group of church leaders. It has, however, been read by the staff of the White Estate and a few others. The many suggestions and criticisms have been deeply appreciated.

It is our prayer that this pamphlet will help the reader to see truth more clearly, and so have strong confidence in the gift of prophecy and in the special message being proclaimed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

—Robert Olson

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## **A—Two Vital Adventist Doctrines**

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### **1. What These Doctrines Are**

*What two doctrinal areas are included in the questions Adventists are discussing in the 1980's?*

At the General Conference Session in Dallas, Texas, in April, 1980, the Seventh-day Adventist Church formally reaffirmed the doctrinal positions that Adventists have held for more than one hundred years. Two of these doctrines are now being challenged. They are: (1) The belief that Christ began a special ministry in the sanctuary in heaven on October 22, 1844, which included a work of judgment, and (2) the authority of Ellen G. White as an inspired messenger of God.

### **2. Why These Doctrines Are Important To Adventists**

*Why are these two doctrines important to Seventh-day Adventists?*

The doctrine of the sanctuary, including the teaching of the investigative judgment and the belief that Ellen White was divinely inspired, are unique to Seventh-day Adventists. If Christ did not begin an investigative judgment ministry in heaven in 1844, and if Ellen White was not God's chosen messenger, the Seventh-day Adventist Church would lose two teachings that identify it as a prophetic movement, raised up by God to prepare the way for Christ's second advent.

Actually, Ellen White's credibility is closely intertwined with the Adventist interpretation of the heavenly sanctuary and its cleansing, which includes the doctrine of the investigative judgment. In his Sabbath morning sermon at the General Conference of 1891, Uriah Smith, editor of the *Review and Herald*, emphasized the inseparability of the sanctuary doctrine and the Spirit of Prophecy. He stated:



“Within a few weeks after that disappointment, and while the honest in heart were waiting in patience to see what God’s good providence would do for them, light came forth on the great subject of the sanctuary. This opened before us a vast new field of light and truth; and the spirit of prophecy began its work also right there and then to warn the church against giving up the truth of the past. And so light on the gift of the spirit of prophecy, hand in hand, came forth to lead this people forward into a large field of further light and knowledge and truth, to prepare for the coming of the Son of man.”—[The General Conference Bulletin, March 18, 1891](#), *Witness of the Pioneers*, p. 63.

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Ellen White maintained, in 1906, that “the sanctuary question stands in righteousness and truth just as we have held it for so many years,” and that this truth “was revealed to us by the Holy Spirit” ([Letter 50, 1906](#); Manuscript Release #760, Page 23). In the light of these and similar statements, a repudiation of the investigative judgment doctrine is also a repudiation of Ellen White.

## **B—Daniel 8:14 and the Investigative Judgment**

### **3. The SDA Church on the Investigative Judgment**

*What position does the Seventh-day Adventist Church hold on the investigative judgment?*

Paragraph 23 of the doctrinal statement voted at the 1980 General Conference Session in Dallas reads as follows:

**Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary**

“There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus.

“The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who, among the living, are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares

that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The, completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent. (Hebrews 8:1-5; 4:14-16; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; 1:3; 2:16, 17; Daniel 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-27; Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6; Leviticus 16; Revelation 14:6, 7; 20:12; 14:12; 22:12.)”—1981 *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, page 8.

#### 4. Ellen White on the Investigative Judgment

*Does Ellen White support the Adventist interpretation of the Bible with regard to the investigative judgment doctrine?*

Yes. She states:

“The subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. Otherwise, it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time, or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill.”—[The Great Controversy](#), 488. See the entire chapter, pages 479-491.

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“For the past fifty years every phase of heresy has been brought to bear upon us, to becloud our minds regarding the teaching of the Word—especially concerning the ministration of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, and the message of heaven for these last days as given by the angels of the fourteenth chapter of Revelation. Messages of every order and kind have been urged upon Seventh-day Adventists, to take the place of the truth which, point by point, has been sought out by prayerful study and testified to by the miracle-working power of the Lord.

“But the way marks which have made us what we are, are to be preserved, and they will be preserved, as God has signified through His Word and through the testimony of His Spirit. He calls upon us to hold firmly,

with the grip of faith, to the fundamental principles that are based upon unquestionable authority.”—[Manuscript 44, 1905](#). See also [Selected Messages 1:124, 125](#).

## 5. Desmond Ford on the Investigative Judgment

*How has Desmond Ford characterized the Adventist doctrine of the investigative judgment?*

Ford declares:

“It is quite impossible to prove from Daniel, Hebrews, Revelation, or elsewhere that a judgment upon believers began as a result of a change of heavenly ministry in 1844.” “Neither is there any Scripture which teaches an investigative judgment of the saints beginning long before the advent.” “Either our basic sanctuary doctrine is found in the New Testament chapter which alone deals with that theme, or it is not found in Scripture at all.”—Ford, pages 630, 5, 41. <sup>1</sup>

[10] Ford’s belief in a “pre-advent judgment” is not the same as the Adventist teaching of an investigative judgment. Ford states, “A pre-advent judgment decision as Christ is about to close His intercession is Biblical, but not an attenuated investigative process.... Our traditional method of explaining the pre-advent judgment will not stand up to critical examination. There are no texts teaching an investigative judgment as we proclaim it.”—Ford, pages 595, 651.

## 6. The Commencement of the Judgment

*Where in the Bible is the commencement of the investigative judgment described?*

In [Daniel 7:9, 10, 21, 22, 26](#). The prophecy of [Daniel 7](#) pictures four successive world empires, following which the nations of Europe were to come on the scene. [Daniel 7:1-7, 23, 24](#). These nations, in turn, would witness the development and age-long supremacy of the papal power. [Daniel 7:8, 24, 25](#). Daniel states that, after the

<sup>1</sup>Page references to quotations from “Ford” here and in the following pages are from his 991-page document “[Daniel 8:14](#), The Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment,” which was discussed at Glacier View Ranch in Denver, Colorado, in the summer of 1980

papacy had worn out the saints for three-and-a-half times or 1260 years (538-1798 AD.), the judgment would commence. [Daniel 7:8, 26](#). This judgment, when the books were opened and inspected before the angelic host, would take place before Christ's glorious kingdom is established. [Daniel 7:11, 26, 27](#).

It can be seen that [Daniel 7](#) locates the investigative judgment after the year 1798, but before the return of Christ. A more precise date for the beginning of the judgment, October 22, 1844, can be computed from [Daniel 8:14](#). (The concept of an investigative judgment is found also in [Matthew 13:47-50; 22:1-14; 2 Corinthians 5:10](#), etc.)

### 7. [Daniel 8:14](#) Points to October 22, 1844

*How can October 22, 1844, be found in [Daniel 8:14](#)?*

A detailed answer is given in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. Basic to the Adventist interpretation are the following five points:

(1) Both the 2300 days of [Daniel 8](#) and the seventy weeks of [Daniel 9](#) are to be explained on the year-day principle (that is, one prophetic day equals one calendar year).

(2) The seventy weeks form the first part of the 2300-day prophecy, and thus both have the same starting point.

(3) The “commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem,” which [11] begins the two time periods, went forth with the decree of Artaxerxes in 457 BC.

(4) When these time periods are begun at 457 BC we arrive at 27 AD for Christ's baptism, 31 AD for His crucifixion, and 1844 for the cleansing of the sanctuary.

(5) The cleansing of the sanctuary in 1844 commenced on the day in that year when the Jewish Day of Atonement occurred, which was October 22.

### 8. Ford's Challenge to October 22, 1844

*Does Ford challenge these interpretations?*

Yes, all five of them. He declares:

(1) “It is quite impossible to prove that the year-day principle is a Biblical datum.” “There is no Biblical basis for assuming that the year-day principle must be applied to [Daniel 8 and 9](#).”—Ford, pages 288, 8. (Ford does allow that “in the providence of God ... the year-day principle was espoused after the Advent hope of the early church had faded away.” He insists that it “is not a primary Bible datum, but a providential strategy of God, only pertinent after the long centuries of unnecessary delay.”—Ford, pages 294, 643, 644.)

(2) “There is no way of proving that the cutting off of the 490 from 2300 is intended.”—Ford, Page 288.

(3) “There is no way of proving that the decree of 457 BC. is the one referred to in [Daniel 9:25](#).”—Ford, Page 35.

(4) “It is quite impossible to be dogmatic about the precise dates of prophetic fulfillment.”—Ford, Page 470.

(5) “There is no certain evidence that October 22 was the tenth day of the seventh month in 1844.”—Ford, Page 470.

## 9. The Year-Day Principle

*Is the year-day principle a valid Biblical yardstick that can be used in the interpretation of symbolic time prophecies?*

[12] Yes. For example, [Revelation 12:6, 14](#) and [13:5](#) state that the papacy would exercise control over the Christian world for 1260 days. Historical records reveal that the papal power dominated the world, not for 1260 literal days, but for 1260 years, from 538 to 1798 AD. The prophecy makes sense only when interpreted by the year-day principle.

As far as the 2300 days are concerned, the angel Gabriel said that this period would reach to “the time of the end” ([Daniel 8:17](#)). Adding 2300 literal days to 457 BC brings one only to 451 BC which is not in the time of the end. But when 2300 years are added to 457 BC one reaches the date 1844 which is in the time of the end. So the prophecy requires the days to be interpreted as years.

The vision of [Daniel 8](#) included the ram, the he-goat, and the desolating activities of the little horn ([Daniel 8:1-12](#)). When the angel asked, “How long shall be the vision?” (v. 13), he was asking how long it would be from the time of the ram (Medo-Persia) to the time of the little horn (the papacy). Another angel answered

that it would be 2300 days. It would be absurd to insist that the time interval from Medo-Persia to the papacy was only 2300 literal days. Only when interpreted by the year-day principle does this time period match the records of history.

Daniel further states that the seventy-week period (490 days) would begin in the days of Medo-Persia with Artaxerxes' decree ([Daniel 9:25](#)) and would continue beyond the time of the crucifixion of Christ ([Daniel 9:26](#)). The 490 days, then, must begin in the fifth century BC and end in the first century AD. The prophecy makes sense only when interpreted by the year-day principle. The year-day idea is suggested also in [Numbers 14:34](#) and [Ezekiel 4:6](#). (The time prophecies also may be reckoned on the basis of jubilees; see articles by Jean Zurcher in the *Adventist Review*, January 29, February 5, 1981.)

In his commentary on Daniel published by the Southern Publishing Association in 1978, Desmond Ford strongly supported the use of the year-day principle in interpreting the time prophecies of Daniel. He wrote:

“The context of the 2300 days, the 1290, and the 1335 days each stresses the cataclysmic events associated with the close of the great controversy between Christ and Satan (see [Daniel 8:17, 25, 26; 12:3, 4, 9-13](#)).

“The preceding point regarding the divinely indicated importance of the prophetic times finds support in the fact that ordinary days cannot be here intended by these prophecies. As the visions themselves embrace comprehensive rather than trifling themes, so the time periods emphasized are symbolic of extensive, rather than limited, eras.

“The context of both [Daniel 7 and 8](#) forbids the idea that the periods mentioned could be literal. In the first case the little horn emerges from the fourth world Empire and endures till the time of the judgment and the advent, and [7:25](#) declares that the period of ‘a time, two times, and half a time’ extends over most of this

[13]

time. How impossible this would be if three and a half years only were intended.

“Similarly, in [8:17](#) the prophet is told that the 2300 days would extend from the restoration of the sanctuary until ‘the time of the end.’ This means that a period of approximately 2300 years is involved. The treading down of the sanctuary brought to view in [8:11-13](#) could not begin before the restoration spoken of in [9:25](#), in the fifth century BC. And besides this, its terminus is expressly stated as belonging to the latter days, just prior to the final proclamation of the gospel by the ‘wise’ (see [12:3, 4](#)).

“It has been largely overlooked by critics that [8:17](#), when linked with [12:3, 4, 9, 10, 13](#), makes it conclusive that the 2300-day period covers many centuries. Likewise in [Revelation 12](#) the forty-two month period covers the greater part of the time between the first and second advents, when the church would be in the wilderness of persecution during the Dark Ages. This is granted by almost all expositors.”—Ford, Daniel, 301, 302.

At some point between 1978 and 1980 Ford apparently changed his mind so that he no longer advocates these well-expressed views. His arguments, however, were sound in 1978 and they are still valid.

## 10. Time Prophecies Extend Beyond the First Century

*Ford states that in [Matthew 24:34](#) “the evidence is overwhelming that Christ was saying He planned to return to that very generation He was addressing”, and that a major argument against the year-day principle is that it is not compatible with a first-century end of the world. Ford claims further that “Prophecies such as [Daniel 7:25; 8:14; Revelation 11:2; 12:16; 13:5](#), would have met fulfillment on a much smaller scale had the church quickly grasped the gospel and proclaimed it in its purity” (Ford, pages 297, 296, 306). Is this reasonable?*

[14] The prophecy of [Daniel 9:25](#) located the first advent of Christ in the time of the Roman empire, while the prophecy of [Daniel 2:41-44](#)



placed the second coming of Christ at a point substantially later. The two advents of Christ could hardly have been intended for the same generation. [Daniel 7](#) predicted the rise of ten European powers after the fall of Rome. The European nations were then to witness the development of the papacy. It seems unrealistic to believe that all of these prophecies were to be fulfilled before the end of the first century.

Paul pointed out that the Second Advent would not occur until the great papal apostasy had developed ([2 Thessalonians 2:1-5](#)). John, near the end of the first century, stated emphatically that Christ had not promised to return within his lifetime ([John 21:23](#)).

### 11. The Year-Day Principle in History

*How long has the year-day principle been used by Bible expositors? Is it something new?*

Ellen White indicates that Christ Himself must have used this principle (see question 16). Rabbi Akiba recognized the year-day principle as early as 130 AD. Julius Africanus, in 240 AD interpreted the 70 weeks on this basis. Benjamin Nahawendi, who lived in the ninth century AD interpreted the 2300 days as years. Martin Luther used this principle in the interpretation of time prophecies. (See L. E. Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Volume 1, Page 280; Volume 2, pages 194, 1950 279.)

### 12. The Seventy Weeks A Part Of The 2300 Days

*What about the second of the five points mentioned above? What is the Biblical basis for considering the seventy weeks to be part of the 2300 days?*

This comes from a careful comparison of [Daniel 8](#) with [Daniel 9](#). Note the logic of this position:

(a) [Daniel 8:16](#)—Gabriel was told to explain the vision of [Daniel 8:1-14](#).

(b) [Daniel 8:17-25](#)—Gabriel explained all but the 2300 days.

(c) [Daniel 8:26, 27](#)—Daniel did not understand the “vision of the evening and the morning” (the 2300 days), though it astonished him.

(d) [Daniel 9:1-20](#)—Twelve years later Daniel was engaged in earnest prayer and Bible study.

(e) [Daniel 9:21](#) Gabriel, the messenger of the previous vision, returned.

(f) [Daniel 9:22](#) Gabriel said he would give Daniel understanding.

(g) [Daniel 9:23](#) Gabriel reminded Daniel of the previous vision. This must have been the vision of [Daniel 8](#), for there is no record of any other prior appearance of Gabriel.

(h) [Daniel 9:24](#)—Gabriel’s explanation was clearly of a time prophecy.

### 13. The First Expositor to Begin These Two Periods Together

*Who first worked out this explanation? Was it William Miller?*

No, this explanation was used before Miller or the Millerite Movement were born. It may have been Johann Petri, a Reformed Church pastor in Germany, who published a tract in 1768 in which he declared that the 2300 days began synchronously with the seventy weeks. (See L. E. Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Volume 2, Page 714.)

### 14. Why Artaxerxes’ Decree Is Chosen

*Why is the 457 BC decree of Artaxerxes chosen as the starting point of the prophecy rather than the earlier decrees of Cyrus and Darius?*

The decrees of Cyrus ([Ezra 1:1-4](#)) and Darius ([Ezra 6:1-12](#)) dealt only with the rebuilding of the temple. The decree of Artaxerxes in 457 BC restored the civil government ([Ezra 7:25](#)), which went beyond either of the two previous decrees and which was one of the specifications laid down in [Daniel 9:25](#). The decree of Artaxerxes authorized Ezra to teach both Jewish and Imperial law and to enforce the same with capital punishment ([Ezra 7:26](#)). Implied is the setting up of law courts and a fortress for enforcing the court’s decrees, the

building of shops to provide supplies, houses to provide homes, and a wall for community protection. This decree restored Jerusalem to capital-city status. [16]

### 15. Correctness of the Prophetic Dates

*What about the allegation that calls into question “the precise dates of prophetic fulfillment”? Is there a lack of certainty about the date 457 BC?*

Drs. Lynn Wood and Siegfried Horn have established with absolute certainty the date 457 BC as the year when Artaxerxes issued his decree. With 457 BC definitely known, the other dates in the prophecy, such as AD 27, 31, 34, and 1844 are made equally sure. (See *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Volume 3, pages 100-109; Horn and Wood, *The Chronology of Ezra* 7.)

### 16. Ellen White Supports the Year-Day Principle

*Does Ellen White support the use of the year-day principle and the correctness of the other interpretations involving the seventy weeks?*

Yes. She states:

“The burden of Christ’s preaching was, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the gospel’ [[Mark 1:15](#)]. Thus the gospel message, as given by the Savior Himself, was based on the prophecies. The ‘time’ which He declared to be fulfilled was the period made known by the angel Gabriel to Daniel. ‘Seventy weeks,’ said the angel, ‘are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy’ ([Daniel 9:24](#)). A day in prophecy stands for a year. (See [Numbers 14:34](#); [Ezra 4:6](#).) The seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety days, represent four hundred and ninety years. A starting point for this period is

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given: ‘Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks,’ sixty-nine weeks, or four hundred and eighty-three years ([Daniel 9:25](#)). The commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, as completed by the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus (see [Ezra 6:14](#); [7:1, 9](#), margin), went into effect in the autumn of BC 457. From this time four hundred and eighty-three years extend to the autumn of AD 27. According to the prophecy, this period was to reach to the Messiah, the Anointed One. In AD 27, Jesus at His baptism received the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and soon afterward began His ministry. Then the message was proclaimed, “The time is fulfilled.”—[The Desire of Ages, 233](#).

### 17. Correctness of the October 22 Date

*What evidence do we have that October 22 is the correct date for the Jewish Day of Atonement in 1844?*

This evidence is supplied by L. E. Froom who, in *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Volume 4, pages 790, 792, gives six exhibits showing how the October 22 date is indisputably correct as the equivalent of Tishri 10, the day on which the Jewish Day of Atonement fell in 1844.

### 18. Ellen White Supports the October 22 Date

*Does Ellen White affirm the correctness of the October 22, 1844, date?*

Yes. She states:

“The tenth day of the seventh month, the great Day of Atonement, the time of the cleansing of the sanctuary, which in the year 1844 fell upon the twenty-second of October, was regarded as the time of the Lord’s coming. This was in harmony with the proofs already presented that the 2300 days would terminate in the autumn.

“The computation of the prophetic periods on which that message was based, placing the close of the 2300 days in the autumn of 1844, stands without impeachment.”—[The Great Controversy](#), 400, 457.

## 19. Ford and Antiochus Epiphanes

*How does Ford’s interpretation of the 2300 days and [Daniel 8’s](#) little horn differ from the position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?*

In his commentary on Daniel, published in 1978, Ford essentially endorsed the historic Adventist interpretation of the little horn of [Daniel 8](#), applying it primarily to Rome rather than Antiochus Epiphanes. He wrote:

“The obvious reason for such repudiation of the Epiphanes interpretation is the admission by most that the climax of the vision just does not fit, with any precision, what happened during the day of Antiochus ... This inadequacy of a Maccabean fulfillment for the fourteenth verse is matched by others ... Its chief applications are to Rome—pagan and papal—and to the final apostasy, as indicated by Christ Himself.... These verses [[Daniel 8:23-25](#)] interpret the little horn. What is said fits pagan and papal Rome with considerable exactitude (and Antiochus Epiphanes to a much lesser extent).”—Ford, Daniel, 173, 174, 191. (See also Page 200.)

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In his 1980 document prepared for the Glacier View Committee, Ford departed from the Adventist position when he wrote, “Only Antiochus Epiphanes fulfills the chief specifications of [Daniel 8’s](#) little horn,” and “the approximate period of oppression by Antiochus was 2300 days,” from 171 to 165 BC. (Ford, pages 469, 383).

## 20. Ford’s Principle Of Multiple Fulfillments

*The Adventist Church teaches that the little horn of [Daniel 8](#) represents Rome, not Antiochus Epiphanes. How does Ford now characterize this interpretation?*

According to Ford, “To says that the little horn of chapter eight is Rome turns the symbolism upside down.” However, he explains that the prophecy does apply to Rome “in broad outline.” He holds that prophecies may have multiple fulfillments, a concept he calls the “apotelesmatic principle.” He considers this principle to be the “key” to what he calls “our sanctuary problems” (Ford, pages 389, 391, 485).

Using this key, Ford maintains that “every era of revival of the truths symbolized in the sanctuary may claim to be a fulfillment of [Daniel 8:14](#).” He applies [Daniel 8:14](#) to (a) Antiochus Epiphanes, (b) the cross, (c) the Adventist movement, (d) the last judgment, and (e) “every revival of true godliness,” but he does not apply it to the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary in 1844 (Ford, pages 486, 344, 356, 624, 648).

Basic to Ford’s “apotelesmatic principle” is the concept that prophecy always had direct relevance for the people first addressed (Ford, Page 392). However, Daniel was instructed that certain portions, at least, of his book did not have relevance for his day. Not until the “time of the end” was the book of Daniel to be unsealed ([Daniel 12:4](#)). At that time (after 1798) many would run to and fro in the book of Daniel, and knowledge of the prophecies of Daniel would be increased.

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### **21. Multiple Fulfillments for 2300 Days Impossible**

*How many fulfillments can be expected for the 2300-day prophecy?*

Some Bible prophecies have more than one fulfillment. For example, [Joel 2:28-32](#), [Malachi 4:5, 6](#), and [Matthew 24:14](#) all had a first-century fulfillment (see [Acts 2:16](#); [Matthew 17:12, 13](#); [Colossians 1:23](#)), and obviously all require a last-day fulfillment as well. But there is no sound basis for holding that the time prophecies of the Bible have multiple fulfillments. The 2300 day-years end only in 1844 when the sanctuary was to be cleansed. This period of time does not fit anywhere else.

## 22. The Sanctuary of Daniel 8:14

*How do Ford and the SDA Church differ in their interpretation of the “sanctuary” of Daniel 8:14?*

Ford warns his readers against the assumption “that the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14 means the sanctuary in heaven” because, he says, “the context is about the sanctuary on earth” (Ford, pages 289, 290). However, according to his “apotelesmatic principle,” Ford also holds that the earthly sanctuary is the symbol of the kingdom of God in all ages, in heaven as well as on earth.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, on the other hand, holds that the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14 is the sanctuary in heaven. When the veil of the temple was rent at Christ’s death, the earthly sanctuary ceased to be a place that was honored or recognized by God. Therefore, the sanctuary to be cleansed in 1844 could only be the one in heaven. (See Hebrews 8:1, 2; 9:11, 12, 23, 24.)

## 23. Ford’s View of the Cleansing

*How does Ford believe the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary occurred?*

In his discussion of the epistle to the Hebrews, Ford states:

“What the high priest did once a year in entering the Most Holy, Christ did by His death and ascension.” “The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary was also its dedication, and therefore pointed to an event at the commencement of the Christian era primarily, not its close.” “The cleansing of the sanctuary and Christ’s entrance therein has already taken place by the time of the writing of Hebrews.”—Ford, pages 228, 229, 180.

