

ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE

# WHAT ELLEN WHITE HAS MEANT TO ME



HERBERT E. DOUGLASS



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**What Ellen White has  
Meant to Me**

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**Ellen G. White**

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### **About the Author**

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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Edited by  
Herbert E. Douglass

## About The Book

Only a person in his seventies, or older, would likely recall seeing Ellen White and listening to her speak. A generation has arisen that knows her not, personally, and with the passing of time there is a real and present danger that the vivid conviction made upon the minds and hearts of those who were eye and ear witnesses—that indeed God spoke to her and through her—will fade like the handwriting on the Magna Charta or the Declaration of Independence. The solution to this problem is not to preserve her voluminous writings in a vacuum with a trace of helium to prevent mildew, but to witness their impact on the thinking and in the lives of those of our own generation who have known her, vicariously to be sure, through personal experience with the effects of her inspired counsel in their own lives and in the life of the church. In these short essays they share their inmost thoughts and convictions about Ellen White as God’s appointed messenger to the church *today*.

## About The Author

Herbert Douglass is an associate editor of the *Review and Herald*. Previously he served the church as a pastor and, with a doctorate in theology, as a college teacher, academic dean, and president. He is the author-editor of *If I Had One Sermon to Preach* (1972) and *I Became a Seventh-day Adventist Christian* (1973). This symposium reflects his own deep conviction with respect to the importance and value of the inspired counsel borne by God's chosen messenger to the church today.

## Foreword

Robert H. Pierson, *President*

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is distinctive, not only because of the doctrinal pillars reflected in its name but because of its sense of mission. It is completely committed to the task of preparing a people to meet their soon-coming Lord—a people made up of all races, from all continents, high and low, rich and poor, who have chosen to be faithful to God’s way of life, regardless of earthly consequences.

No other group on earth, whether political, social, or religious, has united such diversity. Perhaps no other worldwide organization has begun so small, and gone so far, in such breadth of human interest in the past one hundred years.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church operates the largest Protestant educational system in the world; more than 300 medical institutions circle the world and are probably the first contact that most people make with Seventh-day Adventists. Adventist community programs in health education, featuring stop-smoking and alcohol-prevention clinics, are pacesetters on most continents. And the list goes on.

What, under God, is one of the greatest single factors behind this oft-acknowledged religious phenomenon? The answer is simple: the life and writings of a humble woman, Ellen G. White. Her counsel along all lines of human concern, whether it be education in the home and school, health education and medical care, community welfare services, spiritual awareness and nourishment, theological expositions or personal relationships, was many times years ahead of advanced scientific discoveries and affirmations.

The years have passed—many of the opinions of her contemporaries have been updated if not forgotten—but the passing years have

only vindicated the foresight and wisdom of her counsel. Nothing has had to be deleted or adjusted to conform to incontrovertible facts of the twentieth century.

For Seventh-day Adventists, Ellen G. White is more than a tradition. For those who have read her works, tested her counsel, trusted her judgments, she has been the messenger of the Lord for these modern times. No excuses are made for her contributions, not only to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but to the world in general. Her writings have been an invaluable asset to Seventh-day Adventists. Much of the success the Adventist Church has experienced on its worldwide program, whatever advance perception it has enjoyed in such fields as education and medicine, the open secret is usually found in her writings.

I speak these words after nearly forty years of denominational service; most of this time in administrative responsibilities. Whenever my mind ranges over this period, whether during those gratifying years as a pastor and evangelist, or as a missionary in India or the Caribbean, or when president of a local or union conference, the Southern Asia or Trans-Africa divisions, and lately in my present responsibility, the part that Ellen White played in my ministry has been indispensable. Her writings have provided insight for my duties, courage in the face of difficult problems, inspiration in developing Biblical subjects, clear vision as I faced the future, and above all else, the surest evidence that God was speaking through her to His children.

I speak to young and old, those within and without the Adventist Church. What you will read in this volume is perhaps like nothing else you have ever read. These contributors are not giving theological lectures; out of personal experience and conviction they are speaking the truth about a rarely discussed subject—the tender experiences of listening to God speak to them through the writings of Ellen White. They have all walked different paths but they have heard the same voice—the voice of their Lord through her. I stand with them and with a simple, urgent plea join them in inviting each reader to “taste and see” for himself. No man can go it alone. To know that God has spoken in the Bible and in the writings of Ellen G. White is reassuring indeed.

*Loma Linda, California*  
*November 3, 1972*

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## Chapter 1—How Confidence in a Book Is Born

How does a person develop confidence in a book? What finally impels a person to trust a book so much that he will, voluntarily and joyfully, mold his life, give up immediate rewards and gratifications, because of what he reads in a book *whose author he has never met*?

Men and women must ask this question sooner or later, if they are ever to become committed Christians, or if they are to remain committed believers, after being born into a Christian-oriented home.

Every generation since the disciples first passed on the good news about Jesus Christ to those who knew Him not in flesh and blood has had to answer this question. Every generation that has arisen since Ellen White's death in 1915 has had to answer this question in regard to her credibility.

Confidence in the Biblical books, which set forth Jesus Christ as Lord, and confidence in the books that were written by Ellen G. White as His messenger in modern times begin and end with the same questions and the same answers. Finding an unshakable confidence, or trust, in the writings of Ellen White comes in the same way that confidence in the Bible is developed.

[11] How, then, does confidence arise? Where does a person begin? Must all the evidence be in, all questions answered, before a Christian can have confidence? How does a person go about knowing anything with certainty so that he can have faith and confidence in his knowledge?

With some areas of life, knowing with certainty is not important. If someone is asked, "How many dogs are there in the world?" he probably would reply, "I don't know for sure." And no one is especially disturbed because he does not know with certainty. We say it doesn't matter.

There are other areas, however, where we need to have confidence that *someone else does know for sure*, even though we may not. It is interesting, and probably helpful, for a young mother or her accountant husband to know what the tappet clearance should

be in the motor of the family car, but they do not need to know so long as their garage mechanic knows for sure.

When asked about the diameter of the earth we would probably say, "Oh, about 8,000 miles." Very few people would know for sure, and for most people it doesn't really matter. But for an astrophysicist or a telemetrist it is very important that he knows for certain that the diameter of the earth at the equator, for all practical purposes, is 7,926.41 miles.

We may not know, nor really care to know, just where a kidney stone is or how to get at it, but we trust that someone else does and can get at it with dispatch whenever the need should arise.

There are many important matters in life that we leave to others who have far more confidence and certainty than we may have. But there are some matters we must know with unquestioning confidence, such as whether God answers prayer, or whether there is power available to live nobly, and unselfishly, like Jesus lived. Does this kind of heavenly intervention really exist, or are we using poetic language, or symbolic words? Knowing the truth for sure about such questions is not a matter of mere interest or convenience on our part, but a matter of life and hope, or despair and death.

When a book such as the Bible talks about such matters, how do we develop confidence that we are reading truth? Where do we begin? Is it something that we will only feel? Is it fair to rely on a warm feeling that we are on the right path? Is it safe to trust in spectacular upsurges of elation and ecstasy—even phenomenal, [12] spontaneous radical changes in attitudes and feelings?

However, if feeling and ecstatic effusion are to be the test that truth has been found, then the next question must be faced: How does any man know that his feelings are any more reliable than anybody else's feelings, especially when each man comes up with a different way of life and a conflicting set of theological conclusions?

Deep feelings of rightness on the part of the screaming Voodoo witch doctor, or of one who claims the gift of tongues, or of Trappist monks, do not, because of their undeniable emotional experiences, guarantee the path of credibility and certitude. On the contrary, thoughtful persons looking for the truth to which they can trust their lives, turn away, with alarm and probably with some disgust, from religious emotion as a basis for unshakable confidence. Ellen White

observed: “Impressions and feelings are no sure evidence that a person is led by the Lord.”—[Testimonies for the Church 1:413](#).

Let’s try trust. Often we hear, “Everyone has to believe in something. The Bible is as good as anything else we can trust.” How does trust begin? Do we believe that God is “up there” and that the Bible is “truth” because our teachers and parents “believe in” the Bible?

If one answers Yes, he is fortunate indeed; there is so little trust today. To trust teachers and parents for one’s concepts of God and duty is an admirable trait—for children. But to stay on this level of secondhand faith makes for spineless adults or outright rebels—depending upon the young adult’s way of expressing his emotional immaturity. Anyhow, trusting someone else doesn’t make that other person right. Besides, who told our parents or pastor that what they believe is the truth? Their parents? Who told them?

[13] In other words, if we believe the Bible to be the truth, on whose authority do we build such confidence? Whom do we trust so much that we can base our life on this conviction? As Biblical words come to us over the centuries, whether written by Moses or Isaiah or John, how do we know that such words can be trusted? Every man who has ever heard about the Bible—even the disciples of Jesus—had to answer this question. Even those fortunate people who heard Paul preach had to ask, “How can I be sure that I can trust what this man is saying? He means well, he sounds as if he believes what he is saying, but is it the truth?”

Trusting the enthusiasm and well meaning of other people is not the safest ground on which to build unshakable confidence.

How about reason and research? That sounds safer. Let us see truth as it is, with our own eyes and ears and brain, Reason says. But the history of thought over the past three hundred years has exploded the tantalizing myth that unaided human reason can arrive at truth, especially with questions about the meaning and purpose of life. Even empirical “truth” carries only tentative credentials while it waits for the next discovery and the junking of previously “settled” conclusions.

The beatniks of the fifties, the hippies, yippies, and copouts of the sixties and seventies, are not strange, unexplainable ingrates, but the logical consequences of the total collapse of certainty and

confidence in human reason and the morality of scientism. The age of permissiveness, supported by naturalism or agnostic existentialism in the West, and pantheistic idealism in the East, is the logical conclusion to several centuries of progressive rejection of authority as once claimed, each in their turn, for reason, romantic feeling and intuition, historical research, and laboratory investigation.

Yet in spite of the collapse of human effort to find certainty, men everywhere continue to seek certainty, the confidence of knowing that what they believe is for real. The human mind and heart crave truth. They were made to be at home with truth. Not knowing the truth induces a deep-set homesickness of the spirit, alienation, and a feeling of lostness in a world without meaning.

All the while there have been people who have not drifted in a meaningless existence. To reach these men and women who sincerely want to know the truth about life, about themselves, and about the future, God has used books, sixty-six of them in the Bible and scores written by Ellen G. White. In these books men have found confidence in Him and in the truth they seek, unshakable confidence. How has this happened?

Unshakable confidence begins only when men and women know that God, personally, has spoken to them *directly*. The questions that arise, of course, are: How does a person know that there is a God who wants to talk to men? How does he know when He speaks? How can a man know he is listening to God and not to the echoes of his own soul? [14]

Answers to these questions must be direct, immediate, and personal—or there would not be sufficient to warrant intelligent, unshakable confidence. Yet, the answer must be more than a deep conviction based on private study, personal feeling, or a dramatic emotional experience.

Personal conviction, however arrived at, must be tested against some objective yardstick—something historical, observed, and corroborated by other persons—something that, in itself, has stood the test of scrutiny. Subjective certitude requires objective certainty if an idea is to have any lasting, convincing credibility.

The only times through the centuries when men have known the truth about life have been when God spoke to them “in many and various ways” ([Hebrews 1:1](#), R.S.V.) such as historical interventions

(the Exodus through the Red Sea), personal confrontations (Moses and the burning bush), prophetic instruments (Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, et cetera), nature's handiwork ([Psalm 19](#); [Romans 1](#)), and His own personal presence as a carpenter from Nazareth.

In such manifestations, or revelations of Himself, God put Himself on record before the human race, saying over and over again: "I am like this." "Remember how I kept my promise with Abraham? I will also keep my promises to you." "Love is stronger than hate or death."

Human research has never come up with a God like the Lord of the Holy Scriptures, for the simple reason that He could not be thought. For the human mind, the Biblical God would be too unreal. Ideas, such as a creation by decree, forgiveness through permanent sacrifice on the part of God Himself, divine power within man that regenerates thought, feelings, and will, are incredible to people who have not listened humbly to this God speak to them.

[15] Men saw Him act, heard Him speak, trusted His counsel, observed the validity and vindication of His principles as the years went by. All this they wrote down in documents that finally became the Holy Bible.

But they did not write their experiences and record these messages so that generations to come would have a "holy" book that could be revered and memorized. They wrote so that succeeding generations could stand where Biblical writers had stood and listen and see what they had experienced. Their writings were not meant to be primarily the object of faith but a two-way channel by which readers would learn of a personal, self-communicating God and also in the learning, actually hear Him speak! The truth they wrote was the truth about a living God who would do in every generation to follow what He had done in the lives of the Biblical writers. It was truth that had been given to them by God Himself, not something devised by the mind of man.

Their appeal was: "O taste and see that the Lord is good! Happy is the man who takes refuge in him!" ([Psalm 34:8](#), R.S.V.). Peter reminded his readers that the source of their confidence resided in the self-authentic witness of the good news that he and others were proclaiming: "Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk,

that by it you may grow up to salvation; for you have tasted the kindness of the Lord” (1 Peter 2:2, 3, R.S.V.).

The apostles did not ask men merely to trust them as to who Jesus was. But they did ask men to stand where they stood and listen to what they heard. Although, after the ascension, Jesus no longer spoke face to face as the apostles once heard Him, nevertheless, the apostles asked their hearers to join them in listening to the voice of Jesus as He spoke to their souls. This personal invitation of the apostles, whether face to face or through their letters, became to those who were eager for truth as a telescope bringing the unknown to earth. The telescope, however—no matter how elegant—was not made to be merely looked *at*, but to be looked *through*. The apostles knew, as all men of faith learn, that human instruments such as historical research, human logic, and even emotional, sensational demonstrations would not in themselves produce a lasting conviction on second-generation believers—for all such human tools are subject to interpretation, incompleteness, and the latent suspicion that maybe somebody had been duped. [16]

They simply said (but with conviction that shook the world): “This Carpenter who was nailed to a Jerusalem cross was God Himself. He spoke, lived, and died like no man before Him. His analysis of man’s predicament rings true. His promises have always been fulfilled. In fact, He promised us his personal Representative whom He called the Holy Spirit, so that we would never have reason to doubt His continuing presence and power in our lives. He wants all men actually to have this Holy Presence and Power in their lives, just as we first experienced it when He walked and talked with us face to face. If you want more out of life, real happiness, and reason to hope, He has much to teach you. If you listen to Him as we have, as you read our words and hear His inner voice, you will know exactly what we are talking about.”

And listen they did. In Galatia, Corinth, Philippi, Antioch, and many places unknown today, men and women listened—not only to this personal witness of the apostles but also to the Spirit within that verified, confirmed, and authenticated what they heard with their ears and read with their eyes. Head and heart, fact and feeling, were joined.

Peter described the response of these second- and third-generation hearers to the Biblical witness, who through this experience became “contemporary” disciples with those who knew Jesus in the flesh: “Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:8, 9, R.S.V.).

Although Peter, Paul, Matthew, and the other apostles (those who could report about what they had personally seen and heard) passed on, their witness did not die with them. What they had to say about Jesus lived on in their letters to young Christian churches; these eyewitness reports eventually became a permanent addition to the Bible through which the apostles themselves had first heard God speaking to them.

[17] Through this written testimony Jesus was kept before the world as man’s Saviour. Men and women everywhere, as the centuries rolled on, were asked to listen to Him speak. Whenever a person listened with an open mind and heart, he heard the voice of God transmitted through the inspired instruments of human witness.

Today in the twentieth century as for each generation since the apostles died, “the Scriptures are to be received as God’s word to us, not written merely, but spoken.... In them He is speaking to us individually, speaking as directly as if we could listen to His voice. It is in these promises that Christ communicates to us His grace and power.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, 122.

This relationship wherein man declares Jesus to be his Lord, receives His declaration that he is a forgiven son, and commits himself to Him in trusting obedience, is called “faith” in the New Testament. Faith is man’s Yes to God’s Yes. Faith accepts the fact that man is a sinner in need of a Saviour, not merely an ignorant stumbler in need of education. But this knowledge and experience of faith is not something that can be deduced by logic or discovered by research; it comes only in response to the Lord who speaks to man, personally, through His Spirit and through the written record of His mighty acts in history.

In describing how men and women today find faith in God and confidence in the Bible, Ellen White wrote probably the clearest statement found anywhere as to how confidence in a book is born:



“Through faith they come to know God by an experimental knowledge. They have proved for themselves the reality of His word, the truth of His promises. They have tasted, and they know that the Lord is good.

“The beloved John had a knowledge gained through his own experience. He could testify: ‘That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ’ ([1 John 1:1-3](#)).

“So everyone may be able, through his own experience, to ‘set his seal to this, that God is true.’ [John 3:33](#), A.R.V. He can bear witness to that which he himself has seen and heard and felt of the power of Christ. He can testify: [18]

“‘I needed help, and I found it in Jesus. Every want was supplied, the hunger of my soul was satisfied; the Bible is to me the revelation of Christ. I believe in Jesus because He is to me a divine Saviour. I believe the Bible because I have found it to be the voice of God to my soul.’

“He who has gained a knowledge of God and His word through personal experience is prepared to engage in the study of natural science....

“He who has a knowledge of God and His word through personal experience has a settled faith in the divinity of the Holy Scriptures. He has proved that God’s word is truth, and he knows that truth can never contradict itself.”—[The Ministry of Healing, 461, 462](#).

What do we learn from this remarkable statement about faith, personal experience, the voice of God, and the Bible?

First, and beneath all discussion regarding confidence in finding the truth, is the faith experience. Faith is the personal response of a man who has been awakened to the outreaching love of his Creator. In complete agreement he says Yes to all that God says about his being a rebel. What God says about his self-centered living, the man of faith knows to be true. Furthermore, what God offers in His

invitation to return home as a forgiven son the man of faith knows to be the greatest word that could be spoken to man. He knows through experience that wholeness of life dawns for the first time only when He calls Jesus his Lord.

Every disciple lived through this same experience before he turned to his contemporaries and witnessed in voice and word to this life-giving, earth-shaking good news.

This good news, written in the letters later assembled within the covers of what we know today as the Bible, is understood to be the truth only by people who allow the Lord of the Bible to speak to them. The tragedy is that not all who listen to “the voice of God” respond to Him as forgiven and grateful sons!

[19] But for those who do, the Bible is the channel through which they continue to hear Jesus speak. *Because they hear Him speak, they have confidence that the Biblical writers were speaking the truth about God.* The Bible becomes authentic and worthy of confidence because what the writers said God would do when men listened and obeyed is exactly what happens in personal experience. They have “proved that God’s word is truth.”

The basic fact about truth that we learn in this Ellen White comment (a truth verified by many cross-checks in human experience) is that man was made to respond to God, physiologically, as well as morally. Whether or not man listens and obeys what he hears from God, either through the inner Word of His Holy Spirit or the exterior Word of the Bible, does not, in itself, invalidate the inspiration or integrity of God’s Word. The significant fact is that there is a God-given faculty within man that enables him to distinguish between books that are used as channels of the Word of God and those that are mere human opinion or self-echoes. Such books above all others, we contend, are the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White.

After twenty-five years of translating the New Testament into modern English, J. B. Phillips wrote a remarkable testimony to his experience as a translator, called *Ring of Truth*. He regretted the modern scene where so many intelligent people do not understand what the Christian message is all about, chiefly because they have never given the New Testament a fair hearing.

Yet, Dr. Phillips observed: “It [the New Testament] has the proper ring for anyone who has not lost his ear for truth.... It is not

magical, nor is it faultless: human beings wrote it. But by something which I would not hesitate to describe as a miracle there is a concentration upon that area of inner truth which is fundamental and ageless. That, I believe, is the reason why millions of people have heard the voice of God speaking to them through these seemingly artless pages.”—Page 20. <sup>1</sup>

He was amazed at the initial public response to his early translation of the Epistles (*Letters to Young Churches*). And he was astonished at what was happening to him. Coming to grips with the New Testament firsthand, removing the old varnish of archaic speech caused the centuries “to melt away, and here was I confronted by eternal truths which my soul, however reluctantly, felt bound to accept. The further I went with my work of translation the more this conviction of spiritual truth grew within me.”—Page 24.

[20]

He had earlier viewed the Greek of the New Testament with “snobbish disdain” in comparison with the Greek used by the classical writers, but he soon saw that God was using the “ordinary workaday language” of common man just as He humbled Himself by condescending to become man. The infusion of the Spirit of God in the language of man witnessing to Jesus as Lord became “strangely alive; it spoke to my condition in the most uncanny way.... Although as a priest of the Anglican Church I had a great respect for Holy Scripture, this very close contact of several years of translation produced an effect of ‘inspiration’ which I have never experienced, even in the remotest degree, in any other work.”—Page 25.

Dr. Phillips saw the effect of a fresh look at the Bible on himself and on those who read his translations. He reaffirmed the fact that a human being can know God through Christ in a very real sense as He is set forth in the Bible. Almost paraphrasing statements by Ellen White ([The Ministry of Healing](#), 461, 462), he wrote: “The laboratory check for spiritual experience is life itself, and it is exactly here, sometimes in the most appallingly dangerous and painful situations, that I have found faith both sure and radiant. In short, I have seen the experience of God described in the New Testament occurring again and again in our modern world.”—Pages 55, 56.

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<sup>1</sup>From J. B. Phillips. *Ring of Truth* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967).

He concluded his book, saying: “It is my serious conclusion that we have in the New Testament, words that bear the hallmark of reality and the ring of truth.”—Page 125.

[21] Dr. Phillips’ witness to the self-authentic reliability of the Bible joins the long line of grateful Christians who have found their “settled faith in the divinity of the Holy Scriptures.” The Bible, after the death of the apostles (the only eyewitnesses and firsthand reporters of our Lord’s personal witness), became the precondition of faith for all generations to come. After the apostles died, generally speaking, faith in Jesus as Lord would not have been possible without the Bible. But whenever faith arose, confidence in the Bible arose at the same time—it could not have been otherwise. When men find Jesus by traveling the road to Him as outlined in the Bible they simultaneously trust the Book that safely led them. The believability of the Bible comes at the same time that a person believes in the Lord of the Bible. Whatever the Bible says about Jesus and what He can mean to me is exactly my experience—and that is where unshakable confidence in the Bible rests. Safely.

That is exactly where confidence in the writings of Ellen G. White begins and ends. The same joining of head and heart, fact and feeling, is required before unshakable confidence in her works is born. Working with these messages as one would with the Biblical text, letting them speak as they were intended to speak, the door opens to all that is strangely alive, believable, and self-authenticating. Here, too, the voice of God will be heard. This simple observation from experience is repeated often, in so many ways, by the contributors to this volume.

Confidence in the writings of Ellen White is developed in the same way, along the same path, as confidence in the Bible is developed. Even as faith can be understood only by a man who has met Jesus through the Bible, so confidence in the writings of Ellen White becomes real and unshakable only to those who with an open head and heart “taste and see” for themselves.

Herbert E. Douglass

*Takoma Park, Maryland*

*October 1, 1972*

**J. N. Andrews**

[22]

**John Nevins Andrews (1829-1883) was the first Seventh-day Adventist missionary to countries outside North America—called at the time, “the best we had.” He early developed skill in Biblical studies; he could read the Bible in seven languages and, reportedly, could reproduce the New Testament from memory. In 1867 he became the third president of the General Conference, and from 1869-1870, an editor of the *Review and Herald*. As a theologian Elder Andrews made significant contributions to the development of various doctrines of the Adventist denomination. His most important publication was *History of the Sabbath and the First Day of the Week*.**

## [23] Chapter 2—Our Use of the Visions of Sister White

It is quite generally understood that the Seventh-day Adventists are believers in the perpetuity of spiritual gifts. It is also understood that we regard the visions of Sr. White as given by the Spirit of God. But the use which we make of the doctrine of spiritual gifts, and particularly of the visions of Sr. White, is very generally misunderstood.

1. We understand that the Holy Scriptures are divinely inspired, and that they contain the truth of God which is able to make us wise unto salvation.

2. But we do not understand that the gift of the Scriptures to mankind, supersedes the gift of the Holy Spirit to the people of God.

3. On the contrary, we do believe that the Scriptures plainly reveal the office and work of the Holy Spirit; which office and work can never cease while man remains upon probation.

4. This work of the Holy Spirit is revealed to us in the Bible doctrine of spiritual gifts.

5. While therefore we do heartily accept the Scriptures as teaching man's whole duty toward God, we do not deny the Holy Spirit that place in the church which the Scriptures assign to it.

[24] 6. The office of the Holy Spirit is to reprove men of sin ([John 16:8](#)); to take away the carnal mind, and to change our evil nature by removing guilt from the conscience; to make us new creatures ([Romans 8:1-9](#)); and to shed abroad in our hearts the love of God ([Romans 5:5](#)); and to bear witness with our spirits that we are the children of God ([Romans 8:16](#)); and to lead into all truth ([John 16:13](#)); and finally to change the saints to immortality at the last day. [Romans 8:11](#); [2 Corinthians 5:4, 5](#).

7. The Scriptures contain the truth of God, as the precious metals are contained in a mine. The work of the Spirit of God in leading men into all truth is to search out, lay open, bring to light and vindicate the truth of God. And in reproofing sin, it has not only the work of impressing the conscience of the sinner by powerful

convictions of guilt, but also in showing to chosen servants of God the guilt of others; and revealing wrongs which otherwise would remain hidden to the great detriment of the church, and to the ruin of the sinner.

8. The work of the Holy Spirit may be divided into two parts: First, that which is designed simply to convert and to sanctify the person affected by it. Second, that which is for the purpose of opening the truth of God, and of correcting error, and of reproof and rebuking secret sins. This part of the work is wrought by what the Scriptures term spiritual gifts. These exist, not for the especial good of the person to whose trust they are committed, but for the benefit of the whole body of the church.

9. Now it is plain that those who reject the work of the Spirit of God under the plea that the Scriptures are sufficient, do deny and reject all that part of the Bible which reveals the office and work of the Holy Spirit.

10. Thus [1 Corinthians 12](#), and [Ephesians 4](#), which define the gifts of the Spirit of God, cannot really form a part of the rule of life of those who affirm that the Scriptures are so sufficient in themselves that the gifts of the Spirit are unnecessary.

11. The Spirit of God gave the Scriptures. But it is plain that it did not give them for the purpose of shutting itself out from all participation in the work of God among men. And what the Bible says of the gifts of the Spirit shows just what relation the Spirit of God sustains to the work of the gospel.

12. Thus Paul states the matter in two of his epistles: [Quote [1 Corinthians 12:4-11](#); [Ephesians 4:11-13](#)]. [25]

13. Now the Bible expressly teaches that the existence of these gifts is as necessary to the church of Christ, as the different members are necessary to the well-being of the body. While, therefore, the Bible recognizes the gifts of the Spirit, these are not given to supersede the Bible, nor yet to fill the same place as the Bible.

14. The object of spiritual gifts is to maintain the living work of God in the church. They enable the Spirit of God to speak in the correction of wrongs, and in the exposure of iniquity. They are the means whereby God teaches his people when they are in danger of taking wrong steps. They are the means by which the Spirit of God sheds light upon church difficulties, when otherwise their

adjustment would be impossible. They also constitute the means whereby God preserves his people from confusion by pointing out errors, by correcting false interpretations of the Scriptures, and causing light to shine out upon that which is in danger of being wrongly understood, and therefore of being the cause of evil and division to the people of God. In short, their work is to unite the people of God in the same mind and in the same judgment upon the meaning of the Scriptures. Mere human judgment, with no direct instruction from Heaven, can never search out hidden iniquity, nor adjust dark and complicated church difficulties, nor prevent different and conflicting interpretations of the Scriptures. It would be sad indeed if God could not still converse with his people.

15. But here it is proper to say that these uses of the gifts of the Spirit pertain almost wholly to the household of faith. Men who have no acquaintance with them cannot be affected by them. And also, where men have had little opportunity to be acquainted with the manifestations of the Spirit of God, they cannot be asked to accept such work as specially wrought by God. It is but just that they should have clear and convincing evidence for themselves that the Spirit of God is in the work.

16. For this purpose we hold that all the tests presented in the Bible should be applied to the gifts, and that they should be found to sustain the test of such examination.

[26] 17. We therefore do not test the world in any manner by these gifts. Nor do we in our intercourse with other religious bodies who are striving to walk in the fear of God, in any way make these a test of Christian character. Upon none of these persons do we urge these manifestations of the Spirit of God, nor test them by their teaching.

18. There is such a thing, however, as men having in the providence of God an opportunity to become acquainted with the special work of the Spirit of God, so that they shall acknowledge that their light is clear, convincing, and satisfactory. To such persons, we consider the gifts of the Spirit are clearly a test. Not only has God spoken, but they have had opportunity to ascertain that fact, and to know it for themselves. In all such cases, spiritual gifts are manifestly a test that cannot be disregarded except at the peril of eternal ruin.



19. One of the chief gifts of the Spirit of God that he has placed in the New Testament church is the gift of prophecy. [Joel 2:28](#); [Acts 2:1-4, 17, 18](#); [1 Corinthians 12:1-31](#); [14:1-5](#); [Ephesians 4:11-13](#). This gift the Bible connects with the closing work of this dispensation. [Revelation 12:17](#); [14:12](#); [19:10](#). Spiritual gifts do not, therefore, cease to be of importance in the sight of God, nor in that of his true people. And that message which is to accomplish the perfecting of the saints and to fit them for translation, has the Spirit of God connected with it, and speaking out in the management of its work.

20. Finally, in the reception of members into our churches, we desire on this subject to know two things: 1. That they believe the Bible doctrine of Spiritual gifts; 2. That they will candidly acquaint themselves with the visions of Sr. White, which have ever held so prominent place in this work. We believe that every person standing thus and carrying out this purpose will be guided in the way of truth and righteousness. And those who occupy this ground, are never denied all the time they desire to decide in this matter.—[The Review and Herald, February 15, 1870](#).

### Thomas H. Biggs

[27]

**Thomas H. Biggs, medical director of the State Tuberculosis Hospital, London, Kentucky, since 1955, and a specialist in lung disease, has contributed to the dramatic decline in the death rate due to tuberculosis. He has written several articles on relaxation and the conservation of human energy.**

**An avid Bible student and lay preacher, he has collected 65 different English translations, including a reprint of Tyndale's New Testament. Hiking is his favorite hobby, Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain National Park, his favored location.**

**Dr. Biggs received his M.D. degree in 1936 from Loma Linda University, with postgraduate courses in the universities of Michigan, Georgia, Colorado, and Kentucky. He is an associate Fellow of the American College of Chest Physicians.**

[28] **Chapter 3—A Treasured Contribution to My Life**

[29]

When I was a child in South Dakota I heard my mother speak the name of Ellen White with reverence. But I don't remember seeing mother read any of Mrs. White's books. We did not have family worship at home; my parents were incompatible and were separated when I was about 10 years of age. Health principles had not been practiced or taught at home. As a result, I developed certain chronic physical ailments which, though not disabling, caused marked frustration and insecurity.

About the age of 11 I went to northern Illinois, where I attended church school and academy. Although I studied a formal course, "Outline Studies From the Testimonies," childhood habits were still strong and I never took Ellen G. White seriously.

In my freshman year at medical school in Loma Linda, Dr. Risley taught a class in health principles based somewhat, as I recall, on the Ellen White writings. This was a definite help. But it was not until I had been practicing medicine for about eight years, and was in my early thirties, that I became interested in reading Ellen White's books for myself.

[30] Two men from the Oregon Book and Bible House came to the church I attended at Longview, Washington, and talked about the White books. They said that anyone could find much personal help from reading the books *Patriarchs and Prophets* and *The Desire of Ages*. They advised the church members to read these books. They spoke in such a wise and loving manner that I was impressed.

I had been having personal problems and needed some answers that God alone could provide. I began to read *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Answers and unexpected benefits began to come. We began to have family worship. This book prepared me for some of the rough experiences my family endured during several trying years in the postwar period. I went through an experience of spiritual renewal.

I realized that God wanted me to make changes in my diet. My wife and I made the changes. I kept on reading other White books. During the next twenty years I read, cover to cover, about thirty volumes. I read them slowly, studiously, and expectantly. “The proof of a pudding is in the eating.” If anyone wants to develop confidence and interest in Ellen G. White, he should start systematically to read her writings for immediate personal enlightenment.

A few years ago I took *Patriarchs and Prophets* and read it through again, because of my pleasant memories of how, back in the forties, it had been of great help. I study these books prayerfully, as I would the Bible, for they discuss Bible principles and apply those principles to modern life. I ask that the Holy Spirit will make the truths I read seem “clear, lovely, new, and precious.” This prayer has been answered repeatedly.