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As far as the books of Leviticus and Daniel are concerned, Ford states that he “does not question the eschatological cleansing of the sanctuary, and the fact that the Day of Atonement and Daniel 8:14 point to that” (Ford, Page 595). When Ford speaks of the “eschatological cleansing of the sanctuary,” he refers, in part, to an earthly event. He states, “The cleansing of the sanctuary at their close [the close of the 2300 days] was fulfilled by restoration of the everlasting gospel in the Advent Movement of 1844” (*Spectrum*, Volume 11, no. 2, Page 32).

The application of [Daniel 8:14](#) to an 1844 event is called by Ford “a providential reinterpretation and an apotelesmatic fulfillment, rather than the primary intention of the apocalyptic passage” (Ford, Page 367). Ford states further that “the fact that.... 1844 rests on several assumptions impossible to demonstrate does not invalidate God’s raising up of a special people” at that time (Ford, Page 648).

By using his “apotelesmatic principle,” Ford also says that [Daniel 8:14](#) “points not merely to a local sanctuary cleansing in the days of Antiochus, but rather to the final resolution of the sin problem by the last judgment, beginning before the Second Advent, and terminating with the end of the millennium” (Ford, P. 347).

#### 24. SDA View of the Cleansing

*How does the SDA Church interpret the word “cleansed” in [Daniel 8:14](#)?*

The Seventh-day Adventist Church historically has held that the “cleansing” of the heavenly sanctuary includes a blotting out of the record of sin which must be preceded by a work of judgment. This understanding is reached by comparing [Daniel 8:14](#) with [Leviticus 16](#) and [Leviticus 23:26-32](#). According to [Leviticus 23:29](#), the Day of Atonement was a day of judgment: “For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people.” (See *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Volume 9, pages 62, 63, for the Jewish view of the Day of Atonement.)

#### [21] 25. Ford on the Linking Of [Daniel 8:14](#) and [Leviticus 16](#)

*How does Ford look upon the linking of [Daniel 8:14](#) with [Leviticus 16](#)?*

Ford apparently declines to connect these two texts, and refers to some Adventist scholars who, he says, declare that “there is no linguistic evidence for connecting [Daniel 8:14](#) with [Leviticus 16](#) (Ford, Page 98).”



## 26. Reasons for Linking Daniel 8:14 and Leviticus 16

*Is there linguistic evidence that permits connecting Daniel 8:14 with Leviticus 16?*

Yes. Daniel used the word QODESH (translated “sanctuary”) in Daniel 8:14. Moses used the same word (translated “holy place”) in Leviticus 16:2, 3, 16, 17, 20, 23, 27. However, even more important than this linguistic relationship between the two chapters is the fact that Daniel 8:14 and Leviticus 16 have parallel ideas. Both deal with the cleansing of the sanctuary. Since the earthly sanctuary was patterned after the heavenly (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23), it is logical to study the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary in Leviticus 16 in order to understand the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary in Daniel 8:14.

## 27. The Meaning of NITSDAQ

*What is the meaning of NITSDAQ (translated “cleansed”) in Daniel 8:14? Ford warns against the assumption “that ‘cleansed’ is an accurate translation in Daniel 8:14,” for, he says, “this is certainly not the case.” On the other hand, he also states, “It is true that among the many lesser meanings of TSADAQ, ‘to cleanse’ could be invoked”. (Ford, pages 290, 348). What are the facts?*

The Hebrew root TSADAQ, from which the word NITSDAQ is formed, has several shades of meaning. It means to set right, to justify, to vindicate, and it can also mean to be clean or pure, as is shown in several parallelisms in the book of Job.

In Job 4:17 TSADAQ (just) is equated with TAHER (pure). In Job 17:9 TSADAQ (righteous) is equated with TAHER (clean). In Job 15:14 TSADAQ (righteous) is equated with ZAKAH (clean). [22]

Thus the root TSADAQ conveys the idea of being clean or pure. So the King James reading, “then shall the sanctuary be cleansed,” may be considered a correct translation. The seventy Jewish scholars who translated the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek before the time of Christ selected the word “cleansed” as the meaning of NITSDAQ in Daniel 8:14. Other ancient versions also employed words for “cleanse” here.

## 28. Need for Cleansing the Earthly Sanctuary

*What made necessary the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary? Ford says that “Numbers 19:13, etc., indicate that the sanctuary was defiled when a person sinned, regardless of whether confession was made and he warns against the assumption that the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement was cleansed from defilement occasioned by the confession of sin and ministration of blood (Ford, pages 287, 290).”*

The blood of the sin offering on the Day of Atonement cleansed the sanctuary. [Leviticus 16:19, 33](#). This cleansing was needed because of the confessed sins that had been transferred, in figure, from the sinner to the priest and the sanctuary through the flesh or blood of the sin offering. [Leviticus 10:17, 18; 16:20, 21](#). On the Day of Atonement the people also were considered to be cleansed, except for those whose hearts were not right with God. [Leviticus 16:30; 23:29](#).

Various kinds of defilement are mentioned in [Leviticus 15 and 20](#), and in [Numbers 19](#). No doubt the sanctuary was considered to be cleansed of all these defilements also on the Day of Atonement. But these texts do not support the idea that all sins were recorded in the sanctuary whether confessed or not. The sins of the Gentiles were not recorded there. They had no part in the Day of Atonement services unless and until they united with God’s people.

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## 29. Need for Cleansing the Heavenly Sanctuary

*What makes necessary the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary?*

According to [Daniel 8:11, 13](#) the little horn (the papacy) has caused “the place of his sanctuary” to be “cast down” and “both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot.” This must be rectified by restoring the heavenly sanctuary to its rightful state in the hearts and minds of God’s children. There is also the record of the sins of God’s professed people that must be dealt with in the cleansing, or judgment, that takes place. [1 Timothy 5:24](#).

## 30. All Professed Christians Come Into Judgment

*Ford claims that “the little horn, not believers,” is the object of investigation in the judgment of [Daniel 7](#). Again he says, “Never*

are the saints the focus of divine investigation” (Ford, pages 6, 355). Is it true that only the little horn is investigated in *Daniel 7*?

No. Without doubt the papal phase of the little horn is investigated, for the judgment deals with all the professed people of God. However, the books of record include the book of life and a book of remembrance, as well as an account of people’s sins. [Malachi 3:16](#); [Ecclesiastes 12:14](#); [Matthew 12:36](#). These must all have a place in the judgment.

When Michael stands up and the judgment is finished, “at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” [Daniel 12:1, 2](#). The names of true believers remain in the book of life after the judgment is completed. All others will have their names blotted out. [Revelation 3:5](#). Paul states, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” ([2 Corinthians 5:10](#)). Even believers will have their life records brought into judgment. This work of investigation is taught in the parable of the net ([Matthew 13:47-50](#)), and the parable of the man without a wedding garment ([Matthew 22:1-14](#)).

### 31. Ellen White Agrees That Saints Will Be Investigated

*How does Ellen White support this interpretation?*

She states, “At the time appointed for the judgment—the close of the 2300 days in 1844—began the work of investigation and blotting out of sins. All who have ever taken upon themselves the name of Christ must pass its searching scrutiny” ([The Great Controversy](#), 486; see also [Christ’s Object Lessons](#), 122, 310).

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### 32. The Books of Record

*Ford holds that “the books are the memory of God,” and “as for the blotting out of names ([Revelation 3:5](#)), this was a fact in John’s day, and is carried on throughout all Christ’s priestly ministry” (Ford, pages 626, 478). Is this an acceptable interpretation?*

We do not know what heaven’s “books” look like, but they are open to the inspection of angels ([Daniel 7:9, 10](#)). In order for the heavenly records to be examined by the angels they would need to exist in some form more tangible than “the memory of God.” The

blotting out of names could hardly take place until after the judgment is completed, which is near the end of the world.

### 33. True Christians Need Not Fear the Judgment

*Should a Christian live in constant fear lest his name be blotted out of the book of life? Does the doctrine of the investigative judgment automatically deprive a Christian of peace and the assurance of salvation? Ford asserts, "Fears concerning personal standing in the investigative judgment have cut the nerve of joyous witness for many church members. Legalism is one result, and lack of assurance another, when the judgment is traditionally presented, for the primacy of grace and imputed righteousness is usually forgotten" (Ford, Page 42).*

Without doubt many of our presentations on the investigative judgment have not been as Christ centered as they should have been. However, this is not an argument against the validity of the doctrine itself.

[25] There is certainly no need for a true Christian to have any fears concerning his personal standing with God. [Romans 5:1; 8:1, 16; 1 John 3:14, 24; 4:13, 17](#) and [John 3:36](#) are all filled with the most comforting promises. Ellen White states, "An unyielding trust, a firm reliance upon Christ, will bring peace and assurance to the soul" ([The Sanctified Life, 90](#)). "Through the imputed righteousness of Christ, the sinner may feel that he is pardoned, and may know that the law no more condemns him, because he is in harmony with all its precepts. It is his privilege to count himself innocent when he reads and thinks of the retribution that will fall upon the unbelieving and sinful" ([Sons and Daughters of God, 240](#)).

When we give ourselves to Christ, He forgives all of our past wrongs. "Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned" ([Steps to Christ, 62](#)). With Christ's perfect life standing for our imperfect lives, we have all the security that Heaven can offer. This wonderful assurance is ours as long as we maintain a personal relationship with the Lord. Ellen White states, "If you are right with God today, you are ready if Christ should come today" ([In Heavenly Places, 227](#)).

A most practical and comforting assurance is found in Ellen White's explanation that "When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service, and He makes up for the deficiency with His own divine merit" ([Selected Messages 1:382](#)).

### 34. The Purpose of the Judgment

*What is the purpose of the judgment? According to Ford, "God does not need books and 140 years to settle the destiny of men. Neither do the angels or the unfallen worlds, or inhabitants of this earth stand to profit by an investigative judgment as we have described". (Ford, Page 651).*

An investigative judgment would indeed be without point if the Bible taught John Calvin's concept of the perseverance of the saints. But this doctrine, commonly called, "once saved, always saved," is not in harmony with the following texts: [1 Samuel 10:6, 9; 28:6, 15; Ezekiel 18:24; 28:14, 15; Matthew 24:13; 1 Corinthians 9:27; Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 3:12-14; 6:4-6; 2 Peter 2:4, 20, 21](#). (The "once saved, always saved" doctrine is not held by Ford nor by Adventists generally.)

True, God does not need books or 140 years to settle the destiny of men and women. The Bible does not say that God needs books, but it does say that books were opened. Before we were born God knew who would be saved and who would be lost. [1 Peter 1:2](#). But His created intelligences do not know the end from the beginning. The inhabitants of other worlds are watching events on earth with keenest interest. Paul says, "We are ... a spectacle to the whole universe-angels as well as men" ([1 Corinthians 4:9](#), New English Bible).

The Lord knew how wicked Sodom and Gomorrah were, but still He took time to investigate-an investigative judgment, if you please. This was God's method of convincing Abraham that He was being fair in His dealings with the cities of the plain. (See [Genesis 18:23-33](#).) In the end God wants a secure universe and He takes whatever measures are necessary so that His children will always trust Him implicitly. He even allows His creatures, in a sense, to judge or evaluate His actions. [Romans 3:4](#). Ellen White states, "God

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carries with Him the sympathy and approval of the whole universe as step by step His great plan advances to its complete fulfillment” ([Patriarchs and Prophets, 78, 79](#); see also [The Desire of Ages, 58](#), and the beautiful chapter, “Joshua and the Angel,” in [Prophets and Kings, 582-592](#)).

## C—The Epistle to the Hebrews

[27]

### 35. What **Hebrews 8 To 10** Teaches Us

*Ford declares that the epistle to the Hebrews “clearly affirms that in fulfillment of the Day of Atonement type, Christ by the cross-resurrection-ascension event entered upon the ministry prefigured by the sanctuary’s second apartment”. He states further, “**Hebrews 9:23** cannot legitimately be exegeted as applying to the future. All Adventist usage of this verse as part of an 1844 apologetic is erroneous.” “**Hebrews 9** teaches that the Day of Atonement was fulfilled by Christ in AD 31 (Ford, pages 160, 169, 192)”. Does the epistle to the Hebrews support these assertions?*

No. Paul, whom many regard as the author of the epistle, speaks of the blood of bulls and goats, which were offered on the Day of Atonement (**Hebrews 9:13; 10:3, 4**). But he also mentions other animal sacrifices that had nothing to do with that day, such as the red heifer (**Hebrews 9:13**) and the sacrifice offered at the dedication of the first covenant (**Hebrews 9:19-21**).

Obviously Paul was not addressing himself especially to the subject of the Day of Atonement and its fulfillment. Rather, he was attempting to show how far superior the new covenant is to the old. The new covenant has a better priest, a better sacrifice, better blood, better promises, a better sanctuary, and better access. Perfection could not be attained under the old covenant, but it can under the new. All this is in **Hebrews 8, 9, and 10**. Paul used Day of Atonement illustrations and allusions only as they helped to serve his main purpose—that of describing the superiority of the new covenant over the old.

### 36. **Hebrews 6:19, 20**

*Does **Hebrews 6:19, 20** say that Christ entered into the most holy place at His ascension? Ford says yes. (Ford, Page 123.) In support of his position, Ford appeals to Ellen White, who says “The great*

[28] *sacrifice has been made. The way into the holiest is laid open. A new and living way is prepared for all. No longer need sinful, sorrowing humanity await the coming of the high priest. Henceforth the Saviour is to officiate as priest and advocate in the heaven of heavens.”* (*The Desire of Ages*, 757).

No doubt the most holy place is included in [Hebrews 6:19, 20](#). But John the Revelator evidently saw Christ somewhere else as well. (See [Revelation 1:12, 13](#).) It seems clear that from the day of His ascension Christ has had access to all heaven, and through Him all humanity has had unhindered access to the throne of God. The message of the epistle to the Hebrews is not that Christ is in one particular part of the heavenly sanctuary as opposed to another, but that He is in heaven, not on earth, and that His ministry is vastly superior to the work of the Levitical priests. God’s children are urged to come to Him there for grace to help in time of need. (See [Hebrews 4:14-16](#); [10:19-21](#).)

### 37. Ellen White on [Hebrews 6:19, 20](#)

*How does Ellen White explain [Hebrews 6:19, 20](#)?*

Mrs. White nowhere gives a technical exegesis of [Hebrews 6:19, 20](#), but she does cite the text in connection with Christ’s ministry in both the holy place and the holy of holies in the heavenly sanctuary. With reference to Christ’s ministration in the “first apartment” in heaven, Ellen White states:

“The ministration of the priest throughout the year in the first apartment of the sanctuary, ‘within the veil’ which formed the door and separated the holy place from the outer court, represents the work of ministration upon which Christ entered at His ascension. It was the work of the priest in the daily ministration to present before God the blood of the sin offering, also the incense which ascended with the prayers of Israel. So did Christ plead His blood before the Father in behalf of sinners, and present before Him also, with the precious fragrance of His own righteousness, the prayers of penitent believers. Such was the work of ministration in the



first apartment of the sanctuary in heaven.” [The Great Controversy](#), 420, 421.

Earlier she had written:

“If we are firmly fixed upon the present truth, and have our hope, like an anchor of the soul, cast within the second veil, the various winds of false doctrine and error cannot move us. The excitements and false reformations of this day do not move us, for we know that the Master of the house rose up in 1844, and shut the door of the first apartment of the heavenly tabernacle; and now we certainly expect that they <sup>2</sup> will ‘go with their flocks,’ ‘to seek the Lord; but they shall not find him. He hath withdrawn himself (within the second veil) from them.’”—[The Present Truth](#), March, 1850, Page 64.

[29]

### 38. Two-Apartment Heavenly Ministry Is Biblical

*Mrs. White is not alone in holding that Christ began a first apartment ministry in heaven at His ascension and a special second apartment ministry in 1844. This is the belief held by Seventh-day Adventists generally. Is this a Biblical doctrine? If so where does the Bible teach it?*

Yes, this is a Biblical teaching. It is found in [Daniel 7:9, 10, 13, 14](#); [8:14](#); and [Hebrews 8:5](#) and [9:23](#). As explained above, the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary (the investigative judgment) began in 1844. If this special second apartment heavenly ministry began in 1844, a special first apartment ministry must have preceded it. Earlier Adventist doctrinal statements spoke of “apartments” in the heavenly sanctuary (see *1889 SDA Yearbook*, Page 149), whereas the more recent doctrinal statements speak of two “phases” in Christ’s heavenly ministry (see *1931 SDA Yearbook*, Page 378; *1981 SDA Yearbook*, Page 8, cited above).

<sup>2</sup>Ellen White apparently refers here to those Millerite Adventists who rejected the significance of October 22, 1844, and who did not believe that Christ began a special ministry in heaven’s holy of holies on that day

The Ancient of Days, God the Father, is depicted as coming into the heavenly court room in order to commence the judgment. ([Daniel 7:9, 10, 21, 22.](#)) Thereafter the Son of man is pictured as coming to the Ancient of Days in that judgment. ([Daniel 7:13, 14.](#)) There is no contradiction between this passage and others which refer to Christ being present with the Father since His ascension. [Hebrews 6:19, 20](#) and [Revelation 3:21](#) assure us of Christ's constant accessibility to the Father while [Daniel 7:9, 10, 13, 14](#) speak of a formal occasion, the beginning of a heavenly ministry comparable to that carried forward by the high priest on the earthly day of atonement.

[30] [Hebrews 8:5](#) and [9:23](#) state that the earthly tabernacle with its services was a shadow, or figure, of the heavenly sanctuary. Since the earthly tabernacle had both a daily and a yearly priestly ministry, it is reasonable to conclude that there are two phases to Christ's ministry in heaven as well.

### 39. Basing a Doctrine on Types and Symbols

*Ford declares, "It is not legitimate to establish a fundamental doctrine upon either types or symbols", and "the two-apartment schema ... is no longer useful" (Ford, pages 471, 540). Does Ford have a point here?*

The concept of judgment runs throughout the Bible. See, for example, [Acts 17:31; 24:25; Romans 14:10; James 2:12; 1 Peter 1:17; 4:5.](#) "Types" are not employed in these verses, nor are they employed in [Daniel 7:9, 10](#), where the Adventist doctrine of the investigative judgment is taught. However, it is legitimate to establish a major doctrine on types and symbols. The most important teaching in the Bible is that Christ died on behalf of sinners so that we might receive eternal salvation. Christ's substitutionary death was kept before Israel every day of their lives by the types and symbols of the sanctuary services.

### 40. The Appearance of the Heavenly Sanctuary

*What is known of the appearance of the heavenly sanctuary?*

The two apartments of the earthly sanctuary were "earthly reproductions of heavenly realities." They were "only a symbol of the

reality,” “only a copy and shadow of the heavenly” ([Hebrews 9:23](#), Phillips; [Hebrews 9:24](#); [8:5](#), New English Bible). A shadow of a tree or building gives some information, but no precise details. Ellen White states:

“The heavenly temple, the abiding place of the King of kings, Where ‘thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him’ ([Daniel 7:10](#)), that temple filled with the glory of the eternal throne, where seraphim, its shining guardians, veil their faces in adoration—no earthly structure could represent its vastness and its glory. Yet important truths concerning the heavenly sanctuary and the great work there carried forward for man’s redemption were to be taught by the earthly sanctuary and its services.”—[Patriarchs and Prophets](#), 357.

[31]

#### 41. [Hebrews 9:8](#)

*Ford argues that “the first tabernacle” in [Hebrews 9:8](#) means “the first apartment,” and that [Hebrews 9:9, 10](#) are a “commentary on the ministry of the first apartment.” Of the Greek term TA HAGIA in [Hebrews 9:8](#) (translated “holiest of all” in the King James Version), Ford declares that it is “impossible to contend that the term embraces both apartments.” He interprets this passage to mean that “the first apartment stands for the era before the cross, but the second apartment for the era after the cross” (Ford, pages 165-167). Is Ford’s position correct?*

Some Bible translations, such as the New International Version, appear to support Ford’s conclusion, but the context does not; neither do translations by Phillips, Rotherham, Knox or the New English Bible. The contrast in [Hebrews 9:8](#) is not between the first and second apartments and what they stand for, but between the earthly sanctuary and the heavenly sanctuary. The context of [Hebrews 9:8-10](#) requires that “the first tabernacle” of [verse 8](#) be understood to be the entire earthly sanctuary. Not just the first apartment of that sanctuary. Furthermore, Ford is mistaken in insisting that TA HAGIA cannot mean both apartments for that is precisely what it

does mean in [Hebrews 13:11](#) where TA HAGIA (“the sanctuary”) clearly includes both apartments. See [Leviticus 4:13-21](#); [16:15-27](#).

[Hebrews 9:8](#) does not teach that in 31 AD Christ began a heavenly ministry which was the counterpart of the ministry of the high priest in the second apartment of the earthly sanctuary.

## D—The Glacier View Questionnaire

### 42. Where Adventist Theologians and Administrators Stand [32]

*According to the South Bend Tribune of December 1, 1980, “Ford said in an interview last week that his argument is not so much with Adventist theologians, but with church administrators. Ford said he knew of no New Testament theologians and only one Old Testament theologian who disagrees with his views.” What do Adventist theologians believe about the topics which were discussed at the Glacier View meeting?*

Of the 115 delegates who were present at the Glacier View (Colorado) Sanctuary Review Committee in August, 1980, at least 59 had served the church at one time, or were still serving, as college, university, or seminary professors in religion or theology. Obviously these individuals had attained some degree of competence in Biblical studies. On August 11 a questionnaire was filled out anonymously by the delegates. Four days later, on August 15, the same questionnaire was repeated, to see what shifts in opinions might have occurred. The 21 questions with delegates’ responses are given below. The reader can decide as to whether Ford’s claim to almost total support from Adventist theologians is justified.

It should be understood, of course, that even the best Biblical scholars can sometimes draw erroneous conclusions. Luther and Calvin were brilliant, dedicated, and highly educated, but this did not guarantee the correctness of all their theological positions. It would not be wise to assume that the Scriptures can be understood only by professional theologians.

Aug. 11	Aug.15	
		For each numbered item, circle the letter before the phrase which most nearly expresses your present understanding
		1. Time prophecies in the Old Testament.

21	22	a. were all intended to be fulfilled in Israel's experience by approximately the time of the first-century church
75	70	b. were intended, in certain instances, to reach nearly 1900 years into the Christian era
6	2	c. not sure
		2. The time prophecies of Daniel
42	22	a. are conditional
50	67	b. are unconditional
8	2	c. not sure
		3. In the prophecies of Daniel
36	50	a. each prophecy has a single fulfillment
53	36	b. each prophecy has more than one fulfillment
6	4	c. not sure
		4. The application of the year-day principle to interpret symbolic prophecies in the Bible
15	10	a. is not supported by the Scriptures
75	83	b. is supported by the Scriptures
12	1	c. not sure
		5. The words of Jesus lead us to believe that He expected the second advent to occur during the lifetime of His contemporaries
42	38	a. agree
53	55	b. disagree
4	2	c. not sure
		6. A long span of time between two advents
41	60	a. is set forth in the Old Testament
49	33	b. is not set forth in the Old Testament

10	1	c. not sure
		7. The terminus of the 2300-day prophecy
68	75	a. relates to 1844 as the sole application
27	18	b. relates to 1844 as a secondary application
7	2	c. not sure

		8. “Then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (KJV) refers to cleansing the heavenly sanctuary from defilement caused
22	18	a. by the little horn
22	9	b. by the sins of the saints
49	65	c. by both the little horn and the sins of the saints
5	2	d. not sure
		9. Sacrificial blood in the daily sanctuary service
67	55	a. transferred sin from the sinner to the sanctuary
24	35	b. cleansed sin, but did not transfer it
9	8	c. not sure
		10. The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, antitype of the ritual day of atonement, began in 1844
80	78	a. agree
10	8	b. disagree
9	9	c. not sure
		11. The investigative judgment is a concept that is
75	81	a. supported by Scripture
14	10	b. without support in Scripture
9	4	c. not sure
		12. The first apartment ministry in the earthly sanctuary represented

27	17	a. the Mosaic dispensation
65	72	b. the ministry of Jesus from His ascension to 1844
5	6	c. not sure
		13. The heavenly sanctuary
63	64	a. must be cleansed of confessed sins
17	17	b. needs no cleansing
11	9	c. not sure
		14. “The hour of His judgment” ( <a href="#">Revelation 14:7</a> )
73	80	a. includes an investigative judgment of those who accepted Jesus as Savior
17	17	b. refers only to God’s judgment on the wicked
6	1	c. not sure
		15. The second apartment ministry in the earthly sanctuary represented the ministry of Jesus
31	27	a. beginning with His ascension
65	64	b. beginning in 1844
6	6	c. not sure

		[Paragraph 23, “Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary,” from the 1980 Statement of Fundamental Beliefs was quoted. For the text, see above, question 3.]
		16. With the above statement I
60	71	a. agree strongly
27	17	b. agree somewhat
3	0	c. not sure



14	7	d. disagree somewhat
0	1	e. disagree strongly
		[When this quiz was given on August 11 a number of the delegates did not see questions 17-21, which were on the last page of the questionnaire.]
		17. The inspiration of Ellen G. White is
68	83	a. equal to that of the Biblical prophets
12	11	b. less than that of the Biblical prophets
2	1	c. not sure
		18. The writings of Ellen G. White
12	8	a. all of her teachings must be specifically stated in the Bible
68	85	b. none of her teachings will actually contradict the Bible
0	0	c. not sure
		19. The writings of Ellen G. White
11	8	a. are pastoral and devotional, but have no doctrinal authority
6888		b. have a doctrinal authority
3	0	c. not sure

		20. The writings of Ellen G. White are
33	35	a. equally authoritative with the Bible
44	56	b. less authoritative than the Bible
3	3	c. not sure
		[Paragraph 17, “The Gift of Prophecy,” from the 1980 Statement of Fundamental Beliefs was quoted. For the text, see below, question 43.]
		21. With the above statement I
7287	a. agree strongly	
11	6	b. agree somewhat
0	0	c. not sure
1	1	d. disagree somewhat
0	0	e. disagree strongly

## **E—Ellen White and the Bible**

[33]

[34]

### **43. The SDA Church on Ellen White**

[35]

*What is the official attitude of the Seventh-day Adventist Church toward Ellen White?*

[36]

The statement on the Gift of Prophecy approved at the General Conference Session in Dallas in 1980 reads as follows:

#### **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; Hebrews 1:1-3; Revelation 12:17; 19:10.)”—*1981 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, Page 7.

### **44. “The Testimony of Jesus Is the Spirit of Prophecy”**

*What is meant by the text, “The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy” (Revelation 19:10)?*

In [Revelation 19:10](#) the angel is quoted as saying to John, “I am ... of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus.” This phrase is parallel to “I am ... of thy brethren the prophets” in [Revelation 22:9](#). In other words, one who had the testimony of Jesus had the prophetic gift. The term “spirit of prophecy,” as used in [Revelation 19:10](#), must then apply to anyone who had the prophetic gift, including the angel, John, and John’s brethren.

Adventists believe that Ellen White had the “spirit of prophecy,” and commonly use the term as a title, applying to her writings. In

the strictest Biblical sense, however, the phrase “spirit of prophecy” applies to the ministry and teachings of all the prophets, both ancient and modern.

[37] According to [Revelation 12:17](#) the remnant church was to have “the testimony of Jesus Christ.” This phrase, in English as in Greek, can mean either testimony *about* Christ or testimony *from* Christ. Since all Christian groups talk about Christ this could hardly be a distinguishing feature of God’s true church in the last days. However, to have divine communications from Christ—a renewal of the prophetic gift—would quite easily identify the true remnant from other church groups.

Seventh-day Adventists hold that the phrase “the testimony of Jesus” in [Revelation 12:17](#) is a reference to the gift of prophecy as seen in the ministry of Ellen G. White. This interpretation is in harmony with the meaning of the phrase in [Revelation 1:2](#) and [1:9](#).

#### 45. Prophecy A Unique Gift

*What did the Apostle Paul mean when he said that we should all desire the ability to prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:1, 5)? Can all become prophets?*

No. The words “prophet” and “prophecy” are apparently used in a rather broad sense in certain Scripture passages. “You may all prophesy,” Paul wrote the Corinthians, but he admonished, only one at a time ([1 Corinthians 14:31](#)). At Corinth church members were fragmented into four groups and were causing the apostle much anxiety because of their numerous irregularities. When he said, “You may all prophesy,” it is not likely that Paul was declaring them all to be divinely-credentialed prophets. He may have been speaking of a praise or testimony meeting, or some meeting in which everyone could participate.

David’s musicians “prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the Lord” ([1 Chronicles 25:3](#)). These musicians were not appointed to their work directly by the Lord, but by David and the captains of the host ([verse 1](#)).

On the other hand, God Himself called some men and women to fill a unique role as prophets or prophetesses—to be His spokespersons ([Jeremiah 1:5](#); [1 Samuel 8:30](#)). Not everyone, by any means,

had—or could have—this prophetic gift; it was something special ([Numbers 12:6](#); [Amos 3:7](#)). Spiritual gifts are conferred by the Holy Spirit who divides “to every man severally as He will” ([1 Corinthians 12:8-11](#)). Not all have the gift of prophecy ([1 Corinthians 12:28, 29](#)).

#### 46. Ford’s “Degrees of Revelation”

[38]

*Ford acknowledges “that Ellen White was a true prophet, but, on the other hand, he asserts that her prophetic ministry was not of the same quality as that of the Bible prophets.” He says, “Because God’s attention to matters is proportionate to their importance, He has exercised more miraculous superintendence over Scripture than over the writings of Ellen G. White. This is not to speak of degrees of inspiration, but rather degrees of revelation.” He indicates that her authority should be limited to edification, exhortation, and comfort as mentioned in [1 Corinthians 14:3](#) (Ford, pages 599-600, 602, 619). Does this concept correctly reflect Ellen White’s view of her inspiration?*

No. She wrote:

“I am now instructed that I am not to be hindered in my work by those who engage in suppositions regarding its nature, whose minds are struggling with so many intricate problems connected with the supposed work of a prophet. My commission embraces the work of a prophet, but it does not end there. It embraces much more than the minds of those who have been sowing the seeds of unbelief can comprehend.”—[Selected Messages 1:36](#).

There is nothing in Ellen White’s writings that would warrant the conclusion that she had a lower “degree of revelation” than any other prophet. In her *Great Controversy* introduction she wrote:

“Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the scenes of the long-continued conflict between good and evil have been opened to the writer of these pages. From

time to time I have been permitted to behold the working, in different ages, of the great controversy between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin.”

“As the Spirit of God has opened to my mind the great truths of His Word, and the scenes of the past and the future, I have been bidden to make known to others that which has thus been revealed.”—[The Great Controversy](#), xii, xiii.

Here are claims as broad and unequivocal as any found in the Bible. Without doubt Ellen White believed that her work embraced the work of a genuine prophet.

#### 47. Ellen White’s Relationship to the Bible

[39] *Ford declares, “Never did Ellen G. White claim to be a medium of truth that superseded Scripture.” “Ellen G. White is not our authority. That position only Scripture can hold” (Ford, pages 604, 623). What was Ellen White’s understanding of her relationship to the Bible?*

It may be that a few over-zealous, misinformed individuals do, in practice, place Ellen White above the Scriptures. However, this is certainly not the official position of the church, nor does it correctly represent Ellen White’s own view of the absolute primacy of the Bible. As a “lesser light” she invariably referred her readers to the Scriptures, the “greater light” ([Evangelism](#), 257). Typical of her many statements on the preeminence of the Bible are the following:

“The Word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.”—[The Great Controversy](#), vii.

“God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the

voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith”—[Ibid., Page 595](#).

“The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union; all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony. Our own views and ideas must not control our efforts. Man is fallible, but God’s Word is infallible. Instead of wrangling with one another, let men exalt the Lord. Let us meet all opposition as did our Master, saying, ‘It is written.’ Let us lift up the banner on which is inscribed, The Bible our rule of faith and discipline.” [Selected Messages 1:416](#).

Of her writings compared with the Bible she declared:

“The testimonies of Sister White should not be carried to the front. God’s Word is the unerring standard. The testimonies are not to take the place of the Word. Never do we want any soul to bring in the testimonies ahead of the Bible.”—[Evangelism, 256](#).

However, a recognition of the final authority of the Scriptures in matters of faith and religion does not thereby deny authority to those prophets God has used who were not Scripture writers. Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist were God’s acknowledged spokesmen though they did not contribute to the canon.

When Nathan pronounced Heaven’s judgments on David ([2 Samuel 12](#)), David accepted the verdict, believing fully that Nathan’s message was of divine origin. The existence of the Pentateuch as a doctrinal standard in no way diminished Nathan’s authority as a living prophet, even though his writings were not canonical. (See [1 Chronicles 29:29](#); [2 Chronicles 9:29](#).)

[40]

So today, the existence of the sacred canon does not exclude other inspired authorities. To say that the Bible is our authority, but Ellen White is not, is a false dichotomy. We can have both—the Bible in its sphere, and Ellen White in hers. Uriah Smith used an illustration which has helped many on this point. He wrote:

“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 quick sands 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 you.

“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.”—[The Review and Herald, January 13, 1863](#). (See [Joel 2:28-32](#); [1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28](#); [Ephesians 4:11-13](#).)



#### 48. Belief in Ellen White Not a Test of Membership

*Is it necessary to believe in Ellen White in order to be a Seventh-day Adventist? Ford states, “From Ellen G. White’s own pen came counsel that belief in her specific role was not to be made a test of church membership or fellowship” (Ford, Page 605).*

True, belief in Ellen White’s unique role as an inspired messenger is not a test of fellowship in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. One might gather from Ford’s statement, however, that a church member may manifest any attitude he wishes toward Ellen White and still be considered in good and regular standing. But this is not the case. Ford quotes a paragraph from [Testimonies for the Church 1:327-328](#), and another from Page 329, in support of his position, but he skips an important paragraph in between. The omitted passage says, of those who oppose the visions, that “the church may know that they are not right” ([Testimonies for the Church 1:328](#)).

[41]

#### 49. Ellen White as an Interpreter of Scripture

*Are Ellen White’s interpretations of the Bible reliable and are we to understand the Scriptures only as interpreted by her? Ford asserts, “In every discipline our scholars feel hamstrung lest their expression of scholarly conclusions should seem to contradict anything in Ellen G. White. This is a deplorable situation, and the church will make little progress until the situation is remedied.” “Our major error has been to make the writings of E. G. White have veto power over the Scripture” (Ford, pages 661, 12).*

In endeavoring to arrive at a satisfactory answer to the question of Ellen White’s authority as an interpreter of Scripture, several factors must be kept in mind:

1. To give an individual complete interpretive control over the Bible would, in effect, elevate that person above the Bible. It would be a mistake to allow even the apostle Paul to exercise interpretive control over all other Bible writers. In such a case, Paul, and not the whole Bible, would be one’s final authority.

2. Ellen White’s writings were available to no one before the nineteenth century. Even now, the distribution of her works throughout the world is limited largely to Seventh-day Adventists. If the

Scriptures can be understood only as they are interpreted by Ellen White, most people will never be able to understand God's Word.

[42] 3. Ellen White's writings are generally homiletical or evangelistic in nature and not strictly exegetical. In [The Desire of Ages, 211](#), Mrs. White quotes [John 5:39](#) as "You search the Scriptures," but in [Selected Messages 2:39](#), she says "Search the Scriptures." The first quotation is from the Revised Version while the latter is from the King James Version. She felt free to use either translation, depending on the point she was trying to make. One needs to be quite sure of how Ellen White is using a given text before claiming that she is interpreting the text from an exegetical standpoint for her reader.

4. According to W. C. White, some of his mother's interpretations of Scripture may have lacked perfection in certain unimportant details. He wrote:

"Where she has followed the description of historians or the exposition of Adventist writers, I believe that God has given her discernment to use that which is correct and in harmony with truth regarding all matters essential to salvation. If it should be found by faithful study that she has followed some expositions of prophecy which in some details regarding dates we cannot harmonize with our understanding of secular history, it does not influence my confidence in her writings as a whole any more than my confidence in the Bible is influenced by the fact that I cannot harmonize many of the statements regarding chronology."—[Selected Messages 3:449-450](#).

5. Ellen White took no position on doctrinal matters she regarded as unimportant, such as the "daily," the 144,000, and the king of the north.

6. There were specific instances, however, when she claimed divine authority for the interpretation of specific Scripture passages. For example, regarding [Genesis 1](#) she wrote:

"I was then carried back to the creation and was shown that the first week, in which God performed the

work of creation in six days and rested on the seventh day, was just like every other week.”—[Spiritual Gifts 3:90](#).

7. Ellen White also claims that, in connection with earnest study of the Scriptures, the leading points of the Adventist faith were presented to her in vision. She states, concerning meetings held in the late 1840’s:

“At that time one error after another pressed in upon us; ministers and doctors brought in new doctrines. We would search the Scriptures with much prayer, and the Holy Spirit would bring the truth to our minds. Sometimes whole nights would be devoted to searching the Scriptures, and earnestly asking God for guidance. Companies of devoted men and women assembled for this purpose. The power of God would come upon me, and I was enabled clearly to define what is truth and what is error. As the points of our faith were thus established, our feet were placed upon a solid foundation. We accepted the truth point by point, under the demonstration of the Holy Spirit.”—[Gospel Workers, 302](#).

“The Spirit of God 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 ... A line of truth extending from that time, to the time when we shall enter the city of God, was plainly marked out before me.”—[This Day With God, 317](#).

[43]

8. Ellen White has been used by God on more than one occasion over the years to settle doctrinal controversies in the Adventist Church. For example, in 1848, long before the church was organized, she settled certain issues at the meeting in David Arnold’s barn in Volney, N.Y. Of the differences manifested over the Lord’s Supper and the doctrine of the millennium, Ellen White wrote:

“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.

“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.”—[Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 111](#).

Half a century later, Ellen White's doctrinal teachings were still bringing blessing and unity to the church. In 1898 she came out solidly against the semi-arianism of Uriah Smith. (Compare Smith's editorial in the March 16, 1897 *Review* with [The Desire of Ages, 530](#).) In 1901 she put an end to the “holy flesh” teaching. (See [Selected Messages 2:31-36](#).) From 1903 on, she drew the line on Dr. Kellogg and his special brand of pantheism. (See [Selected Messages 1:193-208](#); [Testimonies for the Church 8:255-328](#).) In 1905 she kept A. F. Ballenger's sanctuary views out of the church. (See [Selected Messages 1:160-162](#) and Manuscript Release #760.)

9. Ellen White insists that she never teaches heresy. She states,

“The Bible must be your counselor. Study it and the testimonies God has given; for they never contradict His word.”—[Selected Messages 3:32](#).

“There is one straight chain of truth, without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written.”—[Ibid., Page 52](#).

10. Ellen White acknowledged that some of our interpretations of Scripture might not be entirely correct and that continued study of the Scriptures will be amply rewarded. She states:

“In closely investigating every jot and tittle which we think is established truth, in comparing Scripture with Scripture, we may discover errors in our interpretations of Scripture. Christ would have the searcher of His

Word sink the shaft deeper into the mines of truth. If the search is properly conducted, jewels of inestimable value will be found.”—[The Review and Herald, July 12, 1898](#).

11. Ellen White asserts positively, however, that any new interpretations of Scripture, if correct, will be in harmony with our distinctive doctrines. She declares:

“One will arise, and still another, with new light, which contradicts the light that God has given under the demonstration of His Holy Spirit. We are not to receive the words of those who come with a message that contradicts the special points of our faith.”—[Selected Messages 1:161](#).

12. Finally, the promise is given that “all who believe the Lord has spoken through Sister White, and has given her a message, will be safe from the many delusions that will come in these last days” ([Selected Messages 3:84](#)).

## 50. Ellen White’s Role in Doctrinal Conformity

*Did Ellen White—or did she not—intend for her writings to be used to settle doctrinal issues in the church? According to Ford, “Ellen G. White refused to be the arbiter in matters of doctrinal controversy. Time after time she was solicited to end the ‘daily’ controversy by some authoritative word from the Lord ... This she refused to do, and urged all to study their Bible, and decide from that supreme authority rather than quote her writings. This paved the way for the right approach to similar doctrinal problems, offering the church a salutary paradigm” (Ford, pages 606, 616).*

Ford acknowledges that the Lord used Ellen White to settle doctrinal controversy in the early days of the advent movement. He states:

“It is true that in the early days of the movement, when our brethren were yet dependent upon the proof-text method, and when every man had a different interpretation, at such a time God through Ellen G. White

indicated some evidence from Scripture which decided the point at issue.”—Ford, Page 605.

However, Ford argues that doctrinal directives through Ellen White have not been experienced by the church in its later years. He assumes that Ellen White’s attitude toward the “daily” controversy should be taken as the norm for her attitude toward all doctrinal controversy.

[45] True, Ellen White did direct the brethren not to use her writings to settle their debate over the “daily” of [Daniel 8:12, 13](#). However, she said that the “daily” was “not a subject of vital importance” and the Lord had given her “no instruction on the point under discussion” ([Selected Messages 1:164](#)). Some issues, on the other hand, were of vital importance, and on many doctrinal subjects she had received instruction. Concerning the controversy with A. F. Ballenger, for example, she declared:

“Let all cling to the established truth of the sanctuary.... If the theories that Brother Ballenger presents were received, they would lead many to depart from the faith. They would counterwork the truths upon which the people of God have stood for the past fifty years. I am bidden to say in the name of the Lord that Elder Ballenger is following a false light. The Lord has not given him the message that he is bearing regarding the sanctuary service.

“Elder Ballenger’s proofs are not reliable. Another and still another will arise and bring in supposedly great light, and make their assertions. But we stand by the old landmarks.”—Manuscript Release #760, pages 4, 10, 19, written in 1905.

It can be seen that Ellen White did intend that her writings should continue to settle doctrinal issues in the church on those points where the Lord had given her light. (See question 49, section 8.)

## 51. Dissecting the Testimonies

*What did Ellen White mean when she declared, “If the testimonies speak not according to the Word of God, reject them”? Does Ellen White encourage us to dissect her writings and accept only what we think is in harmony with Scripture? Did she think that she was right in some places but wrong in others?*

No, this certainly was not her intention. In fact, she said exactly the opposite. Here are her words:

“Do not by your criticisms 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, claiming that God has given you ability to discern what is light from heaven and what is the expression of mere human wisdom. If the *Testimonies* speak not according to the Word of God, reject them. Christ and Belial cannot be united.”—[Testimonies for the Church 5:691](#).

She was saying, my work is of God or the devil. It is one or the other. Don't try to pick and choose. Accept my work in its entirety or reject it in its entirety. [46]

## 52. Don't Quote Me Till You Obey the Bible

*What did Ellen White mean by the following declaration? “I do not ask you to take my words. Lay Sister White to one side. Do not quote my words again as long as you live until you can obey the Bible. When you make the Bible your food, your meat and your drink, when you make its principles the elements of your character, you will know better how to receive counsel from God. I exalt the precious Word before you today. Do not repeat what I have said, saying, ‘Sister White said this,’ and ‘Sister White said that.’ Find out what the Lord God of Israel says, and then do what He commands (Quoted by Ford, Page 589).”*

These words were spoken to the leaders of the Adventist Church and its institutions in a special meeting held in the Battle Creek College library the day before the opening of the 1901 General Conference. Many of Ellen White's counsels during the previous

decade had been almost wholly ignored. The sanitarium was moving away from any denominational emphasis, the publishing house had become largely a commercial enterprise, and a few key men were exercising undue control over the church through interlocking directorates. Ellen White was convinced that a complete reorganization was vital to the survival of the church. She addressed searing words to the church leadership: “How can the Lord bless those who manifest a spirit of ‘I don’t care,’ a spirit which leads them to walk contrary to the light which the Lord has given them?” ([Selected Messages 3:33](#)). Then comes the passage quoted by Ford.

What Ellen White had been saying, in effect, was this: Brethren, you have not just been setting Sister White aside, you have been ignoring the Bible. You are in no position to appreciate my words while you continue to ignore God’s Word. Put first things first. Start obeying God’s Word as you should. Then, and not until then, will you be in a position to understand and appreciate my counsels. (See [Selected Messages 3:33](#), footnote.)



## F—Allegations of Errors and Mistakes

[47]

### 53. Ellen White's Personal Failings

*According to M. E. Kern, Ellen white once got off her subject in a meeting at College View, Nebraska, and criticized the sanitarium's mattresses. Should we expect such behavior from a genuine prophet?*

It may be that the sanitarium's mattresses deserved to be criticized, in which case Ellen White's comments would have been in order. However, there were times when she recognized that her conduct required an apology. For example, we find her seeking forgiveness from her husband for some impertinent remarks she had made in a letter to him only the day before. She confessed:

“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 Savior more closely, I should not have to mourn so much my unlikeness to His dear image.”—[Letter 27, 1876](#).

While Ellen White was an unusually exemplary person in life and character she was not without personal weaknesses and failings. Arthur Spalding, who knew her well, states:

“Nor was Mrs. White reluctant to confess her own faults when confession was due. She did not hold herself to be perfect. Sometimes, under the stress of burdens and slanders, her patience failed; and such lapses she confessed with tears and sorrow.”—*Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists*, Volume 1, Page 362.

It should not surprise us to learn that prophets can make mistakes. Concerning the weaknesses that overcame Moses, David, Solomon, and others, Ellen White declared:

“If they had been without foible they would have been more than human, and our sinful natures would despair of ever reaching such a point of excellence. But seeing where they struggled and fell, where they took heart again and conquered through the grace of God we are encouraged, and led to press over the obstacles that degenerate nature places in our way.”—[Testimonies for the Church 4:12](#).

#### 54. Historical Errors in Ellen White’s Writings

*Ford asserts that “scholars are discovering historical errors in chapter after chapter of Great Controversy” (Ford, Page 586). What are the facts?*

[48] The facts are these: *The Great Controversy* is not a history textbook, but the message it contains was inspired by the Spirit of God and is completely reliable. Ellen White states, “I was moved by the Spirit of the Lord to write that book” ([Colporteur Ministry, 127](#)). In her introduction to *The Great Controversy*, the author states:

“As the Spirit of God has opened to my mind the great truths of His Word, and the scenes of the past and the future, I have been bidden to make known to others that which has thus been revealed—to trace the history of the controversy in past ages, and especially so to present it as to shed a light on the fast-approaching struggle of the future.”—[Page xiii](#).

Many important episodes in the history of God’s people, from the creation of Adam to the new earth, were shown to Ellen White in vision. In her earliest account of *The Great Controversy* we find such statements as “I saw a sadness came over Adam’s countenance” and “I then looked, and saw the fire which had consumed the wicked” ([Spiritual Gifts 1:21, 218](#)). Elsewhere she specifically declared, “Events in the history of the reformers have been presented before me” ([Selected Messages 3:110](#)).