The Ellen White books were written in English, my mother tongue. They did not have to be translated out of Greek or Hebrew. I can get the meaning on some things better from them than from the Bible directly. She makes the historical and contextual background more interesting and clear. She knew how to emphasize a point.

Mrs. White has helped me to develop my love for books. When I finished medical school I was so tired of reading books and preparing for written exams that I deliberately quit reading nearly all books and magazines for several years. I gradually came to see again the need to study. Now reading is great pleasure. I have read thoroughly many books that others decorate their shelves with. I have a Bible collection of sixty-five different translations and paraphrases. I made an intensive study of the book of Psalm over a period of about two years. All of this has been unexpected pleasure of the impetus given me by the writings of Ellen G. White.

[31]

When the Prophetic Guidance course was first introduced, I enrolled. This course further enhanced my knowledge of the Spirit of Prophecy and how to use it. It also encouraged me to continue reading the White books, and to set new personal goals. More recently I participated in Testimony Countdown.

The White books helped me to catch up on things my parents neglected to teach me.

Ellen White has helped me to be more happy and secure, knowing that my salvation has been provided by Jesus. She gives the

antidotes for both legalism and indifference. I am much more spiritual than I was before. I have been able to suffer frustrations and misfortune without losing my faith and trust in God's providential care. Specifically, her writings taught me how to pray.

Giving up the use of flesh food in my diet was a great hurdle for me. To this end *Patriarchs and Prophets*, in the chapters describing the Exodus, gave me incentive and perspective.

I am more healthy since adopting the principles of fresh air, nature study, abstemiousness, relaxation, exercise, hydrotherapy, proper habits of eating and drinking, singing and praying, prescribed by Mrs. White in the *Testimonies*, *Counsels on Health*, and *The Ministry of Healing*. My medical practice is more balanced because I use less drugs.

Considering my age, I am now in better physical, mental, and spiritual health by far than in my youth. I can work faster and keep it up for longer hours now than when I was a young doctor.

If I had kept on living as I did before the men from Oregon came and told me about *Patriarchs and Prophets*, I would probably be disabled from sickness by now, or possibly dead! My personal heredity is not the best, but by having the truth in my heart, and wisdom on how to live in a troubled world, I am still active and can capitalize on the reserves I do have.

[32] I give credit, of course, to other people in addition to Ellen G. White. A number of ministers, counselors, physicians, teachers, and relatives have given valuable help along the way. One of these was a Week of Prayer article by J. L. McElhany in 1945, but he quoted from Ellen White's writings! Many people will share the credit for my soul's success and salvation, but one of the brightest stars will be in Mrs. White's crown.

Even though in 1949 we had three children, we adopted two more as a missionary project because of Mrs. White's counsel on helping orphans. I learned how to be a better father, and about the problems of neglected children and modern youth.

A good example of how the *Testimonies* have brought me peace of mind is my experience with the last paragraph of a chapter in volume 2, on "True Conversion." There is an advantage in reading the White books by the "cover to cover" method, for I would never have discovered this paragraph otherwise.

I have had a tendency to be overconscientious in certain areas of interpersonal relationships. If I had hurt someone, I thought—according to [James 5:16](#)—I should go to that person and admit it, ask forgiveness, and express my friendship and desire to do better. But this sometimes brought more harm than good. I found that there are exceptions to the general rule. Mrs. White stated, “It is not your duty to publish a confession which will lead unbelievers to triumph; but to those to whom it is proper, who will take no advantage of your wrong, confess according to the word of God, and let them pray for you, and God will accept your work, and will heal you.”—Page 296.

This definitely implies that there are some people to whom it is not proper to confess. There are some who *will take advantage* of your weakness if you admit it! They will use your confession as ammunition against you, and what you stand for. They will cause disunity. They will not forgive you nor pray for you. They may be unfriendly, basically unchristian, even your personal enemy at heart. With certain people it is impossible to reconcile a difference.

If Ellen White had not written, I would wonder why God had not communicated through a human messenger in modern times. The Holy Scriptures were based on a society different from ours. It is sometimes difficult to find the principles involved in an ancient situation, and even more difficult to apply those principles in our day. Without the White writings, I would be tempted to think that God had not fulfilled His promises to His church—promises that the church should not be lacking in any gift. I would wonder why we had to forgo the privilege of having God speak to us in our generation. As it is, none of these perplexities arise.

[33]

These are turbulent times, and the church could not have survived without the special contemporary prophetic guidance God sent us in the writings of Ellen White. But what seems even more certain, I, as a practicing physician, a father and husband, could not have survived with peace and hope in my heart without her treasured contribution to my life.

*London, Kentucky*

*July 1972*

[34]

**Charles D. Brooks**

**Charles D. Brooks, a general field secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, has baptized nearly 2,400 persons so far in his ministry.**

**Elder Brooks, a graduate of Oakwood College, has served as Ministerial secretary, associate stewardship secretary, and field secretary of the Columbia Union Conference, as well as pastor of several large churches in the Mid-Atlantic States.**

**He is widely sought for college campus appointments and is a frequent commencement speaker.**

## Chapter 4—“Ellen White Is My Friend”

[35]

When I consider God’s personal concern for the individual, I exclaim with the ancient hymn singer, “What is man that thou art mindful of him?” My experience with God’s remnant church began in a spectacular way with the infinite God bending low to speak to one of His children in a private conversation.

I was just an infant at the time. But I had a blessed mother whom all her friends remember as an extraordinary Christian. God spoke to her directly, audibly, as she lay on a sickbed. He called her name and told her to keep the seventh-day Sabbath. Mother was amazed to discover that she was ignorantly observing the wrong day, but she promised the Lord then and there that she would observe His true Sabbath, even if no one else besides herself and her children did.

For seven years our mother and the children who were yet at home observed the Sabbath (from midnight Friday to midnight Saturday), and we thought we were the only folks in the whole world who were doing so. This brought us into severe conflict with neighbors, relatives, and our church. I come from a long line of Methodist preachers. There was hostility from everywhere. Father did not agree with the new idea. (He was baptized later and died loving Jesus and this precious Adventist truth.) Folks all around us showered us generously with opprobrium and vitriolic abuse.

[36]

After several years of rancor our church decided on a more charitable course. A committee was named to approach mother with the view of “reclaiming” for the church this valuable but confused member. Over the years we children had become defensive, bristling before the abuse. We had no counselor, no pastor to guide us, no books—only the patient, kindly example of mother.

But God was about to send us help. The committee arrived, headed by the senior deacon of the church. They pleaded and cajoled at length, then offered their arguments to refute the message that had come to mother. However, this “quiet spirit,” our mother, had pored over the Word by the hours on Sabbaths (with no church to attend),

and had become more than a match for the committee. She did not do it with fire, but with light. She didn't argue and dispute in the face of ridicule; she questioned. Her points scored hard and well. Her lines of argument were later found to my amazement in our many books. She was, in effect, quoting the thoughts of great preachers in the Adventist Church before she had ever heard of them. I use her arguments now as an evangelist in the cities of the earth.

We saw the truth triumph that day. We saw the committee retreat in exasperation. When they stood to leave, the head deacon removed from under his arm a package wrapped in brown paper and tied with binder's twine. He said, "Mrs. Brooks, since you believe this foolishness, here is something I've brought for you. I didn't think we could change you."

After they had left, we carefully opened the package. Inside was a large, elegantly bound volume called *The Great Controversy* by some unheard of woman named Ellen G. White. Curiously we began to open its powerful pages, and God spoke to us again. This time He carefully, accurately, retraced history, documenting the events that led to the great apostasy in Christendom. Here was His explanation as to why He spoke to mother in that hospital room and asked her to do this unheard of "new" thing. The whole thing became clear. Reading this book was like God speaking in thunder tones to His own in a way that only His own could understand. "Because My Word is sure," He was saying, "and stands forever and is not subject to the whims and fancies of theologians and priests, fanatics and friars, scholars and sectarians, I am not moved by plebiscites and polls. I am God, and My Word is settled forever in heaven. So, walk confidently in truth though the heavens may seem to fall. I am God and My Word is as sure as I am!" No volume ever spoke to us like that, and though I was not yet ten years old I understood it. I got the message! Powerful, profound, yet simple.

This was our introduction to Mrs. White and, through her, to God's special message to His special people. Remember that at this time we had never heard the name Seventh-day Adventist, nor did we know anything about Ellen G. White. We only knew that God was speaking to us. He delivered a book by a Methodist deacon, and that book was delivering the truth, confirming, affirming, declaring, underscoring, strengthening, encouraging, empowering!



How could we know at that time the blessed story of this weak girl, called to the high and holy office of prophetess? How could we even believe that one without great formal training had produced such a profound work? But then had she?

As a matter of fact, Ellen White did *not* produce this great volume, nor the many other volumes we were to discover later. God produced them through her. All she possessed by grace was the holy gift. Through her, not by her, God leaned over the battlements of glory, tugged at the ear lobes of His church, and whispered special inside information that no other organization has—the secrets of God for our day!

Surely a well-organized church, unoffensive in nature, liberal in views, could arise and flourish and progress numerically and economically any time, anywhere. But God’s remnant church, born in ridicule, preaches a straight testimony, rebukes all sin (while encouraging the sinner), upholds all of God’s law (while rebuking legalism and righteousness by works), calls for obedience to God rather than keeping the commandments of men, takes on nearly the whole Christian world by exposing a man-made Sabbath, preaches the mark of the beast, the judgment, the unconscious state of the dead, and other decidedly unpopular beliefs. How could such a church progress and flourish in spite of the opposing forces? It is because of God’s devotion, His defense, His guidance, especially as revealed in His gift of prophecy through Ellen G. White.

[38]

I have often said that if I were shut away and isolated forever and were allowed only three books, my choices would be the Bible, *The Desire of Ages*, and *The Great Controversy*. These books all exalt Christ as the means and proof of salvation. They all exalt truth above error and tradition, and they all prescribe and urge special preparation to stand in the day when the controversy ends and our splendid Christ sets up His kingdom of glory.

But wait. You probably are wondering whether it has always been so simple for me to believe in Mrs. White and her writings. The answer is No! I did have a problem at one period in my life. But I have many times thought how happy I am that I had read *The Great Controversy* and *The Desire of Ages* first. Once faith and love get their hooks into you, you cannot dislodge them easily. I’m

glad I didn't hear, then, about certain isolated and misunderstood statements in volume 9 of the *Testimonies*.

I might complete this assignment by quoting precious passages here and there in the writings of Ellen White that have meant much to me. Such passages have proved veritable anchors to my soul. I quoted one to myself and others when our dear mother suffered long and intensely. I quoted others when she went to sleep in Jesus. I've meditated on the promises of these sacred books when I and my flock were deeply distressed and troubled, and God used them literally to wipe away all tears. Other passages have been buffer stones to polish character, while still others, when obeyed, have literally renewed physical health.

Other writers in this present volume will tell of fulfilled predictions—a sound basis for credibility and for validating Ellen White's gift. I love and believe all these things.

[39] But I am black and there was a time when Satan stormed my faith by stinging references to what "Mrs. White says in volume 9 about black people." It happened that even as a youngster I weighed the positive good of all I had read against the apparent narrowness of volume 9, and decided to suspend judgment until I could understand.

I could not believe that she who would write *The Desire of Ages*, presenting Christ as the Desire of all nations and who wrote so powerfully of the final triumph when God's people of every race, kindred, tongue, and people would be gathered home, could possibly be a racist. It just didn't make sense that Mrs. White could write with such conviction and power urging the church into jungle recesses and island villages in search of souls, and then believe that the fruit of such excursions could be "one in Christ" and subhuman at the same time. I couldn't allow my impression of the instrument who penned *Steps to Christ* to disintegrate.

Would she who wrote with such tenderness, such holiness, such feeling, such sympathy, now break the "bruised reed"? Could one who wrote with such love now join the hostile oppressor, the inhuman, demon-inspired tyrant against a defenseless people? I'm glad I wondered and did not jump to conclusions. I'm glad I suspended judgment. I waited.

But I was troubled. Men and women, black and white, were being fed a revolting diet of sanctified racism, and perhaps it did

much less harm to the blacks than it did to their white brothers and sisters. It displaced love, nurtured bitterness, extended ignorance, and separated brethren. Many fell by the wayside on both sides of the issue. Could God’s servant be responsible for that? Many blacks tried to find a way out. Some just dismissed the issue; but it didn’t go away.

Others questioned: “Is all that Mrs. White wrote inspired?” To me this is a dangerous approach. It opens the door to skepticism everywhere and solves nothing. One could easily dismiss any counsel or all counsel by simply deciding that one part of this counsel was not inspired. Well, I don’t believe that way. I do not think of some words as inspired and others as uninspired.

I believe Mrs. White was inspired. She was God’s chosen instrument. We cannot categorize her writings according to our likes and dislikes. *She* was inspired! *She* was chosen! *She* was special to God and His church, and whatever counsel she gave came from Him.

I finished school, refusing to lose faith in spite of all the foolishness some people had associated with certain statements in volume 9. I heard painful references applying the statement about the “amalgamation of man and beast,” to the production of subhuman beings. I endured the insults aimed at black morals and black brains and black worship. I lived with the discipline of humiliation and sustained myself with private thoughts and faith.

[40]

Then one day my wife’s father, a saintly minister of God and president of my conference, answered a question for me. His radiant, confident, poised faith was something to emulate. He was a fighter for human rights and dignity, but he was always at peace. I wanted to know whether all this bothered him. He pulled from a special recess in his desk a battered old copy of *The Southern Work* by Ellen G. White and began to read. I cannot tell you how I felt. There it was, God coming through for me and for disinherited peoples of all lands. There was what I had heard at mother’s knee from the “fancy-backed” volume that the Methodist deacon brought—truth, courage, power, judgment, and through it all the sterling quality of the gift and the vessel. I didn’t have to surrender one iota of respect or confidence.

Some time later I got my own copy of this book *The Southern Work*. I was no longer afraid to investigate, no longer fearful that the whole beautiful thing would come crashing down on me. I should have known better. I think I did.

Here is a sample of what became clearer to me as the days of study passed:

“The white people who embrace the truth in the Southern field, if converted to God, will discern the fact that the plan of redemption embraces every soul that God has created. The walls of sectarianism and caste and race will fall down when the true missionary spirit enters the hearts of men. Prejudice is melted away by the love of God. All will realize that they are to become laborers together with God. Both the Ethiopian and the white race are God’s purchased possession, and our work is to improve every talent that has been lent to us of God, to save the souls of both white and black.”—[The Southern Work, 55](#).

[41] “There is to be no special heaven for the white man and another heaven for the black man. We are all to be saved through the same grace, all to enter the same heaven at last. Then why not act like rational beings, and overcome our unlikeness to Christ.”—*Ibid.*

“He who is closely connected with Christ is lifted above the prejudice of color or caste.”—[Testimonies for the Church 9:209](#).

“He [Christ] laid the foundation for a religion by which Jew and Gentile, black and white, free and bond, are linked together in one common brotherhood, recognized as equal in the sight of God.”—[Testimonies for the Church 7:225](#).

These are only a few of the general statements of principle, but all her comments taken in context are essentially incisive, direct, clear, sharp, bold in rebuke, and loving in appeal. Not all that has been written is complimentary to the black race, and certainly not to the white race. But her counsel is practical, timely, and realistic; it is just. The point is, the Lord’s servant was what we should expect her to be in her witness: flawlessly pure and true to principle. She said, “I do not intend to live a coward or die a coward.” Like all of God’s prophets, she was first faithful to her calling—to speak for God without accommodating to the ingrained sins of the people. She never compromised.

The negative, soul-withering impressions too long ascribed to volume 9 are the responsibility then, not of the sacred gift or of the holy vessel, but of misguided persons who want to project their own views and that of a hostile, divided, hate-filled society on the authority of the Lord’s servant. In recent years I have cooperated with concerned church leaders to see that *The Southern Work*, so long out of print, was republished and joined the other well-known Ellen G. White volumes. Together, they pull up the slack, exalt the dark valleys of oppression, make low the mountains and hills of pride and superiority, and place the flock of God everywhere on an equality in all nations and among all races. She challenges all to stand equal in Christ Jesus, a common brotherhood of saints.

I did not have to surrender my faith in Ellen White. Had I found her to be a racist I would have found her to be immoral, for racism is immoral. On the other hand, I did not have to surrender my manhood or my convictions on the brotherhood of man in order to believe in her. No one else can decide for me whether or not I am a man and equal to all other men in that respect. I decided that. The God who created me said so, and as surely as I am born, Mrs. White confirms it. She was a champion of human rights. She spoke up when it was unpopular to do so—even dangerous. The pioneers of our faith joined her and risked much for this principle. I am grateful now that our church stands on this principle, supports this principle. We are officially and forever with her on this question. Anyone in the church showing weakness in this area is out of step with the church, out of agreement with what she wrote, and out of harmony with God. Such deserve our pity and our prayers.

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Ellen White is my friend. I believe in her as a person, a prophetess, a servant of God. The church moves ahead as it moves back to her God-given counsel.

“Believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.”

*Takoma Park, Maryland*

*June 1972*

**George I. Butler**

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**George I. Butler (1834-1918), as president of the General Conference on two occasions, 1871-1874 and 1880-1888, quickly**

**demonstrated his keen administrative abilities. He was active in raising funds to establish the first Adventist college in Battle Creek, Michigan, and the Pacific Press Publishing Company, California.**

**In 1884 he laid the groundwork for publishing houses in Europe, resulting in notable expansion.**

**His iron will and enthusiasm were impressed on many developing church activities.**

## Chapter 5—Visions and Prophecy Among Seventh-day Adventists

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As God's work ever has the same general characteristics, the manifestations of his power would be likely to resemble each other in different ages. Before proceeding directly to the Bible argument upon this point it will be necessary to give the reader some general idea of the appearance of the one mentioned while in vision. This is the more necessary to meet a question which may have arisen in the mind of the reader, as to what evidence we have that there is anything about them beyond mere human power and wisdom. We desire to speak upon this point with becoming diffidence, not wishing by any means to minister to the public craving for something sensational and startling, nor make boasts of things miraculous or supernatural.

We are aware of the sentiment existing among sensible, sober people, of incredulity and lack of faith in things of this character. And we have no fault to find with this feeling, because there have been so many false claims put forth of such things; and where wonderful manifestations of power have existed, such have often been mixed up with doctrines so ridiculous and blasphemous, that it is certainly demanded of sensible people that they be cautious in their reception of everything of this nature.

All we ask is that people shall be reasonable. We are prepared to support by hundreds of living truthful witnesses all that we shall claim, so far as facts are concerned, of the manifestation itself, for this thing has not been done in a corner. For nearly thirty years past these visions have been given with greater or less frequency, and have been witnessed by many, oftentimes by unbelievers as well as those believing them. They generally, but not always, occur in the midst of earnest seasons of religious interest while the Spirit of God is specially present, if those can tell who are in attendance. The time Mrs. White is in this condition has varied from fifteen minutes to one hundred and eighty.

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During this time the heart and pulse continue to beat, the eyes are always wide open, and seem to be gazing at some far-distant object, and are never fixed on any person or thing in the room. They are always directed upward. They exhibit a pleasant expression. There is no ghastly look or any resemblance of fainting. The brightest light may be suddenly brought near her eyes, or feints made as if to thrust something into the eye, and there is never the slightest wink or change of expression on that account; and it is sometimes hours and even days after she comes out of this condition before she recovers her natural sight. She says it seems to her that she comes back into a dark world, yet her eyesight is in nowise injured by her visions.

While she is in vision, her breathing entirely ceases. No breath ever escapes her nostrils or lips when in this condition. This has been proved by many witnesses, among them physicians of skill, and themselves unbelievers in the visions, on some occasions being appointed by a public congregation for the purpose. It has been proved many times by tightly holding the nostrils and mouth with the hand, and by putting a looking-glass before them so close that any escape of the moisture of the breath would be detected. In this condition she often speaks words and short sentences, yet not the slightest breath escapes. When she goes into this condition, there is no appearance of swooning or faintness, her face retains its natural color, and the blood circulates as usual. Often she loses her strength temporarily and reclines or sits; but at other times she stands up. She moves her arms gracefully, and often her face is lighted up with radiance as though the glory of Heaven rested upon her. She is utterly unconscious of every thing going on around her, while she is in vision, having no knowledge whatever of what is said and done in her presence. A person may pinch her flesh, and do things which would cause great and sudden pain in her ordinary condition, and she will not notice it by the slightest tremor.

There are none of the disgusting grimaces or contortions which usually attend spiritualist mediums, but calm, dignified, and impressive, her very appearance strikes the beholder with reverence and solemnity. There is nothing fanatical in their appearance. When she comes out of this condition she speaks and writes from time to time what she has seen while in vision; and the supernatural character of these visions is seen even more clearly in what she thus reveals than



in her appearance and condition while in vision, for many things have thus been related which it was impossible for her to know in any other way.

Peculiar circumstances in the lives of individuals, whom she never before had seen in the flesh, and secrets hidden from the nearest acquaintances, have been made known by her when she had no personal knowledge of the parties other than by vision. Often has she been in an audience where she was wholly unacquainted with the individuals composing it, when she would get up and point out person after person whom she never had seen before, in the flesh, and tell them what they had done, and reprove their sins. I might mention many other items of like nature, but space forbids. These things can be proved by any amount of testimony, and we confidently affirm that they are of such a character that they could not be accomplished by deception.

We now propose to notice the cases of ... [Paul and Daniel] who as every believer will admit had genuine visions, and see how far these resemble them in their manifestations.

We ... notice the case of Paul, [2 Corinthians 12:1-7](#): “It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such a one caught up to the third Heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one will I glory: yet of myself will I not glory; but in my infirmities.... And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.”

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Paul is speaking here of “visions.” He is speaking of *himself* having visions, and he was not ashamed of them either as some are in these days, but was in great danger of being exalted because of them, which made it necessary that he be buffeted with this thorn in the flesh. It was through these visions that revelations were given. And it was doubtless by means of them that he was enabled to prophesy more than all others. In regard to the manner of his

having visions, it is very plain from this language that he was utterly unconscious of everything around him while in vision. He was caught up to paradise, and it was so real to him that he could not tell himself whether he was actually taken up there in his body, or whether the mind was taken complete possession of by the Spirit of God, and shown things in the third Heaven.

In either case, he was entirely shut away from earthly scenes. He was actually shown things in Heaven, and was utterly unconscious of things around him in this world. However much ridicule people may cast upon the idea of persons being shown things in Heaven now, they certainly were in Paul's time. This is an important testimony in regard to the manner and nature of heavenly visions. Supposing it to be admitted that Paul's body remained on the earth while he was seeing these things in Heaven. He was not dead. The functions of life would not have been entirely suspended. His heart would have beat and his blood would have circulated, but he would have been oblivious of everything transpiring around him. His mind would have been beholding things in Heaven.

[49] This, as I have shown, is precisely the condition of Mrs. White while in vision. No spiritualist medium that I ever heard of was ever in any such condition. But Paul was, and doubtless others were when seeing things in heavenly vision. After Paul came back to his natural condition he wrote out such things as were given him to communicate for the benefit of the church.

We next notice the case of Daniel. Certainly his visions were genuine. In [chap. 10](#), we have quite a full description of his condition in vision. The prophet had been humbling himself greatly before God, and for three full weeks had tasted no pleasant food. [Verses 5-11](#): "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz; his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I Daniel alone saw the vision; for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me; for my comeliness [or vigor, margin] was turned in me into corruption, and

I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words; and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. And, behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright; for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.”

Here is Daniel’s description of this vision. He was permitted to behold one of the angels of God and listen to his words. The Spirit of God came upon him, and through this agency he was enabled to see this vision. The others who were present “saw not the vision.” In fear and quaking they hid themselves. The manner of his beholding this is also worthy of notice. “He lifted up his eyes.” The effect of the vision upon him was such that he lost his strength. “There remained no strength” in him, yet he still heard the voice of the angel’s words. Soon after this he stood upon his feet.

As I have already stated in my description of Mrs. White’s condition while in vision, every one of these particulars is often seen in her case when she is in vision. The prophet Daniel continues his description of his own case as follows, [verse 16](#): “And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, *neither is there breath left in me.*”

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Here the prophet speaks words to the angel, but positively declares there is no “breath in him.” He was not fainting or swooning. He had the possession of his faculties so that he could clearly understand what the angel said and did, and to any one who can conceive of the circumstances it must be evident that his mind was entirely removed from all earthly scenes. The case of Mrs. White as I have already described is precisely similar. She speaks words and sentences to her accompanying angel, never to others while in vision. But there is no breath as has often been proved by holding a looking glass before her as she spoke. The power to speak is given, as it

was in Daniel's case, by the divine strength supernaturally imparted. These facts can be proved by scores and hundreds of witnesses.

Here we leave the Bible argument. To our mind, we have proved beyond a reasonable doubt that these visions are just such as the Bible teaches are given through the influence of the Holy Spirit. We have shown that the gifts of the Spirit were to be perpetuated in the church, that they were to be seen in the last days. We have taken the tests given in the Bible to show the difference between the spurious and the genuine, and every rule given proves these to be true. We have noticed nearly every instance where the nature of the manifestations of true visions in the Bible is given, and we find these exactly similar. We are compelled, therefore, to conclude that these are genuine visions of the Spirit of the Lord, or that the Bible has left us wholly unable to determine between the true and the spurious.

[51] As the Scriptures are designed to "thoroughly furnish" the man of God unto all good works, we can rely upon them in this case. We believe these visions because the Bible teaches them. We use the rules given in that holy book and are forced to the conclusion that these manifestations are the work of the Spirit of God. Instead of our setting up these visions above and outside of the Scriptures as another rule of authority, as our opponents pretend, we claim that none can really take the Bible and fairly apply its teachings without accepting these visions as from God. The Bible is the supreme authority in deciding this as well as other questions. When it tells us to "try the spirits," to "prove all things," and "hold fast that which is good," it is our duty to do this. We find by so doing that these visions harmonize perfectly with the Scripture, and that they in no case contradict themselves or the Bible. They everywhere teach the purest doctrine, and even their bitterest enemies admit that a person will be saved if he will obey them.

We have tested them as a people for nearly a quarter of a century, and we find we prosper spiritually when we heed them, and suffer a great loss when we neglect them. We have found their guidance to be our safety. They never have led us into fanaticism in a single instance, but they have ever rebuked fanatical and unreasonable men. They everywhere direct us to the Scriptures as the great source of true instruction, and to the example of Jesus Christ as the true

pattern. They never claim to be given to take the place of the Bible, but simply to be a manifestation of one of those spiritual gifts set in the church by its divine Lord; and as such, should have their proper weight.

We admit that their influence upon Seventh-day Adventists during their past history has been weighty, but it has always been for good, and always had a tendency to make us a better people. Having been in exercise for so many years among us, we are certainly prepared to judge by this time in regard to the nature of their teachings....

Seventh-day Adventists believe in these visions because the Bible teaches them. They do not make them in any sense a test of fellowship, knowing very well the prejudice which exists against everything of this kind and that the people have been witnesses to many false manifestations. They leave every one perfectly free to come to their own conclusions concerning them. They are not ashamed of these visions, but thankful to God for his care and interest in giving them, as their instructions have been of great benefit. They claim the right to believe in them and to present the reasons for such belief. There are some in their churches who have not been acquainted with Mrs. White, or had evidence sufficient to satisfy them in regard to the visions. These are not disturbed. It is true that many of those who have longest believed in the tenets of this church have faith in the visions as from the Lord. These were at first as skeptical as any. But after much investigation and careful observation of the workings of this cause, they were forced to this conclusion.

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The evidences which I have noticed are submitted to a candid public, hoping they will be fairly considered. There is much more which might be said; but it is believed that what is presented is sufficient to satisfy any one who will candidly consider the subject with a determination to arrive at the truth. We fully believe we have reached the last church, that the great day of God is soon to burst upon the world, and that the spirit of prophecy exists among his servants, as God has declared it would.—[The Review and Herald, June 9, 1874.](#)

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**Raymond F. Cottrell**

**Raymond F. Cottrell, book editor, Review and Herald Publishing Association, was senior associate editor of *The SDA Bible Commentary* and a major contributor to both it and the *SDA Bible Dictionary* and *SDA Encyclopedia*. His publications include *Beyond Tomorrow*, *Perfection in Christ*, *Crisis and Victory*, and *Reason and Faith*. He was also a major contributor to *Problems in Bible Translation*. A specialist in Roman Catholic studies, he participated in Vatican II, International Conference on the Theological Issues of Vatican II, and Ecumenical Consultations with the World Council of Churches.**

**Ordained in 1937 while a missionary in Manchuria, he returned during the war years to Pacific Union College where he taught on the religion staff from 1941-1952. He has been at the Review since 1952. Andrews University conferred on him the Doctor of Divinity degree in 1972.**

## Chapter 6—Confidence Based on Experience

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As far back as I can remember Ellen White seemed almost like a member of the Cottrell family. My great-grandfather, Roswell Fenner Cottrell, was a Seventh Day Baptist minister in western New York at the time he accepted the Advent message on October 19, 1851. A short time later he became a Seventh-day Adventist minister, and served the church in this capacity until his death in 1892. Over the years, in their home about thirty miles east of Niagara Falls, near Ridgeway on the old Ridge Route, he and his wife, Catherine, entertained every ordained Adventist minister. Among their guests from time to time were James and Ellen White, who often followed the Ridge Route on their travels back and forth between New England and Michigan subsequent to the move from Rochester to Battle Creek in 1855.

Sister White's often presence in the Cottrell home established the Bible principles and way of life she fostered by precept and example, as the ideal to which the home was dedicated and toward which its members aspired. This included all aspects of faith and doctrine, Christian experience, healthful living, relationships with other people, and one's attitude toward the church and its leaders. In 1871 Roswell's son James Uriah (for Uriah Smith) married Lucy Taylor, and for the next forty years her life and her ideals were molded by this same personal influence. It was in large measure through her, my grandmother, that I became acquainted with Ellen White as God's messenger to the remnant church and that these principles were instilled into my young mind. For twenty years my boyhood home was also her home.

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In the shelter of an Adventist home throughout childhood and youth I accepted all of this almost automatically. It was, by my time, a family tradition. But when I was about 17 I began to think things through critically for myself. I read all of Sister White's published writings, appreciating especially *The Desire of Ages*, *Steps to Christ*, *The Great Controversy*, *Christ's Object Lessons*, and

*Education.* Their perspective of life, duty, and destiny became mine. I recognized the Bible as primary and studied it with care, and she always seemed to apply its principles, directly and clearly, to life's contemporary problems.

As I encountered, other philosophies of life, both inside and outside of the church, I thought through the basis of my personal faith, and the authority of the Bible and the writings of Ellen White in relationship to it. My reasoning—in brief—went something like this: There is a personal God; personal experience had convinced me of that. He didn't always go about things the way I thought I would if I were in His place, but I learned to adjust my thinking to His way of doing things. Obviously there was no point in expecting Him to conform to my ways of thinking and doing. There is a personal God, and the Bible must be His inspired Guidebook, and acceptance of the Bible logically calls for acceptance of the writings of Ellen White also. Over a period of three or four years I went through this process of reasoning several times, checking it out for flaws, and every time the result proved to be the same.

One of the major factors in my thinking about Sister White was the logical, common-sense appeal of the principles she enunciated. Furthermore, every time I tried them out they always worked, and I observed that the lives of other people I knew personally reflected the same result. This was true, for example, of her counsel with respect to healthful living, and to life with its responsibilities and opportunities. Those who adopted these principles, even if they were in poor health or had a warped outlook on life, were able to live at least reasonably healthy and happy lives. In my now more than sixty years I have not spent a day in a hospital. I am convinced that this is a direct result of a conscientious endeavor to live by these principles.

So many statements Sister White made on various aspects of healthful living, as long as a century or more ago and often in conflict with then-accepted scientific concepts, have since been corroborated by research, thus indicating the wisdom of patience with respect to the few that have not yet been so validated. This is not to imply that her statements need scientific confirmation in order to be credible, or that they become more so as a result. It is simply to affirm that she was far in advance of her day and that modern research has at no point proved her to have been in error.



In the years prior to the organization of the General Conference in 1863 Grandfather Roswell was among those who opposed the idea of organization, fearful that organization reflected the spirit of Babylon and that it would have dire results. But a personal testimony from Sister White transformed him into a loyal advocate of the idea. This experience influenced my personal response to the authority of Ellen White as God's appointed messenger to the Church, and my own attitude toward the Church.