While many events of the past were shown to her, neither Ellen White nor her son ever claimed that every historical detail mentioned

in her works was provided by the Lord in vision. Ellen White says that she used “facts” which were “well known and universally acknowledged.” (See [The Great Controversy](#), xiii, xiv.) She wrote, for example, “In 1816 the American Bible Society was founded ([The Great Controversy](#), 287).” There is no reason to believe that this type of information was supplied in vision. W. C. White states:

“The framework of the great temple of truth sustained by her writings was presented to her clearly in vision. In some features of this work, information was given in detail. Regarding some features of the revelation, such as the features of prophetic chronology, as regards the ministration in the sanctuary and the changes that took place in 1844, the matter was presented to her many times and in detail many times, and this enabled her to speak very clearly and very positively regarding the foundation pillars of our faith.

“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](#).

[49]

In a letter to W. W. Eastman, W. C. White declared:

“When *Controversy* was written, Mother never thought that the readers would take it as authority on historical dates or use it to settle controversy regarding details of history, and she does not now feel that it should be used in that way.”—[Selected Messages 3:447](#).

W. C. White also wrote S. N. Haskell on the same subject, stating that:

“We will make a great mistake if we lay aside historical research and endeavor to settle historical questions by the use of mother’s books as an authority when she herself does not wish them to be used in any such way.”—W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, October 31, 1912, White Estate Document File #65. (See further, question 83.)

In making her case for the future, Ellen White built not only on the revelations God gave her, but also on the records of the past. She made no attempt to write an authoritative history textbook. Rather, in the words of W. C. White, “The principal use of the passages quoted from historians was not to make a new history, not to correct errors in history, but to use valuable illustrations to make plain important spiritual truths” (W. C. White to L. E. Froom, February 18, 1932). No doubt God led Ellen White to lean on those historians who wrote basically from His point of view. Where their larger features were in accord with the panoramic scenes shown her, she felt free to draw from their works, even though these works may not have been perfect in every respect.

[50] It should not be surprising to learn that as Ellen White gathered information from secular historians to develop her great controversy theme, some inaccuracies crept into her own book. When new printing plates for *The Great Controversy* had to be made in 1911, the author used the occasion as an opportunity to correct the discrepancies which were brought to her attention. For example, she changed the reading on page 50 from “He styles himself ‘Lord God the Pope’” in the 1888 edition to “He has been styled ‘Lord God the Pope’” in the 1911 edition. She modified the reading on page 65 from “The Waldenses were the first of all the people of Europe to obtain a translation of the Holy Scriptures” in the 1888 edition to “The Waldenses were among the first ...” in the 1911 edition, etc.

Even if some inaccurate historical statements still remain in *The Great Controversy*, this in no way weakens the message of the book. Ellen White says, “God gave me the light contained in *The Great Controversy*” ([Colporteur Ministry](#), 129). That light is needed in the church and in the world today more than ever before.

## 55. **Revelation 9** and Josiah Litch

*Ford states, “Litch’s application of **Revelation 9:15** to August 11, 1840, was quite wrong, as he himself admitted in later years.” “Ellen White accepted the prophetic conclusions of Josiah Litch regarding August 11, 1840” (Ford, pages 659-660, 584). Did Mrs. White say much about the seven trumpets?*

No. This is the only known reference to **Revelation 9** in all of Ellen White’s writings and it appears, not in connection with an exegetical study of the Bible, but as part of her description of the Millerite movement. On the basis of his interpretation of **Revelation 9:15** Josiah Litch predicted in 1838 that the Ottoman power would be broken in 1840. On August 1, 1840, he predicted that it would occur on August 11. What took place on that date confirmed the faith of multitudes in the Millerite interpretation of Scripture and gave the advent movement great impetus.

If Ellen White, in **The Great Controversy**, 334-335, means that John the Revelator’s prophecy was fulfilled on August 11, 1840, she would be giving support to Litch’s interpretation of **Revelation 9:15**. If she simply means that Josiah Litch’s prediction was fulfilled, then she is not necessarily supporting Litch’s interpretation of the text.

*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* states, “Generally speaking, the Seventh-day Adventist interpretation of the fifth and sixth trumpets, particularly as touching the time period involved, is essentially that of Josiah Litch” (Volume 7, Page 796). Ministry magazine has suggested the dates 1453 to 1844 for the sixth trumpet instead of the period 1449 to 1840 assigned by Litch (Ministry, October, 1980, Page 41.).

## 56. **Revelation 11** and the French Revolution

[51]

*Was Ellen White wrong in her **Great Controversy** explanation of **Revelation 11**? Ford claims that “it is not possible to support **The Great Controversy** exposition of **Revelation 11** either exegetically or historically” (Page 575), and “the application [of the year-day principle] made to the French Revolution is certainly incorrect.” He says he prefers the application of **Revelation 11** found in **Testimonies for the Church 4:594** (Ford, pages 575, 326).*

In [Testimonies for the Church 4:594](#), Ellen White is not giving an exegesis of [Revelation 11](#). She is simply using the language of [Revelation 11:3](#) as a matter of convenience. In [The Great Controversy, 265-288](#) she discusses [Revelation 11](#) in considerable detail and gives the impression that she is really telling her readers what that chapter means.

Ellen White did make some minor changes in the 1911 edition of this chapter of *The Great Controversy*. “The great bell of the palace” in the 1888 edition was changed to “a bell” in 1911; “The Word of God was prohibited” became “The Worship of the Deity was abolished.” “The decree which prohibited the Bible” was altered to read “the decrees which abolished the Christian religion and set aside the Bible,” etc. (See [The Great Controversy, 272, 273, 286, 287.](#))

These changes did not affect the exposition of the chapter, however, which remained the same in 1911 as it had been in the 1888 edition.

Although certain minor historical points needed revision, this can hardly be used as an argument against the basic exposition itself. No better or more satisfactory interpretation of [Revelation 11](#) has been written than that found in *The Great Controversy*.

### 57. [Revelation 14](#) and Rome “Alone”

*Ford states, “In 1911 the word ‘alone’ was inserted on page 383 of The Great Controversy, changing the meaning considerably. The argument in the changed sentence of page 383 now does not make sense” (Ford, Page 691). Is Mrs. White’s interpretation of [Revelation 14:8](#) in The Great Controversy unclear?*

[52] In 1888, Ellen White wrote:

“The message of [Revelation 14](#) announcing the fall of Babylon, must apply to religious bodies that were once pure and have become corrupt. Since this message follows the warning of the Judgment, it must be given in the last days, therefore it cannot refer to the Romish Church, for that church has been in a fallen condition for many centuries. Furthermore, in the eighteenth chapter

of the Revelation, in a message which is yet future, the people of God are called upon to come out of Babylon. According to this Scripture, many of God's people must still be in Babylon. And in what religious bodies are the greater part of the followers of Christ now to be found? Without doubt, in the various churches professing the Protestant faith."—[The Great Controversy, 383, 1888](#) edition.

W. W. Prescott asked how "Babylon" in [Revelation 14](#) could apply to Protestantism when "Babylon" in [Revelation 17](#) applied to Roman Catholicism. (See W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, April 26, 1910.) To eliminate any possible misunderstanding, Ellen White added the word "alone" to her 1911 edition of the book. The key sentence now reads, "Since this message follows the warning of the judgment, it must be given in the last days; therefore it cannot refer to the Roman Church alone, for that church has been in a fallen condition for many centuries" ([The Great Controversy, 383, 1911](#) edition). Prescott was delighted with the added word and said so at the 1919 Bible Conference. We leave it to the reader, studying the full context of the chapter and the book, to judge whether the changed sentence was appropriate.

## 58. Discrepancies in Narrating Biblical Events

*Ford says that Ellen White numbered Abraham's allies wrong; she once said that God commanded Adam and Eve not to touch the fruit, then later wrote that these were Eve's words, not God's; she said that only eight souls received Noah's message, but in another place said that there were others who believed and who helped build the ark (Ford, pages 612, A-253, <sup>3</sup> 246). Ford also points out that Ellen White's account of the daily ministrations in the ancient sanctuary is not entirely accurate. (See [Patriarchs and Prophets, 354.](#)) Did Ellen White make mistakes of this nature and, if so, what do such discrepancies teach us?*

Ellen White did not always narrate Biblical events with absolute accuracy, thus demonstrating that she was not inerrant. In this regard

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<sup>3</sup>p. "A-253 indicates Page 253 of the appendix to Ford's document

[53] she had much in common with the Bible prophets, who also were not inerrant. Moses described Hobab as his brother-in-law ([Numbers 10:29](#)), so [Judges 4:11](#) presents a problem. [1 Samuel 16:10, 11](#) indicates that David was Jesse's eighth son, a different figure from that given in [1 Chronicles 2:15](#). [Luke 3:36](#) mentions a Cainan who is not named in [Genesis 11:12](#). Paul's account of the ratification of the first covenant is not entirely in harmony with the Old Testament record. Compare [Hebrews 9:19](#) with [Exodus 24:3-8](#).

These and other similar difficulties that could be cited by no means prove that the Scriptures are unworthy of our trust. The Bible was not written to settle minute details of history, but to establish doctrine, and "for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" ([2 Timothy 3:16](#)). The Bible is an infallible guide to heaven, yet it was written by human beings who, in the providence of God, were sometimes permitted to err in their writing in matters not affecting anyone's salvation. Likewise, Ellen White's humanity was evident from time to time in her writing.

### 59. Mistakes of a Doctrinal Nature

*According to Ford, "Ellen White changed several doctrinal positions" such as the time to begin the Sabbath, the eating of pork, systematic benevolence versus tithing, the meaning of the shut door, the law in Galatians, etc. (Ford, pages 12, 619, 622, 629.) Is this true?*

Ellen White's understanding of some Scriptures did change as a result of Bible study and as she received increased light from the Lord. Several of Ford's examples are valid, but others are not. The Bible writers themselves were wrong at times in their theology and had to be corrected. Peter erroneously interpreted such texts as [Nehemiah 13:1-3](#) and [Hosea 2:23](#) until the Lord straightened him out ([Acts 10](#)). The apostles all misunderstood [Zechariah 13:7](#) and [Isaiah 53:7, 8](#), even when Christ tried to explain His coming crucifixion to them ([Mark 9:31, 32](#)). They grew in their comprehension of the Bible just as others did ([Luke 24:25, 26](#); [John 20:8, 9](#); [Acts 1:6](#)).

[54] The same was true of Ellen White. At times she did not understand certain Bible teachings until these were presented to her in vision. Note the examples given in the next few paragraphs.



## 60. The Use of Swine's Flesh

Ford states, “To one who wished to oppose the use of swine’s flesh, Ellen G. White sent a caution, but in later years when the church was more established, she herself urged what she had earlier condemned” (Ford, Page 622).

The word “condemned” is too strong. Ellen White, in 1858, did not condemn the views of the person who was urging Adventists to abstain from swine’s flesh. Rather, she urged him not to press his views on the infant church to the point where they would cause division. Here is what she said:

“I saw that your views concerning swine’s flesh would prove no injury if you have them to yourselves; but in your judgment and opinion you have made this question a test, and your actions have plainly shown your faith in this matter. If God requires His people to abstain from swine’s flesh, He will convict them on the matter. He is just as willing to show His honest children their duty, as to show their duty to individuals upon whom He has not laid the burden of His work. If it is the duty of the church to abstain from swine’s flesh, God will discover it to more than two or three. He will teach His church their duty.”—[Testimonies for the Church 1:206, 207](#).

Five years later the Lord did exactly that. In the vision of June 6, 1863, at Otsego, Michigan, Ellen White was shown that “God never designed the swine to be eaten under any circumstances” ([Spiritual Gifts 4a:124](#)). She grew in understanding, yet there is no conflict between her 1858 and 1863 statements. (See [Testimonies for the Church 1:206](#), footnote.)

## 61. Time to Begin the Sabbath

Here is Uriah Smith’s explanation of what happened:

“Mrs. white has in two visions been shown something in regard to the time of the commencement of the

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Sabbath. The first was as early as 1847, at Topsham, Maine. In that vision she was shown that to commence the Sabbath at sunrise was wrong. She then heard an angel repeat these words, ‘From even unto even shall you celebrate your Sabbaths.’ Brother Bates was present, and succeeded in satisfying all present that ‘even’ was six o’clock. Mark this: The vision at Topsham did not teach the six o’clock time. It only corrected sunrise time.”

“In the autumn of 1855 Elder J. N. Andrews called on me at Battle Creek, on his way to Iowa, and set before me the Scriptural reasons for commencing the Sabbath at sunset. He had written a clear article upon the subject which he left with me, and which appeared in the *Review* for December 4, 1855. This article, however, before it appeared in the *Review*, was read at the Conference at Battle Creek about that time. At the close of the conference ... Mrs. White had a vision, one item of which was that sunset time was correct. This settled the matter with Brother Bates and others, and general harmony has since prevailed among us upon this point.”—[The Review and Herald, February 25, 1868, Page 168.](#)

Ellen White followed the example of Joseph Bates between 1847 and 1855 in keeping the Sabbath from six to six. After concerted Bible study and her 1855 vision she kept the Sabbath from sunset to sunset. It can readily be seen that she grew in her understanding of the true meaning of Scripture. It can also be seen that her two visions relating to the beginning of the Sabbath were in perfect harmony with each other. (See [Testimonies for the Church 1:116.](#))

## 62. Systematic Benevolence and Tithing

Ellen White was not guilty of a doctrinal contradiction when she endorsed both the systematic benevolence plan and the present tithing system. In Ellen White’s mind the terms “systematic benev-

olence” and “tithing system” were virtually synonymous. (See [Testimonies for the Church 4:469](#).)

“Systematic benevolence” was based on the tithing principle. Property owners were to pay to the church annually one percent of their property value, plus offerings. The one percent was a tithe of a theoretical ten percent interest income represented by the use of the property. Ellen White wrote in 1859 that this plan was “pleasing to God” ([Testimonies for the Church 1:190](#)).

When in 1876 the church formally adopted a tithe policy of ten percent of income rather than one percent of property this did not represent a change in doctrine, but a better method of computing the tithe. See *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Volume 10, Page 1288. Ellen White readily gave her support. In 1881 she wrote, “Of the means which is entrusted to man, God claims a certain portion—a tithe; but He leaves all free to say how much the tithe is, and whether or not they will give more than this” ([Testimonies for the Church 5:149](#)). [56]

### 63. The Law in Galatians

In 1854 J. H. Waggoner took the position that the law of [Galatians 3:24](#) was the moral law alone. Two years later Ellen White was shown in vision that Waggoner was wrong and she wrote and told him so. The Lord did not show Ellen White at that time what the “schoolmaster” in [Galatians 3](#) did represent, but most Adventists felt that the “schoolmaster” must be the ceremonial law since it was not the moral law alone.

The subject was not discussed much further until 1884, when *Signs* editor E. J. Waggoner reopened the matter by advocating his father’s view that the law of [Galatians 3](#) was the moral law alone. Waggoner was strongly opposed in this by Uriah Smith and George I. Butler who were certain that the law in [Galatians 3:24](#) was the ceremonial law.

An open confrontation occurred at the 1888 Minneapolis Conference where Ellen White tried to maintain some semblance of harmony. She refused to fully support either group. “I cannot take my position on either side,” she explained, “until I have studied the question.” (See *Through Crisis to Victory*, Page 292.) While she

favored Waggoner's position over that of Smith and Butler, yet she said that neither of them was completely right. "Neither have all the light upon the law; neither position is perfect" ([Letter 21, 1888](#)).

Shortly after the Minneapolis Conference she wrote that the question of the law in Galatians "should not be handled in a debating style" and that it was "not a vital question and should not be treated as such" ([Manuscript 24, 1888](#)).

Several years more elapsed before the Lord gave Ellen White an understanding of the disputed text. In 1896 she declared, "In this Scripture [[Galatians 3:24](#)], the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law," and in 1900 she wrote, "What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments." This settled the question for all who believed Ellen White as God's messenger. [57] It was not just one law or the other. The whole legal system was represented as the schoolmaster, to "bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." (See *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Volume 6, pages 1110, 1109.)

## 64. The Two Covenants

Ellen White's clearest and most comprehensive discussion of the two covenants is in [Patriarchs and Prophets, 370-373](#), published in 1890. It has yet to be demonstrated that anything she wrote either prior to or after that date is in conflict with the *Patriarchs and Prophets* statement.

## 65. The Shut Door

The true meaning of the phrase "and the door was shut" ([Matthew 25:10](#)) unfolded only gradually to the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. When Christ did not return on October 22, 1844, many Advent believers thought that on that date the door of mercy had been "forever closed to the world" ([Selected Messages 1:63](#)).

Seventeen-year-old Ellen Harmon was one of those who shared this belief. However, she soon changed her mind. About a month after the disappointment, Ellen concluded that the "seventh-month movement" of the autumn of 1844 was not the real midnight cry

of [Matthew 25:6](#) after all. The October 22 date appears for a few weeks to have lost all of its significance for her. James White stated in 1847, “When she received her first vision, December, 1844, she and all the band in Portland, Maine had given up the midnight cry, and shut door, as being in the past” ([A Word to the Little Flock, 22](#); facsimile published in F. D. Nichol’s *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, Page 582). That first vision was intended to reassure the little advent band of God’s leading in the Millerite movement and of the integrity of the October 22 date. (See [Early Writings, 14-20](#).) Ellen was shown three groups of people:

- (a) The living saints, 144,000 in number, who maintained their faith in the October 22 experience.
- (b) Former Millerites who looked upon the 1844 movement as a mistake and who claimed that “it was not God that had led them out so far,” and
- (c) “The wicked world which God had rejected.”

[58]

Ellen misinterpreted this vision. She correctly understood that the day of salvation for the latter two groups was past. For them, the door was shut. (See [Selected Messages 1:62](#).) But she incorrectly concluded that no one could accept Christ after October 22, that only the little flock remaining in the household of faith would be saved, and that everyone else would be lost. She somehow failed to see that the figure 144,000, however interpreted, must surely include more than a few small groups of advent bands. In January, 1845, Ellen Harmon began visiting the little advent bands in Maine and New Hampshire to tell them what she had seen in vision. Concerning her ministry at this time, Otis Nichols wrote William Miller:

“Her message was always attended with the Holy Ghost, and wherever it was received as from the Lord, it broke down and melted their hearts like little children, fed, comforted, strengthened the weak, and encouraged them to hold on to the faith, and the seventh month movement, and that our work was done for the nominal church and the world, and what remained to be done was

for the household of faith.”—Otis Nichols to William Miller, April 20, 1846, White Estate Document File #439b.

In February, 1845, while she was on her first journey to eastern Maine, the Lord gave Ellen another vision which illuminated still further the events of October 22, 1844. (See [Early Writings, 54-56](#).) Concerning this vision she wrote Joseph Bates:

“While in Exeter, Maine, in meeting with Israel Damon, James, and many others, many of them did not believe in a shut door.... There was one sister there that was called very spiritual. She had traveled and been a powerful preacher the most of the time for twenty years. She had been truly a mother in Israel. But a division had risen in the band on the shut door. She had great sympathy, and could not believe the door was shut. (I had known nothing of their difference.) Sister Durben got up to talk. I felt very, very sad.

“At length my soul seemed to be in an agony, and while she was talking I fell from my chair to the floor. It was then I had a view of Jesus rising from His mediatorial throne and going to the holiest as Bridegroom to receive His kingdom.... Most of them received the vision and were settled upon the shut door.”—[Letter 3, 1847](#).

[59] It appears that in 1847—the date of this letter to Bates—Ellen White still held that the door of mercy had been closed for the world in 1844. However, during the next two years, her view of the implications of the shut door enlarged materially, as is evident from the following documentation:

In May, 1848, Ellen White wrote the Hastings family:

“How are the children? Do they feel their acceptance with God? Dear children, do not rest a moment if you do not.... I do love you, children, and I want you to be saved in the kingdom and enjoy the beauty of the earth made new.”—[Letter 1, 1848](#).

In the November, 1848, vision when she saw “streams of light that went clear round the world” ([Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 125](#)), Joseph Bates recorded the following words as Ellen White spoke them:

“The angels are holding the four winds.... The saints are not all sealed.... Yea, publish the things thou has seen and heard, and the blessing of God will attend.... The shut door we have had. God has taught and taught, but that experience is not the seal.”—Quoted in *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, Page 249.

In a vision on January 5, 1849, Ellen White “saw that Jesus would not leave the Most Holy Place until every case was decided either for salvation or destruction” ([The Present Truth, August, 1849, Page 22](#)).

On March 24, 1849, she was shown that,

“Jesus had shut the door in the Holy Place and no man can open it, and that He had opened the door in the Most Holy Place and no man can shut it. And that since Jesus had opened the door in the Most Holy Place the commandments have been shining out and God has been testing His people on the holy Sabbath.”—[Letter 5, 1849](#). See [Early Writings, 42-45](#).

On January 11, 1850, Ellen White joyfully reports,

“O my brother and sister, I wish all of God’s people could get a sight of it as God has shown it me. The work of the Lord is going on. Souls are coming in to the truth and soon the work will be all done. Keep up good courage, hope in God, let nothing weigh thee down. We have the truth. We know it. Praise the Lord. I saw yesterday our work was not to the shepherds who have rejected the former messages, but to the honest deceived who are led astray.”—[Letter 18, 1850](#).

By January, 1850, Ellen White had reached two firm conclusions. These were that on October 22, 1844:

[60]

- (1) The door of mercy was closed for some individuals but not for the world at large, and
- (2) While one door in heaven had been shut, another door had been opened. The shut door represented the completion of one phase of Christ's heavenly ministry while the open door represented the beginning of the second phase of his heavenly ministry. The Sabbath-keeping Adventists came to be known as the "Sabbath and shut-door" people. That is, their two unique doctrines were that the seventh day was the Sabbath and the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary began on October 22, 1844. The "shut door" had become a catch phrase for "faith in October 22, 1844."

Ellen White continued firmly to hold this concept of the "shut door" throughout her life. In 1888 and again in 1911 she emphasized that, after having completed eighteen centuries of first-apartment ministry, Christ entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary on October 22, 1844. (See [The Great Controversy, 420-422.](#))

In the five years from December, 1844, to January, 1850, Ellen White had gained a much clearer and broader understanding of the phrase "and the door was shut" in [Matthew 25](#)—admittedly, a fundamental change. However, this in no way invalidates the reliability of her visions. Years later she stoutly defended the integrity of those early visions when she declared:

"With my brethren and sisters, after the time passed in forty-four, I did believe no more sinners would be converted. But I never had a vision that no more sinners would be converted."—[Selected Messages 1:74.](#)

Sometimes, she explained, the Lord gave her several visions on a particular subject before she understood it. She declared:

"Often representations are given me which at first I do not understand. But after a time they are made plain



by a repeated presentation of those things that I did not at first comprehend, in ways that make their meaning clear and unmistakable.”—[Selected Messages 3:56](#).

The full meaning of her first vision was now plain. Those who “saw the light of the first and second angels’ messages and rejected that light, were left in darkness.” But “those who did not see the light, had not the guilt of its rejection” ([Selected Messages 1:63](#)). The phrase “all the wicked world which God had rejected” referred only to those who had rejected light. Progressive revelation on God’s part had been accompanied by progressive understanding on Ellen White’s part.

In order to avoid further misunderstanding, when she published her 1846 broadside in her first book in 1851 she dropped out the “wicked world” phrase. Compare [Early Writings, 15](#), with [Selected Messages 1:62](#). (See [The Great Controversy, 429](#).) [61]

### 66. The Parable of the Ten Virgins

*Ford states that Ellen White’s application of [Matthew 25:1-12](#) to the Millerite Movement in [The Great Controversy](#) is “one of principle rather than one of exegesis,” but he refers to this application as an “erroneous position” and says it is “not Scriptural.” He maintains that, “While in [Great Controversy](#) Ellen G. White equated [Daniel 8:14](#) with [Matthew 25:1-13](#), and pointed to 1844 as the fulfillment of both, in later writing on [Matthew 25:1-13](#) she omitted that application entirely, and pointed rather to the end of the world for the fulfillment” (Ford, pages 596, 544, 659). Is there any truth to this allegation?*

Ellen white applied the parable of the ten virgins to the Millerite movement in [The Spirit of Prophecy 4:248-250](#), published in 1884, and in [The Great Controversy](#), published in 1888 and 1911. She applied the parable to the church that lives just before Christ’s Second Coming in [Christ’s Object Lessons](#), published in 1900. It is significant that while she made some changes in the 1911 edition of [The Great Controversy](#), as noted, she did not change her interpretation of the parable of the ten virgins. She obviously still believed that it was valid. So it is not correct to say that after 1900, “she omitted that

application entirely.” Who is to say that of these two applications of the parable one must be erroneous? [Matthew 24:4-14](#) has a dual application. Why not [Matthew 25:1-12](#) as well?

### 67. The Shaking Of the Powers of Heaven

*In [The Great Controversy](#), 306-308 and 332-334, Ellen White states that the signs in the sun, moon, and stars were fulfilled in 1780 and 1833. In [Early Writings](#), 41, she says that the powers of heaven (the sun, moon, and stars) will be shaken at the voice of God, which is still a future event. Ford asserts that these two prophecies point to the same event. (See Ford, pages 547-549.) Is this true?*

[62] No. In her *Great Controversy* account Ellen White is discussing the heavenly signs referred to in [Luke 21:25](#), whereas in *Early Writings* she is discussing the shaking of the powers of heaven mentioned in [Luke 21:26](#). These are different, not the same, events. The sun was not “shaken” when it was darkened, nor was the moon “shaken” when it looked like blood. Ellen White states that “the sun, moon, and stars will be moved out of their places” at the voice of God. This is clearly a different set of events from the darkening of the sun, etc.

### 68. The Lisbon Earthquake and Signs in the Heavens

*Ford maintains that Ellen White’s explanation of [Revelation 6:12, 13](#) and [Luke 21:25](#) by “allusions to the Lisbon earthquake, the Dark Day, and the falling of the stars, is an application suitable for the people first addressed Adventists of the nineteenth-century. That application is passé in the twentieth century” (Ford, Page 546). Do those events still have significance for our day?*

Ellen White did not believe that her references to the events of 1755, 1780, and 1833 were passé in the twentieth century. In 1911 she made some changes in the text of *The Great Controversy*, but did not change her interpretation of these three signs. The 1833 star shower may seem like ancient history to some people, but in terms of the total history of the earth, it is quite a recent event and assures us that the Lord’s coming really is near.

We should also remember that the Lord was prepared to come back to this earth many years ago and that His return has been delayed because of human failure. (See [Evangelism, 694-697.](#))

### 69. The Astronomy Visions

*Ford states that “astronomers know nothing of a great open space in Orion, and the planetary moons numbered in an early Ellen G. White vision are no longer correct by modern knowledge” (Ford, pages 620-621). How accurate are Ellen White’s statements in [Early Writings, 40-41](#)?*

We ask, how complete is our knowledge of Orion? And how can anyone say that the number of moons Ellen White mentioned is not correct when there is no way of knowing what planet she saw? No one can prove that her statements are wrong. A thorough discussion of the planetary moons may be found in F. D. Nichol’s *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, pages 91-101.

[63]

### 70. Ballenger’s Letter Not Answered

*Ford quotes a five-page letter addressed by A. F. Ballenger in 1909 to Ellen White in which he asked for a Scriptural refutation of his views on the sanctuary. Ford notes that this letter was “one which did not receive a personal reply” (Ford, pages 64-69). Why did Ellen White not answer Ballenger?*

Ellen White never attempted at any time to write a detailed exegetical commentary on any passage of Scripture. She left this type of exercise to others. At the age of eighty two it was all the more necessary for her to leave argumentative correspondence and the defense of the faith in the hands of the brethren. Ellen White had fully expressed her views about Ballenger’s teachings in 1905, 1906, and 1907. In previous years she had set forth Bible-supported presentations of the sanctuary truth in a number of her books. There was little she could add in 1909. (See the 31-page Manuscript Release #760, “The Integrity of the Sanctuary Truth.”)

## G—Ellen White As a Writer

### 71. The Plagiarism Charge

*The Chicago Tribune of November 23, 1980, quotes Walter Rea as saying, “Ellen G. White was a plagiarist.” Is there anything to this charge?*

Plagiarism, as only understood, includes the act of one author in borrowing from another without giving credit, the practice of deception by passing off the borrowed material as one’s own, and the deprival of the original author of recognition and his just financial benefits.

It is a fact that Ellen White did use the works of others to some extent while engaged in her writing, but there is no evidence of intention to deceive on her part, nor is there evidence that any other author was ever deprived of his legitimate benefits because of her activities. No publisher or author in any land has ever brought or threatened to bring suit against Ellen White on the ground that the rights of publishers or authors had been infringed upon. (See *Brief Statements Regarding the Writings of Ellen G. White*,<sup>4</sup> Page 14; also see F. D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, pages 403-467 for a full discussion of the plagiarism issue.)

### 72. Copyright Laws and Plagiarism A Century Ago

*Did copyright laws exist one hundred years ago? Did the Whites know about these laws? Did they understand what constituted plagiarism?*

Yes, copyright laws did exist, and the White family, as well as Adventists in general, were aware of these laws. They also understood what the word “plagiarism” meant. In 1864 Uriah Smith editorialized in the *Review*:

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<sup>4</sup>Referred to as Brief Statements in the following pages

“Plagiarism: This is a word that is used to signify ‘literary theft,’ or the taking [of] the productions of another and passing them off as one’s own.

“In the World’s Crisis of August 23, 1864, we find a piece of poetry duly headed, ‘For the World’s Crisis,’ and signed, ‘Luthera B. Weaver.’ What was our surprise, therefore, to find this piece our familiar hymn, ‘Long upon the mountains weary have the scattered flock been torn.’

[65]

“This piece was written by Annie R. Smith, and was first published in the *Review*, Volume ii, No. 8, December 9, 1851, and has been in our hymn book ever since the first edition thereafter issued.

“We are perfectly willing that pieces from the *Review*, or any of our books should be published to any extent, and all we ask is, that simple justice be done us by due credit being given.”—[The Review and Herald, September 6, 1864, Page 120.](#)

Edson White who had become a publisher in his own right, once advised his younger brother Willie about copyrights on hymns:

“In regard to copyrights: You are mistaken when you think they have only a general copyright on the [hymn] book. Every original piece [of music] is copyrighted. Even if not I receive advice from the Librarian of Congress in the matter. He says a general copyright will hold every piece in the book unless they were to be published separately. I wanted words from Biglow and Main for an Anthem, but did not dare to use them until I had written. I would advise you to be very careful about infringing on copyrights. The world will soon use everything they can command against us, and what they might now allow to pass might in the future injure us very much.”—James Edson White to W. C. White. May 21. 1878. The editor of the *Youth’s Instructor* in 1895 expressed his chagrin at being deceived by certain

contributors to the paper. He protested strongly: “Articles have been received in good faith as original, which afterward to our great mortification were found to have been copied bodily from another’s writings.” The editor referred to this practice as plagiarism and thievery. He stated:

“A plagiarist is one who pretends to have written an original article, but who has borrowed it—perhaps stolen would be a more appropriate word—from another person. Some people who would think it a great sin to steal a bushel of apples or a dollar in money, have little hesitation to steal the written thoughts and expressions of others, and then palm them off as their own. Such persons need to have their moral senses sharpened, so that they shall realize that it is as truly a theft to steal an article from a book or paper and send it to the press as original, as it is to steal anything else.”

In conclusion, he appealed to his readers:

“Will all friends of the *Instructor* write freely their own best and choicest thoughts, and quote from other writers if they desire, but let it be clearly known what is original with them and what is not?”—[The Youth’s Instructor, May 2, 1895](#).

[66]

### 73. Why Quotation Marks Were Omitted

*In view of the fact that the Whites were acquainted with copyright laws, why did Ellen White not always use quotation marks and give credit to other authors when she copied material from them?*

In spite of the existence of copyright laws it was not uncommon a century ago for writers, both religious and secular, to borrow from one another without giving specific credit. In his *History in the United States 1800-1860* (Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), George Callcott states:

“The second major assault by modern scholars on the historians of the early nineteenth century centered

about plagiarism, the practice of using in their own works the same phraseology as someone else had used. The early nineteenth-century historian would have been dismayed by the attack, would have pleaded *nolo contendere*, and would simply have pointed out that he had never pretended to be original when he could find someone else who had satisfactorily said what he had in mind.

“One of the first to be attacked was William Gordon for using material from the *Annual Register* without quotation marks. After citing his sources, a typical writer stated that he ‘would here publicly acknowledge that he has often copied their language as well as their facts, and has not been particular to disfigure his page with quotation marks.’ Another glibly explained that his ‘first five chapters ... are from the admirably written historical sketch in *Martin’s Gazetteer*.’ Others openly stated that they ‘had not scrupled’ to copy a well-written previous study. That they ‘used substantially another’s language’. That they utilized the work of others ‘without introducing my authorities’; that if a good source was found they had ‘adopted the phraseology of the author entire’; and that they had ‘made use of them as public property.’

“The early nineteenth-century historian felt no need to argue for originality, and he would not have understood why he should make a fetish of reworking material when what he wanted to say already had been better said by another...

“Historians usually felt flattered rather than insulted when their words were used by another. The period is remarkable for the lack of scholarly rivalry, and writers who borrowed from each other remained on the warmest terms.”—pages 134-136.

In 1863 Ingram Cobbin wrote:

[67]

“All the commentators have drawn largely from the fathers, especially from St. Augustine; and most of them have made general property of Patrick, Lowth, and Whitby. Poole has exhausted the old continental writers; Henry has made very free with Bishop Hall and others; Scott and Benson have enriched their pages abundantly from Henry. Gill has translated the spirit of Poole’s ‘Synopsis,’ but he most generally gives his authorities. Adam Clarke and Davidson have been much indebted to all the best critics, though the former does not always mention his obligations, and the latter never. But his preface to his admirable ‘Pocket Commentary’ is an honest confession that he pretends to be no more than a compiler.”—Quoted by F. D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, Page 406.

In 1873 W.P.P. Noble published his exceptional book, *The Prophets of the Bible*, with the following preface:

“In preparing these sketches, the writer has freely used any material suited to his object. He acknowledges his indebtedness to various writers who have touched the same great theme in any of its parts. The works of many leading authors have been before him, and used so far as they could be made available for his purpose. It has been his effort to bring the substance of a number of books before a class of readers to whom these authorities are not accessible. And with this end in view, anything in other writers that seemed likely to impart additional interest to the reading of the Scriptures has been incorporated, so far as space permitted.

“In carrying out his plan, he has not thought it necessary to load the pages with foot-notes, or the letter-press with quotation marks, but deems it sufficient to give this general credit at the outset.”

Conybeare and Howson, from whom Ellen White was accused of copying, borrowed from other writers without giving credit or using



quotation marks. (See Nichol, pages 424, 425.) D. M. Canright, who in 1887 condemned Mrs. White for this practice, borrowed extensively himself in an 1878 publication of his own, with no indication in the preface or anywhere else in the book that he was doing so. (See Nichol, Page 408.) Raymond Cottrell states that when he was working on *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, he had occasion to compare thirty commentaries on 1 Corinthians with one another. To his amazement he discovered that many of these respected commentators had “copied significant amounts of material from one another without once giving credit.” Cottrell concluded that “nineteenth century literary ethics, even among the best writers, approved of, or at least did not seriously question, generous literary borrowing without giving credit.” (“The Literary Relationship Between *The Desire of Ages*, by Ellen G. White, and *The Life of Christ*, by William Hanna,” Page 6).

As late as 1920 the *Review and Herald* published W. W. Prescott’s college textbook, *The Doctrine of Christ*, which had quotation marks, but no credit lines for more than 700 of the 1000 paragraphs of borrowed materials. What the publishers would not even consider for a moment today apparently was quite acceptable in 1920. Prescott defended this liberal borrowing from other authors without giving them credit. In his introductory note he stated:

“All quotations in the notes taken from the spirit of prophecy are duly credited to book and page. The other quotations have been selected from many sources, but as they are not cited as authority, but are used merely for the expression of the thought no credit has been given.”—*The Doctrine of Christ*. Page 3.

[68]

#### 74. Why Credit Lines Were Included

*When told that she had not been fair to the authors she had drawn from in her 1888 edition of The Great Controversy, what was Ellen White’s response?*

While most of the sentences and paragraphs in the 1888 edition of *The Great Controversy* quoted directly were in quotation marks, credit had not been given to the authors cited. The opportunity to

include quotation marks in the few instances where needed, and to insert credit lines, came when the type was reset in 1910. W. C. White wrote A. G. Daniells at the time:

“When I presented to Mother questions as to what we should do regarding the quotations from historians and the references to these historians, she was prompt and clear in her opinion that it ought to give proper credit wherever we can.”—W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, June 20, 1910; Document File #83b.

### 75. Was Ellen White Deceptive?

*Some people have accused Ellen White of doing her writing at night and early in the morning “because she didn’t want anyone else to know that she was copying from other authors.” Is there anything to this accusation?*

There is no truth whatsoever in this insinuation of deception. Ellen White tells us many times why she wrote when she did. The following statement is typical:

“Wednesday, I could not sleep after half past one a.m. My mind was burdened and in the visions of the night subjects were pressed upon my mind and I awoke. I could not find relief until I arose and commenced to trace upon paper that which burdened me, which in object lessons was presented before me. Thursday I slept until half past two o’clock and then I arose and again relieved my mind by writing.”—[Manuscript 74, 1894](#).

It was Ellen White’s custom, especially in her later years, to retire early and rise early. She did her writing when her mind was fresh and clear, when the house was quiet and she was free from disturbance.

[69] If, as alleged, Ellen White was anxious to hide the knowledge of her literary borrowing, why did she borrow from standard works which were in the libraries of many of her readers? D’Aubigne, Wylie, Conybeare and Howson, and Geikie were household words

to many Adventists. If Ellen White wished to keep the knowledge of her borrowing a secret, why did she urge the prospective buyers of her *Sketches From the Life of Paul* also to acquire Conybeare and Howson's work on Paul? Her book was published in June, 1883. In the [The Signs of the Times, February 22, 1883](#), she highly recommended Conybeare and Howson's volume to *Signs* readers as a "book of great merit." In that year 2,000 copies of the Conybeare and Howson book were distributed free as premiums to all subscribers. Three thousand copies of Geikie were distributed on the same basis in 1881-82. (See *Brief Statements*, pages 14, 15.)

She also recommended d'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation*, from which she borrowed extensively, as an ideal holiday gift. (See the [The Review and Herald, December 26, 1882](#).)

When Ellen White drew from Uriah Smith's publication on the sanctuary in 1884 and 1888 she was using a book that was well known to Adventists. She obviously did not mind if her readers noticed parallels between her works and the works of others. The accusations or inferences that Ellen White was deceptive in her literary borrowing cannot be supported.

### 76. "The Words...Are My Own"

The Chicago Tribune, on November 25, 1980, stated: "White, a health reformer who said she experienced divine visions, always maintained that her religious principles were inspired by God. In 1867 she wrote: '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.'" Walter Rea is then quoted as saying, "We are faced with choosing to live with the bitter truth rather than with a sweet lie." Rea is quoted by the Long Beach Independent Press Telegram, of the same date, as saying, "Why did she lie? I don't know." What did Mrs. White mean when she said that the words she employed were her own?

Ellen White had written that the reform dress should "clear the filth of the streets an inch or two" and "should reach somewhat below the top of the boot to about nine inches from the floor" ([Testimonies](#)

for the Church 1:458, 461, 521). When one of her readers thought he saw a contradiction in these three expressions, she explained:

“The proper distance from the bottom of the dress to the floor was not given to me in inches. Neither was I shown ladies’ gaiter boots; but three companies of females passed before me, with their dresses as follows with respect to length:

“The first were of fashionable length, burdening the limbs, impeding the step, and sweeping the street and gathering its filth; the evil results of which I have fully stated. This class, who were slaves to fashion, appeared feeble and languid.

“The dress of the second class which passed before me was in many respects as it should be. The limbs were well clad. They were free from the burdens which the tyrant, Fashion, had imposed upon the first class; but had gone to that extreme in the short dress as to disgust and prejudice good people, and destroy in a great measure their own influence.

“A third class passed before me with cheerful countenances, and free, elastic step. Their dress was the length I have described as proper, modest and healthful. It cleared the filth of the street and sidewalk a few inches under all circumstances, such as ascending and descending steps, etc.

“As I have before stated, the length was not given me in inches, and I was not shown a lady’s boot. And here I would state that 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. As I wrote upon the subject of dress the view of those three companies revived in my mind as plain as when I was viewing them in vision; but I was left to describe the length of the proper dress in my own

language the best I could.”—[The Review and Herald](#),  
[October 8, 1867](#), pages 260, 261.

Ellen White was saying, in effect, “The exact wording of my testimonies is not given to me by God. Sometimes I am given pictures without any words at all. When writing I have to choose the words and expressions myself. The words are mine, not God’s.” It was precisely because God did not dictate His messages word-for-word that she felt the need of help from other writers in order to express herself in the best way possible. It is unfair to Ellen White to take a statement she made in a specific context and make it appear to mean the exact opposite of what she intended.

## 77. Why Ellen White Borrowed From Others

[71]

*Why did Ellen White borrow materials from other authors?*

There are at least four answers to this question.

First, it was to help her express well what she had seen and heard in vision. She often alluded to her sense of inadequacy at the task of putting divine thoughts and scenes into human language. With only three grades of formal schooling, she found that reading widely aided her. She was on the alert for clearer and better expressions to use in the composition of her articles and books.

Had her thoughts been ordinary ones, she might have had a far easier time writing them out. But in vision she had been shown, for example, the pathos of the Cross, and found herself in anguish to find the best words with which to communicate the utter depths of meaning and feeling with which she had been inspired. When she found phrases in other Christian writers that helped her toward expressing what she felt, she was grateful. W. C. White states:

“In the writing of her books, she has sometimes found it very difficult and laborious to put into language the scenes presented to her; and when she has found in the language of another a correct representation of the thought presented to her, she has sometimes copied sentences and paragraphs,—feeling that she had a perfect right to do this; that it was her privilege to utilize

the correct statements of other writers, of the scenes that have been presented to her.”—W. C. White to J. J. Gorrell, May 13, 1904.

Second, she borrowed historical, geographical, chronological, and other details not revealed to her in vision. W. C. White writes, as noted above:

“In some of the historical matters such as are brought out in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, and in *Acts of the Apostles* and in *The 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](#).

Ellen White laid no claim to having received all the minutiae of her historical information in vision. She stated:

“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.”—[The Great Controversy, xiii](#).

[72] Third, at times the Lord led her to the discovery and use of beautiful gems of truth in the works of other authors. W. C. White and D. E. Robinson have written:

“In her early experience when she was sorely distressed over the difficulty of putting into human language the revelations of truths that had been imparted to her, she was reminded of the fact that all wisdom and knowledge comes from God and she was assured that God would bestow grace and guidance.

“She was told that in the reading of religious books and journals, she would find precious gems of truth expressed in acceptable language, and that she would

be given help from heaven to recognize these and to separate them from the rubbish of error with which she would sometimes find them associated.”—*Brief Statements*, Page 6.

In using gems found in the writings of others, Ellen White no doubt saw herself as following a precedent set by the Lord Himself. Christ gave us the golden rule ([Matthew 7:12](#)), but Rabbi Hillel, a generation earlier 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 in the Lord’s prayer may be found in earlier Jewish ritual prayers known as Ha-Kaddish. (See *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Volume 5, pages 346, 356.)

Concerning Christ’s use of such works, Ellen White wrote:

“Christ was the originator of all the ancient gems of truth. Through the work of the enemy these truths had been displaced. They had been disconnected from their true position, and placed in the framework of error. Christ’s work was to readjust and establish the precious gems in the framework of truth.

“Christ Himself could use any of these old truths without borrowing the smallest particle, for He had originated them all. He had cast them into the minds and thoughts of each generation, and when He came to our world, He rearranged and vitalized the truths which had become dead, making them more forcible for the benefit of future generations. It was Jesus Christ who had the power of rescuing the truths from the rubbish, and again giving them to the world with more than their original freshness and power.”—[Manuscript 25, 1890](#). (See also [The Desire of Ages, 287, 288](#).)

Fourth, she appropriated some of the doctrinal writings of her fellow-workers, since they had developed their doctrinal concepts by mutual study. W. C. White and D. E. Robinson state:

[73]

“When tracts and pamphlets were published, the expositions of truth therein presented frequently represented the results of united, concerted study, and the forms of expression by the several writers were very similar and sometimes identical. All felt that the truths to be presented were common property and wherever one could help another or get help from another in the expression of Biblical truths, it was considered right to do so. Consequently there were many excellent statements of present truth copied by one writer from another. And no man said that aught which he wrote was exclusively his own.

“In the process of time many things which Sister white wrote and said were used by others without credit, and she in turn when dealing with prophetic exposition or doctrinal statements felt free to use without credit the statements and teachings of leading writers among the pioneers when she found in their writings the exact thought that she wished to present.... It is in the delineation in prophetic and doctrinal exposition that we find that she used the words of others or had closely paraphrased them.”—*Brief Statements*, pages 10, 19.

In her Introduction to *The Great Controversy*, first in 1888 and again in 1911, Ellen White acknowledged her borrowing not only from historians, but also from “those carrying forward the work of reform in our time” (Page xiv). She here appears to have in mind such writers as Uriah Smith, J. N. Andrews, and James White.

### 78. Ellen White Acknowledges Her Literary Borrowing

*Did Mrs. White ever acknowledge her literary borrowing elsewhere than in the introduction to The Great Controversy?*

Not that we are aware of. *The Great Controversy* was the first of the five “Conflict” books to be published, and it is the only one to contain an introduction from her own pen. It may be that Ellen White intended for *The Great Controversy* introduction to be considered as an introduction to the whole series of five books.



Ellen White seems not to have considered paraphrasing an irregular procedure for an author, or that this should require acknowledgment. W. C. White speaks of her “habit of using parts of sentences found in the writings of others and filling in a part of her own composition.” He says that this “habit” was not questioned by anyone until about the year 1885. Even then, he says, “when critics pointed out this feature of her work as a reason for questioning the gift which had enabled her to write, she paid little attention to it” ([Selected Messages 3:460](#)).

W. C. White once agreed with his brother that it would be proper to use the paraphrasing method, as paraphrasing would eliminate the need for quotation marks and, presumably, of credit lines. He advised Edson:

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“Regarding ‘Past, Present and Future’ [an Edson White book] we are very much interested in what you have written regarding the suggestions made by our brethren in Washington and your intention to rewrite those portions of the book in which numerous quotations are made from Mother’s writings and other writers of our denominational books.... I am inclined to believe that Dores Robinson has a good gift for this work of restating the truths brought out in Mother’s writings and the writings of other authors so that it can be used without quotations.”—W. C. White to J. E. White, March 19, 1913.

### 79. Borrowing from Uriah Smith on the Sanctuary

*The Los Angeles Times of October 23, 1980, states that some of Desmond Ford’s arguments against the Adventist doctrine of the investigative judgment “were based on the evidence of literary borrowing by White for her three chapters on the heavenly Investigative Judgment from earlier writings by fellow Adventists Uriah Smith and J. N. Andrews.” The Times article then quotes Ford as saying, “It was Rea who first mentioned the parallels to me. Not only was sentence after sentence copied or paraphrased, but her sources*

contained errors which she repeated.” How similar is Mrs. White’s account of the sanctuary and the judgment to that of Uriah Smith?