As Sister White counsels, I have always looked to the Scriptures as of supreme authority. Corollary to this belief I concluded that it was my first and highest duty to read and to understand the Bible. In my quest to learn how to listen attentively to the inspired writers I discovered that the seemingly simple process of ascertaining precisely what they do say is not always quite as simple as it might at first have appeared to be. I discovered, also, that Ellen White's concept of inspiration tallies precisely with the observed facts, and that the principles of Bible study explicit and implicit in her writings comport with sound, recognized methods of Bible research.

The process of editing the *SDA Bible Commentary*,<sup>1</sup> all the way from [Genesis 1:1](#) to [Revelation 22:20](#), provided a unique opportunity for a detailed comparison of her writings with those of the Bible. Our guiding editorial principle was to deal fairly with the Bible text—to affirm neither more nor less than the Bible itself says. Before us, verse by verse, was the text of the Bible in the original languages, and at each step of the way we asked, What did the Holy Spirit and the inspired writer intend to say? Also open before us was Ellen White's comment on each passage.

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This meticulous comparison of the Bible and Ellen White's writings led to certain interesting and significant conclusions. Foremost among these was that when understood in terms of the intentions of the respective inspired writers, the two are in perfect harmony. Repeatedly we found Sister White making a statement about a particular passage of Scripture that reflected either an accurate knowledge of the Hebrew or the Greek text, or the writings of Biblical scholars on the subject, or the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The fact that she knew no Hebrew or Greek ruled out the first possibility, and

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<sup>1</sup>Francis D. Nichol, editor in chief.

that she rarely consulted scholarly works on the Bible from which she might have obtained such information, similarly ruled out the second. We could come to no other conclusion than that before our eyes was conclusive proof that she had been guided by the same Spirit that inspired the Bible writers.

At countless hundreds of minor points where her statements might accidentally have been in conflict with the Bible we were impressed by the accuracy with which all that she wrote conforms to the Bible. The team of Bible scholars who wrote the manuscripts we were editing reflected a wide range of ability to deal with the Bible text. Some reflected the intent of the Bible writers accurately and consistently; a few failed, again and again, to grasp the true import of passages of Scripture. But we found the contributors, almost without exception, prone to making minor misstatements of fact now and then—in impressive contrast with Ellen White’s almost perfect accuracy. Here was a person who had been denied a formal education beyond the third grade, far surpassing the best brains of the Church! What more impressive evidence could we ask for, in confirmation of the fact that a divine hand had protected her against the minor accidental errors to which most writers are prone? We were able to count her misstatements on the fingers of one hand.

[59] Those who have studied both the Bible and the writings of Ellen White with more than ordinary care are aware that, at times, she applies Bible statements in a way different from that intended by the original writers, and in so doing may appear to err in her comment on Scripture. Some have pointed to this as evidence that she was not an inspired spokesman for God, and at first glance this accusation may appear to have a semblance of validity. But on our way through the *Commentary* we discovered that New Testament writers, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, often do the same thing. They frequently apply Old Testament statements out of context, in a new setting, to teach a new truth—just as Ellen White does. Therefore to reject Ellen White as a credible witness to divine truth on this account would be to reject the New Testament as well.

As a matter of fact, every challenge to Sister White’s credibility as an inspired writer can be brought, often with even more telling force, against the Bible writers themselves. To present such charges as a pretext for rejecting her as an inspired writer is, in

most instances, the result of an artificial, arbitrary concept of what inspiration is and how it operates. Those who do so assume for the Bible certain a priori standards to which even the Bible writers themselves do not conform, and then reject Ellen White because she does not always measure up to these arbitrary criteria. When the same criteria are applied to the writings of Ellen White as to the Bible, it soon becomes evident that the two stand or fall together. This impressed the *Commentary* editors with the fact that the only safe way to define inspiration and to describe its operation is to approach the matter inductively and objectively—to learn from the inspired writings themselves what *they* say about the fact of inspiration, and to observe their demonstration of it in what they wrote.

Preparing the *Commentary* for publication also impressed the editors with the variety of ways in which later inspired writers often quote from, allude to, or build on the work of earlier inspired writers. This was particularly apparent in the use New Testament writers make of the Old Testament, and that Sister White makes of the entire Bible. Her use and theirs proved to be identical. This fact is important to an accurate understanding of both the New Testament and Ellen White. [60]

There are three principal ways in which later inspired writers—including Ellen White—make use of, or build on, the statements of earlier inspired writers: (1) by way of direct quotation from, or reference to, a former passage in its original historical and literary context, in the same sense in which it was originally used; (2) by borrowing the words or phraseology of a former inspired statement for use in a new context, without implying that the earlier writer intended what he wrote to be understood thus, and (3) by using the words, the phraseology, and/or the ideas of a former passage to set forth a new, different truth than that intended by the former writer, as determined by his own context.

This is not the place for an extended discussion of these and other hermeneutical principles inherent in the canonical writings and in those of Ellen White. But it cannot be emphasized too strongly that recognition of this principle is essential in order to harmonize the New Testament with the Old, and Ellen White with the Bible, at all points. To reject this principle is, in effect, to deny that either the Bible or her writings are inspired.

The Bible speaks to all of the world; the writings of Ellen White were addressed primarily to the remnant church. Herein lies the only significant difference between them. The person who listens to both with an open mind will hear the same Voice speaking through both, with equal authority. Human elements can be pointed out in both, but to the person who chooses to listen attentively to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to the Church today God's message comes, clearly and distinctly, through all of the human static, attested by a plain "thus saith the Lord" and pointing out the way in which God would have His people walk today.

We shall do well to respond, as did Samuel, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth" (1 Samuel 3:9).

*Takoma Park, Maryland*

*January 1973*

[61]

### **Arthur Grosvenor Daniells**

**Arthur Grosvenor Daniells (1858-1935), president of the General Conference from 1901-1922, presided over a difficult growing period in the history of the Adventist Church. He led out in fundamental reorganization and reforms.**

**As president of a local conference and later the Australasian Union Conference, he was closely associated with Ellen White while she was in Australia during the 1890's. During the tremendous problems he faced as General Conference president he often sought Ellen White's counsel.**

**His writings included *The World War, A World in Perplexity*, and *Christ Our Righteousness*.**

## Chapter 7—Confidence Confirmed by Personal Experiences [62] [63]

In other books or in periodical articles may be found many early incidents of Mrs. White's work,—incidents largely personal, and pertaining chiefly to the early days of her work when the cause was comparatively small. In relating a few of the many striking illustrations of the operation of the gift as manifested through Mrs. White, I shall confine myself to certain larger issues that have come within the range of my own experience, and which exerted a profound influence upon the major plans and policies of the administration and the welfare of the church.

As I approach this great and sacred endeavor, I feel constrained to make a statement regarding my personal acquaintance with Mrs. Ellen G. White during a period of twenty-three years of close association in the work in which we had mutual relationships.

This personal acquaintance and association began in the year 1878, when I was just beginning my work in the gospel ministry in the State of Texas. In the autumn of that year, Mrs. White, with her husband, came to our field to attend a general meeting of the new believers who had recently joined our ranks.

At the close of the meeting, they decided to remain for the winter. As they were alone and in rather poor health, it was arranged that my wife and I should join them in their rented home, to give them such service as we could. In this way we became members of their family, for the time. My wife superintended the household affairs, and I assisted Elder White in his writing and other activities. This was a valuable experience for us, and one never to be forgotten. We remained with them until they left Texas in the following summer. [64]

In 1886, I was called to ministerial work in Australasia. In the autumn of 1891,—thirteen years after my first association with Mrs. White,—it was my privilege to meet her and her attendants at the port of Sydney, and to extend to them a truly heartfelt welcome to that mission field.

A few weeks later, I was elected to the presidency of the newly organized Australian Conference, and continued in that office during the nine years of Mrs. White's residence in that field. This official responsibility kept me in unbroken association with her. Our mission field was vast. Our problems were heavy, and some of them very perplexing. It fell to my lot to promote evangelistic activities, to give counsel in the organization of churches and conferences, to superintend the erection of church buildings, and to foster many other phases of the gospel work.

Our membership increased encouragingly, and it became necessary to establish a training school for Christian workers, also church schools for the children of our believers. Then followed the erection of a sanitarium for the treatment of the sick, and the establishment of a factory for the manufacture of health foods.

I was young, and utterly inexperienced in most of these undertakings. As president, I was held more or less responsible for progress in all these endeavors. I needed counsel. This I sought at every important step from Mrs. White, and I was not disappointed. I was also closely associated in committee and administrative work with her son, W. C. White. His counsel was very helpful to me; it was based on a longer experience than my own, and also upon his intimate knowledge of the many messages of counsel that had been given through his mother during past years, in meeting conditions similar to those we were facing.

[65] It is hardly necessary to state that nearly nine years of such intimate association enabled me to gain a clear insight into the life of Mrs. White, and to reach a well-considered conclusion regarding her high claims to inspiration.

In 1900 we all returned to the United States, and in the spring attended the session of the General Conference held in Battle Creek, Michigan. At this Conference Mrs. White delivered many solemn messages regarding our work. Some were warnings of dangers we were facing. Others urged a great advance into the unentered parts of our world field. Important changes and improvements in administrative methods were called for. In fact, nothing less than a complete reorganization was demanded.

With those revolutionary changes outlined, I was overwhelmed with a sense of responsibility when I was unexpectedly called to the

presidency of the General Conference. I could not have given the consent of my mind to accept the office, were it not for the invaluable experience I had gained under the counsels of Mrs. White during the years in Australia. I was also encouraged by the expectation that she would remain in this country, and that I might still have her counsel as it had been so freely given in the mission field.

In attempting to effect the sweeping changes, especially in organization, called for by the messages given at the General Conference, it was inevitable that conservative elements should be alarmed and disconcerted. It was only to be expected that in the distribution of responsibilities, some who had for years occupied positions of great prominence should find it difficult to relinquish a portion of the administrative power that had long been held by them. Added to these divisive factors, there was a still more serious cause for anxiety in certain new and subversive teachings that were being advocated by some men prominent in the ministry and in some official positions.

After two years of great perplexity and of increasing controversy with some of my brethren whose judgment differed from mine, we came to the time of the General Conference of 1903, with every prospect of facing debate and opposition over features both of organization and of doctrine. I had sought earnestly, as far as I knew, to act in harmony with the counsel of the Lord's messenger. But we were separated by two thousand miles, or more, and there had been so many weighty problems that called for immediate action that there had frequently been neither time nor opportunity to seek guidance through her counsel as often as I desired.

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At this time I was weary and heartsick at the prospect. I was sorely tempted to lay down the responsibilities of leadership, and go to a country across the broad Atlantic where I might give the rest of my life to simple gospel ministry. But I did not want to run away from duty or to act rashly. I set aside the Sabbath day before the Conference in Oakland, California, for fasting and prayer, that I might know my duty. I trusted that thus I might receive light from the Lord.

This experience of prayer, and its sequel, is so personal and sacred to me that it is with great reluctance that I make it public. It seems fitting, however, to relate it here because of its profound influence upon my later relations to the controversial and administrative

problems with which I had to deal. It also marked the beginning of an important era of wholehearted acceptance of the spirit of prophecy and of my deep interest in the subject.

After hours of agonizing prayer for some sign or evidence of my own personal acceptance with the Lord and of His support in the great conflict before me, the answer was given. The Lord came graciously near me, and gave me a most profound impression. Every doubt was removed from my mind. I knew that I must not run away from the work to which I had been called by my brethren, and that I must stand with them at my post of duty. I was deeply impressed that I must be as true as the needle to the pole to the counsels of the spirit of prophecy, that I must stand loyally by the Lord's servant, upholding her hands, and leading this denomination to recognize and appreciate her heaven-sent gift.

As distinctly as if audibly spoken, the words burned into my mind as a message from heaven, "If you will stand by My servant until her sun sets in a bright sky, I will stand by you to the last hour of the conflict."

[67] I then made my solemn promise to the Lord that I would be true to His cause, that I would do all in my power to prevent anything from arising in this denomination to dim the glory of the priceless gift and of the Lord's servant who had exercised this gift for so many years.

In reviewing the experiences of the years that followed, I am not unmindful of the help that came from the Lord in this direct answer to personal prayer for wisdom, courage, and victory. Nor am I forgetful of the great service rendered by the members of the various committees and boards with which I was associated. But beyond this we were often in sore need of the help God foreordained to give His church through His messenger to whom He imparted the prophetic gift. During fifteen out of the twenty-one years of my presidency of the General Conference, Mrs. White was my chief earthly counselor. My responsibilities were heavy all the time. My dangers were great. Often my perplexities were bewildering and almost crushing.

Until nearly the close of her life, in 1915, Mrs. White continued to take an active part in all the major interests of the cause to which she had given unreserved devotion for seventy-one years. The great



problems in both home and foreign lands which her messages urged upon me led to scores of personal interviews, and brought many messages of instruction and warning, and sometimes of needed reproof.

In this present year of our Lord 1935, Mrs. White has been at rest twenty years, while I have been toiling on. I had had twenty-three years of direct observation of her lifework. Since her death I have now had twenty additional years for thoughtful reflection and study of that life and its fruits. Now, at an advanced age, with the constraint of expressing only sober, honest truth, I can say that it is my deep conviction that Mrs. White's life far transcends the life of anyone I have ever known or with whom I have been associated. She was uniformly pleasant, cheerful, and courageous. She was never careless, flippant, or in any way cheap in conversation or manner of life. She was the personification of serious earnestness regarding the things of the kingdom. I never once heard her boast of the gracious gift God had bestowed upon her, or of the marvelous results of her endeavors. She did rejoice in the fruitage, but gave all the glory to Him who wrought through her. [68]

I realize that these are grave statements, but they come from the deepest conviction and soundest judgment that I am capable of rendering. They are uttered in the sobering atmosphere of my last illness, as I face the Judge of all the earth, before whose presence I realize that I soon shall stand.—*The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, pp. 363-368.

### Thomas A. Davis

[69]

**Thomas A. Davis**, associate editor of the *Review and Herald* since 1970, served as editor at the Philippine Publishing House, Manila, from 1960-1965, and at the Oriental Watchman Publishing House, Poona, India, 1965-1970. From 1943 to 1946 he was a member of the medical service in the Royal Canadian Air Force.

His publications include *Seven Mysteries of the Cross*, *Preludes to Prayer*, *Island of Forgotten Men*, *Romans for the Everyday Man*, *Death on Dark Wings*, and numerous magazine articles.

**He received the Th.B. degree from Canadian Union College in 1951.**

## Chapter 8—How I “Discovered” Ellen G. White’s Writings [70] [71]

My appreciation for Ellen G. White was born in wartime England in a setting of boredom, guilt, and spiritual dissatisfaction, as the Holy Spirit penetrated my heart.

It was late 1944. Then in my early twenties, I was wearing the uniform of the Royal Canadian Air Force. As a medical orderly I was attached to the small hospital on a bomber station in Northern England.

Baptized a Seventh-day Adventist a few years before, and desiring to be a Seventh-day Adventist minister, I had been attending an Adventist college preparing for that work.

But I had become tired of school. Many of my friends were in uniform. The desire for adventure coursed in my blood. So I left school and worked on a farm for a few months before joining the Royal Canadian Air Force. One year later found me in England.

Meanwhile, my Christian experience had suffered. I had not clearly understood, in my everyday experience, the “science of salvation,” the nature of faith, and the place of Jesus as my Redeemer. I had neglected prayer and Bible study. And, I had found non-Christian friends in the air force who, while not bad, did not share the standards I had been taught; more and more, my daily habits did not reflect these standards.

For a while the thrill of being in England (to me a romantic country of which I had read much and which I had often wished to see), and the interest I had in being connected with the great air armadas that were helping to end the war with Germany, took my attention. But gradually the romance faded and the routine duties became dull. [72]

Off hours around that Northern England airdrome were spent by many of the airmen drinking in the “pubs,” playing cards, dancing, attending the movies, and similar activities. I frequented the movies, but the other pastimes did not appeal to me.

Under these circumstances, boredom and discontent began to plague me. At the same time there began to gnaw at my conscience the conviction that I was a traitor to my religious beliefs, that I ought to be living the Christian life my heart and mind believed in. I became unhappy and moody.

I continued in this condition for many weeks. Finally, I felt I could not go on with the guilt and dissatisfaction that were almost my constant companions. So, looking for some way to find relief from my unhappiness, I decided to write to the Book and Bible House at Watford, in Southern England, and order some of Ellen G. White's books. Perhaps they would help.

Now, my previous youthful contacts with her writings had not given me any great predilection toward them. I recall a discussion about them at college with two of my bosom friends. We had come to the conclusion that Ellen White's books were rather heavy, dull stuff. Fine for old folks, perhaps. But too much for young people.

But in my unhappy situation in England I thought that perhaps her books could help me. So I ordered two. One of them was *Messages to Young People*.

There is much truth in the adage that beauty lies in the eye of the beholder. Whether the object be physical, moral, or spiritual, the eye or the heart must be tuned to appreciate them. And God had been preparing my heart for the beauty and truth that were in the pages of that book.

[73] As I write this I have that volume *Messages to Young People* before me. Its red cover shows the effects of the years. The red edging on the pages is faded and mottled. But as I leaf through the volume and see again the passages I underlined long years ago in Northern England, I can trace the path of my return to Jesus Christ.

I needed inspiration, encouragement, and strength. I found it in those pages. "No one understands as well as He your peculiarities of character. He is watching over you, and if you are willing to be guided by Him, He will throw around you influences for good that will enable you to accomplish all His will for you."—Page 17.

"Through the gift of the Holy Spirit moral power will be given you, and not only will you have your former intrusted talents for the service of God, but their efficiency will be greatly multiplied. The

surrender of all your powers to God greatly simplifies the problem of life.”—Page 30.

“Satan knows better than God’s people the power that they can have over him, when their strength is in Christ.

“When they humbly entreat the mighty Conqueror for help, the weakest believers in the truth, relying firmly upon Christ, can successfully repulse Satan and all his host.”—Page 51.

“Every resistance of temptation makes resistance more easy. Every denial of self makes self-denial easier. Every victory gained prepares the way for a fresh victory. Each resistance of temptation, each self-denial, each triumph over sin, is a seed sown unto eternal life. Every unselfish action gives new strength to spirituality. No one can try to be like Christ without growing more noble and more true.”—Pages 96, 97.

Then there is, on page 95, the underlined sentence that, even today, thrills me as I read it: “Yes, tell it in words full of cheer, that no one who perseveringly climbs the ladder will fail of gaining an entrance into the heavenly city.”

In addition to strength and encouragement, I needed practical, level-headed counsel. In the military service one does not usually find himself in surroundings conducive to godly living. So I needed help for living a Christian life. I found it in *Messages to Young People*.

“It is not safe for us to linger to contemplate the advantages to be reaped through yielding to Satan’s suggestions.... So far as in us lies, we should close every avenue by which the tempter may find access to us.”—Page 70.

“Those who fail to realize their constant dependence upon God will be overcome by temptation. We may now suppose that our feet stand secure, and that we shall never be moved.... But Satan is planning to take advantage of our hereditary and cultivated traits of character, and to blind our eyes to our own necessities and defects. Only through realizing our own weakness, and looking steadfastly unto Jesus, can we walk securely.”—Page 101.

“You cannot control your impulses, your emotions, as you may desire, but you can control the will, and you can make an entire change in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ, your life will

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be hid with Christ in God, and allied to the power which is above all principalities and powers.”—Page 152.

“Talk faith. Keep on God’s side of the line. Set not your foot on the enemy’s side, and the Lord will be your Helper. He will do for you that which it is not possible for you to do for yourself.... There will be in you a power, an earnestness, and a simplicity that will make you a polished instrument in the hands of God.”—Page 153.

Words such as these spoke to my heart, and, used by the Holy Spirit, were instrumental in changing my life. Soon my air force friends and associates saw the difference in me as I began once more to live the life of a Christian.

Ever since that pivotal moment some thirty years ago, Ellen G. White’s writings have been something special to me. Through the years, as a college student, pastor, editor, and missionary, I have frequently needed wisdom, encouragement, spiritual guidance, and strength to meet problems that confronted me. And whenever I have gone to those writings for help, I have found it.

Unfortunately, I have not always looked to those pages as I should have. And there have been times when I did not heed the counsel and the cautions those books had for me.

But as the years have passed, and my knowledge of those writings has broadened, my confidence in them has increased. It has increased because of the “ring of truth” I continue to find in them, their consonance with the Bible.

[75] Time and time again I have thrilled as I have discovered there clarifications of half-understood Bible truths couched in such simple terms that they suddenly became almost self-evident to me. Each time, I have received another bright glimpse of God’s love in His method of saving humanity.

Often I have closed one of her books with a deep sense of my failings, and a humbling knowledge of how very much I must yet develop in order to reflect the beauty of the character of the Lord Jesus. More than any other writer I have read, Mrs. White’s pen conveys this conviction. But she also inspires hope. Always she encourages me onward. “Through Christ, you can,” is her message.

Every institution, every home, every individual, has an atmosphere, an influence that affects the person contacting them. The same is true of books. Because of the ideas presented, and Ellen

White’s choice of words that causes her Christian character to come through in her writings, her books breathe the atmosphere of heaven.

But there is more: I believe the influence of the Holy Spirit is there seeking to woo to a deeper relationship with God, endeavoring to soften oftentimes obdurate hearts, and pointing in infinite love to the victory and the crown.

Admittedly, what I have written thus far is largely subjective. In spiritual matters this will often necessarily be so. I have also drawn some objective conclusions regarding the writings of Ellen G. White that have greatly strengthened my confidence in them.

I can only allude to them here. But I have watched the sciences, especially medical, authenticate her words. I have seen developing in the world around me situations and conditions she depicted in her writings that tell of the return of Jesus. And I have observed that when her counsel is followed by individuals and the church, they prosper. When it is not followed, spiritual drought sets in. In the light of what I have experienced and seen, I must conclude that Ellen G. White was indeed a prophet of the God of heaven. Her books steadily point us to Scripture and to Him who is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

*Takoma Park, Maryland*

*August 1972*

### **Raoul Dederen**

**Raoul Dederen, professor of systematic theology and chairman of the department of theology and Christian philosophy at the Theological Seminary, Andrews University, authored *Un Réformateur Catholique au XIXe Siècle*, *Eugène Michaud*, *Vieux-Catholicisme*, *Oecuménisme*, and numerous magazine articles.**

**Prior to his appointment at the Theological Seminary, Dr. Dederen was professor of religion at *Seminaire Adventiste du Salève*, France; teaching assistant, University of Geneva; and pastor of several churches in Belgium.**

**He received his doctorate from the University of Geneva in 1964.**

## Chapter 9—A Theologian’s Testimonial

Theology is the intellectual reflection upon, and the articulation of, the content and experience of Christian faith. The basic reason for theology lies in the fact that believers have minds. They seek to deepen their understanding of what God wills for man, and therefore of their experience of faith. In this capacity theology has long served the Christian community. It has been the methodological tool by which individual Christians have implemented their inherent desire to understand the “deposit of faith,” and to make the content of faith more accurately accessible to man’s mind. This is the function of theology. The task of the theologian today is essentially the same as it has been in the past—to help the church acquire a deeper understanding of the Christian faith, and to mediate, to commend it to the contemporary world.

[77] What role does Ellen G. White play in the ministry of the Adventist theologian? A rapid glance at the theologian’s task will help answer the question. Some describe this task as creative. And it is, to a certain extent. This does not mean, however, that the theologian fashions his system out of thin air. Just as the scientist works with, and from, the given substance of the cosmos, and just as the sculptor shapes his forms from a given substance, so does the theologian. He has a given “substance” from which to work. Theology, therefore, is not just reflection on some aspects of one’s experience of the Christian faith, it is also an intellectual attempt to comprehend and express the *datum*—the objective information that revelation offers to man. This datum, I believe, is the Word of God. For practical purposes, since the first century this Word from God is the written Bible. This statement must not be taken to imply, as some have supposed, the supplanting of the authority of the Living Word of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, by the authority of an inanimate document of paper and ink. The authority of Scriptures and the authority of Christ are not in fact in conflict, for it is precisely the



Bible that bears unequivocal testimony to the supreme Lordship of Christ.

In that it conveys the knowledge of God's saving deeds in Christ, Scripture plays an integral role in the divine purpose of revelation. It remains for us what God wanted it to be, the living element that continually brings new generations face to face with Christ. And the treasures theologically quarried from it are not the treasures of a lifeless object but the riches of Him who is the Living Lord. It remains the theologian's function to see to it that the Biblical message is heard in a language that can be understood by the people among whom he works. The task is no easy one, but it is hardly avoidable.

Where is the theologian to find fixed and final concepts where-with to challenge the secular concepts of his contemporaries? Will he, as many so vociferously do, take contemporary experience as the norm, itself exempt from criticism, by which everything, including Christian faith, is to be judged? Will he reject, under one of several labels, the notion that the doctrinal truth consists in its agreement with objective reality, adopting a purely subjective and fluid criterion of truth? On the basis of what authority is he to discriminate permanent truth in the Christian faith from impermanent opinions? Where will he start? This is where, in my case, the ministry of Ellen G. White played a decisive role.

Born in the Roman Catholic tradition, and trained as I was in the habits of skepticism, accepting Ellen G. White as an expression of the spiritual gift of prophecy so many years after Christ's death, was a major stumbling block. I found myself actually repulsed by the very thought of it. That I did eventually make this affirmation of faith is to be attributed solely to the grace of God. This revulsion on my part developed, not merely in response to the strangeness of the doctrine but also in an unwillingness to succumb to sugary sentimentality before I had answered certain religious problems intellectually. I needed answers to certain questions, and I was determined not to let sentiment precede reason. The Scriptures and sound logic, I was sure, would provide me with these answers.

It was not long before the same thirst for a fuller understanding of God's nature and of His will for man, which had brought me to a personal study of the Bible, impelled me to seek for guidance and

understanding in interpreting it. As I became more familiar with the personality and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, I felt the need for some voice that would bring Christ closer as a person, and apply His lofty principles to our troubled twentieth century.

While I was disillusioned with the Roman Catholic Church, Protestantism generally left me with a sense of inadequacy, by failing to insist on the inerrancy of New Testament doctrine. As for the Adventist doctrine on the gift of prophecy, I found it positively repellent. Although Adventists intrigued me, I stubbornly refused to be taken in by the miraculous elements surrounding Ellen G. White's ministry—the loss of physical strength aspect, the no-breath sign, the upholding of an eighteen-pound Bible.

Far different, however, was the effect of my exploration of her writings. I read extensively in this branch of Adventist literature and I discovered that man in our day can regard the supernatural, the miraculous, as a fact of experience without having to apologize to anyone for this conviction. I discovered that faith and prayer can penetrate beyond the confused surface of philosophy and scholarship to the realm where the powers of light and darkness clash in unceasing strife.

[79] If anyone contends that in order to accept the Adventist faith one must first be attracted to the logic of its doctrines, he will have to explain me away. In fact, through the ministry of Ellen White I was brought face to face with *Jesus Christ*, as He was and still is. It was no abstraction of theology, no reasoned dissertation about the logical consequences of the Incarnation that confronted me there, but the Incarnation itself, the living and breathing warmth of the person of Jesus Christ. Christianity was Christ, and my questions had found their answers.

I soon felt the need to express my faith, to find the means by which I would be able to make its content more accessible to the mind, my own as well as the mind of others with whom I wanted to share it. Theological reflection was burgeoning. But where does one find the master key that opens the Scriptures to a more systematic unfolding?

We have it on good authority that the theologian, well instructed in the things of the kingdom of heaven, is “like ... an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things both new and old”

([Matthew 13:52](#)). Well and good. In his reflection the theologian will enlist all the resources of human reasoning. He will try to grasp the truths, opinions, and questions that the Spirit stirs up in the people of God, and he receives no little help from the Spirit, to whom he must pay heed. But how can he make sure that what he hears from others and even what he thinks the Spirit is saying to him rightly reflects the intent of the Scriptures? How, in his attempt to make the Christian message the good news for contemporary man, will the theologian know whether he is expounding the faith in its integrity, or simply handing back to the world its own beliefs and assumptions adorned with a Christian label?

Amid the theological pluralism derived from the various philosophies and systems of thought that our contemporaries employ in their attempt to expound and explain the Christian faith, the same prophetic ministry, which brought me face to face with Jesus Christ by enlightening the Bible, also dispelled darkness around me.

Yielding to Ellen G. White's counsel, I went back to the Scriptures again, believing in order that I might understand. The words of Scripture now rang with undeniable truth. The book I had found closed and remote I suddenly studied with eagerness and delight. Dull and dry-as-dust to the eye of unbelief, to the eye of faith the Bible came alive, the dynamic and authoritative Word of God, the key and criterion to its own interpretation.

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Any writing that proceeds from God's Spirit is a veritable mine of wisdom, an inexhaustible source of truth. With renewed diligence I studied both volumes, the Scriptures and the writings that had called my attention to the supreme authority of the Bible. The more I examined, the more I was impressed with the consistency of Ellen White's testimony. There was no attempt on her part to place her writings on a par with the Bible, much less above it. She was ever pointing to the Scriptures as the one source of truth and light, reminding me as a theologian that the Bible should be the Christian's first source of spiritual instruction. Christianity, to be sure, is Christ; it is essentially encounter with Christ, an encounter that upsets the whole existence of man and calls him to a decision, to a commitment of his whole person. This Ellen White had been emphasizing from the very start.

But faithful to the realism of the Incarnation, she also explained that such an encounter with Christ is effected only through hearing the apostolic witness consigned to Scripture. It is no wonder she insists that we take the Bible as it is, as God's voice speaking to us, as the end of all controversy and the foundation of all faith, as surely as though we had a personal audience with the Infinite One. Even the work of the Spirit on the human heart is to be tested by it.

At a time when the sickness of theology is largely attributable to the increasing extent to which it is becoming infected with the arrogance of human self-sufficiency, Ellen White's inspired meditation of the Christian faith, with its reverence for the Living and Written Word, and its dynamic doctrine of the Holy Spirit, has, more than any other influence in my life, helped me to restore the right balance between the supreme honor of God and the dependent dignity of man, whom God created in His image and for a personal relationship with Him.

*Berrien Springs, Michigan*

*July 1972*

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#### **N. R. Dower**

**N. R. Dower, secretary of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, is a frequent contributor to denominational magazines.**

**Prior to his present appointment he was president of the Washington, Texas, and Texico conferences. After receiving his ministerial training at Columbia Union College and serving as dean of men and Bible teacher at Atlantic Union College, he did pastoral-evangelistic work in the Pennsylvania and Michigan conferences.**

## Chapter 10—The Blessing Experienced

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From my earliest years I have been acquainted with the writings of Ellen G. White. My parents became Seventh-day Adventists in Englee, Newfoundland, four years before I was born. Soon thereafter some of the writings of Sister White came into the hands of our family and became a regular and cherished part of our library. I cannot remember a time when we did not have these books; though we were for a time far removed from an organized church, they never ceased to assist in meeting the needs of our lives.

During my church school and academy years we had frequent reason to study these writings and to learn to love the simple, beautiful presentations of truth they contain. While preparing for the ministry in college, these books took on a new importance as I became familiar with them, and with their role in the Adventist Church.

For thirty-seven years in my ministry I have found them to be a source of great inspiration, encouragement, and help. In all these years they have never failed me in any respect. They have met the needs of my life, my home, my church, and the organizations in which I have served. They have given right counsel on important issues, at the right time. I do not recall a single instance where they have not provided the guidance needed to meet difficult problems. Only the Bible has surpassed them in giving me unerring, infallible direction.

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In my personal life I have been a completely reborn man because of the following counsel: “It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of

penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.”—[The Desire of Ages, 83](#).

I have tested this marvelous promise and have found it true. There is much ground yet to gain, much growth still to experience. But the way is clearly marked out by my Lord and I expect to follow on. until through His grace and by the power of His Spirit I reach “mature manhood, measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ” ([Ephesians 4:13](#), N.E.B.).

Led by the writings of the servant of the Lord to study the life of John the Baptist, I have experienced renewal in my ministry.

“As a prophet, John was ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.’ In preparing the way for Christ’s first advent, he was a representative of those who are to prepare a people for our Lord’s second coming.”—[The Desire of Ages, 101](#).

Again, I thank God for this rich insight into the meaning of my ministry. To know by personal experience rather than by theory only, how to be a modern counterpart of John the Baptist is my constant goal. The challenge to give myself without reservation of any kind to the service of Christ is motivated by these simple words:

“All that the apostles did, every church member today is to do. And we are to work with as much more fervor, to be accompanied by the Holy Spirit in as much greater measure, as the increase of wickedness demands a more decided call to repentance.”—[Testimonies for the Church 7:33](#).