In her first paragraph in [The Great Controversy, 409](#), Ellen White used snatches of wording from six pages of Smith’s book. Note the comparisons given below. These are drawn from Delmer Johnson’s study, “A Comparison of Chapter XXIII of *The Great Controversy*, 1911 ed. by Ellen G. White and Uriah Smith’s 2nd 1877 ed. of *The Sanctuary and the Twenty Three Hundred Days of Daniel VIII, 14*.” In evaluating the significance of these parallels, the reader may wish to refer to the fourth point mentioned under question 77.

Ellen White, <a href="#">The Great Controversy, 409</a>	Uriah Smith, <i>The Sanctuary</i> , Chapter One
The Scripture which above all others <i>had been</i> both the foundation and <i>the central pillar of the advent faith</i> was the declaration:	Let us then say, by way of anticipation, that the sanctuary is a great <i>central</i> object in the plan of salvation. p. 10.
“ <i>Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.</i> ” <a href="#">Daniel 8:14</a> . <i>These had been familiar words to all believers in the Lord’s soon coming.</i>	The sanctuary occupies this <i>central</i> position. In it the

	great truths of revelation find their focal point. p. 11.
By lips of thousands was <i>this prophecy</i> repeated as <i>the watchword of their faith</i> . All felt that upon the events therein foretold depended <i>their brightest expectations and most cherished hopes</i> .	It has led them to make a full surrender of positions which were once acknowledged <i>to be the ground and pillar of the Advent faith</i> . p. 24

<p><i>These prophetic days had been shown to terminate in the autumn of 1844.</i></p>	<p><i>“Unto two thousand and three hundred days then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” were household words with every happy believer in the Lord’s soon coming. They were emblazoned on the shield of every soldier in the Advent ranks. They were joyfully uttered from many lips as the watchword of their most ardent desires and their brightest hopes. p. 17</i></p>
<p>In common with the rest of the Christian world, Adventists then held that <i>the earth, or some portion of it, was the sanctuary</i>. They understood that <i>the cleansing of the sanctuary was the purification of the earth by the fires of the last great day, and that this would take place at the second advent</i>. Hence the conclusion that <i>Christ would return to the earth in 1844</i>.</p>	<p>Arguments <i>had been</i> produced, invulnerable to all the attacks of opposers, and entirely satisfactory to all lovers of the Advent doctrine at that time, that the <i>2300 days would end in 1844</i>. p. 20.</p>

<p><i>But the appointed time had passed, and the Lord had not appeared.</i></p>	<p><i>The sanctuary is the earth, or at least some portion of the earth. Its cleansing is to be by fire. But the renovation of the earth by fire is to take place only at the second coming of the Lord. Therefore the Lord will come at the termination of the 2300 days. The point of time at length came; but the Lord did not. p. 20.</i></p>
<p>The believers knew that God's word could not fail; their interpretation of the prophecy must be at fault; but <i>where</i> was the <i>mistake</i>?</p>	<p>God cannot be the author of the confusion that has existed since that time in some branches of the Advent body. p. 20.</p>

[75] *Where had the mistake been made?* p. 20.

Johnson has drawn the following conclusion as to how Ellen White probably used Smith:

[76] “It would seem reasonable to assume that during the years between her 1858 presentation of the sanctuary and the time that she wrote 4SP [*Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. IV], Ellen White obtained a copy of Uriah Smith's 1877 edition of *The Sanctuary* and read it. She probably found Smith's work to be ‘a ready and forcible presentation of the subject.’ Smith provided some historical details and a convenient description of the interior of the earthly sanctuary. She must have remembered this when she sat down to write in 1884 and turned to *The Sanctuary* for aid in presenting the subject which she said, in 1858, she had seen in vision. She also used her Bible and perhaps a concordance as she composed this chapter. In 1888 she also used 4SP and often copied large portions of it verbatim.

“It would appear that Ellen White read a chapter or two of Smith’s book and then wrote a few paragraphs on the subject. As she wrote she may have turned back to some especially helpful places. It is evident, though, that she did not simply ‘copy’ *The Sanctuary*. She thought between the time she read and the time she wrote. There is not a single sentence, other than Biblical quotations, in which Smith has been quoted verbatim. At times she would summarize a page in a single sentence. In some places, she summarized whole chapters with a sentence. On other occasions, when the appearance of the interior of the sanctuary and the service of the earthly day of atonement were being described, she took the liberty to follow him more closely.”—Delmer Johnson’s *Comparison etc.*, pages 54, 55, White Estate Document File #615.

### 80. Examples of Word for Word Copying

*Is Ellen White’s use of Uriah Smith typical of the way she used other authors or are there examples of closer word-for-word copying, possibly of whole sentences?*

Ellen White’s use of Smith was quite typical of her method of borrowing. There are, however, some cases of very close copying or dependency. Several examples are given below:

Other Authors	Ellen White
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<p>“The eagle of the Alps is sometimes beaten down by the tempest into the narrow defiles of the mountains. The clouds in black and angry masses sweep between the mighty bird and the sunny heights where she builds her nests and basks in the full day. For a while she dashes to and fro, buffeting the storm with her strong wings and waking the echoes of the mountains with her wild cry, vainly endeavoring to</p>	<p>“The eagle of the Alps is sometimes beaten down by the tempest into the narrow defiles of the mountains. Storm clouds shut in this mighty bird of the forest, their dark masses separating her from the sunny heights where she has made her home. Her efforts to escape seem fruitless. She dashes to and</p>
<p>find some way out of her dark and high-walled prison.”—Daniel March, <i>Our Father’s House</i>, p. 254.</p>	<p>fro, beating the air with her strong wings, and waking the mountain echoes with her cries.”—<a href="#">Education</a>, 118.</p>
<p>“The great want of this age is men. Men who are not for sale. Men who are honest, sound from center to circumference, true to the heart’s core—men who will condemn wrong in a friend or foe, in themselves as well as others. Men whose consciences are as steady as the needle to the pole. Men who will stand for the right if the heavens totter and the earth reel.”—Anon. in <a href="#">The Review and Herald</a>, January 24, 1871, p. 47.</p>	<p>“The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.”—<a href="#">Education</a>, 57.</p>

<p>“His name was to be their watchword, their badge of distinction, the principle of their piety, the bond of their union, the end of their actions, the authority for their conduct, and the source of their success. Nothing was to be recognized or received in his kingdom which did not bear the superscription of his name.”—John Harris, <i>The Great Teacher</i> (1842 ed.), p. 32.</p>	<p>“Christ’s name was to be their watchword, their badge of distinction, their bond of union, the authority for their course of action, and the source of their success. Nothing was to be recognized in His kingdom that did not bear His name and superscription.”—<a href="#">The Acts of the Apostles, 28</a>.</p>
<p>“He could have uttered a single sentence, which, by furnishing a key to many a mystery, and affording a glimpse of arcane before unknown, would have collected and concentrated around it the busy thoughts of each successive generation to the close of time...He disdained not the repetition of old and familiar truths, provided his introduction to them would subserve his grand design; for, though he proposed to erect a second temple of truth, the glory of which should eclipse the splendor of the first, he deigned to appropriate whatever of the</p>	<p>“He could have opened mysteries which patriarchs and prophets desired to look into, which human curiosity has been impatiently desirous of understanding....Jesus did not disdain to repeat old, familiar truths; for He was the author of these truths. He was the glory of the temple. Truths which had been lost sight of, which had been misplaced, misinterpreted, and disconnected from their pure position, He separated from the companionship of</p>

<p>ancient materials remained available. Truths, which the lapse of time had seen displaced and disconnected from their true positions, as stars are said to have wandered from their primal signs, he recalled and established anew; and principles which had faded, disappeared, and been lost, as stars are said to have become extinct, he rekindled and resphered, and commanded them to stand fast forever.”—<i>Ibid.</i>, p. 51.</p>	<p>error; and showing them as precious jewels in their own bright luster, He reset them in their proper framework, and commanded them to stand fast forever.”—<a href="#">Fundamentals of Christian Education, 237</a>.</p>
<p>“Drawing aside the veil which concealed his glory from our eyes, it shows him in his high and holy place, not in a state of silence and solitude, but surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of holy, happy beings, and every one of them waiting to do his bidding; not in a state of inactivity and moral indifference, but in a state of active communication with every part of his vast dominions.”—<i>Ibid.</i>, p. 61.</p>	<p>“The Bible shows us God in His high and holy place, not in a state of inactivity, not in silence and solitude, but surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of holy beings, all waiting to do His will. Through these messengers He is in active communication with every part of His dominion.”—<a href="#">The Ministry of Healing, 417</a>.</p>



<p>“He came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment in the temple of creation, that every worshipper might have free and equal access to the God of the temple.”—<i>Ibid.</i>, p. 71.</p>	<p>“Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God.”—<a href="#">Christ’s Object Lessons, 386.</a></p>
<p>“He raised the veil of the past eternity, carried back their thoughts through dateless ages before the world began, towards the unimaginable and awful place where God dwells,—assuring them that there never was a period when he was not there.”—<i>Ibid.</i>, p. 80.</p>	<p>“Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God.”—<a href="#">Evangelism, 615.</a></p>
<p>“The Father demonstrates his infinite love to Christ, by receiving and welcoming the friends of Christ as his own friends. He has pledged himself to do so, and he is so complacently delighted with Christ,—so fully satisfied with the atonement he has made,—feels himself so unspeakably glorified by the incarnation and life, the death and mediation, of Christ, by all that he has done for the honor of</p>	<p>“And the Father demonstrates His infinite love for Christ, who paid our ransom with His blood, by receiving and welcoming Christ’s friends as His friends. He is satisfied with the atonement made. He is glorified by the incarnation, the life, death, and mediation of His Son.”—<a href="#">Testimonies for the Church 6:354.</a></p>

<p>the divine government and the salvation of man,—that, if I may say so, he has thrown open his heart and his heaven to all the friends of Christ.”—<i>Ibid.</i>, p. 107.</p>	
<p>“Other blessings are desired; but this, which would bring all blessings in its train, which is offered in an abundance corresponding to his infinite plenitude—an abundance, of which the capacity of the recipient is to be the only limit,—...descends more copiously than the offered influences of the Holy Spirit, and reproaches us with the spiritual drought of the church.”—<i>Ibid.</i>, p. 147.</p>	<p>“Other blessings they desire; but that which God is more willing to give than a father is to give good gifts to his children; that which is offered abundantly, according to the infinite fullness of God, and which, if received, would bring all other blessings in its train.”—<a href="#">Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 358.</a></p>
<p>“But the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is that only object on earth on which he bestows his supreme regard.”—<a href="#">Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 225</a>, (1836 ed.).</p>	<p>“I testify to my brethren and sisters that the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is the only object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard.”—<a href="#">Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 15.</a></p>

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### 81. Criteria of Dependence

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*The Chicago Tribune of November 23, 1980, quotes Walter Rea as*

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*saying, “She copied and borrowed almost everything.” Newsweek magazine, in its January 19, 1981, issue states, “The copying charge was leveled by Rea. In all, he estimates as much as 80 percent of Mrs. White’s writing was lifted almost word-for-word from earlier*

works. ‘The borrowing wasn’t a sentence here and word there,’ he says, ‘it was her habit to copy from the beginning of her writing to the end.’” (Page 72). Is there any way of knowing how much borrowed material there is in Ellen White’s writings?

The evidence now available does not support Rea’s claims. Actually, it would be an impossible and fruitless task to attempt to discover the exact origin of every word or phrase found in the writings of Ellen White—or of the Biblical authors, for that matter.

At the request of the White Estate, in 1979, Walter Specht and Raymond Cottrell spent several months comparing William Hanna’s *Life of Christ* with *The Desire of Ages*, Cottrell taking the first half and Specht the last half. In his 85-page report Specht pointed out the difficulties involved in attempting to come to firm conclusions in this kind of study. In response to the question, “Did Ellen White copy Hanna?”

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Specht states:

“In answering a question of this kind one must first explain what is meant by copying. If by copying we mean reproducing Hanna’s *Life of Christ* verbatim et literatim, then the answer is clearly, ‘No.’ We have not found a single sentence in [The Desire of Ages, 419-835](#), that corresponds verbatim with Hanna’s *Life of Christ*. But the problem is far more complicated than this fact suggests.

“How does one determine literary dependency? In the literary study of the New Testament one of the most complicated problems scholars face is the solution of the Synoptic Problem. This problem concerns the literary relationship that exists between the first three Gospels. It is the problem of explaining the large amount of agreement in wording between them, and at the same time the marked divergences that occur.

“Alfred M. Perry has set forth some Critical Criteria for determining literary dependence which have proved helpful in the study of the Synoptic Problem:

“The two criteria of dependence upon written sources are resemblance and continuity. Proof here does

not rest upon casual similarity, but upon the following rather definite similarities:

1. Resemblance of the contents: telling the same stories.
2. Resemblance in continuity: telling the stories in the same order.
3. Similar sentence and word order: telling the stories in the same way.
4. Extensive agreement (50 percent to 60 percent) in the words used.
5. Agreement in using unusual words or harsh construction.—“The Growth of the Gospels,” *Interpreter’s Bible*, Volume 7, Page 62.

“In applying these criteria to the present problem, however, there are certain qualifications that must be considered. Number one, ‘Resemblance of the contents: telling the same stories,’ for example, cannot take one very far. Since both White and Hanna based their writing on the Gospel accounts, the fact that they tell the same stories is not an evidence of literary dependency of one on the other. The same applies to number two, ‘Resemblance in continuity: telling the same stories in the same order.’ We would expect them to agree in giving the stories in the same order.

“The other criteria, however, have more validity. One will need to examine whether White follows a similar sentence and word order as Hanna (No. 3). It can be at once stated that this is not often the case. Hanna has a tendency to use long and involved sentences. Ellen White uses much shorter sentences, and apparently aims at clarity and simplicity.

“Criterion number four, ‘Extensive agreement in the words used,’ is a valid criterion. But there is no such extensive agreement (‘50 percent to 60 percent’) between White and Hanna as Perry calls for to show literary dependence.

“The fifth criterion also has validity unless both writers borrowed the words in question from the King James Version of the Bible, the basic text of both authors. It is evident, then, that the task we have undertaken is a complicated and difficult one.”—“The Literary Relationship Between *The Desire of Ages* by Ellen G. White and *The Life of Christ*, by William Hanna, Part II,” pages 1-3.

With reference to the similarities between Hanna and *The Desire of Ages*, Specht states:

“It appears doubtful that Ellen White had Hanna’s *Life of Christ* before her as she wrote. In her search for adequate words to portray what she had in mind, however, she may have recalled some of the exact words and phrases Hanna had used in the work she had carefully read. The resemblance between paragraphs between the two authors is one of ideas rather than literary structure” (*Ibid.*, pages 19, 20).

Specht also notes the dissimilarities between Hanna and *The Desire of Ages*. He states: “There are a number of statements in Hanna which Ellen White evidently held to be incorrect. At any rate, *The Desire of Ages* makes assertions that contradict what Hanna has written” (*Ibid.*, Page 49).

The greatest difference between Hanna and Ellen White, Specht notes, is her constant emphasis on *The Great Controversy* between Christ and Satan:

“It is the interpretation of Jesus Christ—His life, His ministry, His death, His resurrection—as a part of this great controversy that constitutes the central theme of *The Desire of Ages*. This is Ellen White’s distinctive contribution to the life of Christ, and helps to make her book the great classic that it is.”—*Ibid.*, Page 83.

Cottrell worked independently of Specht, yet he came to the same conclusions. He states that Ellen White’s “unique, original contribution” was her interpretation of Christ’s life on earth “in terms

of its role in the age-long conflict between the forces of good and evil and in the outworking of the plan of salvation” (“The Literary Relationship Between *The Desire of Ages*, by Ellen G. White, and *The Life of Christ*, by William Hanna, Part 1,” Page 30).

## 82. W. C. White’s Integrity

*W. W. Prescott’s letter of April 6, 1915, virtually accuses W. C. White of withholding important information on the composition of Ellen White’s books. What kind of man was W. C. White? Would he have tried to deceive the people?*

[82] Ellen White states:

“After the death of my husband, I was instructed that the Lord had appointed W. C. White to do a special work in connection with my writings. The Lord promised to give him of His Spirit and grace, and a spirit of wisdom and of sound judgment. This would enable him to be a wise counselor. The Lord foresaw that my son would not make haste, but would wisely consider his movements; he would not turn the truth of God into a lie for gain.”—[Letter 328, 1906](#).

An indication of W. C. White’s integrity may be found in a few lines taken from a letter he wrote to General Conference president A. G. Daniells in 1913. Referring to several of his mother’s letters that caused him problems, he stated:

“It seems to me that the only straightforward and satisfactory way to deal with them is to tell the truth, and let our brethren, with help from God, deal with the difficulties. It might be much easier to repudiate a few documents that perplex us, and say they were forgeries, but it is the truth that makes us free, and I do not know of any way in harmony with the law of God than to deal with these matters just as they are.”—W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, December 31, 1913.

### 83. W. W. Prescott's April 6, 1915, Letter

*How do you explain W. W. Prescott's April 6, 1915, letter to W. C. White?*

The pertinent paragraphs from Prescott's letter read as follows:

“It seems to me that a large responsibility rests upon those of us who know that there are serious errors in our authorized books and yet make no special effort to correct them. The people and our average ministers trust us to furnish them with reliable statements, and they use our books as sufficient authority in their sermons, but we let them go on year after year asserting things which we know to be untrue. I cannot feel that this is right. It seems to me that we are betraying our trust and deceiving the ministers and people. It appears to me that there is much more anxiety to prevent a possible shock to some trustful people than to correct error.

“Your letter indicates a desire on your part to help me but I fear that it is a little late. The experience of the last six or eight years and especially the things concerning which I talked with you have had their effect on me in several ways. I have had some hard shocks to get over and after giving the best of my life to this movement I have little peace and satisfaction in connection with it, and I am driven to the conclusion that the only thing for me to do is to do quietly what I can do conscientiously, and leave the others to go on without me. Of course this [is] far from a happy ending to my lifework, but this seems to be the best adjustment that I am able to make.

“The way your mother's writings have been handled and the false impression concerning them which is still fostered among the people have brought great perplexity and trial to me. It seems to me that what amounts to deception, though probably not intentional, has been practiced in making some of her books, and that no serious effort has been made to disabuse the minds of the people of what was known to be their wrong view

concerning her writings. But it is no use to go into these matters. I have talked with you for years about them, but it brings no change. I think however that we are drifting toward a crisis which will come sooner or later and perhaps sooner. A very strong feeling of reaction has already set in.”—White Estate Document File #198.

Prescott mentions three problems in his letter. One is the shock which had come to him personally in the previous six or eight years. Another is that “there are serious errors in our authorized books.”<sup>5</sup> The third is that the people have a wrong view of the making of Ellen White’s books and “no serious effort has been made” to correct that wrong view.

What were the “serious errors” to which Prescott made reference? He does not elaborate, but in his letter of April 26, 1910, to W. C. White, he mentions his disagreement with Ellen White’s *Great Controversy* on several counts. He held to the dates 533 to 1793 for the 1260-year period, whereas Ellen White gave 538 to 1798. He insisted that the 2300 years began in the spring of 457 BC, while she said they began in the autumn. He gave 30 AD for the crucifixion, while she held to 31. He disagreed with her explanation of August 11, 1840, her interpretation of the word “also” in [Hebrews 9:1](#), etc.

Prescott was seriously troubled because “the people and our average ministers” were using “our books as sufficient authority in their sermons,” and in doing so they were “year after year asserting things which we know to be untrue.” It appears that he wanted W. C. White to tell the people and the ministers that they should stop quoting *The Great Controversy* as final authority, not only in historical matters but also in the interpretation of certain Bible prophecies as well.

[84] W. C. White could not go as far as Prescott wanted him to go. He could and did allow that some historical details in *The Great Controversy* could be called into question. But he could not—and did not —surrender his mother’s doctrinal interpretations or her endorsement of basic dates used in prophetic interpretations.

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<sup>5</sup>Prescott did not name the books he had in mind. Uriah Smith’s *Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation* was a principal target and *The Great Controversy* was another



Prescott was not the only minister with strong convictions. Other strong-minded men had opinions too, and they were pulling in the opposite direction. Prescott wanted W. C. White to surrender too much. Haskell, Loughborough, and Leon Smith, on the other hand, were advocating what is commonly called the doctrine of verbal inspiration. Caught in the middle, W. C. White appealed to Haskell:

“Regarding Mother’s writings, she has never wished our brethren to treat them as authority on history. When *Great Controversy* was first written, she often times gave a partial description of some scene presented to her, and when Sister Davis made inquiry regarding time and place, Mother referred her to what was already written in the books of Elder [Uriah] Smith and in secular histories. When the “Great Controversy” was written, Mother never thought that the readers would take it as an authority on historical dates and use it to settle controversies, and she does not now feel that it ought to be used in that way....

“I believe, Brother Haskell, that there is danger of our injuring Mother’s work by claiming for it more than she claims for it, more than Father ever claimed for it, more than Elders Andrews, Waggoner, or Smith ever claimed for it. I cannot see consistency in our putting forth a claim of verbal inspiration when Mother does not make any such claim, and I certainly think we will make a great mistake if we lay aside historical research and endeavor to settle historical questions by the use of Mother’s books as an authority when she herself does not wish them to be used in any such way.”—W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, October 31, 1912, W. C. White Letter book #52. On the last page of the letter are the handwritten words, “I approve of the remarks made in this letter. Ellen G. White.” (See also question 54, above.)

Years later, L. E. Froom asked W. C. White if his mother had ever rebuked “the extreme positions set forth by Brother Loughborough, Haskell, and some others.” He added:

“You of course understand, Brother White, that I hold these brethren in high esteem. I recognize the place that they occupy in the work of God, but I do feel that they took unwarranted positions in some of these matters which have in turn brought great perplexity, and in instances ridicule of the whole gift of prophecy to this movement.”—L. E. Froom to W. C. White, February 28, 1932.

With Loughborough and Haskell pulling one way and Prescott the other, W. C. White tried to keep an even balance, which in Prescott’s eyes was not at all satisfactory. Prescott’s comments at the 1919 Bible Conference reveal that this problem was still his one overriding concern.

[85] Early in the discussions relating to the prophetic gift he asked, “How should we use the writings of the *Spirit of Prophecy*?—as an authority by which to settle historical questions?” The next day he queried, “Do I understand Brother Benson’s view is that such a statement as that in *Great Controversy*, that the 1260 years began in 538 and ended in 1798, settles the matter infallibly?” (1919 Bible Conference Minutes).

Prescott blamed the White Estate for not getting out something that would explain these matters. When H. Camden Lacey suggested, “Wouldn’t it be a splendid thing if a little pamphlet were written setting forth in plain, simple, straight-forward style the facts as we have them?” Prescott responded, “To my certain knowledge, a most earnest appeal was made for that from her office to issue such a statement, and they would not do it”<sup>6</sup> (*Ibid.*).

Prescott wanted a document that would set forth a true concept of Ellen White’s inspiration, especially with respect to her use of

<sup>6</sup>W. C. White worked practically alone in the White Estate for many years after his mother’s death. It is not likely that he could have met Prescott’s demands even if he had wanted to. He may not have seen matters as Prescott did

historical sources. He felt alone, distrusted, and the object of suspicion because he did not hold to the doctrine of Ellen White's verbal inspiration. He asked:

“Can you explain how it is that two brethren can disagree on the inspiration of the Bible, one holding to the verbal inspiration and the other opposed to it, and yet no disturbance be created in the denomination whatever? That situation is right here before us. But if two brethren take the same attitude on the, *Spirit of Prophecy*, one holding to verbal inspiration and the other discrediting it, he that does not hold to the verbal inspiration is discredited.”—*Ibid.*

Who would write the volume that Prescott was requesting? Direct evidence linking the 1919 Bible Conference with the choice of A. G. Daniells is lacking, yet, for whatever reason, he was eventually chosen for this highly sensitive assignment. In 1930 Froom wrote W. C. White:

“I am so glad that Elder Daniells is soon to enter upon the preparation of the book on the Spirit of Prophecy. If there is any one volume that is needed at the present time to help toward unity within our own ranks, to silence the lips of opponents, and to place this blessed gift in its true and rational setting, it is one similar to that proposed. There are some who hold to verbal inspiration of all of Sister White's writings. There are others who go to the other extreme. And there are strong-minded individuals who have such strange relationships that we do need to have a strong, scriptural, reasonable presentation, in harmony with facts and in harmony with the historical position, in harmony with the understanding of those who have had the closest contacts with the manifestation of this gift in the remnant church. I pray that God will greatly bless Brother Daniells in his writing.

“It is my solemn conviction, Brother White, that one of the greatest crises that confront this movement is

before us as we come to a sound, rational, Scriptural and historical understanding of the place, the character, the authority, and relationship of the Spirit of Prophecy to this movement. Unfortunately, we have narrow cranks who believe in the verbal inspiration of all that Sister White wrote, rather than the thought inspiration, who make claims for her that she never made, and whose attitude is so harsh and arbitrary that I fear some of these men when confronted with things that are unexplainable according to their ideas will be inclined to throw everything overboard as some have done in the past. Of course, on the other hand, there are others who swing to the other extreme. Brother Daniells' presentation will doubtless draw the gunfire of some, but I think that is inevitable sooner or later. May God guide us through perplexities of this character into a sane, wholesome, Scriptural understanding."—L. E. Froom to W. C. white, September 28, 1930.

When Daniells' book, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, was published in 1936, it proved to be a historical rather than a theological presentation. Prescott's concerns still had not been met. Daniells intended to say more than he did, but unfortunately a bout with cancer put a sudden end to his career.

Prescott's other concern had to do with the making of some of Ellen White's books. On his world tour he spent ten months in Australia where he had opportunity to observe first-hand the work of Ellen White's secretaries. He apparently wanted the people to understand the process by which Ellen White's articles, letters, etc., were turned into books. For a discussion of this point, see question 92.

#### **84. The SDA Church and Verbal Inspiration**

*Has the Seventh-day Adventist Church ever officially approved of the concept of "verbal inspiration?"*

No, it has not. In fact, the General Conference of 1883 formally endorsed the concept of "thought" inspiration rather than "verbal"

inspiration. In deciding to remove grammatical imperfections from the first four volumes of the *Testimonies*, the delegates took the following action: [87]

“Whereas, We believe the light given by God to His servants is by the enlightenment of the mind, thus imparting the thoughts, and not (except in rare cases) the very words in which the ideas should be expressed; therefore.”

“Resolved, That in the re-publication of these volumes such verbal changes be made as to remove the above named imperfections, as far as possible, without in any measure changing the thought; and, further.”

“34. Resolved, That this body appoint a committee of five to take charge of the re-publication of these volumes.”—[The Review and Herald, November 27, 1883](#), Page 741.

The committee appointed were W. C. White, Uriah Smith, J. H. Waggoner, S. N. Haskell, and G. I. Butler. In the end, the basic work was done by Marian Davis, who was one of Ellen White’s literary assistants, and Mary Kelsey-White, W. C. White’s wife. (See W. C. White to L. E. Froom, February 18, 1932.)

## 85. Ellen White’s Literary Assistants

*Who were Ellen White’s “literary assistants”?*

Ellen White was instructed as to whom she could trust and who were not trustworthy. Among those who helped Ellen White in preparing her writings for publication over the years were James White, Mary Kelsey-White, Lucinda Abbey-Hall, Adelia Patten-Van Horn, Anna Driscoll-Loughborough, Addie Howe-Cogshall, Annie Hale-Royce, Emma Sturgess-Prescott, Mary Clough-Watson, Mrs. J. I. Ings, Mrs. B. L. Mitney, Eliza Burnham, Fannie Bolton, Marian Davis, C. C. Crisler, Minnie Hawkins-Crisler, Maggie Hare, Sarah Peck, and D. E. Robinson.

Probably Mrs. White’s most notable assistant was Marian Davis, who worked for her from 1879 to 1904. She assisted in preparing for

[88] publication *Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume 4; *Historical Sketches of SDA Foreign Missions*; *The Great Controversy*; *Patriarchs and Prophets*; *Steps to Christ*; *The Desire of Ages*; *Christ's Object Lessons*; *Education*; *The Ministry of Healing*, and other books. C. C. Crisler and several of the lady secretaries assisted Ellen White in selecting and arranging material for *Acts of the Apostles*; *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*; *Gospel Workers*; and *Prophets and Kings*. (See [Selected Messages 1:50](#); [Selected Messages 3:453-461](#) for other details.)

### 86. The Work of the Literary Assistants

*How much freedom did Ellen White's literary assistants have in editing or changing Ellen White's manuscripts?*

Ellen White did not always use perfect grammar, spelling, punctuation, or sentence or paragraph construction in her writing. She freely acknowledged her lack of such technical skills. In 1873 she lamented, "I am not a scholar. I cannot prepare my own writings for the press ... I am not a grammarian" ([Selected Messages 3:90](#)). She felt the need of help from others in the preparation of her manuscripts for publication. W. C. White describes the boundaries that his mother set for her workers:

"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...."

"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 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."—W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, May 7, 1900. (See question 94, "Ellen White Gives Final Approval.")

### 87. Only Ellen White's Thoughts Used

*Did any of her secretaries ever presume to add their own thoughts, contrary to Ellen White's instruction?*

D. E. Robinson says No. Here is his testimony:

“Inasmuch as reports and rumors are current to the effect that Mrs. white's helpers were responsible for many of the thoughts, or at least for the beautiful literary style of some of her books, and as many who hear these reports are not in a position to know the facts for themselves, I feel it a privilege to testify of what I have seen and do know regarding this matter.”

“Through later years, it was my privilege to receive for editing hundreds of pages of manuscripts written by Mrs. White, also to assist the other secretaries in preparing copy for articles in the papers and for some of the later books. In all good conscience I can testify that never was I presumptuous enough to add any ideas of my own, or to do other than to follow with most scrupulous care the thoughts of the author. And my observation of the work of my associate secretaries, as well as my confidence in their integrity makes me refuse to believe that any of them changed her writings, other than to make them grammatical, or perhaps to make transpositions for rhetorical effect, for clearness of thought, or for emphasis.”—D. E. Robinson, *How the Books of Mrs. E. G. White Were Prepared*, pages 1-3, White Estate Document File 107g.

[89]

### 88. Examples of Manuscript Editing

*Please give an example of one of Mrs. White's manuscripts both before and after her literary assistant had worked on it.*

On the following pages (90-92) [Manuscript 30a, 1896](#), Page 1, is shown, first in Ellen White's own handwriting, then in an exact transcription of the original, with editorial corrections indicated. Two paragraphs from this manuscript as now published in the book *In Heavenly Places* are also shown.

The first page of the handwritten original of [Letter 2, 1874](#), is also reproduced, as well as the published version.

It will be observed that the 1896 manuscript required considerable editing, while the 1874 letter needed very little.

This is typical of Ellen White's literary work. Some of her manuscripts required more attention from her copyists than others. W. C. White explains the difference:

“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 ungrammatical sentences.”—W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, May 7, 1900.

Fannie Bolton, who assisted Ellen White for several years in Australia, concurred with W. C. White. She stated, “Many times her manuscript does not need any editing, often but slight editing, and again a great deal of literary work” (White Estate Document File #445).

[90]       Reproduction of [Manuscript 30a, 1896](#), p. 1, written at Ashfield, N.S.W., Australia, October 4, 1896. Original size 7 ½ x 8 ½ inches. *Please refer to page 90 in the print version of 101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White for a reproduced copy of the handwritten manuscript*

[91]       An exact typewritten reproduction of the original of [Manuscript 30a, 1896](#), p. 1. Ellen White's literary assistant made the grammatical improvements which we have indicated here.

[92]       *Please refer to page 91 in the print version of 101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White for a reproduced copy of the manuscript* *Please refer to page 92 in the print version of 101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White for a reproduced copy of the document*

***In Heavenly Places***

May 7

*An Audience with the Most High*



*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectively works also in you that believe. 1 Thessalonians 2:13.*

The Bible is God's voice speaking to us just as surely as though we could hear Him with our ears. The word of the living God is not merely written, but spoken. Do we receive the Bible as the oracle of God? If we realized the importance of this Word, with what awe would we open it, and with what earnestness would we search its precepts. The reading and contemplating of the Scriptures would be regarded as an audience with the Most High.

God's Word is a message to us to be obeyed, a volume to be perused diligently, and with a spirit willing to take in the truths written for the admonition of those upon whom the ends of the world are come. It must not be neglected for any other book. When we open the Bible, let us compare our lives with its requirements, measuring our character by the great moral standard of righteousness.

The life of Christ, that gives life to the world, is in His Word. It was by His word that Jesus healed disease and cast out demons; by His word He stilled the sea, and raised the dead; and the people bore witness that His word was with power. He spoke the Word of God, as He had spoken to all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament. The whole Bible is a manifestation of Christ. It is our source of power.

As our physical life is sustained by food, so our spiritual life is sustained by the Word of God. As we must eat for ourselves in order to receive nourishment, so we must receive the Word for ourselves. We are not to obtain it merely through the medium of another mind.

Yes, the Word of God is the bread of life. It gives immortal vigor to the soul, perfecting the experience, and bringing joys that will abide forever.

Reproduction of the first page of [Letter 2, 1874](#).

Original page size 5 x 7 inches.

The published version is from [Selected Messages 1:74](#). Please refer to page 93 in the print version of *101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White for a reproduced copy of the manuscript*

Battle Creek, Michigan

August 24, 1874

Dear Brother Loughborough:

I hereby testify in the fear of God that the charges of Miles Grant, of Mrs. Burdick, and others published in the *Crisis* are not true. The statements in reference to my course in forty-four are false.

With my brethren and sisters, after the time passed in eighteen forty-four [1844 AD] I did believe no more sinners would be converted. But I never had a vision that no more sinners would be converted. And am clear and free to state no one has ever heard me say or has read from my pen statements which will justify them in the charges they have made against me upon this point.

It was on my first journey east to relate my visions that the precious light in regard to the heavenly sanctuary was opened before me and I was shown the open and shut door. We believed that the Lord was soon to come in the clouds of heaven. I was shown that there was a great work to be done in the world for those who had not had the light and rejected it. Our brethren could not understand this with our faith in the immediate appearing of Christ. Some accused me of saying that my Lord delayeth His coming, especially the fanatical ones. I saw that in 1844 God had opened a door and no man could shut it, and shut a door and no man could open it. Those who rejected the light which was brought to the world by the message of the second angel went into darkness, and how great was that darkness.

I never have stated or written that the world was doomed or damned. I never have under any circumstances used this language to any one, however sinful. I have ever had messages of reproof for those who used these harsh expressions.—[Letter 2, 1874](#).

[94]

## 89. Editorial Imperfections

*Did Ellen White or her literary helpers ever make mistakes in the editorial process?*

Yes. For example, whoever put the quotation marks in [Testimonies for the Church 6:59](#), put them in the wrong place. The handwritten original of the manuscript published in part on that page has been lost. However, we do have the typewritten copy made from the original shortly after it came from Ellen White's pen, and it contains no quotation marks, except for Scripture texts.

When this material was put into print in the *Review and Herald* in 1899, quotation marks were not used. They were inserted for the first time in 1900 when the manuscript was published in part in volume 6 of the *Testimonies*. The quotation from Christ obviously ends in the middle of the second paragraph. Close quotation marks should have been inserted at that point rather than at the end of the following paragraph. Christ would hardly have spoken the sentences we have underlined.

The last paragraph is similar in many respects to a passage in Heman Humphrey's introduction to John Harris' book, *The Great Teacher*. Humphrey writes:

“We turn to the beloved disciple once more, and ask him what he saw and heard in the visions of Patmos, and he answers, ‘I beheld, and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living ones and the elders.’

“Here then, Christian reader, is a theme worthy of an angel's pen—yea, of more than an angel's intellect. Here is the grand radiant point, towards which all the affinities converge: infinite wisdom—infinite love—infinite justice—infinite mercy! Depths, heights, length, breadth—all passing knowledge! Innumerable pens have been employed upon the life, character, preaching and mediation work of Christ.”—*The Great Teacher*, pages xiv, xvi (1836 edition).

Note the differences between the 1899 and 1900 publications which are reproduced side-by-side on the next page.

<b>Review and Herald</b>	<b>Testimonies for the Church,</b>
April 4, 1899, Pages 209,210	Volume 6, Pages 58, 59 (1900).

At the beginning of the Sabbath my heart went out in prayer that God would give wisdom to these workers, and in the visions of the night many words of instruction and encouragement were spoken to us. Ministers and workers were in a meeting where Bible lessons were being given. We said, We have the Great Teacher with us today, and we listened with interest to his words. He said: There is a great work before you in this place. You will need to present truth in its simplicity. Bring the people to the waters of life. Speak to them the things which most concern their present and eternal good. Do not present subjects that will arouse controversy, things that it will require a person of experience by your side to defend. In all that you say, know that you have something that is worthy of the time you take to say it, and of the time of the hearer to hear. Speak of those things which are essential, those things which will instruct, bringing light with every word.

At the Queensland camp meeting in 1898, instruction was given me for our Bible workers. In the visions of the night, ministers and workers seemed to be in a meeting where Bible lessons were being given. We said, “We have the Great Teacher with us today,” and we listened with interest to His words. He said: “There is a great work before you in this place. You will need to present truth in its simplicity. Bring the people to the waters of life. Speak to them the things which most concern their present and eternal good. Let not your study of the Scriptures be of a cheap or casual order. In all that you say, know that you have something which is worthy of the time you take to say it, and of the time of the hearers to hear. Speak of those things which are essential, those things which will instruct, bringing light with every word.

Learn to meet the people where they are. Let not your study of the Scriptures be of a cheap or casual order. Let not your instruction be of a character to perplex the mind. Do not cause the people to worry over things that you may see, but which they do not see, unless those are of vital consequence to the saving of the soul. Do not present the Scriptures in a way to exalt self, and encourage vainglory in the one who opens the Word to others. The work for this time is to train students and workers to deal with subjects in a plain, serious and solemn manner. There must be no time uselessly employed in this great work. We must not miss the mark. Time is too short for us to undertake to reveal all that might be opened up to view. Eternity will be required that we may know all the length and breadth, the height and depth, of the Scriptures. There are some souls to whom certain truths are of more importance than other truths. Skill is needed in your education in Scriptural lines. Read and study [Psalm 40:7, 8](#); [John 1-14](#); [1 Timothy 3:16](#); [Philippians 2:5-11](#); [Colossians 1:14-17](#); [Revelation 5:11-14](#).

“Learn to meet the people where they are. Do riot present subjects that will arouse controversy. Let not your instruction be of a character to perplex the mind. Do not cause the people to worry over things which you may understand but which they do not see, unless these are of vital consequence to the saving of the soul. Do not present the Scriptures in a way to exalt self and encourage vainglory in the one who opens the word. The work for this time is to train students and workers to deal with subjects in a plain, serious, and solemn manner. There must be no time uselessly employed in this great work. We must not miss the mark. Time is too short for us to undertake to reveal all that might be opened to view. Eternity will be required for us to know all the length and breadth, the depth and height, of the Scriptures. There are some souls to whom certain truths are of more importance than other truths. Skill is needed in your education in Scriptural lines. Read and study [Psalm 40:7, 8](#); [John 1:14](#); [1 Timothy 3:16](#); [Philippians 2:5-11](#); [Colossians 1:14-17](#); [Revelation 5:11-14](#).

To the apostle John, on the Isle of Patmos, were revealed the things that God desired him to give to the people. Study these revelations. There are themes worthy of our contemplation, large and comprehensive lessons, which all the angelic hosts are now seeking to communicate. Behold the life and character of Christ, and study his mediation work. Here are infinite wisdom, infinite love, infinite justice, infinite mercy. Here are depths and heights, lengths and breadths, for our consideration.

Numberless pens have been employed in presenting to the world the life, the character, and the mediation work of Christ. Yet every mind through whom the Holy Spirit has worked has presented these themes in a light that is fresh and new, according to the mind and spirit of the human agent.

“To the apostle John on the Isle of Patmos were revealed the things which God desired him to give to the people. Study these revelations. Here are themes worthy of our contemplation, large and comprehensive lessons, which all the angelic host are now seeking to communicate.

Behold the life and character of Christ and study His mediation work. Here is infinite wisdom, infinite love, infinite justice, infinite mercy. Here are depths and heights, lengths and breadths, for our consideration. Numberless pens have been employed in presenting to the world the life, the character, and the mediation work of Christ, and yet every mind through which the Holy Spirit has worked has presented these themes in a light that is fresh and new.”

[95] **90. Ellen White Invites Constructive Criticism**

[96] *Did Ellen White ever submit her manuscripts to the brethren for doctrinal correction?*

No. Ellen White at times sought counsel from the brethren, not on the content of her writings, but on the effectiveness of the way she had expressed herself, as well as on the use to be made of the materials. She informed W. H. Littlejohn:

“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 [*Spirit of Prophecy*] Volume 4 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.”—[Letter 49, 1894](#).

When in 1910 it was found that the type for *The Great Controversy* must be reset, Ellen White informs us:

“I determined that we would have everything closely examined. to see if the truths it contained were stated in the very best manner, to convince those not of our faith that the Lord had guided and sustained me in the writing of its pages.”—[Letter 56, 1911](#).

This word was conveyed to different ones, including W. W. Prescott, editor of *The Protestant Magazine*. In response, Prescott wrote W. C. White in April, 1910, offering him 105 suggestions on points which he felt needed improvement in the book. About half of Prescott’s suggestions were accepted. These mainly called for references or appendix notes or greater precision of expression, while some had to do with historical fact. Ellen White accepted none of Prescott’s recommendations for the altering of her doctrinal positions.

## 91. Ellen White’s Basic Sources

*What was Ellen White’s basic source for the information in The Desire of Ages? Was it the Bible? Was it other nineteenth-century authors? Was it visions given by the Lord?*

Ellen White said that God gave her the light that is found in her [97]

books. After naming *The Great Controversy*, *The Desire of Ages*, and *Patriarchs and Prophets*, she said:

“In my books, the truth is stated, barricaded by a ‘Thus said the Lord.’ The Holy Spirit traced these truths upon my heart and mind as indelibly as the law was traced by the finger of God, upon the tables of stone.”

“God would be pleased to see *The Desire of Ages* in every home. In this book is contained the light He has given upon His Word.”—[Colporteur Ministry, 126](#).

At the time of her 1858 vision on *The Great Controversy* between Christ and Satan she was shown many episodes in the life of Christ. Note her claims:

“I then viewed Jesus in the garden. I beheld the angelic host watching with untold interest the resting place of Jesus. I saw the Roman guard. I was shown the disciples as they sorrowfully gazed towards heaven.”—[Spiritual Gifts 1:46, 64, 68, 79](#).

Some years later she wrote:

“I could but have a vivid picture in my mind from day to day of the way reformers were treated, how slight differences of opinion seemed to create a frenzy of feeling. Thus it was in the betrayal, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus. All this had passed before me point by point.”—[Selected Messages 3:121](#).

Many visions picturing events in the life of Christ were given Ellen White. It was the information supplied in these visions, as well as the Bible record itself, which provided the primary sources for her writing on *The Desire of Ages*.

This is also true of her other books. According to W. C. White, “the framework of the great temple of truth sustained by her writings was presented to her clearly in vision,” some features being “presented to her many times and in detail many times.... The main outlines were made very clear and plain to her.” “The great events



occurring in the life of our Lord,” he said, “were presented to her in panoramic scenes as also were the other portions of *The Great Controversy*.” She witnessed “flashlight scenes” and heard conversations and controversies ([Selected Messages 3:462, 459](#)).

W. C. White’s claims are in perfect harmony with those made by Ellen White in her introduction to *The Great Controversy* where she wrote:

“Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the scenes of the long-continued conflict between good and evil have been opened to the writer of these pages.

[98]

“From time to time I have been permitted to behold the working, in different ages, of *The Great Controversy* between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin.... The Spirit of God has opened to my mind the great truths of His word, and the scenes of the past and the future.”—[The Great Controversy, xii, xiii](#).

The material Ellen White drew from other writers, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, from non-vision and non-Biblical sources helped her considerably in her writing, but these sources were only of secondary importance when compared with the instruction she received through divine revelation.

## 92. Marian Davis, My Bookmaker

*What was the nature of Marian Davis’ work in the preparation of The Desire of Ages?*

Marian Davis’ work on *The Desire of Ages* included not only the routine responsibilities of Ellen White’s “copyists” (see question 86), but also the gathering and organizing of pertinent E. G. White materials into chapters. In a letter to G. A. Irwin, the General Conference president, Mrs. White described Marian’s work in contrast to that of Fanny Bolton:

“My copyists you have seen. They do not change my language. It stands as I write it. Marian’s work is

of a different order altogether. She is my bookmaker. Fanny never was my bookmaker.

“How are my books made? Marian does not put in her claim for recognition. She does her work in this way: 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.”—[Letter 61a, 1900](#). (See [Selected Messages 3:91](#)).

In similar vein Ellen White informed Dr. Kellogg:

[99]

“Marian greedily grasps every letter I write to others in order to find sentences that she can use in the life of Christ. She has been collecting everything that has a bearing on Christ’s lessons to His disciples, from all possible [E. G. White’s] sources.”—[Letter 41, 1895](#); [Selected Messages 3:117](#).

Marian mentions certain letters which she found to be especially helpful in supplying material for the book on Christ’s life. She wrote Ellen White:

“I have been using matter gleaned from late letters, testimonies, etc. Have found some of the most precious things, some in those letters to Elder Corliss. They have been to me like a storehouse of treasures. There’s something in these personal testimonies that are written with deep feeling, that comes close to the heart. It

seems to me the things gathered in this way give a power and significance to the book that nothing else does.”—November 25, 1895, White Estate Received Correspondence File.

Marian was deeply involved in the overall plan of the book, in the arrangement of material within each chapter, in the chronological sequence of the chapters, in the choice of chapter titles, and in correspondence with the Pacific Press in Oakland when the type was being set.

In 1897 when the book was nearly completed, Marian laid it aside for awhile, and then took a fresh, critical look at it. She and Ellen White agreed that many adjustments of an editorial nature still needed to be made. In describing these improvements, she explained to W. C. White:

“I see that neither in Brother Jones’ letter nor in yours have I stated definitely just what I am doing on the manuscript and *why*. In the first place, I have worked for a better opening to the chapters. As to the success of the effort, let any canvasser who examines the pages I have sent to Brother Jones bear testimony.

“The chapters of the old manuscript began too often with some notice of Jesus going here or there, until the book seemed almost like a diary. *That* has been corrected. Then I have tried to begin both chapters and paragraphs with short sentences, and indeed to simplify wherever possible, to drop out every needless word, and to make the work, as I have said, more compact and vigorous.

“On some chapters I had fresh, *live* matter that will add greatly to the interest of the book. If you would offer me, personally, a thousand dollars for the work that has been done on the book during the past few weeks, I would not look at it. I never realized the power of simplicity and compactness, as since I began this work.” (Emphasis hers.)—April 11, 1897, White Estate Received Correspondence File.