[85] As the leader of the ministry of the Church, I have been diligently studying, seeking answers to the way that God’s work can be quickly finished. How grateful I am, therefore, for the wise counsel that outlines the only way that this can be done:

“The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work, and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers.”—[Gospel Workers, 352](#).

We seek for the blessings and power of the latter rain, and it is vital to the success of our mission. Yet we are told that “when we have entire, wholehearted consecration to the service of Christ, God will recognize the fact by an outpouring of His Spirit without

measure; but this will not be while the largest portion of the church are not laborers together with God.”—[Christian Service, 253](#).

Thank God for these concepts. What a tremendous difference it will make when all our church membership catches this vision of a completed work. The promise of future victory should urge us to implement all the counsels we have received from the Lord through His chosen messenger.

“God will do the work if we will furnish Him the instruments.”—[Testimonies for the Church 9:107](#). This, too, has been a special challenge to me and to my fellow ministers and church members of the remnant people.

Her counsels for our homes, our schools, our medical institutions, our publishing houses, and our churches are so rich and so vital that it would be impossible for us to fail if we follow the guidance of the Lord, and impossible to succeed if we refuse to follow it.

I have encountered no problems in my life or ministry for which God has not provided a ready solution, either in the Scriptures or in the Spirit of Prophecy. These infallible guides afford us advantages others do not have.

A further proof of Ellen White’s divine inspiration is that her counsels are as relevant today as when they were first given. They enable us to face up courageously to the varied and intricate problems of our modern society. Their remarkable balance and great reasonableness make it possible for us to avoid extremes in such areas as dress, recreation, diet, social services, and theology. I have never found a person who truly believes in, and follows, the counsel of the messenger of the Lord who has become either a fanatic or a careless liberal. [86]

Her counsels are suitable for people of all ranks, ages, and classes. They give us direction as we face up to the dangers of this mixed-up world.

I have found her writings to be an inspired, reliable commentary on the Bible. It has been a most rewarding experience to study the Word of God in depth, and then find amplification and verification for the truths discovered in Ellen White’s writings.

Some have serious doubts about the Scriptures. I have found a way to dispel these doubts: Develop a simple faith in the authenticity of the writings of Ellen White. Some, for example, have unresolved

questions about who wrote the book of Hebrews. I know! The servant of the Lord tells us repeatedly that it was written by the apostle Paul. That settles it for me.

Even as there is great need for much study and prayer as we seek to understand God's will, outlined in the Bible, so there is also need for the same kind of deep study and earnest prayer as we seek to understand His will in the writings of Ellen White. Both sources of truth demand all the strength of mind and spirit. Only when we lose faith in the certainty and assurance of this inspired gift are we in any real danger of being deceived by the errors of the last days. Personally, I would rather take the statement of the servant of the Lord as the truth on a given subject, than all the works of all the great theologians or scientists.

What I am saying is that I believe the writings of Ellen G. White are inspired of the Lord. We can safely trust them, and this gives us an authoritative understanding of the Sacred Scriptures. My life has been blessed as I have heard the call through her writings to a holier and more fruitful ministry. My heart responds to her repeated calls to conversion, consecration, and total commitment of all that I am to the advancement of God's work.

[87] When we faithfully follow her counsels in eating, drinking, working, serving, and other areas, I have discovered through experience that we can be assured of success and may fully enjoy the blessings of the Lord. The call is for full surrender to the guidance of the Spirit. Wherever the work of God is making unusual progress today it is because we have faithfully followed her counsel. Where it is struggling to hold its own, it is because other concepts have been given prominence and minor matters have occupied our attention.

In summary, the writings of Ellen White have established my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in His divinely inspired Word. They have given positive guidance to a church seeking to fulfill its mission in a bewildered and bewildering world. They have marked out a straight course for us to follow in education, medicine, publishing, evangelism, and every other phase of our work. They give personal guidance to anyone who is honestly seeking their counsel and is willing to follow their instruction. I thank God for this priceless gift to me, to my family, and to my church. I cannot imagine what my life would be like without it.



*Takoma Park, Maryland  
April 1972*

**Paul H. Eldridge**

[88]

**Paul H. Eldridge, president of the Far Eastern Division of Seventh-day Adventists, has been a missionary in the Far East for 35 years. He earned his B.Th. at Atlantic Union College in 1935. Prior to his present responsibilities, he has been radio-TV and Ministerial secretary, Far Eastern Division; radio speaker, Voice of Prophecy (in Japanese); pastor-evangelist, Tokyo and Osaka; Bible teacher, Japan Missionary College.**

## Chapter 11—A Priceless Legacy

“What I’m looking for is a small suitcase that’s really tough. I want it for carrying books.”

On the counter were two or three good-looking but rather flimsy bags that my father obviously considered unsatisfactory. Trying hard to please, the clerk in the luggage shop turned once more to the shelves behind him. Then, a triumphant twinkle in his eye, he reached for a plain brown case and deliberately slammed it noisily on the counter.

“This is just what you need,” he said.

Dad gave the little suitcase a skeptical glance.

“I’ll show you just how tough it is.”

In one fluid series of motions the clerk closed the lid, dropped it on the floor, and stepped with his whole weight on the flat side of the hollow case.

It was an impressive demonstration. Dad bought the case.

That was nearly fifty years ago. As a small boy, excited to be on a shopping trip with Dad, I observed the incident with great interest. And I watched through the years as Dad carried that tough little suitcase packed with books wherever he went.

The books were his Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White. Looking inside them, I discovered that they were heavily underlined in various colors, with cross references to Scripture and other Spirit of Prophecy writings.

Dad lived with those books. As a busy district pastor, he often traveled by train. Overnight visits in members’ homes were frequent. He could not bear to spend a day without studying those volumes. He quoted from them in his sermons. He read them in family worship. He ordered his life and ministry according to their teachings.

Thus my confidence in the messages of Ellen White and the validity of her inspiration came to me intact as a heritage from my father. One day after I had become a minister, Dad put his finger on a passage in [Testimonies for the Church 5:214](#): “Every one must

now search the Bible for himself upon his knees before God, with the humble, teachable heart of a child, if he would know what the Lord requires of him.” Then, looking at me with a smile, Dad said simply, “I’ve read the entire Bible through on my knees—twice.”

For many years, every letter he wrote to me contained at least one quotation from Ellen White. Until his death at eighty-six years of age, not once did his faith in these inspired messages falter.

My present confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy, however, is not dependent on sentimental loyalty to my father’s memory. Passing years have built an unshakable structure of personal confidence on the solid foundation he bequeathed. Here are the factors that have influenced my faith:

*The visions.* Beginning with the account of that first dramatic occasion, late in 1844, when the Holy Spirit came to Ellen Harmon as she and four other women prayed together in the Haynes home at Portland, Maine, is the entire record of her direct communications from God. The physical facts, especially while recognizing the background of the humble messenger, are impressive. The very improbability of her personal accomplishments apart from the direct intervention of God carries conviction.

*The gift of prophecy itself a remarkable fulfillment.* Its timing and location, as well as the messages themselves, were a necessary feature in the rise of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Bible passages that call for the prophetic gift in the final phase of the church on earth give me complete assurance that the work of Mrs. White fulfills their requirements. [91]

*Role in church development.* Whether considered from the standpoint of history, doctrine, or organization, the growth of the church is inextricably entwined with the work of Ellen White. She did not plan the events, originate the doctrine, or dictate the organization. But her counsels, cautions, and admonitions gave both courage and conviction to church leaders.

*Specific predictions and fulfillment.* The most convincing proof of prophecy is fulfillment. I have always been intrigued with the long list of persons, events, locations, and circumstances that Mrs. White outlined in unmistakable detail, long before she or anyone around her could have known of them. She always did this to aid the church, never for personal recognition or reward.

*The appropriateness and timeliness of her messages.* Rebuke, entreaty, and encouragement for individuals; exhortation to the church, calls for reformation, and counsels on administrative problems—all of these were given exactly when needed. Human genius could not have accounted for this invariable timeliness.

*Consistency.* It is impossible to read Ellen White's writings, remembering the seventy years over which they were written, the rapidly changing circumstances in the world and in the church, and the amazing increase of knowledge since her death, without amazement at the continuing consistency and timelessness of her counsel.

*Scientific corroboration of health principles.* I have been fascinated to see that almost every feature of Ellen White's health messages, often ignored or ridiculed by the scientists of her day, has now, more than half a century after her death, been corroborated scientifically. What few areas are yet to be vindicated in the scientific laboratory, such as the germ theory of cancer, are even now in process of validation.

*Impact on personal experience.* "By their fruits ye shall know them." It would be impossible to deny the change in people's lives that has followed acceptance of the counsels and challenges in Ellen White's writings. I feel their influence in my own life.

[92] *Beauty of language.* Recognizing that some might rightly ascribe this distinctive characteristic to writings that make no claim to divine inspiration, I have left it to the last. Yet there is a unique quality in Ellen White's use of words. Her developing style is so unstudied, so much in contrast with her meager formal education. Her eloquence flashes like polished jewels in unexpected places.

Only recently, in notes on the Sabbath school lesson, I came across this gem: "When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God."—[The Ministry of Healing, 58](#). Could this thought be expressed more eloquently?

Through the years of my ministry many quotations from Ellen White have become my personal treasures. I will mention four, each of which has been a source of help for a particular phase of my work.

Like every other Adventist worker, I have frequently found myself faced with important decisions to make, not always certain what

God wanted me to do. When situations have seemed untenable, or when delay continued past what seemed the limit of patient endurance, this quotation has always been a solace: “Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God.”—[Christ’s Object Lessons, 327](#). Never has God failed to make good on this promise. Inevitably, when the periods of uncertainty passed I have recognized that God led me where He wanted me to be.

Work with young people has been a frequent and fascinating part of my ministry. I have lost count of the colleges, schools of nursing, academies, and elementary schools where I have been asked to conduct Weeks of Prayer. One of my favorite quotations has often given a breath of courage to a disheartened youth: “Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness, and relies wholly on the merits of the Saviour. God would send every angel in heaven to the aid of such an one, rather than allow him to be overcome.”—[Testimonies for the Church 7:17](#).

While I was still a ministerial intern, I discovered that the world is full of people who have distressing personal problems. Many of these involve members of the family or other individuals. Emotional security as well as physical health is often affected. I found these troubled people turning to me, their young pastor, for help. Despite my training in theology and the fact that I had been brought up in a minister’s family, I had somehow failed to realize how much of my attention would be occupied with these problems. I resented it. I actually considered dropping out of the ministry because I didn’t want to become involved.

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Gradually, however, I recognized that giving comfort and wise counsel was one of a preacher’s greatest privileges. Through an unusual set of circumstances I had an opportunity to study and observe the operation of a professional counseling ministry. A deep sympathy developed for persons suffering from emotional distress. For several years my radio program featured “The Pastor’s Counsel Study,” and many hundreds of letters, mostly from non-Christians, gave me a broad spectrum of human woe.

One brief quotation encouraged me in this ministry: “Sickness of the mind prevails everywhere. Nine-tenths of the diseases from

which men suffer have their foundation here.”—[Testimonies for the Church 5:444](#). The book *The Ministry of Healing* is filled with especially valuable counsel. Now I find great blessing and satisfaction in helping these troubled individuals.

Finally, in my administrative duties, one familiar quotation has been the promise that gives me the greatest courage. “God is able and willing to bestow upon His servants all the strength they need, and to give them the wisdom that their varied necessities demand.”—[Gospel Workers, 262, 263](#).

Problems there have been—relentless, varied, solution-defying. They have been complicated by international confrontation, surges of national pride, baffling financial fluctuations, spiritual atrophy, leadership paralysis. Most difficult and most distressing have been the people problems. And always there has been the awesome challenge to the church of the Orient’s massed millions.

[94] “Who is sufficient for these things?” How comforting have been the words, “God is able and willing ... to give them the wisdom that their varied necessities demand.”

By implanting in my mind an unforgettable impression of faith in the writings of Ellen White, my father left me a priceless legacy. His lifetime, and mine, have deepened and broadened that impression.

I believe, and what a blessing belief has brought!

*Singapore*

*July 1, 1972*

[95]

### Paul A. Gordon

**Paul A. Gordon, associate secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate, authored *A Teacher’s Manual for Youth Guidance*, several magazine articles, and earliteen and youth Sabbath school lessons.**

**After several years as a pastor in the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, he was successively Bible teacher at Milo Academy, Walla Walla Valley Academy, and the Upper Columbia Academy.**

**Elder Gordon received the M.A. degree from Walla Walla College.**

## Chapter 12—A Great Adventure in Confidence

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In the years of my connection with the White Estate I have met many people with a great variety of attitudes toward Ellen G. White. Before audiences ranging from just a few to several hundred, I have often invited questions with no prearranged list of topics. The subject and slant of the questions have been the sole responsibility of the ones who asked them. I have not known what question or attitude would surface.

The questions a person asks tell much about him. They may show a genuine interest in finding truth, or outright skepticism—even cynicism. Sometimes a question is raised in a defensive tone that indicates unwillingness to hear a reasonable answer. Still other questioners seek reinforcement of what they already believe and only ask for reassurance—whether their position is right or wrong.

Whether the writings of Ellen White appear to be a hammer to pound home an idea, or a help to a better life, depends more upon the reader than upon the literary works themselves. Even as the sun hardens clay, melts ice, and burns the skin, so the results of being exposed to the writings of Ellen White vary according to the nature and disposition of the reader.

F. D. Nichol's *Ellen G. White and Her Critics* has often been a help to me in my work. There are obviously two kinds of critics. The dictionary distinguishes between (1) "One who expresses a reasoned opinion on any matter involving a judgment of its value, and appreciation of its beauty or technique, and (2) One given to harsh or captious judgment, a caviler or carper."

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The specialty experts who speak from a background of experience such as music, literature, or art are of the first kind. Though we may not agree with every detail of their evaluation, we usually have respect for their opinions as being more than rash, unenlightened pronouncements. The other kind are those who indulge in carping criticism. To find fault with something or someone is a way of life with them. They are given to finding fault.

Surely, then, we need to be aware of the basis on which a person expresses an opinion. Is his attitude based on facts, or ignorance, or worse still, on an unwillingness to know the truth or be guided by it?

I determined early in my academy years to find out for myself what Sister White said rather than depend on another person's evaluation. I remember many hours of patient reading. To keep myself at it I set goals—a certain number of pages each week—and quickly found that I was into some of the most fascinating reading I could imagine. By the time I had finished college and my theology course, I had read a number of her books through, and found my confidence growing.

If I were to pick out a favorite paragraph it would be one I memorized and often used as a part of my prayer experience. I rearranged the sentences a bit and used it this way: “Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is Thy property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for Thee.” “Save me in spite of myself, my weak, unchristlike self.” And then the part I remember best: “Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of Thy love can flow through my soul.”—[Christ's Object Lessons, 159](#).

[99] I believe that prayer, especially the last words, helped me through several hard experiences. I was committed to the ministry, and these words summed it all up for me. Not that I never made any mistakes, because I failed many times. But I do say that what I read in the books by Ellen White in my younger years has had a powerful influence over my entire life.

I have always enjoyed reading whole books, or stories or chapters, at one sitting. My mother would have testified to my concentration on such reading while she repeatedly called me for dinner. I think this is the reason I remember with so much pleasure reading the book *Education* one long Sabbath afternoon, or large gulps of *The Great Controversy* or *The Desire of Ages*, and *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Such a plan has given me a view of historical and Biblical events that I would never have acquired in hit-and-miss reading.

My years of academy teaching bring back many high lights. How often I wish I had had a tape recorder during a lively discussion in a Bible Doctrines or Youth Guidance class. I have always tried to deal with the Bible and the writings of Ellen White as authoritative



and factual sources, and have never made apology for doing so. I believe students have appreciated this approach.

One of the most rewarding experiences I had as a teacher was with a freshman Old Testament class. We used *Patriarchs and Prophets* as our major textbook, along with the Bible. Daily I handed out written questions and required the students to read in this book, and then we would discuss their findings. I can remember animated discussions on Noah, Abraham, Jacob and Esau, Joseph, Moses, and many others. It was a great personal satisfaction to hear these students talking about their reading in Sabbath school classes and in private conversation. Their confidence in Ellen White grew, and from that time on *Patriarchs and Prophets* has been near the top of my personal list of favorites.

When I was called to the White Estate in 1967 I knew I was about to begin a new, even more rewarding experience. A Prophetic Guidance class at Andrews a few years earlier and a tour of New England had been a great inspiration to me, but I was hardly prepared for what was in store. The ensuing experience has been far beyond what I had thought it would be. Part of my work calls for research into the original documents and letters in Ellen White's own hand. Perhaps two projects will illustrate how this has increased my confidence. [100]

Soon after my arrival at the White Estate office I was asked to search through all of Ellen White's letters, looking especially for those she wrote to young people. I collected about 170 letters. They tell the kind of person that Ellen White was. She usually got right to the point. Some contain uncompromisingly stern rebukes. Often she stated in these letters that she had been shown the basis for her counsel in vision. There was no indulging in gossip or hearsay. She spoke with an assurance as to her divine source of information. Often her tone was one of encouragement, frequently calling for dedication to a higher standard in life.

I find her writing tender words to a dying girl, urging her not to be discouraged because all her hopes and plans cannot be fulfilled. She writes to other girls who lived for a time in the White home, giving them motherly counsel as her own "stepdaughters." I detect that she sometimes regretted having no daughters of her own—only

four boys. She wrote to many young men, speaking to them as plainly as a mother might speak to her own son.

She often challenged these young friends to make the most of their lives for God, and urged dedication of their time and abilities to the One who had created them. These letters to young people proved to be a real reading adventure. To all who will trust the Lord with their lives as she had done, they breathe a confidence in her work, her Lord, her Christian experience, and an assurance for the future.

There are, of course, letters to her own sons. Those written to them while they were young can be understood by any young person. Writing to Henry and Edson when they were ten and eight she said, “You can be little Christians.”—[Letter 3, 1858](#). In another letter to Henry when he was 12, she urged, “Do right because you love to.”—[Letter 5, 1859](#).

Letters to her son Edson, especially in his teen years, often are very pointed. She talks plainly of dishonesty, expresses concern about the careless use of money, and cautions regarding his association with others. Yet all of this rather straight counsel is written in the framework of concern and love.

[101] A similar project led me to search through all of the unpublished letters and manuscripts looking for comments on Bible characters. This was done in preparation for the 1971 Morning Watch book—*Conflict and Courage*. I scanned thousands of pages. Often I found myself going far beyond the parts originally intended. With this project, as with several others, I was impressed with her consistency and integrity of spirit, but even more than that. I know from this reading that I have been listening to a prophetic voice that I also hear when I read the Bible.

Ellen White does not speak hesitantly. She does not hedge. Even as the apostle Paul, she knows whom she believes, and speaks with certainty whether in a letter of the 1840’s written in exuberant teen-age style, or in correspondence of later years that reflects the maturity of long experience.

Ellen White’s attitude toward her work appears hundreds of times and in a great variety of ways. She considered that what she had written was, in some sense, beyond herself. She often seemed to take a detached attitude toward what she had written. In 1870, for

example, she wrote, “I have been looking over the Testimonies given for Sabbathkeepers, and I am astonished at the mercy of God and His care for His people in giving them so many warnings, pointing out their dangers, and presenting before them the exalted position which He would have them occupy.”—[Testimonies for the Church 2:483](#).

This detachment obligated her to follow the advice herself. The same concept helps us to understand a few statements from her pen, such as the following, that might at first notice be misunderstood: “The Holy Ghost is the author of the Scriptures and of the Spirit of Prophecy. These are not to be twisted and turned to mean what man may want them to mean, to carry out man’s ideas and sentiments, to carry forward man’s schemes at all hazards.”—[Letter 92, 1900](#).

“When before the people there seems to be presented before me the most precious things of the gospel and I participate in the gospel message and feed upon the word as much as any of the hearers. The sermons do me good, for I have new representations every time I open my lips to speak to the people.”—[Manuscript 174, 1903](#).

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Her personal response was the same way when she read her own books. She once commented, “The book *The Great Controversy*, I appreciate above silver or gold.”—[Colporteur Ministry, 128](#).

Once in her later years as she read the book *The Desire of Ages*, she commented on the inspiration she received from reading its pages.

Another statement is perhaps even more interesting. In it she even expresses surprise at what she had written: “In the night I am aroused from my sleep, and I write in my diary many things that appear as new to me when read as to any who hear them. If I did not see the matter in my own handwriting, I should not think my pen had traced it.”—[Letter 118, 1898](#).

I believe a major reason why some people lack confidence in the writings of Ellen White is ignorance of the facts. I believe—as with all truth—that the claims of Ellen White as a messenger of God not only stand study, but demand it. I do not believe any person will be disappointed with such study if he determines from the beginning to follow the truth as he finds it. I can personally attest to my study as being a great adventure, daily strengthening my confidence in God’s leading of His remnant church through the gift of prophecy.

*Takoma Park, Maryland*  
*July 5, 1972*

[103]

**Richard Hammill**

**Richard Hammill, president of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, authored *In Full Assurance*, and has contributed to the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* and other scholarly Adventist works in addition to numerous magazine articles.**

**He has served as associate secretary, General Conference Department of Education; Bible teacher and academic dean, Southern Missionary College; missionary to Vietnam and the Philippine Islands (where he was interned during World War II); and minister in the Washington Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.**

**Dr. Hammill received his M.A. from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, and his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1950.**

## Chapter 13—A Messenger of God

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[105]

I believe Ellen G. White was a messenger of God and that her writings are inspired instruction from God for my personal well-being. This confidence has developed through the years because her writings have, in a very special way, been a means of spiritual enlightenment suited to the various stages of my development as a Christian and as a worker in the Adventist Church. Her writings have helped at crucial moments.

I became a Christian while I was a freshman in an Adventist college, in the midst of the great depression. Of necessity, I worked my entire way. I received no Bible studies, nor any particular Christian guidance from anyone during those formative months. However, a student across the hall gave me a copy of Ellen G. White's *Christ's Object Lessons*. Though I had very little time for reading during the week due to my heavy work load and full class schedule, I did have time on the Sabbath; often I would spend the largest part of the Sabbath day reading from that book. As I began to read I was practically ignorant of the teachings of the Bible and the basic concepts of Christianity. In this wonderful book, however, Ellen White opened to my mind the possibilities for Christian living and the great opportunities God opens to every man who chooses to cooperate with Him in completing the Christian mission. I was encouraged to believe that my life might grow and develop, even like that of a mustard seed.

[106]

Looking back through the forty years since I first read this book, I am truly grateful for its clear picture of what genuine Christianity is like.

After I had been a Christian for several years I felt God's Spirit calling me to be a Christian minister or teacher. I gradually changed my major from history to theology, and in less than four years after I became a Christian I found myself a minister in the Washington Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. I was assigned to a small church, with very little supervision from an experienced minister.

Feeling quite inadequate, I again turned to the writings of Ellen White for special help, especially *Gospel Workers* and *Testimonies to Ministers*. I read such words as:

“It is to the honor of Christ that He makes His ministers a greater blessing to the church, through the working of the Holy Spirit, than are the stars to the world. The Saviour is to be their efficiency. If they will look to Him as He looked to His Father, they will do His works. As they make God their dependence, He will give them His brightness to reflect to the world.”—[Gospel Workers, 14](#).

It was a tremendous encouragement to me to know that Christ intends His ministers to be a greater blessing to the church than the stars are to the world. I determined to let Christ work through my life to make me such a blessing.

Upon receiving my first paycheck from the conference I was filled with a sense of awe as I thought of the fact that this money was tithe that had been paid to the church by the members. I thought a long time before I was ready to cash that check. That feeling of awe, as a minister of the gospel supported by the tithe of other Christians, is still present after thirty-seven years in the ministry. Ellen White’s writings humbled me as I reflected on the sacredness of my work, and helped me to develop a high concept of my ministry:

“The minister stands as God’s mouthpiece to the people, and in thought, in word, in act, he is to represent his Lord.”—[Gospel Workers, 20](#).

[107] I soon found that the work of the minister is exciting. It often leaves a person with a sense of unworthiness. When under tremendous pressure and uncertain which way to turn, I learned to search the writings of Ellen White for guidance. I have enjoyed my work, nevertheless, and though at times it has been difficult, her counsel has lifted a weary spirit: “Workers for Christ are never to think, much less to speak, of failure in their work.”—[Gospel Workers, 19](#).

When I entered the gospel ministry I owned only a few books by Ellen White. I had been hard pressed financially while working my way through college, and the \$14 a week I received for my services as a minister didn’t enable me to purchase more of them. By the time Christmas arrived I had reread all the books I owned.

Before Christmas all of the conference workers gathered for a workers’ meeting. As the last item on the agenda for the day the

conference president, M. L. Rice, handed to each of the workers an envelope containing a check, which he said was a Christmas bonus. I was not expecting a bonus, and was pleased, upon opening the envelope, to see a check for about the amount I needed to purchase a set of Ellen G. White's nine-volume set, *Testimonies for the Church*. I had been looking at them that very morning in the Book and Bible House but not having the money had put the thought away. I hastened to the Book and Bible House, before it closed, and purchased the set.

A nine-volume set of books is a formidable undertaking to read. I set myself a standard allotment of ten pages a day, a plan I followed undeviatingly until I had read the full set. These volumes gave me an excellent grasp of the development of the Adventist Church from its beginning. I understood better the purpose and role of the church. They presented a kaleidoscopic cross section of the human experience. Composed as they are with personal testimonies to individuals and to leaders, they helped me to see men and women striving, failing, rising again, giving, living their lives in an effort to advance the cause of the kingdom. I don't believe that anyone who has not read through the nine volumes of the *Testimonies* can really understand what the Adventist Church is.

Those books gave me my first true concept of the place of healthful living in the life of a Christian. From earliest infancy I had not been blessed with the best of health. At one time I had been forced to drop out of grade school because of tuberculosis. I recuperated through outdoor living, which I had learned to love. The writings of Ellen White helped me to know how to live in harmony with the laws of my physical being. [108]

It was also from the *Testimonies* that I learned the real meaning of the seventh-day Sabbath and how to relate to it in order to derive the greatest blessing from it. For me, these writings were not only an instrument of grace but the voice of God speaking to my soul. Chapters describing ideal home life, Christian education, dress, or warning against covetousness and close dealing, or making God's presence a reality in the daily life, have helped me to grow as a stable, steadfast, Seventh-day Adventist Christian.

As I write these lines late Friday afternoon, alone in the administration building of Andrews University, I glance up to the most

prominent shelf at the entrance to my office where, in a place of honor, rest the last seven volumes of that precious set of *Testimonies for the Church* that I purchased with my Christmas bonus in 1936. The first two volumes are missing; I lost them at the end of World War II upon being rescued from a prisoner of war camp early one morning by a battalion of U.S. paratroopers. Those two volumes burned up in the holocaust that followed, but the other seven, worn and tattered with years of use, I keep where I see them every time I glance up from my desk; they serve as a reminder of the important contribution the writings of Ellen G. White have made to my life.

Following several years in the ministry and a period of mission service, I was asked to enter the teaching ministry of the Adventist Church.

Space does not permit mention of every way in which the writings of Ellen White have helped me in my chosen work of Biblical scholarship. I mention only one aspect, that of the inspiration of the Bible. A scholar's concept of the Bible will naturally shape all of his conclusions and concepts.

[109] After years of careful study of the Word of God I have not been able to define its authorship and inspiration as well as Ellen White did in these words:

“The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all “given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. The Infinite One by His Holy Spirit has shed light into the minds and hearts of His servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures; and those to whom the truth was thus revealed, have themselves embodied the thought in human language....

“God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies, and He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do His work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was entrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, none the less, from Heaven. The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing



child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth.”—[Selected Messages 1:25, 26](#).

As the years passed, my church asked me to serve as an educational administrator. Upon taking up these responsibilities, for which I had had no specialized training, again I turned to the writings of Ellen White for instruction and guidance. I have been much impressed by the breadth of her educational philosophy and her insistence on the highest scholastic standards. She has stated that the literary requirements and standards held in our schools should be of the highest of any educational institution in the land. (See [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 220](#).) She has said that advanced science is to be taught in our schools. (See [Fundamentals of Christian Education, 186](#).) Yet at the same time, she has pointed out that ample provisions should be made for those students who are not inclined toward scientific and literary vocations. All the children of the church are to have the benefits of a Christian education, she says, for who can tell which one has the ability, or the interest, or the call to serve as ministers, or teachers, or physicians? (See [Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 44](#).) Those who labor in trades and nonliterary vocations need the benefit of Christian education as they prepare for life and a successful career:

“The sturdy mechanic taxed muscle and sinew, manifesting his love to God in the toil for His honor....

“There is science in the humblest kind of work, and if all would thus regard it, they would see nobility in labor.... In agricultural or mechanical occupations men may give evidence to God that they appreciate His gift in the physical powers, and the mental faculties as well.... There is honor in any class of work that is essential to be done.”—[Fundamentals of Christian Education, 315](#).

Such concepts as these have helped me guide an institution of higher education within the Adventist Church.

In these perplexing times, with changing concepts about standards of dress, appearance, and relationship to authority pressing hard upon individuals and institutions, I have been grateful, even more than ever, for the counsel and guidance given by Ellen White. She wrote that “the youth who enter our schools and colleges will find there every class of mind. If they desire sport and folly, if they seek to shun the good and unite with the evil, they have the opportu-

nity. Sin and righteousness are before them, and they are to choose for themselves.”—[Conflict and Courage, 135](#). We will never be able to build a wall around our schools high enough to keep all evil out. However, we are to build an atmosphere in which the Word of God is honored, and where the principles of His kingdom permeate the instruction and the way of life on the campus. Such an atmosphere helps youth to choose the good.

Ellen White counsels us that students who are “determined to have their own will and their own way” are to be advised “to return to their homes and to the guardianship of their parents,” for a “few leading spirits in wrongdoing” will demoralize the other students. Principals or teachers who permit this to happen will be held responsible by God “as if they had committed it themselves.”—[Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 102](#).

[111] Through these many interesting and varied years I have found wisdom in her writings; through them I have heard the voice of God speaking. Not only have they helped by serving as a guide, but they have been a source of solace to me under heavy pressure, and when feelings of loneliness press in. Her writings will be an invaluable aid to every Christian who desires to be of use to the Master Teacher, as he travels the way to the heavenly city.

*Berrien Springs, Michigan*

*May 1972*

[112] **Frederick E. J. Harder**

**Frederick E. J. Harder, executive secretary of the North American Division Board of Higher Education, authored *Sands of Destiny, Dead Cities Speak, Giants of Faith, Bible for Today, The Church of Yesterday*, and numerous magazine articles.**

**Dr. Harder was dean of the school of Graduate Studies, Andrews University, 1969-1971, after serving in the university’s department of education since 1960. Former positions included chairman, department of education, Atlantic Union College; superintendent of education, Greater New York Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; president, Middle East College, Beirut, and elementary school teacher, Georgia.**

**He received his M.A. from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, and his Ph.D. from New York University.**

## Chapter 14—Read It Like It Is

That deepening, troubled sensation that had been disturbing my study between eight and twelve every morning for some weeks was present as usual. Heretofore concentration on sermon preparation had made it possible to ignore the uneasiness, but on this day I pushed my chair back from the desk, looked unseeingly at the wall, and candidly asked myself, “What’s the problem?” The question required a review of the months that had passed since I had been appointed to this, my first, pastorate.

No major church complications had arisen. The baptismal class was making progress. Goals were being reached. The Ingathering campaign had been short and successful. Lay leaders in the church were bearing their responsibilities. Fraternal harmony prevailed among the members. Could it be that the recurrence of disquietude during the hours of sermon preparation indicated something wrong with my preaching?

[114] My sermons usually consisted of scriptural exposition backed by at least twenty hours of preparation. They had not been diluted with excessive erudition, fractured by funny stories, or even encumbered with long quotations from ... *The thought felt like a slap on a boil—I was ignoring the writings of Ellen White!* Not for a moment was I opposing them, to be sure. I even quoted statements occasionally for emphasis. However, studying the “red books” for the spiritual values they might contribute didn’t seem important. After all, wasn’t I a Protestant?

The options seemed obvious—either I would come to terms with Ellen White, or I must enter some other profession. *No man can be an honorable Seventh-day Adventist minister and ignore the Spirit of Prophecy writings.*

*Diagnosis:* My father and grandfather, as Bible teachers and ministers, treated these volumes as an extension of the Bible. At home, morning and evening worships were as regular as breakfast and supper. From the first day in school to college graduation

my formal education had been entirely in Seventh-day Adventist schools. Attendance at camp meeting was as certain as the coming of summer. I was well acquainted with the life of Ellen White, with the providences surrounding her work, with her physical condition during vision, with her involvement in institutional development, and with the early acceptance of her special ministry by the church. The result? Unconcern. Disinterest.

*Treatment:* Should I talk the problem over with someone? This seemed of doubtful value, considering my background. Read more about Ellen White? This appeared to be an unpromising procedure. Compare her writings with the Bible? I knew there was no problem here. Abruptly a thought struck: never in all my life had I read from beginning to end a single one of her books! It might be worth a try.

I reached over to my bookcase and took down the thinnest one I could find—*Steps to Christ*—and began to read. The portrayal of God’s love, man’s need, the way to become a new person in Christ and to grow in grace—all made a new impact on me. On page 114 I found support for the procedure I was following:

“There is an evidence that is open to all—the most highly educated, and the most illiterate—the evidence of experience. God invites us to prove for ourselves the reality of His Word, the truth of His promises. He bids us ‘taste and see that the Lord is good.’ Instead of depending upon the word of another, we are to taste for ourselves.”

During the following months, while reading *Education* and *The Desire of Ages*, a spiritual glow, a new quality of insight, accompanied by an expanding fascination with the messenger’s own spiritual experience and insights dawned on me. During the morning study hours that annoying restlessness was replaced by a growing optimism that perhaps I might yet become an Adventist minister. [115]

Soon I had the privilege of studying at the Theological Seminary, where I acquired my first experience at true research in Ellen G. White literature, under the inspiring tutelage of Prof. Lynn H. Wood. This fired an intensifying interest in the prophetic office and culminated in the writing of a Master’s thesis on the rise of Hebrew prophetism during the first century of the divided kingdom. Years later the value of Ellen White’s contribution to advanced theological

research came into even bolder relief, during my studies at another seminary where she not only was ignored, but unknown.

While engaged in further studies at one of the nation's great universities, my research included investigations into her concepts of curriculum development within the context of nineteenth-century educational controversies, and the psychological patterns of her adolescent spiritual experiences as compared with the four stages of the mystic outlined by Theresa of Avalon. The class discussions and conferences with teachers that followed such projects were always interesting and sometimes exciting. One of the most eminent authorities on educational bibliography, while reviewing one of these papers before a graduate class, picked out a number of references to the need for balanced development of the student's physical, mental, and moral powers. He then asked, "Class, what does this remind you of?" Immediately several answered John Dewey's, "My Pedagogic Creed." He turned to me and asked, "When was Dewey's 'Creed' published?" I answered, "In the late eighteen nineties." He continued, "I see that the White book you refer to was published in 1903. What does this suggest to you?" My reply—like his question—was not without a slight barb: "I presume you are suggesting that similarities between the two indicate borrowing by the later publication from the earlier. If this is valid you may have a problem, because the basic principles of the 1903 book, *Education*, were first published [116] by Ellen White in 1872." The professor paused, grinned and said, "Well, at least that is significant—yes, very significant."

Research for my doctoral dissertation (a delineation of Ellen G. White's concepts of divine revelation in reference to those of Aquinas, Calvin, Schleiermacher, Strong, and Brunner) included all of the books, journal articles, and pamphlets authored by the Lord's special messenger. The greatest marvel to me was to see the vast scope and breadth of her concepts. I'm convinced that people who speak of "contradictions" in her writings generally have minds that are either too narrow to comprehend more than one aspect of her viewpoint or too inflexible to recognize the propriety of different emphases in different contexts.

In the winter of 1959, while attending a convention in New York City, the chairman of the New York University department in which my major studies had been concentrated invited me to bring

several colleagues from Andrews University for a social evening in his home. It turned out to be a happening marked by grace and refinement, during the course of which the conversation moved to the topic of my dissertation. One of the Andrews teachers asked what some of my findings were. The NYU professor turned to me and said, “Well, Fred, do you want to answer that or shall I?” He proceeded to give an excellent summary of the treatise, and then he made this statement, “You Adventists have wasted a lot of effort and energy in being defensive. If Ellen White is representative of your theology, you have some very positive contributions to make to current religious practice and thinking.” This triggered a mental flash-back to that long ago morning during my first pastorate when I looked blankly at an unyielding wall and ventured onto the course that had brought me to this night, when such a judgment would be elicited from a noted Episcopalian educator, author, and clergyman.

My confidence in Ellen White’s writings has grown out of an experience with her own works, not from the assertions or arguments of others. Hence, my conviction will not be shaken and the power of her literary labors will not be undermined by anyone’s polemics or disputations. If you were to say to me that in her prolific writing Ellen White was sometimes inconsistent and contradictory, or that she was unduly influenced by others and that her manuscripts were severely edited, I would reply, “You bore me. I know her writings as she wrote them, and their merit is not debatable with me. If you want to deny their worth, I will not try to impose my evaluation. If you wish to criticize, I will not argue.”

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But if you want to form a valid judgment, aspire to lofty goals, and are looking for fulfillment in life, or if you are in quest of God’s will for you, you will find that the Ellen G. White literature is eminently worth your attention. But please be fair to yourself and to the author. Don’t confine your reading to proof-text excerpts, “striking statements,” isolated counsels, or illuminating paragraphs, but read her books *as she wrote them*. Of course, the compilations are excellent for reference. However, for getting acquainted with the real Ellen White, for learning what she actually taught, for appreciating what the impact of her insights can mean for your understanding, and for nurturing an experience in life enrichment, few activities can match the force of reading the inspired and inspiring writings of

Ellen G. White in the literary context and form in which they came from her pen.

*Takoma Park, Maryland*

*July 10, 1972*

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### **Gordon M. Hyde**

**Gordon M. Hyde, general field secretary of the General Conference and secretary of the Biblical Research Committee, is a contributing editor to *These Times* and has authored numerous magazine articles.**

**Dr. Hyde has served as chairman of both the religion and the communications departments at Southern Missionary College; Bible teacher at Wisconsin Academy; and pastor-evangelist in several churches in England.**

**A graduate of Newbold College, he received his Ph.D. in Communications from Michigan State University.**



## Chapter 15—Humbled and Amazed at Her Insights [119]

In telling why I believe in Ellen White it is a temptation to list some of the issues that come to the Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference and to show how Ellen White met many of these issues long ago. But such a procedure would be tempting and altogether too lengthy for this personal note on my confidence in this remarkable woman.

There is one general subject area, however, which is also significant for me as a student in the field of communications—the phenomenon of revelation-inspiration. This subject underlies the authority of the Bible and of the writings of Ellen White. I am interested in it as a communicator because revelation-inspiration involves God’s communication with man, and man’s communication to man *for* God.

I am amazed at Ellen White’s insights on both aspects of this vital subject. As a field of study, communications considers itself an ultramodern discipline (in the formal sense at least), and in one way it is disconcerting to discover how thoroughly Ellen White antedated its well-researched conclusions.

Take, for instance, general semantics—the field concerned with problems of meaning as they affect human conduct and relationships. We speak in the communications field of the fact that meaning resides in people, and hence the necessity for receiver-orientation in effective communication. Since human minds differ from one another even as individuals differ in background, heredity, education, and all other respects making the total person, attempts to communicate must take such differences into account. [120]

Ellen White recognized these variables when she wrote in 1886: “Human minds vary. The minds of different education and thought receive different impressions of the same words, and it is difficult for one mind to give to one of a different temperament, education, and habits of thought by language exactly the same idea as that which is clear and distinct in his own mind....

“The writers of the Bible had to express their ideas in human language. It was written by human men....

“The Scriptures were given to men, not in a continuous chain of unbroken utterances, but piece by piece through successive generations, as God in His providence saw a fitting opportunity to impress man at sundry times and divers places.”—[Selected Messages 1:19, 20](#).

Ellen White likewise recognized that the same words have different meanings for different persons:

“Everything that is human is imperfect. Different meanings are expressed by the same word; there is not one word for each distinct idea....

“The stamps of minds are different. All do not understand expressions and statements alike.... Prepossessions, prejudices, and passions have a strong influence to darken the understanding and confuse the mind even in reading the words of Holy Writ.”—[Selected Messages 1:20](#).

In the light of these observations, the problem the Lord encounters in using men as His channels of communication is formidable. Yet He chose to use men as His channels, under His special direction. This, however, does not eliminate the human factors. Ellen White observed: “The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God’s mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers.”—[Selected Messages 1:21](#).

[121] When we look at the limitations and difficulties the Lord met in using men as His channels of communication, we are led to marvel at the effectiveness of the Word. We are led to compare the process of divine revelation with Christ’s experience in the Incarnation, as the divine indwelt the human in a mysterious blending of the two natures. So, through the process of revelation-inspiration:

“It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man’s words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the

impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.”—*Ibid.*

As Ellen White dealt with the confused impressions which some drew from the Scriptures because different writers spoke of the same events differently, she shows once again her remarkable grasp of the semantic principles involved: “The Lord gave His word in just the way He wanted it to come. He gave it through different writers, each having his own individuality, though going over the same history.... The thoughts expressed have not a set uniformity, as if cast in an iron mold, making the very hearing monotonous....

“The Creator of all ideas may impress different minds with the same thought, but each may express it in a different way, yet without contradiction. The fact that this difference exists should not perplex or confuse us.”—[Selected Messages 1:21, 22](#).

As the general semanticist calls for all who use signs and symbols to be patient with one another, and to recognize the possible sources of misunderstanding latent in the variables (so that we check and double check to see whether the receiver had the same meaning for the words the source uses), so Ellen White warned that different minds will be impressed with the same thought in different ways, and express them in different ways, yet without contradiction. “The fact that this difference exists should not perplex or confuse us. It is seldom that two persons will view and express truth in the very same way. Each dwells on particular points which his constitution and education have fitted him to appreciate. The sunlight falling upon the different objects gives those objects a different hue.”—[Selected Messages 1:22](#).

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In communications we always seek to match the source with the receiver, as far as possible. The more completely that the code meaning the receiver takes from the message matches the code meaning the source put into it, the more complete and accurate communication will be. We might say that the Lord has a problem in speaking to human beings in our imperfect language. But in so doing He condescends to meet us where we are. This is essentially what Jesus Christ did when He came in person to communicate God to man. The difficulty a master of a highly technical language (such as a medical doctor) has in expressing his ideas in the language

of a layman illustrates the Lord's problem in communicating the greatness of His thoughts through the faltering channel of human language. In spite of the difficulties, however, Ellen White insists that the Holy Spirit has overruled the communication process to convey to us all of the truth essential to our salvation and all that our finite capacity can appreciate and receive.

In the parallel problem of communicating to others messages the Lord has entrusted to us, Ellen White again manifests a knowledge of communications that is completely up to date. Modern communicators generally assign to the factor of *attention* the greatest share of the communication process. Without attention there can be no communication. It is not only necessary to gain the attention of the receiver at the outset of a communication attempt, but his attention must be maintained from beginning to end if he is to receive the message intended.

We live in the greatest age of mass communication ever known in human history. There is scarcely any comparison between the mass communications of our day and those that existed when Ellen White closed her ministry. Yet she revealed insights concerning the factors of attention that underlie the vast commercial advertising world of our time, though her concern was for "selling" the gospel, not a material product.

[123] The book *Evangelism* brings a number of statements together that show Ellen White's overwhelming burden for the urban masses of her time. (And again, there is no comparison between the population then and now.) In discussing her burden she made such perceptive statements as the following: "In the cities of today, where there is so much to attract and please, the people can be interested by no ordinary efforts. Ministers of God's appointment will find it necessary to put forth extraordinary efforts in order to arrest the attention of the multitudes."—Page 40.

When I think of how accurately this statement describes the predicament of the modern communicator in the mass populations of our time, I am intrigued by the validity of the gift of prophecy.

In expressing her burden for the masses in the cities Ellen White appealed, "Let every worker in the Master's vineyard, study, plan, devise methods, to reach the people where they are. We must do

something out of the common course of things. We must arrest the attention.”—[Evangelism, 122, 123](#).

Having arrested the initial attention of people, however, the messenger must then have something to say that will meet the need of the listener. Should he fail to do so, the initial attention will dissipate almost instantly. Communicators know that attention comes in waves of extremely brief duration, and that if the needs of the individual are not met by that which gives temporary attention, his mind quickly turns in other directions.

In summary, I remain continually impressed with the foresight and insight God gave Ellen White; she saw clearly the problems involved in God’s speaking to His servants the prophets, and of the prophet’s problem (and ours) in communicating these messages in turn to those whose everlasting life may hinge upon hearing and receiving. I am daily more humbled before this gift and more grateful for it. I long, with her, for the completion of the church’s task in communicating God’s message.

*Takoma Park, Maryland*

*July 15, 1972*

### John Harvey Kellogg

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**John Harvey Kellogg (1852-1943) was known in America and abroad as one of the ablest surgeons of his time. In addition to his surgical skills he invented medical instruments still used today. He was a pioneer in physiotherapy and nutrition. He invented cornflakes and other dry cereal breakfast foods, Protose, and other meat substitutes. He made the Battle Creek Sanitarium into a world-famous center for surgery and health rehabilitation, authored more than 50 books, most of them large scientific works, and many articles for medical journals, besides serving as editor of *Good Health*.**

## Chapter 16—“Unmistakable Evidence of Divine Insight”

### I. His preface to *Christian Temperance* (1890)

Nearly thirty years ago there appeared in print the first of a series of remarkable and important articles on the subject of health, by Mrs. E. G. White. These articles at once commanded earnest consideration by those who were acquainted with Mrs. White’s previous writings and labors. Thousands were led to change life-long habits, and to renounce practices thoroughly fixed by heredity as well as by long indulgence. So great a revolution could not be wrought in a body of people without the aid of some powerful incentive, which in this case was undoubtedly the belief that the writings referred to not only bore the stamp of truth, but were indorsed as such by a higher than human authority. This is not the proper place for the consideration of the grounds upon which this belief was based, but the reader’s attention is invited to a few facts of interest in this connection:—

1. At the time the writings referred to first appeared, the subject of health was almost wholly ignored, not only by the people to whom they were addressed, but by the world at large.

2. The few advocating the necessity of a reform in physical habits, propagated in connection with the advocacy of genuine reformatory principles the most patent and in some instances disgusting errors.

3. Nowhere, and by no one, was there presented a systematic and harmonious body of hygienic truths, free from patent errors, and consistent with the Bible and the principles of the Christian religion.

Under these circumstances, the writings referred to made their appearance. The principles taught were not enforced by scientific authority, but were presented in a simple, straightforward manner by one who makes no pretense to scientific knowledge, but claims to write by the aid and authority of the divine enlightenment.

How have the principles presented under such peculiar circumstances and with such remarkable claims stood the test of time and experience? is a question which may very properly be asked. Its answer is to be found in facts which are capable of the amplest verification. The principles presented have been put to the test of practical experience by thousands; and whenever intelligently and consistently carried out, the result has been found in the highest degree satisfactory. Thousands have testified to physical, mental, and moral benefits received. Many of the principles taught have come to be so generally adopted and practiced that they are no longer recognized as reforms, and may, in fact, be regarded as prevalent customs among the more intelligent classes. The principles which a quarter of a century ago were either entirely ignored or made the butt of ridicule, have quietly won their way into public confidence and esteem, until the world has quite forgotten that they have not always been thus accepted. New discoveries in science and new interpretations of old facts have continually added confirmatory evidence, until at the present time every one of the principles advocated more than a quarter of a century ago is fortified in the strongest possible manner by scientific evidence.

Finally, the reformatory movement based upon the principles advocated so long ago has lived and prospered until the present time, and the institutions developed by it have grown to be the most extensive and the most prosperous establishments of the sort in the world; while other efforts, looking somewhat in the same direction, but contaminated by error, have either abandoned the principles of truth, and been given over to error, or have fallen into obscurity. It certainly must be regarded as a thing remarkable, and evincing unmistakable evidence of divine insight and direction, that in the midst of confused and conflicting teachings, claiming the authority of science and experience, but warped by ultra notions and rendered impotent for good by the great admixture of error,—it must be admitted to be something extraordinary, that a person making no claims to scientific knowledge or erudition should have been able to organize, from the confused and error-tainted mass of ideas advanced by a few writers and thinkers on health subjects, a body of hygienic principles so harmonious, so consistent, and so genuine that the discussions, the researches, the discoveries, and

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the experience of a quarter of a century have not resulted in the overthrow of a single principle, but have only served to establish the doctrines taught.—[Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene](#), 3, 4.

**II. [The General Conference Bulletin, March 8, 1897](#), pp. 309, 310**

I am sure, as Dr. Riley said to me this morning, that it is impossible for any man who has not made a special study of medicine to appreciate the wonderful character of the instruction that has been received in these writings [Ellen G. White]. It is wonderful, brethren, when you look back over the writings that were given us thirty years ago, and then perhaps the next day pick up a scientific journal and find some new discovery that the microscope has made, or that has been brought to light in the chemical laboratory,—I say, it is perfectly wonderful how correctly they agree in fact.

[128] Now in the preface to *Christian Temperance* you will find a statement which I presume not very many of you have read. There is no name signed to the preface, but I wrote it. But if you will read it, you will find a statement to the effect that every single statement with reference to healthful living, and the general principles that underlie the subject, have been verified by scientific discovery. I sometimes see some of our brethren appear to be a little shaky on the testimonies; they do not know whether these things come from the Lord or not; but to those I invariably say that if you will study the subject of health reform from the testimonies, and then from the light of scientific discovery,—compare it with what science teaches at the present time,—you will be amazed; you will see what a flood of light was given us thirty years ago. There is, however, a more amazing thing than that, and it is that this light which was given to us at that time, confirmed as it is by scientific discovery,—I say the most amazing thing of all is that we as a people have turned our backs upon this, and have not accepted it, and believed in it as we should. I want to repeat it that there is not a single principle in relation to the healthful development of our bodies and minds that is advocated in these writings from Sister White, which I am not prepared to demonstrate conclusively from scientific evidence.... There is no evidence so powerful that can be deduced in support of



these writings and the source from which they come, as the fact that the writings thirty years ago are fully substantiated by the scientific discoveries of today.

**III. The General Conference Bulletin, February 18, 1897**

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“I believe that every person here has faith and confidence that the words [Ellen G. White excerpt] that I am going to read to you are from the Lord; that they came from divine impression; that they are the result of inspiration; that they are instruction said to us, which we ought to receive.”

**John R. Loor**

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**John R. Loor, Ministerial secretary in the Michigan Conference, served Southern Missionary College as its campus pastor for several successful years. After earning his A.B. from Columbia Union College in 1953 he served pastorates in Virginia, Maryland, Texas, and California.**

## Chapter 17—She Has Made the Difference

God smiled on Seventh-day Adventists when He bestowed on them the modern manifestation of the gift of prophecy, in the ministry of Ellen G. White. I am fully convinced that she was uniquely God’s messenger for our time; her writings have made all the difference in my life. I know from experience, especially as a campus pastor, that rich benefits await everyone who accepts and follows this holy counsel, for it surely is “the testimony of Jesus.”

*The Great Secret of Spiritual Strength*—From my earliest years as a Seventh-day Adventist, I have heard preachers, teachers, and others extolling the virtues of a private devotional life. A few years ago, however, I discovered a passage in *In Heavenly Places* that leaped out at me: “Christian workers can never attain the highest success until they learn the secret of strength.... Family prayer and public prayer have their place, but it is *secret communion with God that sustains the soul life.*”—Page 83. (Emphasis supplied.) This is it! Group experiences are important and helpful, but one’s personal, private devotional life is primary and indispensable.

Prior to this discovery my private devotions had not been as consistent as they should have been. I determined that henceforth, daily consistency would be the pattern, with God’s help. This was a definite turning point in my experience. I have shared this precious truth with others through sermons and personal counseling, suggesting practical techniques and procedures that would enrich and provide sustained interest in private devotions. Under God’s blessing, this new emphasis seems to benefit others, both youth and adults, more than any other single spiritual approach to life.

*Biblical Understanding and Appreciation*—It is a thrill to see what Christ has done through Ellen White to point the way toward a clearer understanding of the Bible. In my experience, her focus has helped in two key areas. Above all else, her writings open before us the magnificent panoramic sweep of Scripture. For years the Bible

seemed, to me, somewhat jumbled; it was not easy to grasp it as a whole.

Then something wonderful took place. I read *The Conflict of the Ages* series through in sequence. Starting with *Patriarchs and Prophets*, I traced events from Creation to the time of King David. Then followed *Prophets and Kings*, beginning with Solomon, David's son, to the end of the Old Testament period. *The Desire of Ages* followed, covering the life of Jesus. The remainder of the New Testament was developed in *The Acts of the Apostles*. Climaxing this remarkable journey through the world of the Bible was *The Great Controversy*, beginning at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and culminating in the glorious new earth. After reading these five books I understood my Bible much better. I knew where to fit the "pieces" in much more accurately, and found that my love for Jesus and His Word was greatly enhanced. For the first time I saw the forest as well as the trees.

The second area of Biblical focus has been Ellen White's help in making clear the meaning of specific Bible texts and symbols. For example, in the Laodicean message of [Revelation 3](#), Jesus, the True Witness, not only accurately diagnoses the spiritual maladies of the Laodiceans, but He lovingly prescribes the divine remedy of gold tried in the fire, white raiment, and eyesalve. Ellen White defines the gold as faith and love, the white raiment as purity of character, and the eyesalve as that wisdom and grace that enables us to discern between evil and the good. (See [Testimonies for the Church 4:88](#).) These explanations are helpful and accurate, as personal experience demonstrates, when we "buy" these heavenly remedies from the Great Physician and incorporate them into our lives. When I see what her Biblical expositions have done—for me and countless others—it is clear to me that God mightily used her.

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*Special Guidance on Contemporary Issues*—Especially while ministering to young people on a college campus did I appreciate her continuing relevance. Two issues particularly stand out in the late 1960's and the early 1970's. One dealt with major developments in the area of music, especially religious music. Many strange and, for some, new beats and rhythms clamored for acceptance in our worship services, Sabbath schools, youth meetings, and in our homes. In this context, my wife was electrified by what she read in [Selected](#)

[Messages 2:36](#), and quickly called my attention to these words: “The things you have described as taking place in Indiana, the Lord has shown me would take place just *before the close of probation*.... There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing.... This is called the moving of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit never reveals itself in such methods.... This is an invention of Satan.... Better never have the worship of God blended with music than to use musical instruments to do the work which last January was represented to me would be brought into our camp meetings.” (Emphasis supplied.) Thank God for the counsel, warning, and instruction Jesus has sent through Ellen White *ahead of time*.

The second issue involved a significant religious trend toward youth revivals. Surely we can rejoice in the awakening of religious interest as we take advantage of this spiritual appetite to give the third angel’s message. We also know that a sincere seeker for Christ can find Jesus and begin his Christian walk regardless of who first may be his human bridge. Yet a deep impression was made on my mind by a vital statement in the chapter entitled “Modern Revivals,” in *The Great Controversy*: “Before the final visitation of God’s judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times.... *Before* the time for such a movement shall come, he [Satan] will endeavor to prevent it by introducing a counterfeit.”—

[134] Page 464. (Emphasis supplied.) Note the chronological relationship. The implications are tremendous.

*Personal Guidance*—I continue to marvel at the wonders these inspired writings can accomplish in the lives of people who accept the guidance they provide. On the college campus, particularly, I had the opportunity to see many young people, during the key decision time of their lives, follow her instruction. This was especially true in vocational guidance. Many times while counseling with students in regard to their vocational choice, I would use [Proverbs 3:6](#) as a base, and a statement in *Education* as a plumb line: “To do our best in the work that lies nearest, to commit our ways to God, and to watch for the indications for His providence—*these are rules that insure safe guidance* in the choice of an occupation.”—Page 267. (Emphasis supplied.) Three simple, clear-cut rules are enunciated in this statement. It has been my happy privilege to see scores of young

people take this divine formula, implement it in their experience, and reap satisfying benefits. Ellen White's counsel is always practical; experience proves its wisdom.

*The Advent Message and Organization in Perspective*—Ellen White's writings keep vivid in our memory the struggles, privations, divine guidance, and deliverance in the early history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her counsel to leaders in the church is especially helpful. We all recognize that the church is made up of human beings who are not above making mistakes. Sometimes, regrettable events occur. But again Ellen White has been helpful, inspirational, and accurate: "God is at the head of the work, and He will set everything in order. If matters need adjusting at the head of the work, God will attend to that, and work to right every wrong."—[Selected Messages 2:390](#). The passage of time has repeatedly proved the veracity and accuracy of such statements.

Closely associated with the question of divine leadership of the Advent Movement is the matter of offshoot movements that arise from time to time. One statement on this subject in *Testimonies*, volume 5, representative of many others, provides sound counsel: "God has not passed His people by, and chosen one solitary man here and another there as the only ones worthy to be intrusted with His truth. *He does not give one man new light contrary to the established faith of the body.*"—Page 291. (Emphasis supplied.) This is a good statement to anchor to when divisive elements arise. [135]

As Seventh-day Adventists we are concerned for the welfare of our schools. Some wonder about their future. The assurance of the following statement has buoyed up my confidence in the future of our educational work: "Our institutions of learning may swing into worldly conformity. Step by step they may advance to the world; but they are prisoners of hope, and God will correct and enlighten them, and bring them back to their upright position of distinction from the world."—[Fundamentals of Christian Education](#), 290.

*Preacher's Assistant*—I believe that my fellow Adventist preachers will bear witness with me that Ellen White's counsels regarding the work of preaching testify to their divine origin.

Other than the Bible, I believe that certain portions of her writings are without peer for help in preaching, both in content and in organization of ideas. Aside from the Bible itself the best sermons I

have been able to prepare are those that rest heavily on these writings for basic content.

Her practical counsel regarding the use of the voice—the rate of speaking, the volume, the resonance, and other aspects of vocal production—has all been vindicated by modern research in speech techniques. Much of this counsel was given when the vogue of the day advocated styles and speech habits that proved to be detrimental to health as well as inimical to Christlike methods.

Numerous other areas lend additional weight to my conviction that Ellen G. White was God's special messenger. Countless examples of the accuracy of her counsel to individuals on items regarding which she could have had no human knowledge add further proof of the divine origin of her counsel. How could I doubt, in the light of all this? What a joy and privilege to believe!

*Lansing, Michigan*

*May 1972*

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#### **D. Malcolm Maxwell**

**D. Malcolm Maxwell, professor of theology, Walla Walla College, earned his M.A. degree at Andrews University; and his Ph.D. at Drew University, specializing in the New Testament.**

**Prior to his present responsibility, he taught on the religion staff at Union College and was a pastor in the Northern California and New Jersey conferences.**

**Dr. Maxwell has authored several magazine articles.**

## Chapter 18—A Veritable Encyclopedia That I Can Trust [137]

I grew up in a family where life was thoroughly enjoyed and where the writings of Ellen G. White were accepted as a guide to making it even more rewarding. As a result, confidence in these writings was as natural as the sunrise, as far back as I can remember, and this confidence has continued to grow steadily through the years. I see five distinct phases in this development. The first was my simple acceptance as a child, trusting what my father and mother trusted.

The second, and perhaps most significant, phase came in my late teens and early twenties when I began seriously to seek the intellectual basis of the religion I had inherited. In thinking through such questions as the existence of God and the inspiration of the Bible, I discovered that the very criteria by which I had come to consider the Bible a reliable source of information about God and how He wants us to live were also the criteria by which Mrs. White's writings are to be judged. I have found all she wrote to be in full agreement with Scripture, and based on Biblical teachings to such an extent that one cannot adequately interpret what she has written, or deal with the question of her inspiration, apart from a consideration of the Bible as well. Certainly there are problems in her writings, as there are in the Bible, but in my view none of these interfere with the reliability of either.

Many factors affected my thinking during this time of reappraisal. [138] One of the most important was the question, Does the counsel given really work? Am I happier, better off in body and mind, better able to think and to fulfill my various responsibilities when I follow the advice given in these writings than when I do not? The answer has always been a clear Yes. In fact, because all that she wrote makes such good sense, I have made it the basis of my own philosophy of life and religion. I have come to regard this instruction as the kindly counsel of a loving Father who, while leaving me free to



do as I wish, hopes that I will choose that which is sensible and constructive, and informs me through these writings what all this includes. Of course, the better I understand this counsel the better I am able to apply it. The more I do, the more meaningful and significant life becomes. In this way I am ever acquiring greater evidence for increasing confidence in what has been written.

This kindly counsel never comes in isolation but in the broader context of the God who gives it. What kind of person is He? Is He great enough to be God? Mrs. White's picture of God is that of the Bible, but her description of Him provides helpful insights into the meaning of the Biblical statements. She says, "God desires from all His creatures the service of love—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service."—[The Great Controversy](#), 493. This reasonable God "never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His Word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason."—[Steps to Christ](#), 105. Her emphasis on reason extends to the way He would like us to govern our own lives, for we are told that "the kingly power of reason, sanctified by divine grace, is to bear sway in our lives."—[The Ministry of Healing](#), 130.

The New Testament claims that this God is best revealed in Christ, so that he who has seen Christ has "seen the Father" also ([John 14:9](#)). One of the best summary descriptions of Christ I know is in the book *Evangelism*:

[139] "Christ carried out in His life His own divine teachings. His zeal never led Him to become passionate. He manifested consistency without obstinacy, benevolence without weakness, tenderness and sympathy without sentimentalism. He was highly social; yet He possessed a reserved dignity that did not encourage undue familiarity. His temperance never led to bigotry or austerity. He was not conformed to this world; yet He was not indifferent to the wants of the least among men. He was awake to the needs of all."—Page 636.

What a tremendous Person to admire and emulate. But can one really become like Him? How could this ever be accomplished? Mrs. White provides an excellent description of the process. She says, "By studying the character of Christ revealed in the Bible, by



practicing His virtues, the believer will be changed into the same likeness of goodness and mercy.”—[Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, 249](#). Of course we often fail to attain this high goal. But here again we find a most helpful and encouraging statement: “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](#). What good news—true gospel! Statements such as these have helped me understand what life is all about, how to order my priorities and direct my ambitions.

The third phase in the growth of my confidence in the writings of Mrs. White came with graduation from college and entry into the ministry. Here I had opportunity to share some of the ideas that had become so valuable to me and see whether they would be equally useful to others. They were. I remember a young man recently out of the Navy who had taken a job in one of the local mills. He was a worldly fellow who smoked and drank heavily, played the field, and, as one might expect, had a troubled marriage. Then a Seventh-day Adventist doctor took an interest in the couple and showed them the good sense of Christianity. They liked what they learned and were eventually baptized. Later they told me that one of the books that meant the most through this experience was *Steps to Christ*.

I recall a woman living in common-law marriage with a much older man she had met through a lonely heart’s correspondence club. Neither was especially religious, but in part through a Dorcas contact she learned of Seventh-day Adventists and began to attend a small old country church in my district complete with pump organ, potbellied stove, and gas lamps. Her interest increased and she began to read our literature. One afternoon she told me how much *The Great Controversy* meant to her. She had read the whole book from cover to cover in a surprisingly short time.

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I recall the comfort a man and his wife derived on the death of their only son by reading three or four passages by Mrs. White that I recommended to them. I remember the subduing influence that *The Desire of Ages* had on a rough, tough, uneducated mountain woman who lived with her old horse, chickens, and goats eleven miles from the nearest whisper of civilization, one old store. My memory is full of such experiences. Interestingly, none of these was

a Seventh-day Adventist at the time they discovered the value of these books. These experiences strengthened my own confidence in the mission of Ellen White.

During this same period these writings took on a new meaning for me personally as I attempted to develop my own understanding of the ministry and its responsibilities. What is the ministry, anyway? “To take people right where they are, whatever their position, whatever their condition, and help them in every way possible, this is gospel ministry.”—*Medical Ministry*, 238. Much of my time, however, was spent in administrative responsibilities rather than with people. The following statement meant a great deal: “Why are those who are set apart for the work of the ministry placed on committees and boards? ... The ministers have not been set apart to do this work.”—*Gospel Workers*, 425. How then was I to help people? What aspect of my work should hold priority? Here is one answer: “The highest work of the princes in Israel ... is to fulfill the responsibility resting upon them to fasten the Scriptures in the minds of the people.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, on *2 Kings 23:2*, p. 1039.