Even after the manuscript had been sent to Oakland and typesetting had begun, Marian was still adding new material. She wrote Mrs. White:

[100]

“I have been gathering out the precious things from these new manuscripts on the early life of Jesus. Sent a number of new pages to California by the Vancouver mail, and shall send more for later chapters by the next mail. Two of those new articles on Christ’s missionary work I let Brother James have to read in church. Last Sabbath he read the one which speaks of the Savior’s denying Himself of food to give to the poor. These things are unspeakably precious. I hope it is not too late to get them into the book. It has been a feast to work on this matter.”—March 1, 1898, White Estate Received Correspondence File.

That Marian enjoyed Ellen White’s complete confidence is evident from a letter written by Mrs. White to her daughter-in-law some years earlier. She stated:

“Mary, Willie is in meeting early and late, devising, planning for the doing of 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 minutiae. 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.”—[Letter 64a, 1889](#). (See [Selected Messages 3:92, 93](#).)

Whatever changes Marian made in wording eventually received Ellen White’s approval (see question 94).

Marian regarded her contribution to *The Desire of Ages* to be strictly that of an editor. When C. H. Jones urged that the manuscript be completed immediately, Marian wrote W. C. White:

“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 into the book. There is one thing, however, that not even the most competent editor could do—that is prepare the manuscript before it is written.”—August 9, 1897, White Estate Received Correspondence File.

In 1904, four weeks before Marian’s death, Ellen White reminisced on the beautiful working relationship that she and Marian had enjoyed for so many years. In her manuscript, “A Tribute to Marian Davis,” she wrote:

“Marian, my helper, faithful and true as the compass to the pole in her work, is dying. My soul is drawn to the dying girl who has served me for the last twenty-five 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 tittles that had come in papers and books and present it to me, ‘Now,’ she would say, ‘there is something wanted [lacking]. 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.”—[Manuscript 95, 1904](#). (See further [Selected Messages 3:115-120](#).)

### 93. The Literary Beauty of The Desire of Ages

*Many people regard The Desire of Ages as their favorite book, next to the Bible. How do you account for the exceptional beauty of the language in this book?*

There is a five-fold answer to this question.

First, it was Ellen White’s favorite subject. She stated, “You know that my whole theme both in the pulpit and in private, by voice and pen, is the Life of Christ ([Selected Messages 3:118](#)).” She wrote abundantly on various aspects of Christ’s life, which gave Marian a large reservoir from which to draw. Marian used only the best.

Second, Ellen White was deeply moved as she meditated on Christ’s life, and she transmitted this depth of feeling into her writing. She stated:

“In writing upon the life of Christ I am deeply wrought upon. I forget to breathe as I should. I cannot endure the intensity of feeling that comes over me as I think of what Christ has suffered in our world.”—[Ibid.](#), [pages 118, 119](#).

Third, some choice gems Ellen White gleaned from the works of others found their way into the book. For example, the following exceptional paragraph from Hanna’s *Life of Christ*, Page 754, she paraphrased for [The Desire of Ages, 770, 771](#):

[Quoting St. Gregory] “The heavens knew him, and forthwith sent out a star and a company of angels to sing his birth. The sea knew him, and made itself a way to be trodden by his feet; the earth knew him, and trembled at his dying; the sun knew him, and hid the rays of his

light; the rocks knew him, for they were rent in twain; Hades knew him, and gave up the dead it had received. But though the senseless elements perceived him to be their Lord, the hearts of the unbelieving Jews knew him not as God, and harder than the very rocks, were not rent by repentance.”

[102]

Fourth, Marian Davis’ unique qualifications fitted her well to be the “bookmaker” for *The Desire of Ages*. She was a truly spiritually minded woman with a natural appreciation for things beautiful. Concerning Marian, D. E. Robinson writes:

“She was a well-read woman, a constant Bible student, a woman of deep devotion and spirituality and conscientious in the highest degree. Physically frail, she yet possessed remarkable mental vigor. She was characterized by a rare love and appreciation for the beautiful, whether in nature, art or literature.”—*How the Books of Mrs. E. G. White Were Prepared*, page 4, White Estate Document File #107g.

Fifth, Marian put her whole heart and soul into the preparation of this book. She lived with the task for six years, from 1892-1898. Her correspondence reveals that it was the consuming passion of her life. She once wrote W. C. White, “When I think of the many thousands who will read the book, I want just as little human imperfection as possible to mar its divine beauty” (Marian Davis to W. C. White, April 11, 1897). Even after the entire manuscript received what appears to have been its final typing, Ellen White was adding matter and Marian was still making improvements. She changed “indicate” to “show” and “the courts above” to “the heavenly courts” (*The Desire of Ages*, 99, line 2). The sentence “It is Gabriel of whom the Savior speaks when he says in the Revelation, that he sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John,” was altered to read, “Of Gabriel, the Savior speaks in the Revelation, saying that ‘He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John.’” Clearly these and many other editorial changes were made with only one object in mind, and that was to enhance the literary quality of

the book. (See Olson and Graybill, *How The Desire of Ages Was Written*, pages 35-37.)

#### 94. Ellen White Gives Final Approval

*How can one be sure that the work of Marian Davis and Ellen White's other literary helpers truly represented Ellen White's wishes?*

[103] While the chapters for each book were being prepared, Ellen White was constantly consulted, and when the work was completed, she gave it her final approval.

At the age of 75 she explained her work to her non-Adventist sister, Mary:

“Now, my sister, do not think that I have forgotten you; for I have not. You know that I have books to make. My last effort is a book on true education. The writing of this book has been very trying to me, but it is nearly finished. I am now completing the last chapter. This book will not have in it so much matter as there is in some of my larger works, but the instruction it contains is important. I feel the need of help from God continually.

“I am still as active as ever. I am not in the least decrepit. I am able to do much work, writing and speaking as I did years ago.

“I read over all that is copied, to see that everything is as it should be. I read all the book manuscript before it is sent to the printer. So you can see that my time must be fully occupied.”—[Letter 133, 1902](#).

#### 95. Is More Information Called For?

*Should the readers of the E. G. White books be given more information concerning the preparation of these books?*

Some have suggested that the introduction to each of Mrs. White's books should present certain acknowledgments, recognizing the assistance of literary helpers. But the literary assistants did not



provide any of the text. They were in no way co-authors. Their work was mechanical or editorial, as explained under question 92.

There are those who feel that quotation marks should be introduced into *The Desire of Ages* wherever Ellen White has drawn on the works of others. However, this seems not to be a practical possibility, since hardly anything has been quoted directly.

A sample chapter, “Lazarus Come Forth” (Chapter 58) was carefully compared with the works of nine nineteenth century authors who wrote on Christ’s life. The closest similarity in wording was the phrase, “the greatest of Christ’s miracles” ([The Desire of Ages, 524](#)), which has three successive words identical to those used in Hanna’s phrase, “the greatest of His miracles” (*The Life of Christ*, Page 452). Quotation marks would hardly be called for on those three words. Ellen White wrote “Jesus encouraged her faith” (Page 530), while John Fleetwood said “Jesus, who was willing to encourage this imperfect faith” (*The Life of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*, Page 281). Ellen White wrote, “Lazarus was stricken with sudden illness” (Page 525), while Hugh MacMillan said “Lazarus was stricken down with one of those sharp malignant fevers” (*Our Lord’s Three Raisings from the Dead*, Page 146). It can be seen that quotation marks would serve little purpose and actually would be inappropriate here. [104]

While Ellen White may have read several of the nine authors examined, there is not much evidence that she was dependent on them for her ideas. Of twenty-four extra-Biblical points discussed by the various authors, Ellen White mentions fifteen. In eight cases she agreed with all others who discussed the same incidents or ideas, on two points she agreed with some while disagreeing with others, while on five points she stood completely alone.

Thus, while the suggestion that due credit be given to various authors may appear simple and practical, implementation would be complex and perhaps impractical.

## 96. Her Ideas Came From God

*Both Walter Specht and Raymond Cottrell state that Ellen White got some “ideas” from Hanna. Didn’t she consistently affirm that God was the direct source of all her ideas?*

Ellen White declared:

“In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, 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. It is true concerning the articles in our papers and in the many volumes of my books.”—[Selected Messages 1:29](#).

[105] Ellen White used the word “idea” to mean basic spiritual or theological concepts. Specht and Cottrell have used the word with a less specific meaning in mind. In his study, “Ellen White’s Alleged Literary and Theological Indebtedness to Calvin Stowe,” David Neff gives examples of how Ellen White was indebted to Stowe for his language, but not for his ideas. Note the similarities and the differences between Stowe and Ellen White:

C. E. Stowe, <i>Origin and History Of the Books of the Bible</i> , Page 20.	<a href="#">Selected Messages 1:21</a> .
“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 was not on the man’s words, not on the man’s thoughts, but on the man himself; that he, by his own spontaneity, under the impulse of the Holy Ghost, conceives certain thoughts.”	“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.”

## 97. Inspired Writings without a Vision Source

*Is there Biblical precedent for including in an inspired book information not provided by divine revelation in vision?*

Yes. Paul wrote the Corinthians, “There is among you envying, and strife, and divisions” (1 Corinthians 3:3). But he was not shown this in vision. He was informed of this problem by the members of the house of Chloe. See 1 Corinthians 1:11. Yet we hold that 1 Corinthians 3:3 was written under inspiration.

Other passages, such as 2 Timothy 4:9-14, 19-21, were not revealed to Paul in vision, but they as surely form a part of the inspired record as anything else he wrote.

Likewise, in the case of *The Desire of Ages*, it is not necessary to believe that every fact mentioned in the book was first seen by Ellen White in vision in order to believe that the entire book came from a truly inspired pen. (See also question 98.)

## 98. The Bible Writers Borrowed

*Is there any Biblical precedent for one author borrowing from another without giving credit?*

Yes. 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 acknowledged their borrowing. (See the Seventh day Adventist Bible Commentary, Volume 5, pages 178, 179.)

[106]

Paul quoted the Greek poets Aratus (Acts 17:28), Epimenides (Titus 1:12), and Menander (1 Corinthians 15:33). Jude quoted the so-called “book of Enoch” (Jude 1:14, 15). John the Revelator apparently drew many lines from the book of Enoch.<sup>7</sup>

Note the following citations:

“After that I saw ... a multitude beyond number and reckoning, who stood before the Lord of Spirits.”—  
Enoch 40:1 (cf. Revelation 7:9).

<sup>7</sup>See R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*

“And I saw and behold a star fell from heaven.”—*Enoch* 86:1 (cf. [Revelation 9:11](#)).

“They were all judged and found guilty and cast into this fiery abyss.”—*Enoch* 90:26 (cf. [Revelation 20:15](#)).

“And the first heaven shall depart and pass away, and a new heaven shall appear.”—*Enoch* 91:16 (cf. [Revelation 21:1](#)).

“The horse shall walk up to the breast in the blood of sinners.”—*Enoch* 100:3 (cf. [Revelation 14:20](#)).

“Their names shall be blotted out of the book of life.”—*Enoch* 108:3 (cf. [Revelation 3:5](#)).

The book of *Enoch* was known to have been in circulation as early as the middle of the first century BC, some 150 years before John wrote the book of *Revelation*. John’s evident choice of the language of an earlier unknown author is no reason for questioning the inspiration of his own book. Those lines, previously penned by another, helped him to say what he wanted to say, so he felt free to use them.

Luke did considerable investigation in available sources before writing his gospel. He says:

“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](#) *New American Standard Bible*.

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.”

[107] 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*, Volume 5, page 669.)

One of Luke's sources was a genealogical record of Christ's ancestors. In [Luke 3:23-27](#) there is a series of names found nowhere else in the Bible. No doubt Luke found these names faithfully preserved in the archives of the temple. From [1 Chronicles 9:1](#) we learn that the Jews engaged in this kind of record keeping.

A few of the parallels between the apocryphal books and the New Testament are given below. Most of the quotations are from the Revised Standard Version of the Apocrypha. For additional examples, see Bruce Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha*, pages 151-173.

“See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another.”—Tobit 4:16 (Douay Version, cf. [Matthew 7:12](#)).

“Jerusalem will be built with sapphires and emeralds, her walls with precious stones, and her towers and battlements with pure gold. The streets of Jerusalem will be paved with beryl and ruby and stones of Ophir.”—Tobit 13:16, 17 (cf. [Revelation 21:18-21](#)).

“The Lord will take his zeal as his whole armor, and will arm all creation to repel his enemies; he will put on righteousness as a breastplate, and wear impartial justice as a helmet; he will take holiness as an invincible shield, and sharpen stern wrath for a sword.”—Wisdom 5:17-20 (cf. [Ephesians 6:13-17](#)).

“For they went far astray on the paths of error, accepting as gods those animals which even their enemies despised; they were deceived like foolish babes.”—Wisdom 12:24 (cf. [Romans 1:22, 23](#)).

“From the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.... Yet again, not even they are to be excused; for if they had the power to know so much that they could investigate the world, how did they fail to find sooner the Lord of these things.”—Wisdom 13:5, 8, 9 (cf. [Romans 1:20](#)).

“Be quick to hear, and be deliberate in answering.”—Sirach 5:11 (cf. [James 1:19](#)).

“Do not prattle in the assembly of the elders, nor repeat yourself in your prayer.”—Sirach 7:14 (cf. [Matthew 6:7](#)).

“There is a man who is rich through his diligence and self-denial, And this is the reward allotted to him: When he says, ‘I have found rest, And now I shall enjoy my goods!’ He does not know how much time will pass until he leaves them to others and dies.”—Sirach 11:18, 19 (cf. [Luke 12:16-21](#)).

“Those who eat me [wisdom] will hunger for more, and those who drink me will thirst for more.”—Sirach 24:21 (cf. [John 6:35](#)).

“Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.”—Sirach 28:2 (cf. [Matthew 6:14, 15](#); [Mark 11:25](#)).

[108]

### 99. Peter’s Literary Assistant

*Did any of the Bible prophets have secretaries or literary assistants who helped them produce their books?*

Yes. In fact, Peter apparently gave his secretary far more liberty than Ellen White ever gave to Marian Davis. The quality of the Greek language in First Peter is so different from that in Second Peter that some scholars think they could not have been written by the same author. Michael Green states:

“The language is different (strikingly so in the original), and the thought is also very different. There is a very great stylistic difference between these two letters. The Greek of 1 Peter is polished, cultured, dignified; it is among the best in the New Testament. The Greek of 2 Peter is grandiose; it is rather like baroque art.”—*The Second Epistle General of Peter and the General Epistle of Jude*, Page 16.

In addressing the question of Bible authors and their assistants, Allen A. MacRae, one of America's ablest Old Testament expositors, declares:

“Toward the end of the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul indicates that he was writing with his own hand, perhaps implying that this was not his usual custom. He may have been following a procedure also used in parts of the Old Testament where the material was dictated to a scribe. Jeremiah, for instance, dictated his prophecies to Baruch. Nor can we rule out the idea that on occasion a writer may have given an assistant a general idea of what he wanted, telling him to put it into written form. In such a case, he would have checked it over to be sure it represented what he wanted to say, and therefore he could truly be called its author. The Holy Spirit would have guided the entire process so that what was finally written expressed the ideas God desired His people to have.

“Probably Paul seldom followed this latter procedure, since he was highly educated and must have had confidence in his ability to express himself in Greek. But the situation may have been different in the case of Peter and John. The styles of First and Second Peter differ so considerably that some critics have suggested one is a fraud. Yet Peter could well have written one book in Greek himself (2 Peter?) and, for the other, expressed his thought in Aramaic to an associate who was more experienced in writing Greek (1 Peter). This associate could then have written Peter's ideas in his own style, afterward making alterations Peter might have suggested. The two letters would thus differ in style; yet, under the direction of the Holy Spirit both would express Peter's thought as truly as if Peter had dictated every word. John Calvin held such a view, but had no doubt that both presented Peter's thoughts accurately.”—*Christianity Today*, October 10, 1980, Page 34.

[109]

**100. Why Doesn't The White Estate Tell Us?**

*Why doesn't the White Estate tell us about these problem situations and facts before others ferret them out?*

Throughout the years the White Estate staff has been small and has been too busy to engage in pure research. It has made efforts, however, to share its growing body of information.

In 1933 W. C. White and D. E. Robinson issued a document, *Brief Statements*, etc., cited above, were specific acknowledgment is made that Ellen White, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, appropriated gems from the writings of others. That document was offered for sale, 27 pages for 25 cents. Apparently not many were concerned about the subject as the existence of the document was soon forgotten. It was not to be resurrected until current discussions aroused an interest in Ellen White's literary activities.

In 1935 W. C. White addressed the issue at the Advanced Bible School in Angwin, California. He asked "Can the descriptions of scenes and events copied from other writers find a proper place in the inspired writings of a messenger of God?" He then answered the question. (See "Address to Faculty and Students at the Advanced Bible School," June 18, 1935, Page 11.)

In 1951, F. D. Nichol published his *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, which included sixty-five pages (pages 403-467) on plagiarism-related issues. During the next twenty-five years there seemed to be little or no concern among Adventists as to the propriety of Ellen White's use of the works of other authors. Even Walter Rea could write, in 1965:

"Controversy has flared from time to time concerning close similarities or outright adaptations in Mrs. White's writings drawn from other contemporary sources. If God in His infinite wisdom chooses to sanctify the thoughts of Conybeare and Howson, Wiley, or Edersheim and bring them to our attention by the pen of Ellen G. White or anybody else, so be it. I have established myself in the writings of Mrs. Ellen G. White, regardless of the human problems involved."—*Clare-*



*mont Dialogue*, Volume II, Number 2 (1965), pages 31, 34, 36.

Arthur L. White dealt with the question of Ellen White's use of historical sources in 1969 (see his supplement, [The Spirit of Prophecy 4:507-549](#)); in 1973 (see *The Ellen G. White Writings*, pages 107-136); in 1974 in a series of lectures in Switzerland; in 1978 when the talks given in Switzerland were published in the *Review and Herald* (Issues of January 12 to February 2); and in 1979 in a series of seven *Review* articles (July 12 to August 23). The latter two series, now available in a reprint, include three articles on the writing of *The Desire of Ages*. [110]

Also in 1979 The White Estate published pamphlets on "Ellen White's Use of Uninspired Sources," and "How *The Desire of Ages* Was Written."

Similarly, the fact that a conference of Bible and history teachers was held in 1919 was completely lost sight of until a member of the White Estate staff noticed an incidental reference to the conference in an old *Review*. This led to a search for the minutes which were eventually located in the General Conference Archives. The "minutes" really are not proper minutes at all, but a 1250-page stenographic report of the day-by-day discussions of the conference. The fifty delegates could not decide what to do with this record, so A. G. Daniells simply filed it away among the unorganized keepsakes of the General Conference. The establishment of the General Conference Archives in 1973 has made these and other materials available to those interested in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Criticism of the White Estate and church leaders for "hiding information," it would seem, is not justified.

### 101. The Whites' Financial Affairs

*The Los Angeles Times* article of October 23, 1980, insinuates that James and Ellen White had selfish motivations, for their writing. What did James White mean when he suggested to Ellen White that there was still "wealth" in their pens?

About six months before his death, James White wrote his wife:

“We must get out certain books. These we shall not complete in California, or in Battle Creek, unless we keep away from the Office and its business. Our financial matters stand well, and there is wealth yet in our pens, if we will keep away from bustle and care and work, and use our pens. In this way we can leave something that will tell when we may be gone.”—James White to E. G. White, February 7, 1881.

The last sentence, which was not quoted in the *Times* article, provides the key to James White’s thinking. The other letter quoted in the *Times* also omitted those passages which showed that the Whites were not thinking selfishly. Under date of April 18, 1880, James wrote his wife:

[111]

“I prefer to receive nothing back from the Sanitarium and College, and in order to have means, to act our part in point of giving to other enterprises, we should receive liberally on our books. With the increasing demand for our writings, and the new Way of Life picture, there will be an income of several thousand dollars annually, besides the immense amount of good our writings will do. I shall find no difficulty in raising the \$20,000 to place your volumes on steamers and ships, in libraries and in companies just raised up.”—James White to E. G. White, April 18, 1880.

James White was not only an editor, a preacher, and an administrator; he also was a good businessman. He sold Bibles, concordances, and stationery in his travels among the churches and at camp meetings. Income from his sales provided funds that he and his wife could use for promoting the general interests of the cause. They consistently made generous contributions toward the establishment of churches, hospitals, schools, and other church enterprises.

In 1888 Ellen White wrote:

“I do not begrudge a cent that I have put into the cause, and I have kept on until my husband and myself

have about \$30,000 invested in the cause of God. We did this a little at a time and the Lord saw that He could trust us with His means, and that we would not bestow it on ourselves. He kept pouring it in and we kept letting it out.”—[Manuscript 3, 1888](#).

Throughout her lifetime Ellen White constantly shared her home and her pocketbook with others. The following lines in a letter written from Australia are typical:

“I see so many things that must be done in order to make even a beginning, to raise the standard in these new fields. From every direction I hear the Macedonian cry for help. ‘Come over and help us.’ I also have calls to assist young people to attend school, and also to open primary schools in different locations, where the children may be educated. This is work that must be done.

“I wish to make some additions to *Christian Education*, and then if the *Review and Herald* wish to carry it, they can do so if they will pay me a small sum as a royalty, to be invested in the education of many who cannot attend school and pay their own expenses. In Melbourne I bore the expenses of no less than fourteen. During the first term of the school in Cooranbong, I carried several through school, paying their board and school expense.”—[Letter 7a, 1897](#).

When Ellen White died in 1915 her books showed a credit balance. According to the court appraisal, however, her assets came short of her liabilities. Neither she nor her husband accumulated any earthly wealth; their treasure was laid up in heaven. See *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, pages 516-530, for a detailed discussion of Ellen White’s financial affairs.

### Ten More Questions to Think About

1. Could the reading of *Steps to Christ*, *The Desire of Ages*, or any other Ellen White book possibly harm a person who is sincerely seeking to know the Lord?

2. What influence have the writings of Ellen White had on your life? Do you find it harder to pray or think about Christ after reading her works?

3. What would the Seventh-day Adventist Church be like today if it had not had the inspired guidance of Ellen G. White? Would it have its present system of organization; its medical, educational, and publishing work; and its international evangelistic outreach?

4. When has the church ever been misled by following Ellen White's counsels?

5. How can one account for the worldwide unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in spite of racial and national boundaries, which divide other religious groups?

6. How can one account for the remarkable harmony throughout Ellen White's writings, whether they were penned in 1846, 1914, or any year between?

7. What has happened to those who were once believers but later opposed Ellen White and the Church?

8. What would be of the Seventh-day Adventist Church if all its members would reject the doctrine of the investigative judgment and the authority of Ellen White?

9. Is it ever wise to reject a prophet's message whatever one may think of the prophet's method? (See [Hebrews 1:1](#).)

10. What if the reader still has questions that have not been answered? Ellen White urges us not to wait until every objection is removed before we believe. Here is her appeal:

“God has made ample provision to establish the faith of all men, if they will decide from the weight of evidence. But if they wait to have every seeming objection removed before they believe, they will never be settled, rooted, and grounded in the truth. God will never remove all seeming difficulties from our path. Those who wish to doubt may find opportunity; those

who wish to believe will find plenty of evidence upon which to base their faith.”—[Testimonies for the Church 4:583, 584](#).

The evidence that God led Ellen White not only in her writing, but also in the guidance she provided the church over the years is overwhelming.

“Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper” ([2 Chronicles 20:20](#)).

*Ellen G. White Estate*

*Washington, D.C. 20012*

*March, 1981*

*Supplement to Australian Record-June 8, 1981*