[141] The next, or fourth, phase in the growth of my confidence in the writings of Mrs. White came while attending graduate school. Here the familiar questions about life and religion were raised in a whole new context and in a much broader perspective. I had excellent teachers, some of them very secular in their outlook. For some, religion and theology were merely a business. Others, however, were deeply committed to what they understood to be truth—conscientious men and worthy of all respect. Nearly all were knowledgeable and some were positively brilliant. How would the writings of Mrs. White compare?

My field was Biblical studies with emphasis on the New Testament; therefore, I was especially interested in Mrs. White’s comments on the specific Biblical passages with which I worked. Many are the times that I surveyed everything written on a particular passage, to the best of my knowledge, in several different languages, and concluded that her treatment of the passages was in line with the best and most recent scholarship; although written long years ago, her comments revealed remarkable perception. In addition, her

statements were often expressed in a way superior to that which I was able to find elsewhere.

While attending a seminar on 1 Thessalonians conducted by a leading New Testament professor, a specific problem in chapter four was discussed. He asked the students for possible solutions and several were given following traditional lines, all of which he shredded unmercifully. Then with some fear and trembling I suggested what I felt was the right approach. He glowed with approval and wondered where I had obtained such an idea. My response was simply that I had given a paraphrase of something I had recently read on the passage in the writings of Mrs. White.

The fifth and final phase in the growth of my confidence in the writings of Mrs. White has come during my current work as a college Bible teacher. Here I find the writings of continuing value in facing life each day. Recently a strong movement on campus urged students to leave school for immediate missionary work. Would Mrs. White have something helpful to say in this situation? I found much. For instance: “God requires the training of the mental faculties.... And He is displeased with those who are too careless or too indolent to become efficient, well-informed workers.... The Lord desires us to obtain all the education possible.”—[Christ’s Object Lessons, 333](#). But, I was asked, is not the Holy Spirit all that one needs? The reply: “But God never sends His Spirit to sanction ignorance.”—[Gospel Workers, 105, 106](#). Well, how about the uneducated man? Of course God uses him too, “but those who, with the same spirit of consecration, have had the benefit of a thorough education, can do a much more extensive work for Christ. They stand on vantage ground.”—[Christ’s Object Lessons, 333](#).

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Sometimes those who make light of education try to replace it with emotion. This approach can be very satisfying momentarily; in fact—as I write—an emotional wave, religiously oriented, appears to be taking the world by storm. Mrs. White’s counsel seems right up to date: “Bible sanctification does not consist in strong emotion. Here is where many are led into error.”—[The Sanctified Life, 10](#). Rather, “no effort should be made to rein the mind up to a certain intensity of emotion.”—[The Sanctified Life, 90](#). “Pure religion has to do with the will.... The will is not the taste or the inclination, but it is the deciding power.”—[Testimonies for the Church 5:513](#). Thus,

“God’s children are not to be subject to feelings and emotions.”—[Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 518.](#)

Experience has given me confidence in a well-known boating manual that is a veritable encyclopedia on such things as equipment, anchoring, boat handling, seamanship, safety, navigation, flag etiquette, signaling, and general legal regulations. I have found that the closer I follow the counsel in this manual the safer I am and the more satisfaction I get from boating. Confidence has come through study and the application of the ideas suggested.

The writings of Mrs. White are a veritable encyclopedia on life. After a great deal of study and experimentation with the ideas recommended, I can heartily recommend them to everyone who is seeking to obtain the most from life both now and hereafter with full confidence that they will be as beneficial to them as they have been to me.

*Walla Walla, Washington*

*June 1972*

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### Clive M. McCay

**Clive M. McCay (1898-1967), at the time his lecture was given in 1958, was professor of nutrition at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, a position he had held since 1927. After receiving his Ph.D. degree from the University of California in 1925, Dr. McCay entered upon a distinguished career in nutritional research. Among his many awards was the Surgeon General’s Commendation, U.S. Navy, 1946. He was past president of the American Institute of Nutrition and the American Gerontology Society and a member of numerous professional societies. One of his special contributions was the development of improved types of bread and flour. In addition to being the editor of *Archives Biochemistry*, he authored many magazine articles and books, including *The Vitamins* (1939), *Problems of Ageing* (1942), and *Food for Life* (1952).**

## Chapter 19—No Better Overall Guide to Nutrition <sup>1</sup> [144]

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For a quarter of a century the writer has taught a course for graduate students dealing with the history of foods and nutrition. In this course are presented original materials beginning with the early Greek work by Athenaeus who lived in Rome at the end of the second century a.d. In the middle of the thirteenth century Petrus Hispanus published much about diet. Shortly after the discovery of America one of the greatest books about nutrition and old age was written by Luigi Cornaro (1467?-1566).

Among writers of the past century, however, those who are concerned with the betterment of human health must pay tribute to the writings of Ellen G. White because she understood the importance of the selection of proper foods and the relation of the rest of the regimen of living to proper nutrition and sound health. These notes have been prepared by a biochemist who specializes in nutrition in the hope that others outside of the Adventists may gain a broader appreciation of the genius of this pioneer nutritionist, Ellen G. White. Whatever may be the religious belief of a reader, he or she cannot help gaining much guidance in a better and healthier way of life from reading the major works of Ellen G. White. [146]

Every modern specialist in nutrition whose life is dedicated to human welfare must be impressed in four respects by the writings and leadership of Ellen G. White.

In the first place, her basic concepts about the relation between diet and health have been verified to an unusual degree by scientific advances of the past century.

In the second place, everyone who attempts to teach nutrition can hardly conceive of a leadership such as that of Mrs. White that was able to induce a substantial number of people to improve their diets.

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<sup>1</sup>Condensation of a lecture given in the Unitarian Church, Ithaca, New York, on April 9, 1958.

In the third place, one can only speculate about the large number of sufferers during the past century who could have had improved health if they had accepted the teachings of Mrs. White.

Finally, one can wonder how to make her teachings more widely known in order to benefit the overcrowded earth that seems inevitable tomorrow unless the rate of increase of the world's population is decreased.

To appreciate the great need for dietary reform one can note the foods available to the average family during the first third of Mrs. White's lifetime beginning in 1827 and ending with the outbreak of the War between the States. The typical farm family—and most families lived on a farm—from Maine to Indiana had some chickens, swine, sheep, and a few cows. A housewife looked after the garden and the chickens while the man labored in the field. The diet was reasonably satisfactory from the time rhubarb checked latent scurvy in April until most of the fresh foods had disappeared by Thanksgiving.

From Thanksgiving until Easter the diet grew progressively worse, with outbreaks of disease in February and March. Although the French scientist Appert patented methods for canning food in 1810, the housewives had no containers for doing this until well after the great war. Therefore, the housewife had to depend upon drying apples, sweet corn, peas, and beans over her kitchen stove. Vinegar was available because the common fruit was apples. Salt was the other common preservative. Most meat was salted and smoked [147] although pork was often fried and stored in earthenware jars with the meat sealed and sterilized by pouring hot lard over it. Pickles could be preserved and families of Germanic origin could make sauerkraut.

Walnuts, hickory nuts, and in some areas chestnuts, were available. Salted fish were commonplace. Eggs were plentiful in summer and scarce in winter because there was no good way of preserving them except by storage in lime or sawdust.

Cellars preserved the potatoes and apples although the potatoes were often exhausted by spring and the family had to eat the seed and plant the peelings.

The Indiana children took corn bread for their lunch at school until well after the middle of the century. At home they had much

corn meal mush and hominy. Highly refined white flour did not become common until after the middle of the century because the roller mills that could take out the germ and the vitamins from wheat flour were only invented about the middle of the nineteenth century.

Butter could be stored in crocks but was usually quite rancid when the cream was skimmed and became worse in storage.

Foods bought at the country stores usually consisted of salt fish or salt meat, some coffee or tea, some sugar, and a jug of thick molasses. Since the molasses came north from New Orleans, the supply was cut off during the sixties and areas like Indiana developed a taste for the sour sorghum molasses.

In *Life Sketches* one learns much about both the bad food served in most homes and the toll of diseases that resulted. It is no wonder that the relationships between food and diseased people were deeply impressed upon the Whites as they traveled in New England and the Middle West more than a hundred years ago. The diet was a monotonous one of fat, salted meats, bread, potatoes, and butter. No wonder that Elder White developed dyspepsia....

Well before the birth of Mrs. White there were a few Americans reacting against the bad diet, the smoking and the drinking.... Sylvester Graham who was born in 1794 stirred the young American nation with his lectures advocating vegetarianism, the improvement of bread, the abolishment of alcoholic beverages, and more healthful living. He had much influence during the first half of the nineteenth century but left no permanent group of followers. The vegetarian church was founded in Philadelphia in 1817 but it languished and perished. [148]

About 1840 the Shakers stopped the use of pork, strong drink, and tobacco. Many turned to vegetarianism and Elder F. Evans of New Lebanon laid down rules of health that included—

1. Supply at least one kind of coarse grain bread per meal. Avoid cathartics.
2. Have the sickly and weakly cease using animal foods, especially fats.
3. Keep the skin clean by regular bathing.

But the Shakers reached their peak about 1850 and have now almost perished.



Mrs. White must have long weighed the problems of health as she saw those around dying from cholera, typhoid fever, dysentery, and tuberculosis. All of these have now been nearly eradicated by improved sanitation and better nutrition.

At the time of Mrs. White's birth, the chemists were beginning to establish the modern science of nutrition. Hundreds have now devoted their lives to creating this science. At this point it seems profitable to note a few of the teachings first expressed as early as 1848 and later developed in such books as *The Ministry of Healing* and *Counsels on Diet and Foods* in order to compare them with the accepted viewpoints of modern nutritionists.

Today there is a widespread movement to reduce the intake of fats, especially animal fats, in order to reduce the blood cholesterol and the dangers of atherosclerosis. Mrs. White wrote: "Nut foods are coming largely into use to take the place of flesh meats.... When properly prepared, olives, like nuts, supply the place of butter and flesh meats. The oil, as eaten in the olive, is far preferable to animal oil or fat."—[The Ministry of Healing, 298](#).

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Near the end of Mrs. White's life in 1915 men began to appreciate that the milling of white flour was removing most of the vitamins, part of the protein and the important trace minerals such as iron. Today nutritionists know that these vital constituents are lost when the bran and germ are taken from the wheat. Mrs. White wrote: "For use in bread-making, the superfine white flour is not the best. Its use is neither healthful nor economical. Fine-flour bread is lacking in nutritive elements to be found in bread made from the whole wheat."—[The Ministry of Healing, 300](#).

In spite of her emphasis upon a given type of diet Mrs. White appreciated that there were some people who could not tolerate foods that were well suited to the majority. Today it is well recognized that there are a few people with very sensitive intestines that suffer if the diet has much fiber. Mrs. White wrote: "Foods that are palatable and wholesome to one person may be distasteful, and even harmful, to another. Some cannot use milk, while others thrive on it.... For some the coarser grain preparations are good food, while others cannot use them."—[The Ministry of Healing, 320](#).

Today it is well recognized that overeating and overweight produce much ill health. This is one of the few areas in which all profes-



sional nutritionists agree. Mrs. White wrote: “There should not be a great variety at any one meal, for this encourages overeating and causes indigestion.”—[The Ministry of Healing, 299](#). “Abstemiousness in diet is rewarded with mental and moral vigor.... At each meal take only two or three kinds of simple food, and eat no more than is required to satisfy hunger.”—[The Ministry of Healing, 308-310](#).

Throughout the whole life of Mrs. White it was customary to eat elaborate meals upon the weekly holy day. She wrote: “We should not provide for the Sabbath a more liberal supply or a greater variety of food than for other days. Instead of this the food should be more simple, and less should be eaten in order that the mind may be clear and vigorous to comprehend spiritual things.”—[The Ministry of Healing, 307](#). All thinking people will agree with this today but some still fail to practice it.

Today we teach home economics throughout our whole nation. Mrs. White wrote: “Cooking is no mean science, and it is one of the most essential in practical life. It is a science that all women should learn.... To make food appetizing and at the same time simple and nourishing, requires skill.”—[The Ministry of Healing, 302, 303](#).

Meals served in many courses have almost passed from the American home, due probably to the disappearance of maids rather than a comprehension of Mrs. White’s philosophy. “If all the food intended for a meal is placed on the table at the beginning, one has opportunity to make the best choice.”—[The Ministry of Healing, 306](#).

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A problem of much concern in America today is that children insist upon watching television and eating snacks in the late evening. They then arise too late in the morning to eat breakfast. Before noon they are tempted to eat snacks and thus spoil their lunch. Mrs. White wrote: “Irregularities in eating destroy the healthful tone of the digestive organs, to the detriment of health and cheerfulness. And when the children come to the table, they do not relish wholesome food; their appetites crave that which is hurtful for them.”—[The Ministry of Healing, 384](#).

Every thinking person today would agree with some of the wise statements of Mrs. White such as, “Pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power—these are the true remedies.”—[The Ministry of Healing,](#)

127. “Parents should early seek to interest their children in the study of physiology and should teach them its simpler principles.... An education in the things that concern life and health is more important to them than a knowledge of many of the sciences taught in the schools.”—[The Ministry of Healing, 385, 386](#).

Mrs. White wrote: “There is a large class who will reject any reform movement, however reasonable, if it lays a restriction upon the appetite.... By this class, all who leave the beaten track of custom and advocate reform will be opposed, and accounted radical.”—[Counsels on Diet and Foods, 195](#). Today this class is greatly strengthened in its opposition by the tremendous forces of advertising and the mass control of activities as described in such works as that of Vance Packard in *Hidden Persuaders*. Hence, improvement of the diet of people is probably far more difficult than it was in the time of Mrs. White.

[151] Today most of us tolerate the smoke blown in our faces as we travel by air and we try to avoid getting holes burned in our clothing as we ride with cigarette smokers on hotel elevators. Today the press is filled with stories relating to smoking—because they force increases in the advertising budgets of the tobacco companies—in an attempt to offset the truthful disclosures. A recent article (1958) by Dr. D. G. Steyn in the South African publication *Lantern*, states: “Reference should be made to the possible relationship between smoking and coronary thrombosis.” Mrs. White wrote: “Tobacco is a slow, insidious, but most malignant poison.... It is all the more dangerous because its effects are slow and at first hardly perceptible.”—[The Ministry of Healing, 327, 328](#).

In some respects it might be easier to write about the areas in which nutrition specialists and the writings of Mrs. White may seem to disagree because the area is much smaller. These areas are probably due to changes in food technology. The raw milk in the days of Mrs. White was a carrier for many contagious diseases such as tuberculosis, dysentery, and typhoid fever. She felt that cheese was not a satisfactory food. This may have been the result of observations that cheese was made under rather unsanitary conditions.

Mrs. White did recognize the importance of mixing a variety of grains. She stated: “All wheat flour is not best for a continuous diet. A mixture of wheat, oatmeal, and rye would be more nutritious

than the wheat with the nutritive properties separated from it.”—[Counsels on Diet and Foods](#), 321. She recognized the truth from Ezekiel, “Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof” ([Ezekiel 4:9](#)). Beans supplement the proteins of wheat bread as well as increase such essentials as calcium.

All stimulants and narcotics were opposed by Mrs. White. Were she alive today she would certainly be disturbed with the extensive and foolish use of modern tranquilizers.

In spite of the fact that the works of Mrs. White were written long before the advent of modern scientific nutrition, no better overall guide is available today. The great need is for people to read fewer books and to devote their efforts to the good ones.

#### Don F. Neufeld

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**Don F. Neufeld, associate editor of the *Review and Herald* since 1967, was associate editor of *The SDA Bible Commentary*, editor of the *SDA Dictionary*, editor of the *SDA Encyclopedia*, and coeditor, *SDA Bible Students' Source Book*. Included among his publications are *Armageddon, Invasion From Outer Space*, and numerous magazine articles. His denominational service began in Canada as a pastor, and then Bible teacher at Canadian Union College. He earned his M.A. at Andrews University in 1948; the university conferred on him the Doctor of Divinity degree in 1972.**

## Chapter 20—Editorial Experience Confirms Credibility

The work of an editor is unique. Only those who have been editors understand its ramifications and implications. Many surprises await those who enter the profession. This was my experience.

My work in that field began when I assisted in editing *The SDA Bible Commentary*. When I arrived to take over my responsibilities the editor in chief of the project, Francis D. Nichol, told me solemnly, “It takes fifteen years to make an editor.” He knew, for he had been an editor for a much longer period. The truth of that statement has been confirmed to me in the nineteen years that have passed since that time.

The work of editing the *SDA Bible Commentary* was especially demanding. It involved much more than checking the grammar and spelling, cutting the material or adding to it to make it fit the space provided, or making the manuscripts conform to an overall style adopted for the *Commentary*.

Every interpretation needed to be weighed to see whether the Bible writer’s meaning was made clear. This involved attention to the original languages, historical backgrounds, context, and the analogy of Scripture.

And since this was a Seventh-day Adventist commentary there was another important rule the editors were solemnly enjoined to observe. The writings of Ellen White were to be constantly consulted and her interpretation of, or references to, passages duly noted.

This rule did not mean that the *Commentary* was to reflect merely Ellen White’s interpretation of Scripture. First of all, there are many parts of Scripture on which she has not commented. Furthermore, if she commented on a passage, she did not necessarily exhaust its meaning. Some of her comments are homiletical rather than exegetical. At times she merely borrows the *words* of a passage and uses them in another context.

The point I am trying to make is this: all the way through Scripture we compared Ellen White's writings with the Scriptures and had the opportunity of weighing her competence as an interpreter and her accuracy as a historian. We discovered that she comments on an amazing amount of background history—Babylonian, Assyrian, Palestinian, Egyptian, Persian, Greek, Roman, medieval, and modern. Available to us were not only her published writings, but the material now appearing at the end of each volume of the *SDA Bible Commentary* entitled, "Ellen G. White Comments." The quotations were drawn from unpublished manuscripts and from articles in various papers not incorporated in current Ellen G. White books.

First of all, how did her writings compare with the manuscripts submitted to us? It should be noted that these manuscripts were the work of carefully selected writers who had attained a level of competence in Biblical studies.

The editors soon discovered that even with the highest level of training men are fallible. It appears to be impossible for anyone to write extendedly on even a simple subject without some error in fact, in deduction, in logic.

The expression "feet of clay" was heard repeatedly in conversation among the editors, with regard to men whose manuscripts we were handling. When a man wrote in the area of his special competence the level of his accuracy was fairly high, but when he stepped outside of his area his percentage of error rose rapidly.

With the amount of information available today it is possible for one man to master only a small area. That is why this is an age of specialization. In the field of Biblical studies there are many areas of specialization—Old Testament, New Testament, Biblical languages, comparative linguistics, ancient Near Eastern studies, systematic theology, church history, Biblical archeology, and others.

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But even when a man works in the area of his competence he may err. Perhaps he is interrupted while gathering his information, or is writing. Perhaps in a moment of less than peak alertness he misinterprets a source he is consulting, or in writing does not follow logically to a conclusion.

All this was impressed on us as day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year we continued our work on the commentary. We editors recognized that we ourselves are just as fallible.

Distrusting ourselves in our own writings, we begged our fellow editors and experts in various areas to check our work. In fact, we discovered that only when many eyes go over the material could we expect reasonable freedom from error.

But before us day by day, alongside the writings of fallible men, were the writings of one who claimed that she was inspired of God to write what she did. The contrast was amazing and could not be missed. Absent were the “pretty follies” uninspired writers commit. Gone was the excess, useless verbiage. When her historical material was compared with secular sources it checked out. True, there have often been several schools of interpretation regarding certain events and characters of history, and she could be expected to support but one interpretation. With Biblical history and secular history closely intertwined in her writings, she covers the gamut of human history from the beginning of civilization to the end of world history. To observe how she did this and remained so free from error, and at the same time to observe that men highly trained in narrow fields of history erred—and at times rather grossly—confirmed to me that hers was more than human work. The fact that her work cut across the various areas of specialization made the observation even more amazing.

[156] Someone might observe that she, too, had her editors. True. But there is no evidence of extensive editing of her writings. Nor were these editors highly trained specialists. If any of them would have undertaken the task of writing as extensively as she did on as broad a field, their writings would have been as fallible, if not more so, as the human writings we were examining.

In the field of Bible interpretation she followed generally accepted principles of hermeneutics (interpretation), which was not always true of the contributors to the *Commentary*. Here again, of course, there are several schools of hermeneutics, and all her principles would not be accepted by all interpreters. But her historical principle, for example, according to which she interpreted the books of the Old and New Testaments in their historical context, is an almost universally adopted principle today. It was interesting to me to observe how often in her interpretation of a passage she wove in elements not evident in the English translation but evident in either the Hebrew or Greek, neither of which she could read.

Following is an example that I noted recently. For years interpreters have titled [Psalm 71](#) the Psalm of an Old Man. [Verse 18](#) states plainly, in the King James Version, “Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not.” But Ellen White says David wrote this psalm, not when he was old, but when “he looked forward to the time when he should be aged.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, on [Psalm 71:9, 17, 19](#), p. 1148. How could she say this when the author in [verse 18](#) seemingly identifies himself as “old” and “greyheaded”?

It happens that the Hebrew of [verse 18](#) can also be translated thus: “Until the time that I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not.” Thus the Hebrew allows a younger author. Was she aware of this Hebrew nuance? Or did she get her information supernaturally? Even if some translator before she wrote her comment in 1880 had given the alternative reading, judgment as to which reading is preferable would have been involved.

The evidence is cumulative. Knowing that Ellen White had little formal education; knowing also that as a busy mother, as an itinerant preacher, and as one who was often ill she could not through self-education have attained the breadth of knowledge, or the consistency and accuracy evident in her works, we need another explanation.

To me the explanation that she was inspired by God as were Biblical writers is fully substantiated by the evidence. There is consistency in her Scripture interpretation because the Spirit that inspired the original messages inspired the interpretation. Ancient history is correctly understood and set forth because the One who has been active in human history since its beginning and who has had and still has the destiny of nations under His control revealed its meaning to her.

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The contrast between her writings and those of others who did not have these special aids was clearly apparent to me and was reconfirmed to me day by day in fresh exhibits as the work on the *Commentary* progressed. The cumulative evidence is overwhelming.  
*Takoma Park, Maryland*  
*November 1972*

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**Francis David Nichol**

**Francis David Nichol (1897-1966), for 39 years an associate editor and editor in chief of the *Review and Herald*, was an indefatigable writer and speaker. At the time of his death he was perhaps the best-known Seventh-day Adventist throughout the world, among those within and without the church. Author of 19 major books, plus pamphlets and innumerable magazine articles, he also found time and energy to serve as editor in chief of the seven-volume *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. He received the Doctor of Divinity degree from Potomac (Andrews) University on May 22, 1958.**



## Chapter 21—Looking Back Over the Record

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Mrs. White was not simply one more fervent religious leader, but rather one possessed of the gift of the Spirit of prophecy. We believe this conviction will grow as one reads her writings, which have a distinctive quality that often impresses readers at the outset.

For illustration: Nearly seventy years ago, in a village in Australia lived a young couple. They had never heard of Mrs. White, or of Seventh-day Adventists, or of the *Review and Herald*, the official organ of this Adventist Church. One day they found by the roadside a mud-spattered copy of a paper. Reading matter was scarce, so they took the paper home and dried it out by the kitchen stove. It was a copy of the *Review and Herald*. In the quiet of their little cottage amid the eucalyptus trees, they turned the pages of this unknown journal from America. They read an article on tithing. They were impressed that whoever the publishers were, they must be most earnest, sacrificial people, because they believed in giving God one tenth of their income—a tithe—besides freewill offerings. Who could these people be! They further leafed the pages, read an article by a Mrs. E. G. White, and exclaimed: “Who is this Mrs. White? She writes as though she is inspired.”

A few days later a villager who sold fresh vegetables stopped at their door. “Do you know about a paper called the *Review and Herald*?” they asked. When he answered, “Yes,” they promptly inquired: “Do you know about a Mrs. E. G. White?” He did. “And who is she?” they asked. He hesitated, evidently fearing if he answered them directly he might prejudice them against Adventism. But his hesitancy only made them the more insistent. Finally, fixing his eyes on them, he answered with fervor: “She’s a prophet.”

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Their interest only increased, for his words simply reinforced the conviction that had gripped them in the quiet of their humble cottage. Not long afterward they were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Their faith in the church, and particularly in Mrs. White, only increased with the years. And that faith they passed on

to their son, present editor of the *Review and Herald* and the writer of these lines. [Written in 1964.]

This little drama enacted in faraway Australia has been many times duplicated in different lands as men and women have found that their strongest reason for believing in the prophetic status of Mrs. White is the internal evidence that her writings present.

Paralleling this weighty evidence is that provided by the fruitage of her long labors. The rule set down by our Lord is still good: “Ye shall know them by their fruits” ([Matthew 7:16](#)). The fruitage of Mrs. White’s speaking and writing can be examined by all the world. She led out in every major project of the steadily growing Seventh-day Adventist Church; indeed her counsel regularly took the church safely through various crises. It passes credulity to believe that a frail, almost uneducated woman could have been able through the long years to take the leading role she did in the life of the church, and give to the world numerous books of great spiritual depth, unless she had been uniquely illumined of Heaven.

[161] This reminds us of a conversation we had some twenty years ago with an aged leader in the Advent Christian Church. This church is the one remaining segment of the First-day Adventists, coming down through the century from Millerism, that is of any size. The other segments have all virtually dwindled to the vanishing point. The Advent Christian Church was organized about the same time as the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and their membership, as their published statistics reveal, has remained almost exactly at the 30,000 point since the turn of the century.

Aided by this aged Advent Christian leader, we had been making a special study of William Miller’s writings that are found in the Advent Christian College at Aurora, Illinois, of which college he had formerly been president. He had been most gracious to us. We had days of sweet fellowship together, and at times I dined at his home. He knew of the amazing growth of Seventh-day Adventists, of the different branches of our work that spread over the earth. As we drove along at sunset one evening in his car, he said to me in substance:

“Your church leaders through the years have been wiser men than ours. They saw the need of a publishing work and started it, the need of medical work, of educational, and of a great mission

program. They also saw the need of a close-knit organization. And so today you are strong and growing fast, while we are not.”

I replied: “No, my dear brother, I don’t think that is quite an accurate statement. Our leaders were not wiser than yours, nor more far-visioned. The record will show that they were ordinary flesh and blood, like your men, with great limitations of vision and faith. But we had in our midst a most singular woman. She marked out what we ought to do in the different branches of our work. She was specific, emphatic, insistent. We accepted her counsel and direction, for we believed she had visions from God. That is the reason we have this marvelous organization and why we’ve grown.”

A great silence descended, for the dear Advent Christian people have ever been critical of our doctrine that Mrs. White possessed the gift of the Spirit of prophecy. So we rode on in silence for a time. What his thoughts were, we know not. Finally he remarked, with a gesture toward a grove of trees: “Are not the trees beautiful at sunset?” I agreed. The silence was broken, and our fellowship continued—continued, we are glad to say, until his death.

We can think of no more impressive testimony to the singular qualities of Mrs. White than that so eloquently, though unwittingly, given by this dear man.

I close with a personal testimony. We set out, years ago, to examine in detail all the major criticisms that had been framed against Mrs. White and to prepare, if possible, a book that would answer them.<sup>1</sup> The task took much time, as might well be imagined. When we had finished we made a statement to the special committee set up by the church to examine the prepared manuscript. In substance we said:

“I have examined all the major criticisms of Mrs. White that I could find in any book or pamphlet, checking back on all the alleged historical declarations and going to the original sources for the accurate text of all statements by Mrs. White. I have also examined many facts regarding her life. Having completed my task by preparing the extended manuscript now before you, I wish to offer this testimony: I end this work fully and irrevocably persuaded

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White and Her Critics, by Francis D. Nichol. Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C. In this book of 703 pages, Nichol examines and refutes all principal objections that have been raised against the credibility of Ellen White.

in my mind and heart that Mrs. White was what she claimed to be, a humble handmaiden of God to whom He gave revelations, authoritative and unique, to guide and direct the Advent people in these last days.”

That same testimony we would offer today.

We honestly believe that anyone who candidly and prayerfully examines the record of her life and writings will likewise testify.—  
From *Why I Believe in Mrs. E. G. White*, pp. 124-128.

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### Robert W. Olson

**Robert W. Olson, chairman of the department of religion, Pacific Union College, was president of Newbold College, England, for four years.**

**Dr. Olson has been associate professor of religion at both Loma Linda University and Columbia Union College. Prior to his teaching appointments he was a pastor in the Northern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.**

**He received his B.D. degree from Andrews University and his Th.D. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.**

## Chapter 22—A Fountain That Never Runs Dry

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I believe that both Ellen G. White and the apostle Paul were true prophets who wrote under the influence of the Spirit of God. My reason for believing in the inspiration of the one is identical with my reason for believing in the inspiration of the other. In both cases the Holy Spirit addresses me through their writings and persuades me of their divine origin.

Protestants have long recognized that it is the eternal witness of the Holy Spirit that authenticates the Scriptures to us as the work of God. John Calvin wrote:

“Scripture, carrying its own evidence along with it, deigns not to submit to proofs and arguments, but owes the full conviction with which we ought to receive it to the testimony of the Spirit.”<sup>1</sup>

In similar vein, the Gallican Confession adopted by French Protestants in 1559 declares concerning the sixty-six books of the Bible:

“We know these books to be canonical, and the sure rule of our faith, not so much by the common accord and consent of the Church, as by the testimony and inward illumination of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to distinguish them from other ecclesiastical books upon which, however useful, we can not found any article of faith.”<sup>2</sup>

I find this principle to be as valid in the twentieth century as it was in the sixteenth. The Holy Spirit still bears witness to His own work, whether it be to messages spoken through ancient prophets or to counsels given by a modern prophetess. In fact, the writings of Ellen White bear many resemblances to those of the Bible prophets.

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<sup>1</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), p. 72. [Book One, Chapter VII, Section 5 of the *Institutes*.]

<sup>2</sup>Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, III (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), pp. 361, 362.

One of the marks of the inspiration of the Bible is that though read a thousand times the deep well of living water is never exhausted. There is always some new discovery of truth, always a new supply of grace that results from its study. The same is true of the writings of Mrs. White. Her books are like a fountain that never runs dry. I have read *The Desire of Ages* through over and over again in connection with my college class in The Life and Teachings of Jesus. Every year my soul is thrilled anew with the profound spiritual insights in that priceless work. The chapters “Calvary” and “It Is Finished” are incomparable. If I could have only two books in my library for the rest of my life, I would choose the Bible and *The Desire of Ages*.

Another characteristic of the Bible prophets is their unwavering confidence in God through all the vicissitudes of life. The writings of the modern prophetess reveal the same unfailing trust. When the morning headlines almost overwhelm me, I find courage and confidence in her words:

“Above the distractions of the earth He sits enthroned; all things are open to His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best.”<sup>3</sup>

When I wonder how God’s work will ever be finished in view of political conditions in some lands, she reminds me that Christ “made full provision for the prosecution of the work, and took upon Himself the responsibility for its success.”<sup>4</sup>

When disappointments perplex and confound me, I find comfort in the assurance that:

“God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as coworkers with Him.”<sup>5</sup>

[167] Mrs. White resembles the Bible prophets in that she magnifies Christ and draws me to Him. She points out my failings and my weaknesses, and invariably drives me to my knees. She always makes me dissatisfied with myself, yet she never discourages me.

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<sup>3</sup>The Ministry of Healing, 417.

<sup>4</sup>The Desire of Ages, 822.

<sup>5</sup>The Desire of Ages, 224, 225.

There is always hope. The exalted themes of which she writes, like those in the Bible, stagger my imagination.

She challenges me to be as true to duty as the needle to the pole, to die rather than commit one wrong act, to live every day as if it were to be my last. <sup>6</sup> As I read the Spirit of Prophecy books, I often find that I want to memorize every line on every page. Great truths are so simply stated. For example: “It is moral worth that God values. Love and purity are the attributes He prizes most.” <sup>7</sup> Another classic: “The everlasting portals will open wide to the trembling touch of a little child.” <sup>8</sup>

A conspicuous feature of Mrs. White’s writing is her undeviating exaltation of the Bible. She does not “explain it away” but is always a faithful interpreter. I freely admit that she has helped me to maintain my faith in the Word of God. When studying in a non-Adventist university some years ago, I frequently had long confrontations with one of my professors on the subject of evolution. He maintained that the first eleven chapters of Genesis were not a dependable historical narrative and insisted that I must surrender my views in favor of his. I felt the pressure constantly, as the issue was renewed so often in his class. If it had not been for the writings of Ellen White I might have accepted his plausible arguments and gone his way. But Mrs. White’s undeniably literal description of Creation and the Flood, as given in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, satisfied me completely as to the truthfulness of the Mosaic record.

Aside from the spiritual quality of her writings, there are other evidences of Ellen White’s inspiration that carry great weight with me. Some of these are:

1. *Her leadership in the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.* Every year, as I lecture to my classes on her role in Seventh-day Adventist history, I am impressed anew with the conviction that Mrs. White’s wisdom bore the imprint of the supernatural. It was her counsel that led to the establishment of our three great American publishing houses; she was the one who insisted that we should have our own educational system; almost singlehandedly she persuaded the brethren to purchase Loma Linda and open a med-

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<sup>6</sup>Education, 57; Testimonies for the Church 5:53, 200.

<sup>7</sup>The Desire of Ages, 219.

<sup>8</sup>Christ’s Object Lessons, 404.



ical school there; it was she who preserved the church from falling hopelessly into a web of legalism at the General Conference of 1888; Avondale College in Australia is a monument to her inspired counsels; our emphasis on healthful living is due almost entirely to instruction from her pen. More often than not, these and other similar accomplishments met their fulfillment in spite of opposition from many of our most influential leaders. In all of this I see the hand of God working through His prophet.

2. *The miraculous timing of her messages in frequent moments of crisis.* She did not know that the advocates of pantheism would present themselves, uninvited, at the Autumn Council of 1903. Yet it was her message, sent from California, which arrived just in time to meet the emergency.<sup>9</sup> When she, with the help of a friend, purchased the Paradise Valley Sanitarium, she did not know that someone in New York had already put a letter in the mail agreeing to buy the property at a higher price. Her action saved the institution for us.<sup>10</sup>

In 1894 she wrote from Australia to A. T. Jones in Michigan, correcting him for statements made in a sermon in the Battle Creek church. Her letter arrived the day after he gave his discourse. Jones, marveling that Mrs. White could have known the content of his message several weeks before he knew it himself, corrected his errors on the following Sabbath.<sup>11</sup> Illustrations of this nature, which might be greatly multiplied, underscore the fact that Ellen White was directed by the divine Mind.

3. *The present validation of scientific statements made a century ago.* How did this mother and homemaker know, in 1864, that tobacco was a malignant poison, “all the more dangerous because its effects upon the system are so slow”?<sup>12</sup> It took the rest of the world another hundred years to find that out. Her comments on prenatal influence, electrical currents in the brain, cancerous germs, et cetera, are chronicled elsewhere.<sup>13</sup> Is it not significant that her book *The*

<sup>9</sup>See A. G. Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, pp. 330-342.

<sup>10</sup>See D. E. Robinson, *The Story of Our Health Message*, 286, 287.

<sup>11</sup>See *Selected Messages* 2:85-88.

<sup>12</sup>*Spiritual Gifts* 4a, 128.

<sup>13</sup>See *Scientific Character of Ellen G. White Science Counsels* (E. G. White Estate Publications).



*Ministry of Healing* is still up to date, while other medical books published in 1905 are now only curiosity pieces?

4. *The fulfillment of her predictions.* Her declaration that she had seen “an immense ball of fire fall among some beautiful mansions, causing their instant destruction” <sup>14</sup> is truly astonishing. This was written in 1909, years before the first aerial bomb was dropped, and decades before atomic weapons were developed. In 1903 she described “the impending destruction of thousands of cities.” <sup>15</sup> In 1913 world leaders, political and religious, were declaring the opposite to be true, that the world was then entering an age of settled peace and good will. They were wrong. She was right. How did this wrinkled grandmother know what world leaders did not know? I can only conclude that God must have told Sister White. Numerous other striking illustrations could be cited. [169]

Convincing as these last four evidences are, they are subordinate in my mind to the overriding evidence of Ellen White’s inspiration, which is found in the deeply spiritual character of her writings. Her many literary productions carry their own credentials. I thank God for every article and every book authored by this modern prophet. No literature, apart from the Bible, so perfectly satisfies the needs of my soul.

*Fort Worth, Texas*  
*June 1972*

## Footnotes

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### Uriah Smith

**Uriah Smith (1832-1903), for almost half a century an editor of the *Review and Herald*, was one of the most versatile of the Adventist pioneers. General Conference secretary and treasurer, Biblical expositor, inventor, engraver, college teacher, and writer, he left his firm convictions in many areas.**

**Elder Smith was one of the most fluent writers the Adventist denomination has ever had. He is best remembered for his book generally known by its short title *Daniel and the Revela-***

<sup>14</sup>Testimonies for the Church 9:28.

<sup>15</sup>Evangelism, 29.

***tion. Among his other works are *The United States in Prophecy, Here and Hereafter, and Looking Unto Jesus.****

## Chapter 23—The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White <sup>1</sup>

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One of the most important subjects treated upon in the New Testament, is the doctrine of spiritual gifts. Paul gives it equal rank with the great question of the state of the dead, and says, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant” (1 Corinthians 12:1). He then proceeds to explain himself by saying that there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; that is, there are various operations produced by the Spirit of God, and a variety of manifestations that result from its presence; but all are wrought by the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

The apostle’s argument in the chapter already referred to, in Ephesians 4, and in other places in the New Testament, places it beyond denial that wherever the Spirit of God is present in sufficient measure, it will operate in some of the special ways which he has described; and to assert, as some do, that the age of miracles and spiritual gifts is past, so that it is impossible for the people of God to enjoy such privileges at the present time, is tantamount to an assertion that it is now, and has been ever since the so-called apostolic age, impossible for them to enjoy a sufficient measure of the Spirit to produce these results. But is there any limitation in this respect? Is it not the privilege of the church in one age to enjoy as much of the Spirit of God as in another? Did the Lord design that to his first disciples the supply should be continual and without measure, while to his followers in later and more degenerate ages, it should be intermittent and meager? Impossible! ...

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[Seventh-day Adventists] believe that the varied operations of the Spirit of God, having been once expressly “set in the church,” were designed to continue therein to the end, because they are not limited, and God has never withdrawn them from the church; just as they believe that the original blessing placed in the beginning upon

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<sup>1</sup>“The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White—a Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts According to the Scriptures,” a small pamphlet first published in 1868.

the seventh day, is there still, because God never has withdrawn it, nor placed it upon any other day.

To them, the doctrine of Spiritual Gifts, as set forth in the chapters referred to, is as much a special doctrine of Revelation, as is the Sabbath, the Sanctuary, the State of the Dead, or the Second Advent. Taking the Scriptures to be in deed and in truth the word of God, they cannot reject it. They can as easily explain away the Sabbath, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and many other prominent and scriptural doctrines, as the doctrine of Spiritual Gifts, and hence believe that to reject it, is to be guilty of error, and that to receive it, is essential to the unity of the faith.

In addition to this theoretical view of the subject, and in addition to the ordinary operations of the Spirit of God, they believe that they have in their midst a special manifestation, answering to one at least of these gifts which have been placed in the Christian church. This is found in the visions of Mrs. E. G. White, as published in the works entitled, *Experience and Views, with Supplement, Testimonies to the Church, and Spiritual Gifts, Vols. 1-4.*

Every test which can be brought to bear upon such manifestations, proves these genuine. The evidence which supports them, internal and external, is conclusive. They agree with the word of God, and with themselves. They are given, unless those best qualified to judge are invariably deceived, when the Spirit of God is especially present. They are free from the disgusting contortions and grimaces which attend the counterfeit manifestations of Spiritualism. Calm, dignified, impressive, they commend themselves to every beholder, as the very opposite of that which is false or fanatical. The instrument is herself above jugglery or deceit.

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The influence is not mesmeric; for this people, reprobating the use of that agency, studiously refuse to learn the principles of its application, or to have aught to do with its practical workings; besides, the hallucinations of a mesmerized subject embrace only such facts and scenes as previously exist in the mind of the mesmerizing power; but the visions take cognizance of persons and things, and bring to light facts known, not only by no person present, but not even by the one through whom the visions are given.

They are not the effect of disease; for no disease has ever yet been known to have the effect of repeatedly suspending the functions

of the lungs, muscles, and every bodily sense, from fifteen to one hundred and eighty minutes, while in obedience to some influence which evidently had supreme possession of the mind, and in obedience to that alone, the eyes would see, the lips speak, and the limbs move.

Further, their fruit is such as to show that the source from which they spring is the opposite of evil.

1. They tend to the purest morality. They discountenance every vice, and exhort the practice of every virtue. They point out the perils through which we are to pass to the kingdom. They reveal the devices of Satan. They warn us against his snares. They have nipped in the bud scheme after scheme of fanaticism which the enemy has tried to foist into our midst. They have exposed hidden iniquity, brought to light concealed wrongs, and laid bare the evil motives of the falsehearted. They have warded off dangers from the cause of truth upon every hand. They have aroused and re-aroused us to greater consecration to God, more zealous efforts for holiness of heart, and greater diligence in the cause and service of our Master.

2. They lead us to Christ. Like the Bible, they set him forth as the only hope and only Saviour of mankind. They portray before us in living characters his holy life and his godly example, and with irresistible appeals they urge us to follow in his steps.

3. They lead us to the Bible. They set forth that book as the inspired and unalterable word of God. They exhort us to take that word as the man of our counsel, and the rule of our faith and practice. And with a compelling power, they entreat us to study long and diligently its pages, and become familiar with its teaching, for it is to judge us in the last day. [174]

4. They have brought comfort and consolation to many hearts. They have strengthened the weak, encouraged the feeble, raised up the despondent. They have brought order out of confusion, made crooked places straight, and thrown light on what was dark and obscure. And no person, with an unprejudiced mind, can read their stirring appeals for a pure and lofty morality, their exaltation of God and the Saviour, their denunciations of every evil, and their exhortations to everything that is holy and of good report, without being compelled to say, "These are not the words of him that hath a devil."

Negatively, they have never been known to counsel evil or devise wickedness. No instance can be found in which they have lowered the standard of morality. No one of their adherents has ever been led by them into paths of transgression and sin. They do not lead men to serve God less faithfully or to love him less fervently. They do not lead to any of the works of the flesh, nor make less devoted and faithful Christians of those who believe them. In not a single instance can any of the charges here mentioned be sustained against them; and, concerning them, we may emphatically ask the question which Pilate put to the Jews in reference to the Saviour, "Why, what evil hath he done?"

Yet with all this array of good fruit which they are able to present, with all this innocency of any charge of evil that can be brought against them, they everywhere encounter the bitterest opposition. They are the object of the blindest prejudice, the intensest hate, and most malignant bitterness. Worldlings and formal professors of all denominations, join in one general outcry against them of vituperation and abuse. Many will go a long distance out of their way for the purpose of giving them an uncalled-for and malicious thrust. And false-hearted brethren in our own ranks make them the butt of their first attacks, as they launch off into apostasy and rebellion.

[175] Why is all this? Whence all this war against that of which no evil can be said? From the example of Cain who slew his brother, of the Jews who clamored for the blood of the innocent Saviour, of the infidel who storms with passion at the very name of Jesus, and from the principle of the carnal heart which is at enmity with everything that is holy and spiritual, we leave the reader to answer.

Some of those who so strenuously oppose the visions, have a series of objections which they offer in justification of their course. But before we look at these, let us for a moment survey the field, that we may, if possible, take in at a glance the cause, object, and aim, of this contest, and so be better prepared to put a just estimate upon the motives and efforts of the opposition. We believe, love, and defend the visions, on the grounds above set forth, their unvarying tendency to good, and because they so admirably answer the purpose for which the Scriptures assure us that the gifts were set in the church, namely, to comfort, encourage, and edify the saints, and bring them to the

unity of the faith. On what ground can they be objected to? What is there in the fact that a person among Seventh-day Adventists, a sincere Christian, has visions and has published them to the world, to excite all the stir and opposition that is everywhere raised over them? They do no hurt; what is the matter? They injure no one; then why not let the person enjoy her gift undisturbed, and those who choose to believe in it, believe in it in peace?

But no! This work, innocent as it is of all evil, fruitful as it is of all good, must not be suffered to go on in peace. And again we ask, Why? We wish the reader carefully to consider this question. If we look at those who oppose this work and consider the ground they occupy, we shall be able to define pretty accurately the motives from which they act. There are two classes which may be described, with the motives that govern them, as follows:

The first class is composed of those who believe, or did believe at the time their opposition commenced, the views held by Seventh-day Adventists, but in whom, or in some one with whom they sympathized, wrongs were pointed out and reprovved by the visions. These same individuals had no doubt often prayed, Lord, show us our wrongs. The Lord answers their prayers in his own way, and chooses to point them out in vision. Now if they object to this, they show at once that there was no sincerity in their petitions; for they cannot sincerely wish to know their faults, if they are not willing to have them pointed out except in a way of their own choosing. They should rather be grateful that they are made known to them in any manner, and that time and opportunity are given them to put them away before it is too late.

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But here too many rebel; and here comes in the first class of objectors to the visions. Not being dead to sin, they give way to the promptings of their still dominant carnal heart, and set to work, not to repent of their wrongs which they cannot deny, but to break down that which has kindly, yet plainly, pointed out their wrongs, that they may see and put them away before the Judgment. They would prefer that the church should be without eyes, rather than that any of their wrongs should be seen and exposed.

The other class consists of those who are the avowed and open opponents of all the distinguishing views held by Seventh-day Adventists. Their opposition springs from a different motive from that

of the first class. Not having been reproved themselves by the visions, they have no ground for opposition in this respect; but they hate that system of truth with which the visions stand connected, and they attack the visions as the most sure and effectual way of hindering the progress of that truth.

In this they acknowledge the efficiency of the visions in advancing this work. They know them to be one of the great elements of its strength and prosperity. And do they not by such a course plainly tell us, who love the truth, how we should regard the visions? If the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light, so the opponents of the truth are wiser than some of its professed friends. The old adage, "It is lawful to learn even from an enemy," may be put in practice by us here. If those who would gladly see this work come to nought, attack the visions as the most effectual way of accomplishing this, should not those who desire the work to advance and prosper be equally zealous in loving, living out, and defending the visions, as one of the most effectual means of securing this result? Consistency forbids that they should be esteemed of less importance by their friends than by their foes.

[177] This covers the whole ground of the opposition; for we have never known any objection to arise which could not be traced to one or the other of these two sources. The opposer is always a person who has either been reproved for wrongs himself, or is in sympathy with those who have been so reproved, or he is a person who is openly hostile to the positions of Seventh-day Adventists as a whole. But neither of these positions is, in our mind, very well calculated to enlist the sympathy of any sincere lover of honesty and uprightness, or any true friend of the cause.

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### William A. Spicer

**William A. Spicer (1865-1952) is remembered as a man of the people, inspiring confidence by his periodical reports of mission experiences in the *Review and Herald* for 50 years.**

**Elder Spicer led out in developing many new mission stations on several continents. Between 1900 and 1940, except for four years (some say two), Elder Spicer was supervising or inspecting the rapidly expanding world mission program. As sec-**



retary and president of the General Conference, an editor of the *Review*, and general field secretary of the General Conference, Elder Spicer found a wide opportunity to serve. His numerous published works include *Our Day in the Light of Prophecy*, *Miracles of Modern Missions*, and *The Hand That Intervenes*.

## Chapter 24—A Special Gift to the Remnant <sup>1</sup>

Truly the Spirit of prophecy is a special gift of God to the remnant church of the prophecy. The gift was planned from ancient times, as the Lord looked forward to the work to be done by this church in carrying the last gospel message of salvation “to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” If ever in the history of Christ’s church special help was needed, such help is needed now by this remnant church. And, thank God, that help has been given.

It fills the heart with awe to see in prophecy and history the rise of this advent movement, timed exactly to the hour. It is the work of the living God before our eyes! And timed also to the very hour, with the rise of the movement there came also the gift of the Spirit of prophecy to open to us in a special way the truths of Holy Scripture, and to direct and guide us in a special way in these critical closing days.

Always, in approaching the part the Spirit of prophecy acts in our day, it is good to look, if for but a moment, to the sure foundation of this gift in Holy Scripture. There is something living and vital about this advent movement. The touch of the divine hand appears at every turn of its story.

[180] Our pioneers, unaided, could no more have brought out and built up such a movement than could Moses and Aaron, of themselves, have brought Israel out of Egypt and led them over the wilderness journey those forty years. When the time of the prophecy came in that ancient day, the living God set His hand to lead the movement. In order to guide it in the right way, He placed the gift of the Spirit of prophecy in the midst of it:

“And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved” ([Hosea 12:13](#)).

That was the Lord’s way of instructing and guiding an organized movement in the ancient days. And now the time has come when the

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<sup>1</sup>A condensation from a pamphlet entitled *The Writings of the Spirit of Prophecy* written at the request of the E. G. White Estate, in 1939.

Lord has “set His hand again the second time” to lead an organized movement, this time to gather “the remnant of His people” from all “the four corners of the earth” ([Isaiah 11:11, 12](#)). It is a world movement, led by the living God.

And the specific prophecy of this work for the remnant church declares that the last church is to keep the commandments of God and have the Spirit of prophecy in its midst:

“The dragon was wroth with the woman [the church], and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” ([Revelation 12:17](#)). “For the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy” ([Chapter 19:10](#)).

As the appointed hour of the prophecy came, in 1844, this advent movement rose. The people of the prophecy appeared, keeping “the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” ([Revelation 14:12](#)). Soon they were armed with the full gospel message for the judgment hour, to carry to every tongue and people the proclamation: “Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come.” And in their midst appeared the special gift of the Spirit of prophecy, as foretold ([Revelation 12:17; 19:10](#)).

In 1844 the Spirit of the Lord spoke in vision to a young woman of one of the early Adventist groups in New England, giving messages to be told to the people of the advent movement. The name of the young woman was Ellen G. Harmon (later married to James White, pioneer leader of this movement in the early years). The frail, youthful agent begged the Lord to lay the burden on someone else. “All the light I could get,” she said, “was, ‘Make known to others what I have revealed to you.’ ... Said the angel, ‘If you deliver the messages faithfully, and endure unto the end, you shall eat of the fruit of the tree of life, and drink of the water of the river of life.’”—[Early Writings, 20, 21](#).

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That young woman rose from prayer, accepting the burden, and for seventy years her voice was heard bearing messages in the movement, and for seventy years that pen, untrained for literary work by any institution of learning, was writing messages that insistently call us to deeper experiences in the grace of Christ, and lead us wonderfully into the green pastures of Bible truth. When the call came, the chosen instrument found her hand so trembling she could

not hold a pen steadily. “While in vision,” she said many years later, “I was commanded by an angel to write the vision. I obeyed, and wrote rapidly. My nerves were strengthened, and from that day to this my hand has been steady.”—[Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 90](#).

And what writings came from that pen! The writings of the youthful days show the unwavering touch of certainty. The same certainty in counsel and in writing was shown to ripe old age, when it might have been thought that years would weaken the service. As a matter of fact, we saw that gift in old age doing some of the strongest and most effective work of all Mrs. White’s lifetime, meeting subtle and intricate situations that threatened peril to the cause. Again and again we had to say to ourselves, “Mrs. White never, never could have sent that counsel of her own knowledge.”

In that ancient movement, when “by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt,” the prophet continued bearing messages by voice, and writing the instruction from God until the movement was nearing the land of Canaan. Then the Lord laid His servant away; and a little later, under the instruction written, the movement entered the land. As this advent movement nears the end of the way, the Lord has laid away the human agent in this gift, and with the fullness of instruction in the Holy Scriptures and in the printed volumes of the Spirit of prophecy, in a little while the advent movement is to enter the heavenly Canaan.

[182] These volumes of the writings of the Spirit of prophecy are living words. They deal with the things the people of the remnant church need to know now. In the files of the General Conference is a letter written by Mrs. White in 1906 to O. A. Olsen, one of the veteran early leaders. She wrote:

“The question is sometimes raised, ‘What if Mrs. White should die?’ I answer: The books that she has written will not die. They are a living witness to what saith the Scripture. Of myself I could not have brought out the truths in these books, but the Lord has given me the help of His Holy Spirit.”

As the later years came, Mrs. White felt more than ever the necessity of haste in writing out more fully the things impressed upon her mind by the Spirit. She cried out: “I am weighted as a cart beneath sheaves.” “I have every reason,” she wrote, “to praise

my heavenly Father for the clearness of thought that He has given me in regard to Bible subjects.” She longed to hasten the work of bringing out these “precious things” for “ministers and people.”—[Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 432.](#)

And here these volumes are—written under the inspiration of the Spirit’s power that worked mightily in this feeble human agent from youth to old age. They are for us. It is a special gift to all believers. How can any believer live in neglect of this precious instruction and expect to be kept in fullness of blessing in these testing days! The Spirit of prophecy is not something merely to be affirmed as a doctrine. It is a gift for use and service. We cannot leave these books on the shelves and get the help that is in them, any more than we can lay away perfectly good food in the cupboard and live without feeding upon it. These volumes, produced in our day, in so extraordinary a way, are gifts of God to us, who need them for spiritual food if our souls are to live and grow.

Look at that “Conflict Series.” That is the set of volumes that covers the great controversy between good and evil from the rebellion in heaven to the end of sin and Satan, and the entry of the saints into the eternal inheritance. As we open these books, we behold as in a pageant the working out of the whole plan of redemption. There is nothing like it in modern writing. Every one of those volumes has a history too long to tell here.

*The Great Controversy*—That was the first of this series prepared. People of the world hear something unusual in its messages. A “publishers’ reader,” an expert for one of the big publishers of London, read this book. “Was Mrs. White an educated woman?” he asked one of our ministers. “No; she was not, as the term is commonly understood.” “Well, it is a wonderful book,” said the reader. “It is almost perfect in composition. I have read thousands of manuscripts, but none more beautiful than this book.”

We repeat, It is a “wonderful book,” thinking not of literary merit, but of the truths given there to guide our feet through the coming time of trouble, which will be a time “such as never was since there was a nation.” Are our people everywhere reading it?

A wealthy Southern woman, leader of society in her town, bought a copy. She said to the colporteur later: “I never read anything like it. It seemed to me as I read I could see the very picture of the scenes

written about.” We know why the woman felt thus, as thousands of others have doubtless felt without reporting it in this way. Mrs. White told of her experience in writing this book:

“The book *Great Controversy* I appreciate above silver or gold, and I greatly desire that it shall come before the people. While writing the manuscript of *Great Controversy* I was often conscious of the presence of the angels of God. And many times the scenes about which I was writing were presented to me anew in visions of the night, so that they were fresh and vivid in my mind.”

*The Desire of Ages*—A woman of New England, a professed Christian, she said, had found her experience with Christ but formal and unreal. She then read this book, and wrote:

“As soon as I began to read it, I felt as never before how real is the gospel story. Where before it had seemed like ancient history, it now seemed like something happening today. Peace came to my troubled soul. I see in Him a living personal Saviour who is with me all the time.”

When Mrs. White was writing that book, under heavy pressure to reproduce the scenes that had been caused to pass before her, she wrote to a friend:

[184] “I walk with trembling before God. I know not how to speak or trace with pen the large subjects of the atoning sacrifice. I know not how to present subjects in the living power in which they stand before me. I tremble for fear lest I shall belittle the great plan of salvation by cheap words. I bow my soul in awe and reverence before God and say, ‘Who is sufficient for these things?’”

“Near the cross! O Lamb of God,  
Bring its scenes before me.”

A woman of education in Europe found *The Desire of Ages* at one of our sanitariums. She was really agitated over it. “Why,” she said, “a little people like you ought not to have this book! It ought to be in the hands of the great London publishers so that it could be brought to the attention of all. That author is inspired!”

Would there were room to tell stories of other volumes of this “Conflict Series.” Each book has its history. Each bears its message. God help us to listen, not now and then merely, but day by day.

Then there are the *Testimonies for the Church*. One might think these volumes would not be so interesting. But they are largely messages written to persons who needed help—just the help that we all need. They were personal messages to living people, and that is why they come as living words to the heart. Besides the personal messages there is vital matter on every phase of life and service. When nearing the close of her work on this series, Mrs. White wrote:

“I have been impressed to call upon the members of our churches to study the last two volumes of *Testimonies for the Church*. When I was writing these books, I felt the deep moving of the Spirit of God.”—[Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, 433](#).

Every phase of home life, of church relationships, of service, is dealt with in just the way to help the brethren and sisters of today. Those last two volumes just spoken of, were the volumes left for a time by one of our ministers on his train seat while traveling in the Northwest. A gentleman who had picked up the volumes in his absence and read from them said:

“I hold a chair on the faculty of a university in New York. I am continually reading books. But this is the finest literature I have ever read. Where can I get some of these books?”

Shall it ever be that while strangers from the east and west and north and south catch fleeting glimpses of these books, and recognize something unusual about them, we, the children of the kingdom, to whom they are committed, often deprive ourselves of an essential gift given to the remnant church?

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We are leaving out volumes full of treasures as rich as those in any books we have named. Look at the whole list—books for workers (and now that means every believer), books on health and temperance, on education, on every department of work among us. It is not ordinary writing. When a former queen of Rumania, before World War days, read *Ministry of Healing*, she wanted it put in the language of her country, and volunteered to write an introduction. Though in the unsettled times that came, the purpose was never carried out, I believe.

In the prerevolution times in Russia one of our sisters, a woman of the nobility, in the Baltic part of Russia, had *Ministry of Healing* bound in white morocco, and presented it to the czarina of Russia. Our sister had the queen’s thanks later, and assurance that she was

reading it. When we heard of the queen's sad death, we were glad to remember that she had read that precious volume.

We could tell of cottage homes to which these books have brought the eternal treasures of hope. "This is our Bible," said a Catholic peasant woman exultantly, bringing out *Steps to Christ* in her own language. "Lay this book on my breast in the coffin and bury it with me," said a dying Catholic man in southern Germany. The treasured book was *Christ's Object Lessons*. A West Indian man of seventy-eight years always carried the book, *Christ Our Saviour*, about with him. "When people ask me the reason," he said, "I reply: 'This book is my bodyguard.' From the time I started to read it, I have been a changed man."

[186] Brethren and sisters, the writings of the Spirit of prophecy are a special gift of God to every member of the remnant church. Somehow—series by series, or one by one—nearly every believer can build up a library of these volumes. The church library surely can make provision for temporary use in cases of extreme scarcity. But by sacrifice and extra effort, every believer should, if possible, have these volumes at hand for constant counsel. Jesus, walking the way to Emmaus with the two disciples, opened the Scriptures to them by the way, so that later they exclaimed to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" In these volumes of the Spirit of prophecy, which is the "testimony of Jesus," the Master, by His Spirit, still speaks to us in the way, to open the Scriptures to our understanding. We cannot afford to be negligent of these things given as special help to prepare us to stand before Him at His coming.

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### James Paul Stauffer

**James Paul Stauffer, dean of the Graduate School and professor of English at Loma Linda University since 1964, is a specialist in the literature and art forms of Western civilization. From 1942-1964, he was a member of the English department at Pacific Union College, for several years chairman of the division of language and literature. He earned his Ph.D. at Harvard in 1952. In recent years he has led study tours to Europe and the**



**Holy Land, followed by several extended visits gathering material for a forthcoming book.**

[188] **Chapter 25—On Rereading Christ’s Object Lessons**

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Sometimes I have wished that I could come again to some great book that has been important in my life but has lost its freshness for me, that I could open it as if for the first time, without any intruding interpreter telling me how I ought to read it, without any accumulated body of experience distorting its message or dulling my perception or obstructing my response.

In particular, I have sometimes wished that I could come to the Bible, especially the New Testament, as an entirely new experience. I have wished that with a mature and reasonably trained mind, but hopefully a yet unspoiled one, I could experience the exhilaration and illumination of that Book, freed from the body of preconceptions and misconceptions, or at least incomplete or juvenile perceptions, built into me over the years from sources outside the book itself.

Out of such thoughts I decided not long ago to reread one of the books of Ellen G. White, as nearly as possible as if it were my first experience with her writings. In my effort to recapture a sense of discovery there were questions I knew I should ask, to see whether I could find within myself any residue of experience or attitude that might interfere with the fullest and most helpful response to that book.

[190] There was, first of all, the problem of familiarity, my mind’s tendency to run ahead of the words on the page, sometimes to let my eyes follow the words while consciousness slipped away to pressing but unrelated concerns. Could I, with special effort, experience the work in its freshness?

Could I come to it released from certain influences out of the past—the dogmatism of well-meaning mentors who, seeking to impose their own attitudes through the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy, emphasized some insights while seeming to ignore other very important ones, and whose understanding of the nature and function of inspiration was for a while an obstacle to my own understanding of how God deals with men?

Could I purge myself of feelings of impatience or resentment at some who tended to use the writings of Ellen White as an argumentative club, prepared to put a period to any discussion by producing a quotation, usually out of context, but with enough finality to abort further discussion.

It was certainly to be hoped that I would find myself released from such external influences as these that might hinder my free and fully responsive reading. Maturing intellectually and emotionally and spiritually involves, after all, recognizing and abandoning all sorts of premature and no longer useful feelings and conceptions.

I might fear, however, that somewhere behind the reach of consciousness a residue from the past might still operate as an obstacle. I think of a passage from Browning in which a painter of the Italian Renaissance, now a middle-aged monk, Fra Lippo Lippi, recalls his early life and particularly the disapproval of his superiors in the monastery where his fresh painting on the walls seemed too much like flesh and blood, too real to be holy. Even now, he says:

... the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes  
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,  
The heads shake still ...

But I must assume that, having recalled and challenged these external influences that might have been hindrances to me, they could be considered exorcised and dismissed.

More important than these external obstacles, of course, are those of my own making. Is it possible that as I read I may find myself resisting the message of the work because of some unwillingness now or in the past to accept the counsel of those writings? That kind of question comes closer home. Can I approach this book with complete openness to its message?

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Does such openness require the complete surrender of my own judgment? Does it mean I must surrender my own critical faculties? This is a crucial question, and its answer may have much to do with my success or failure in getting the fullest measure of instruction and inspiration from the work. The answer, I am convinced, is that my judgment and my critical faculties, trained as fully as possible and open as far as possible to the influence of the Holy Spirit, must be fully active as I read, so that my reading may not be simply automatic but will engage my whole mind.

The book I chose to reread as if it were my first experience was *Christ's Object Lessons*, partly because through the years I had found it a helpful and inspiring book, focusing as it does on Jesus' most characteristic teaching. Partly, I suppose, because it is the work of Ellen White I have known the longest—for as a very young and not very successful student colporteur I had canvassed with *Christ's Object Lessons*.

Since that time I have read it in various ways—sometimes sequentially as one normally reads a book, sometimes searching for statements to support a point or clarify an idea, more often in connection with a class. When I used to teach Freshman English, it was my practice to use the “Talents” chapter as one of the first assignments, and I can still think of no better statement for the thoughtful consideration of students at the outset of their college experience, no more impressive motivation for making the most of one's college opportunities, than that chapter, still my favorite section of *Christ's Object Lessons*.

Rereading the book, I felt more strongly than I ever had before the simplicity and directness of its expression. How perfectly appropriate it is to a study of the parables of Jesus, themselves so unadorned, yet beautiful in their spare simplicity.

[192] Ellen White expresses herself in the least egotistical of styles, never diverting attention from the thought to the manner of expression. It is a style that rejects display yet avoids flatness. As I read I thought often of a passage in *The Desire of Ages* describing the language and manner of Jesus in His ministry, since many of the qualities mentioned there she clearly exemplifies in her own writing:

“He made truth beautiful by presenting it in the most direct and simple way. His language was pure, refined, and clear as a running stream.... His illustrations were taken from the things of daily life, and although they were simple, they had in them a wonderful depth of meaning.... Deep, unprejudiced thinkers received His teaching, and found that it tested their wisdom.... The most highly educated were charmed with His words, and the uneducated were always profited. He had a message for the illiterate; and He made even the heathen to understand that He had a message for them.”—Pages 253, 254.

When I had finished my reading and sat quietly reflecting on the experience, certain impressions dominated all the rest. I feel whenever I read a remarkable book as though I am curiously in touch with the mind and personality of its author.

One of the marvels of the Written Word, of course, is that through books one can live with persons who are in many ways superior to those he lives with and with whom he shares his daily responsibilities. So in this reading I felt the inspiration of that association. It was not really a matter of new insights—I had known the book rather well. It was rather the stimulation of fresh response to what I already knew, or of reinforcing and strengthening my awareness of certain truths, or of reassurance about concerns or perplexities in my own life.

My response, naturally, was partly the result of the questions I was then thinking about. My attention was caught particularly by those statements that spoke to my present need. In a sense, such a book becomes a new book to us each time we read it, because our needs and problems differ from time to time. I often found myself wondering, when I came upon a previously marked passage, what particular problem or what special need had made that passage eloquent to me? What was I concerned about when I had marked it for special emphasis?

Mrs. White identifies three major themes in the ministry of Jesus: (1) the paternal tenderness and abundant grace of God, (2) the holiness of God's character and His Law, and (3) Jesus Himself as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.—Page 40. These are consequently the major themes of *Christ's Object Lessons*. In this reading I was especially aware of emphasis on the first, "the paternal tenderness and abundant grace of God." Possibly it was because I was then particularly burdened for certain persons who seemed wholly indifferent to the Lord's claims that I found it reassuring to come upon repeated references to the way God reaches out for those who are not reaching out for Him, to His compassion and concern for the indifferent, the hostile, and the rebellious.

"We may task our imagination to the utmost," she says, "and then we shall see only dimly the outlines of a love that is unexplainable, that is as high as heaven, but that stooped to the earth to stamp the

image of God on all mankind. Yet it is possible for us to see all that we can bear of the divine compassion.”—Page 129.

I was impressed as never before by the number of references to the Christian’s privilege and his obligation to share the love of God with others. The passage that spoke it most impressively to me was this one:

“Love is the basis of godliness. Whatever the profession, no man has pure love to God unless he has unselfish love for his brother. But we can never come into possession of this spirit by *trying* to love others. What is needed is the love of Christ in the heart. When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously. The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within—when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance.”—Page 384.

As one concerned with learning and with higher education, I could not help being encouraged and stimulated by an emphasis not only on the importance of the truths we have inherited, so to speak, but also on the necessity for that kind of study that opens up new truth to us. My own spirit warmed to such statements as this:

[194] “In every age there is a new development, of truth, a message of God to the people of that generation. The old truths are all essential; new truth is not independent of the old, but an unfolding of it. It is only as the old truths are understood that we can comprehend the new.... But it is the light which shines in the fresh unfolding of truth that glorifies the old. He who rejects or neglects the new does not really possess the old. For him it loses its vital power and becomes but a lifeless form.”—Pages 127, 128.

These and many other impressions rewarded my rereading of *Christ’s Object Lessons*. But what I felt most strongly, and what inspired me most throughout my reading, was the depth and the intensity and the sensitiveness of Ellen White’s personal response to the Scriptures. They obviously had great immediacy for her, a pressing reality, a vigorously present life. Repeatedly she warns against distortion of their message, rebuking those who make the Word of God mysterious and obscure and in doing so rob the Bible of its power. If so, the hearers cannot cry out, “Did not our heart

burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"

Always concerned with the education of the young, she wants the Bible to be so taught as to be, forever, a living book. "The Bible will not become a tiresome book to the student. Under a wise instructor the word will become more and more desirable. It will be as the bread of life, and will never grow old. Its freshness and beauty will attract and charm the children and youth. It is like the sun shining upon the earth, perpetually imparting brightness and warmth, yet never exhausted."—Page 132.

I often sensed that Ellen White's heart must have burned within her as she spoke of the Scripture and the gospel message it embodies. Here, for example:

"In those who possess it, the religion of Christ will reveal itself as a vitalizing, pervading principle, a living, working, spiritual energy. There will be manifest the freshness and power and joyousness of perpetual youth. The heart that receives the word of God is not a pool that evaporates, not like a broken cistern that loses its treasure. It is like a mountain stream fed by unfailing springs, whose cool, sparkling waters leap from rock to rock, refreshing the weary, the thirsty, the heavy laden."—Page 130.

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I was surprised to note that I had not marked it before. Reading such passages I realized that I had never known personally anyone who responded to the words of Scripture so fully as Ellen White seems clearly to have done, and the greatest benefit from my reading of *Christ's Object Lessons* was, I think, new stimulation and new motivation to make that Word central in my own experience and a desire to seek a fuller and more intensely personal response to it than I had ever known before.

*Loma Linda, California*

*October 1, 1972*

**Morris L. Venden**

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**Morris L. Venden, pastor of the La Sierra church at Loma Linda University, also teaches in the university's religion department. During 1969-1972, he conducted Weeks of Religious Emphasis on eight college campuses.**

**After receiving his A.B. from La Sierra College in 1953 he took advanced studies at Andrews University, Oregon State University, and the University of Colorado. He has served as a pastor in all four of the California conferences, in addition to the Oregon and Colorado conferences.**



## Chapter 26—My Confidence in Ellen White

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I am a third-generation Adventist, a second-generation preacher who grew up on the “sawdust trail” with my father and uncle—the “Venden Brothers” evangelistic team. I have always had confidence in their experience, in the message I’ve heard them preach, and in their love and respect for the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. These writings were never used to club me over the head or to force me to good behavior. Perhaps this tolerance prevented some of the hang-ups I see manifested toward the church by some young people today.

There was a time, however, when I became grimly aware that God has no grandsons—only sons—and that each one must have his own private birth into the kingdom of God. No one becomes a Christian on mother’s apron strings and no one turns preacher sliding on father’s coattail. It happened like this:

Father was a preacher, uncle was a preacher, cousin was a preacher, and brother was to be a preacher. What else could a young fellow do but plan to be a preacher? I had thought of being a cowboy or a drummer but I didn’t seem to get off the ground with either plan. So I studied theology at La Sierra College. I guess I was what could be called a “good liver” during those years—not getting into too much trouble.

Graduation came along with a call to the ministry and the beginning of my own home. I began to preach good old Adventist sermons from my file—with something (apologies to my homiletics professor) from Haynes, something from Richards, something from Bunch ... from father.. and from uncle. And then three years later I came into great trouble—trouble that had started small but had grown to giant proportions. It gnawed at my stomach until the ulcer came, it kept me awake at night with jangled nerves. I was discovering that, preacher as I was, probably a year from ordination, I didn’t know what this business of the Christian religion was all about from personal experience. I was to read about this problem later in these

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words by Ellen White: “There are those who profess to serve God, while they rely upon their own efforts to obey His law, to form a right character, and secure salvation. Their hearts are not moved by any deep sense of the love of Christ, but they seek to perform the duties of the Christian life as that which God requires of them in order to gain heaven. Such religion is worth nothing.”—[Steps to Christ, 44](#).

The great search for personal meaning began. At first I asked people how to find reality in the Christian life, but they didn’t seem to help. This inability on the part of Christian friends made me more discouraged than ever. I was about ready to give up when the thought dawned that I hadn’t yet searched in *books* for the answer to my dilemma. Not wanting to look among the simple works of men’s writings, I preferred something inspired. However, the Bible was not meaningful to me for personal experience at that time. It was only an encyclopedia from which to get certain information for my “assignments” as a preacher.

One day I sat down to read *Steps to Christ*. Using a pencil, I underlined everything the book told me to do in order to be a Christian. This work was painstakingly frustrating for two reasons: (1) in the end almost the entire book was underlined; (2) most of the underlined passages spoke of intangibles such as “beholding the Lamb,” “giving the heart,” and “surrendering the will.” I was about ready to give up again when another thought dawned on me. Although I wasn’t any closer to a concrete, verbal answer than I’d been before, *something had happened to me* that I could neither explain nor deny.

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I read *Steps to Christ* again; this time I underlined twice only those things that were tangible to me. It was surprising to discover only three things necessary to become and to remain a Christian. Bible study, prayer, and sharing with others what these meant to me. At first these avenues seemed much too simple, but on second thought I had to admit I wasn’t spending much time with any of these three except as it was necessary for my “job.” Could it be that I was like Grandma going around looking for her glasses when they were on her head?

I began to read *The Desire of Ages* concurrently with the gospel writers, in order to study the life and message of Jesus. At first it

seemed to be simply more information and more theory. But one day I found myself standing alongside Nicodemus; he too had come to the Lord in order to discuss religion. Jesus laid bare his motive, and Nicodemus from that time studied Scripture in a new way; not for the discussion of a theory but in order to find life for his own soul. (See [The Desire of Ages, 175.](#))

A thoughtful hour at the beginning of each day to seek fellowship with Jesus through His Word and through prayer [The Desire of Ages, 83](#)) led me to the surprising discovery that Jesus had found me! I had thought that I was looking for Jesus, but Jesus had been looking for me. And so I entered into a new experience. My problems did not all suddenly vanish, but one of the first things the Spirit brings, I discovered, is peace. Now, one cannot have inward peace and ulcers at the same time. So what antacids had failed to do, *The Desire of Ages* and the Gospels had accomplished.

I didn't realize it at first, but what I was actually discovering was the great experience of righteousness by faith. Ellen White had led me into it when I needed it most, and I shall always be grateful. I have tried to pursue other devotional methods, but I always come back to *The Desire of Ages* and the Gospels as the basis for my personal daily experience with Christ. Let me share some of the breakthroughs in understanding that have come through this study:

1. Christianity and salvation are *based* upon knowing Christ. “Religion means the abiding of Christ in the heart, and where He is, the soul goes on in spiritual activity, ever growing in grace, ever going on to perfection.... The sum and substance of the whole matter of Christian grace and experience is contained in believing on Christ, in knowing God and His Son whom He hath sent.”—[The Review and Herald, May 24, 1892.](#)

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2. We get to know Christ in the same way we get to know one another—by talking to Him (prayer), listening to Him (Bible), and going places and doing things together (witness). “Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies on the merits of the Saviour. By prayer, by the study of His Word, by faith in His abiding presence, the weakest of human beings may live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold them by a hand that will never let go.”—[The Ministry of Healing, 182.](#)

3. We don't read the Bible primarily for information, nor do we pray primarily to get answers, but we do both for *communication!* "In this communion with Christ, through prayer and the study of the great and precious truths of His Word, we shall as hungry souls be fed; as those that thirst, we shall be refreshed at the fountain of life."—[Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, 113](#).

4. We don't change our lives (repent) in order to come to Christ, we come to Christ just as we are and He changes our lives. "If you see your sinfulness, do not wait to make yourself better. How many there are who think they are not good enough to come to Christ. Do you expect to become better through your own efforts? ... We can do nothing of ourselves. We must come to Christ just as we are."—[Steps to Christ, 31](#).

5. The surrender of and right use of the "will" means to give up on ourselves and our ability to do anything at all apart from Christ, and then to use our will power toward knowing and maintaining a close relationship with Him. "If you fight the fight of faith with all your will power, you will conquer... It is for you to yield up your will to the will of Jesus Christ; and as you do this, God will immediately take possession and work in you to will and to do of His good pleasure."—[Testimonies for the Church 5:513, 514](#). (See also [Steps to Christ, 47, 48](#).)

[201] 6. While we are growing in this state of constant surrender to Christ our eternal life is certain. "If one who daily communes with God errs from the path, if he turns a moment from looking steadfastly unto Jesus, it is not because he sins willfully; for when he sees his mistake, he turns again, and fastens his eyes upon Jesus, and the fact that he has erred, does not make him less dear to the heart of God."—[The Review and Herald, May 12, 1896](#).

With these wonderful truths breaking through to my understanding from such books as *The Desire of Ages*, *Steps to Christ*, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, and *Christ's Object Lessons*, I became perplexed over the purpose of another class of Ellen White's writings—her messages of reproof and rebuke. I had seen certain Pharisees in every church who seemed to be sort of self-appointed religious watchdogs, mistakenly using her written rebukes with great ardor.

This problem cleared up for me one day as I read further in her writings: “God rebukes His people for their sins, that He may humble them, and lead them to seek His face.”—[The Review and Herald, February 25, 1902](#). The nine volumes of the *Testimonies* contain, among many other counsels, great warnings that the enemy surrounds us all and that our refuge can be found only on our knees like Jehoshaphat of old. The rebukes, like the Ten Commandments, are as a schoolmaster, not to get us to work on our sins but to send us to the Saviour. Two of the greatest statements I’ve found from Ellen White on this subject are: “Each one will have a close struggle to overcome sin in his own heart. This is at times a very painful and discouraging work; because, as we see the deformities in our character, we keep looking at them, when we should look to Jesus and put on the robe of His righteousness.”—[Testimonies for the Church 9:182, 183](#). “We are not to look at ourselves. The more we dwell upon our own imperfections, the less strength we shall have to overcome them.”—[The Review and Herald, January 14, 1890](#).

As a minister in the church or as a teacher in the classroom, I have found that the inspired commentary on the Bible by Ellen White makes all other commentaries fade into insignificance. She is of tremendous help to young preachers. Young people in general are taking a longer more objective look at her writings instead of accepting the secondhand misuse of her books by some uninformed people. Today many people are realizing that instead of Mrs. White’s being the longest-faced, longest-praying legalist dressed in black, she is one of the best friends young or old may ever get to know. [202]

In conclusion I would like to share a personal burden. It is for those people who complain that we don’t hear enough these days about faith, Christian life, and practical godliness. Listen! If they would take from their shelf some books that God in His kindness has given to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, they’d find all the help they need. They will find in these books the great theme of righteousness by faith which, when properly understood, will prepare a people to be God’s living demonstration of truth and thus finish up the work of preaching the good news of the kingdom in all the world. They will find there tangible help for improving personal devotions and a clearer understanding of God’s Word. They will find channels open by which God can carry forward and ultimately

complete the work He has begun in their heart. That's what many of us have discovered and are continuing to discover through the pen of Ellen White.

*Riverside, California*

*Oct. 1, 1972*

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### Arthur L. White

**Arthur L. White, secretary of the Board of Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications since 1937, is the third son of William C. White, who, in turn, was the third son of James and Ellen White. As guest lecturer for Andrews University, he is called on frequently to conduct graduate classes on the Andrews campus as well as in the university extension schools held from time to time in various parts of the world.**

**Since earning his A.B. degree at Pacific Union College in 1928, he has authored numerous magazine articles, and has been featured as a speaker on innumerable occasions.**

**Chapter 27—Special Impressions Regarding Ellen [204]  
G. White and Her Work [205]**

I grew up in the atmosphere of Ellen White's work. My father, since he was a young man, was associated with Ellen G. White, his mother. He assisted her in her travels, in the handling of her writings, and in preparing them for publication. Denominational interests were always of chief importance. As a boy of 12, at a time when the White Estate office staff was very small and my father was away on trips, I would conduct groups of visitors through the office and vault at Elmshaven, our home near St. Helena, California. But it was not until I had finished school, had completed a year of work in one of our institutions, and was called back to Elmshaven to assist my aging father, that I really became acquainted with Ellen White in a way to assess her work. For more than forty years I have been connected with that work, much of the time carrying responsibility as an officer of the White Estate Board, first as assistant secretary and then as secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate.

I first observed, and then came to sense personally, that those who were the closest to Ellen White in her work—those who were on the inside, if there is an inside—had the greatest confidence in her call and her mission. Close contacts with her in her travels and in her office, combined with their intimate contacts with the documents—all contributed to an unimpaired confidence that she was indeed in a special way led and instructed by God. [206]

If there had been anything deceptive about her work—if anything was put on—this could not be kept from her closest associates who worked with her year after year, some of them for more than twenty-five years. I do not mean to suggest that those intimately connected with her work never passed through experiences that may have raised, for a time, some questions. But the weight of evidence was overwhelming; any such questions arose because of a partial knowledge of the facts, or a misunderstanding of the intent of an action or teaching. Biblical scholars as well as students of Ellen



White understand well the concept that the Lord does not remove all opportunities for question or doubt. (See [The Great Controversy, 57 Testimonies for the Church 5:675, 676](#).) It is significant that somehow God does not remove every hook upon which a doubt may be hung. But when the thoughtful observer backs away from the scene and takes in the overall perspective, the evidence is so overwhelming that any question soon sinks into insignificance. He may have to wait some time for a fully satisfying answer.

Perhaps some such questions may originate in a faulty concept of inspiration; that is, do we demand more of the prophet than we are justified in demanding? The careful student will deny that there are any more occasions for such questions with Ellen White's writings than with Bible writers.

Another impression that deepened in my mind and heart as I worked through the years with the Ellen G. White materials, especially in assisting scholars in their research in specialized fields, was the observation that in each field in which Ellen White wrote, she wrote as a specialist, as an authority, especially in such fields as church administration, doctrine, physiology, hygiene, education, and counsel to gospel workers.

What she wrote in a specialty field could well represent a major portion of a life dedication of one specializing in that field. And yet, uniformly, the writing in each field is weighted with such insights, clear concepts, sound presentation, that the researcher, when he lays his work aside, says in his heart, "Indeed, Ellen White wrote as a specialist in this field."

[207] Perhaps the strongest evidence that has come to me in my work with the E. G. White books, periodical articles, and manuscript files over a period of more than four decades is the unity of teaching in these writings. There may be some progression in a broadening concept of the subject, but no conflicts. Through the years, as vision was added to vision, enlightening amplifications appear, but no backtracking or contradictions. We may take what Ellen White wrote in the 1840's and place it, with no difficulty, alongside what she wrote fifty and sixty years later on the same subject. One complements the other. Statements seem to dovetail in forming a larger composite.

Ellen White touched on many subjects, writing incessantly, traveled in many parts of the world, spoke to audiences large and small,



served as a mother in the home with the care of her husband and children and guests. She could not remember all that she had written. In fact, at times as individuals came to her with questions, she did not call to mind precisely the light that God had given her. At such times she would say, "My mind is now on another subject; you will have to turn to my writings to find what is there presented." But as she wrote under the influence of God the product of her pen presented no conflicts.

A copy editor at the Pacific Press, working on the three-volume *Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*, commented to me one day while we were discussing certain phases of the work, "When we undertook to make a comprehensive index of all of Mrs. White's published books, we took no small risk. For if there had been conflicts or differences in teaching at different times, these would have shown up in bold relief as entry was put beside entry in the *Index*. But the remarkable thing," he said, "is this: We find no such conflicts."

Consequently, after spending a lifetime with the work of Ellen G. White, I can say that to me the prime evidence that she was called to speak for God and that her work was guided by the Holy Spirit is the unity of teaching in all she wrote.

Another point that has impressed itself vividly on my mind and heart is that the principle of inspiration that emerges as we work with the E. G. White materials is sound and easily fathomed. It forms the basis for an answer to many questions that are raised about the way Ellen White did her work, and the teachings themselves. Over the years I have observed that a large part of what seems to be problems to individuals concerning the Spirit of Prophecy is the result of an artificial concept of inspiration, one that is unsound and indefensible.

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We find the situation in Ellen White's life and experience no different from that of the Bible prophets. Any position that establishes an inflexible rule concerning the manner in which God instructed His prophets lays the foundation for problems. We must take into account the way in which the light was given to Ellen White, and the way in which she set this light before the people. A simple understanding of how the process of inspiration operated in practical

ways affords a sound basis for confidence, even in the face of certain problems.

Another observation I have made through the years is the very delicate and tender way in which Ellen White dealt with souls—souls trapped by the enemy, bewitched by false doctrine, intrigued into sin or led to partake of self-assertiveness or rebellion.

She spoke with tears in her eyes. She wrote with a pen dipped in love. She felt heart-rending remorse that one of God’s children should somehow be tripped up. Often, in order to carry its rightful impact, the message was couched in strong words of reproof and correction. But there was always a message of hope. To one young woman who had fallen deep into sin Ellen White, after portraying the villainy of her course and the inevitable destruction of character that would ensue, wrote, “I do not consider your case hopeless; if I did, my pen would not be tracing these lines.”—[Testimonies for the Church 2:562](#).

She encouraged the young woman to look up to Jesus, to place her hand in His hand, to walk by His side, and to imitate His character. Victory, then, would be certain.

She wrote her messages with such feeling, such tenderness, such love, that the reader, blunted as his conscience may have been, could not help realizing that she was writing under the influence of the Holy Spirit, who draws all men to God.

[209] Another observation is that Ellen White never used the gift to elevate herself. She sensed such a danger while yet in her teens, when the visions were first given to her. She prayed that the Lord would spare her from being elevated or proud, and the angel told her that her prayer was answered. This danger, if it threatened, would be curbed. She would be stricken with illness. Anyone familiar with her life story knows of the periods of suffering and illness that she endured—always trustful, always resigned. And she told Elder Loughborough that she suffered a “thorn in the flesh.” This thorn in the flesh was her heart, which gave her considerable discomfort at times.

She never allowed her gift to be a means of personal financial benefit. True, there were returns to her as an author for her literary work. But in this, taking the position that she was a steward of the Lord, she dedicated her financial resources to God’s work. She

tells us that the Lord, observing that she and her husband could be entrusted with means, poured it in; they poured it out.

With more than human insight as to the opportunities of what might be accomplished in certain fields of labor if immediate action were taken, Ellen White not only invested liberally from personal funds, but borrowed to give. She counted on the assured income from her writings, which would eventually provide revenues to meet those obligations. Although she died with some of these obligations still outstanding, they were soon cared for as she had anticipated.

With the greatest care she employed the term *prophet* in connection with her work, because, “in these days, many who boldly claim that they are prophets are a reproach to the cause of Christ; and because my work includes much more than the word ‘prophet’ signifies.”—[Selected Messages 1:32](#). In appropriate forthrightness and humility she declared, “I am instructed that I am the Lord’s messenger.... My Saviour declared me to be His messenger.”—*Ibid.*

One point wherein I never cease to marvel is the innate confidence Ellen White had in men and women with whom she was associated, though, to them, many times messages of the most severe reproof were given. It seems a natural proclivity of the human heart when knowledge of sin and wrong comes to ever remember that person in the light of his shortcomings. Not so Ellen White.

Her confidence in the basic sincerity of humanity never ceases to amaze me. Even though the experiences of some men and women, as they were opened up to her., revealed a vileness of heart, a waywardness that was unexplainable, a perversity of spirit, Ellen White had confidence in the basic sincerity of such individuals. She confidently believed that with the opening up to them of their hearts as God saw them, changes would be made, reformation would follow repentance, strength would follow weakness, and with a soul dedication, God would use them in His service.

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Sometimes as I have read the personal testimonies sent to certain individuals I have wondered that Ellen White could ever again manifest confidence in those who had betrayed their trust. But she saw them repentant sinners, clothed with the robe of Christ’s righteousness, accepted by their Lord, possibly weakened in their experience by their waywardness yet children whom God could use.

My last observation is this: Sometimes a person approaching the time of retirement begins to experience a growing distrust of those who will be picking up the burdens and carrying them, a fearfulness that in the hands of others the cause of God will suffer greatly. Sometimes a bitterness develops toward administration. Not so Ellen White. As the years ripened her experience, she neared the close of her work in full confidence. She looked out over the expanding church with every belief that those entrusted with the work of God would lead it to victory. She saw the church as an organization “to increase in activity and to enlarge her bounds.” And she observed, “While there have been fierce contentions in the effort to maintain our distinctive character, yet we have as Bible Christians ever been on gaining ground.”—[Selected Messages 2:396](#).

[211] In her last message to the General Conference in session in 1913, she wrote of her understanding of the problems the cause would face. She appealed for a deep dedication of heart and life on the part of the workers, and expressed her confidence in these words: “When in the night season I am unable to sleep, I lift my heart in prayer to God, and He strengthens me and gives me the assurance that He is with His ministering servants in the home field and in distant lands. I am encouraged and blessed as I realize that the God of Israel is still guiding His people, and that He will continue to be with them, even to the end.”—[Selected Messages 2:406](#).

Nor did this confidence at any time wane. Late the next year, only a few weeks before the fall in which she broke her hip, terminating her active work, C. C. Crisler, her chief secretary, in a letter to W. C. White, wrote:

“Even when exceedingly brain-weary, your mother seems to find great comfort in the promises of the Word, and often catches up a quotation and completes it when we begin quoting some familiar scripture.... I do not find her discouraged ... over the general outlook throughout the harvest field where her brethren are laboring. She seems to have strong faith in God’s power to overrule, and to bring to pass His eternal purpose through the efforts of those whom He has called to act a part in His great work. She rises above petty criticism, above even the past failures of those who have been reproved, and expresses the conviction, born, apparently, of an innate faith in the church of the living God, that her brethren will remain faithful to

the cause they have espoused, and that the Lord will continue with them to the end, and grant them complete victory over every device of the enemy.

“Faith in God’s power to sustain her through the many weaknesses attendant on old age; faith in the precious promises of God’s word; faith in her brethren who bear the burden of the work; faith in the final triumph of the third angel’s message—this is the full faith your mother seems to enjoy every day and every hour. This is the faith that fills her heart with joy and peace, even when suffering great physical weakness, and unable to make progress in literary lines. A faith such as this would inspire any one who could witness it.”—[Life Sketches of Ellen G. White](#), 436, 437.

This is the Ellen G. White I see as from day to day I work intimately with the documents of the White Estate.

*Takoma Park, Maryland*

*January 1, 1973*

**Kenneth H. Wood**

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**Former positions include associate editor, *Review and Herald*; secretary, lay activities and Sabbath school departments, Columbia Union and New Jersey conferences; pastoral-evangelistic work in Cleveland, Ohio; Charleston, West Virginia; and Central California Conference.**

**He earned his M.A. degree at Andrews University in 1959.**

## Chapter 28—I Am Convinced

With awe and gratitude I contemplate the amazing love and wisdom of God that gave to the remnant church an inspired messenger. For me the writings of Ellen G. White have enabled me to conquer uncertainty, doubt, and skepticism. They have provided guidance in times of perplexity, stability in times of personal or professional storm, and courage when difficulties seemed overwhelming.

My contact with these inspired writings began when I was a child in China. As the son of missionaries, I attended Week of Prayer meetings held in one of the homes on the mission compound and listened attentively as readings were presented night by night. The various passages quoted from the writings of Ellen White reached my heart. The Spirit of the Lord impressed me that God was speaking through these writings. Whether the passage was a description of the reality of heaven, a call to repentance, or a challenge to the church, my inner response was, “This is God speaking; this is truth.”

I have always been grateful that my parents never once said or did anything that would undermine confidence in the prophetic gift. They endeavored to build faith. Likewise, my teachers were positive in their approach to the prophetic gift. Never did they depreciate the value of the inspired writings, nor explain away their pointed counsels.

The quotations from Mrs. White’s writings that followed the questions in the Sabbath school lesson quarterly also made a deep impression on me. In those days (the early 1920’s) children studied the senior lesson along with their parents. Daily family worship in our home included the study of one or two questions from the Sabbath school lesson. As the notes were read I felt a deep conviction that the authority behind these note-quotations was the same as that behind Scripture.

In the academy one of my teachers called my attention to this passage in the book *Education*: “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.”—Page 57. The exalted concept of integrity challenged me.

When I was in college I began to read seriously various books such as *Early Writings*, *The Desire of Ages*, and the *Testimonies*. The scenes described in *Early Writings* made a deep impression on my mind. I was inspired by the views of the future. I was grateful that God had given Mrs. White glimpses of the eternal world. I was stirred by a desire to be ready for the coming of Christ, no matter how great the necessary personal sacrifice or commitment.

At the same time, I let my imagination dwell on what it would be like to be lost. Mrs. White’s description of the terrible disappointment of the wicked as they look upon the Holy City and realize that they are forever barred from it, was so vivid that I felt as if I were standing with the lost outside the city. I shared their despair, and determined that by the grace of God I would dissociate myself from evil and evil-doers, and would identify thoroughly with Christ and the redeemed.

Later in life I came across a passage that gave me great confidence in God’s ability to save me. Here it is—perhaps the simplest yet most powerful statement Mrs. White ever made on the subject of justification by faith:

“When we surrender ourselves wholly to God., and fully believe, the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. The conscience can be freed from condemnation. Through faith in His blood, all may be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Thank God that we are not dealing with impossibilities. We may claim sanctification. We may enjoy the favor of God. We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute. Ye are accepted in the Beloved.”—[Selected Messages 2:32, 33](#).

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With this passage I have always associated one from page 25 of *The Desire of Ages*. The two show how entirely dependent we are on Jesus; He is our *all*:

“Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we



had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’”

For sheer spiritual enchantment I found that perhaps nothing compares to reading and rereading the book *Steps to Christ*, for it deals with the most profound religious questions in simple, understandable language. It makes the plan of salvation sound so reasonable. By describing so clearly God’s love, and His initiative in reaching out for lost mankind, it seems to make eternal life attainable for even the weakest and most degraded.

Shortly before the 1936 General Conference session, held in San Francisco, I began reading *The Desire of Ages*. When, as a student, I had opportunity to attend the session, I took the book with me and read at least one chapter every night after returning to my room from the evening meeting. Never had I had an experience like this. As I read, Christ’s life became real. I found myself confronted with the Saviour as a person. My heart was drawn out to Him in love and sympathy. I identified with His problems as He endeavored to avoid the traps laid for Him by His enemies. And when I reached the chapter describing the crucifixion it seemed as if I were standing at the foot of the cross with the disciples. I could not help saying to myself, “This Man was the Son of God. He is my Saviour.”

[216] As I continued to read Ellen White’s books, the wide range of topics she dealt with amazed me. She wrote on medicine, nutrition, and health. She wrote on education, administration, and the publishing work. Unconsciously the conviction grew in my heart that this writer was drawing on a supernatural reservoir of wisdom. She was a penman for the Infinite One.

At a time when the world of medicine was following many procedures that handicapped the sick in their attempt to recover health, Mrs. White set forth a broad, practical program of healthful living. She said that proper diet is closely related to good health. She said that natural elements such as fresh air, sunshine, rest, water, and exercise are important to health. She said that the mind and body are closely related and that a cheerful spirit, hopeful attitude, and trust in God help the body maintain optimum health. She also pointed out the importance of preventive medicine, outlining health habits that would help the body ward off sickness and disease. In all of this she was far ahead of her time.



Later, as I studied history, I discovered that during the decades of her ministry the world of ideas was in a ferment. Philosophies and theories concerning history, the Bible, medicine, education, the human mind, and many other subjects were being propounded. Yet with amazing skill she had avoided every idea that had in it the seeds of destruction for true religious faith, and had selected the correct theories in a galaxy of fields. I was awed by this discovery and exclaimed almost aloud, "Surely God guided her!"

During my life I have encountered various objections to Mrs. White. For example, I have heard people say, "You Adventists put the writings of Mrs. White in the place of the Bible." But having examined this point carefully in my own experience and in the life of others, I can say that the charge is without foundation. Mrs. White herself continually urged the study of the Bible, and said that if people had been diligent in this pursuit her writings would have been unnecessary. They serve as a magnifying glass to enlarge upon and make clear the great truths set forth in Scripture, leaving people without excuse for ignorance of God's will.

Critics endeavor to undermine confidence in the inspiration of Ellen White by pointing out that her writings apparently contain historical inaccuracies, or that they use language borrowed from other sources, or that a few of her predictions seem impossible of fulfillment. As a young man these charges disturbed me. Later, with a broader understanding of the subject of inspiration, I discovered that any criticism that could be directed at Ellen White's writings could also be directed at the Bible. God takes a person with all of his genetic background, his cultural influences, his IQ, and his vocabulary, and seeks through him to impart truth. The prophet uses the best words he can command at the time of writing. As his education and experience increase, he may be able to describe more vividly a scene shown him earlier in vision. In later editions of a book he may rewrite portions, or use words here or there that he feels convey various ideas more accurately.

Moreover, a prophet gathers information on many subjects just as does an uninspired person. For example, a prophet reads road signs just as does anyone else. Thus if he were describing a vision involving Jerusalem and Jericho, he might from commonly accepted sources indicate the distance between the two places. If later he dis-

covered that his information was inaccurate—perhaps a mile or two off—he would include the more accurate information at the earliest opportunity. This broader understanding of the matter of inspiration has greatly increased my confidence not only in the writings of Ellen G. White, but in the Bible. My faith is no longer narrowly based. It cannot be upset by critics who exclaim triumphantly, “Look, Mrs. White made a mistake!”

I have discovered also that, like some predictions of Bible writers, a number of Mrs. White’s predictions were conditional. Obviously, because of Israel’s failure to accept Christ as the Messiah, it is impossible for some Old Testament prophecies that were based on geography to be fulfilled except in principle. The promises to a specific nation have been transferred to the church that is located not in a small strip of land in the Middle East but throughout the inhabited world.

[218] If man does his part in a given situation, God is able to do His. If man fails, God must seek other ways of accomplishing His purposes. Thus God made it plain to Ellen White that it was His intention that His people should carry out His purposes in a much shorter time than has been the case. Obviously, then, a prophecy that was made on condition that the people of God should finish their work in a few decades, could not be fulfilled exactly as outlined when God’s people have taken more than a century to carry out the gospel commission.

I mention these objections because at one time they seemed large to me; but with a broader understanding of the subject of inspiration they have assumed a proper perspective. They no longer seem of consequence. I now have a relaxed, trusting attitude toward the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White. The security of my faith is no longer threatened.

Perhaps the greatest reason I accept and love the writings of Ellen G. White as inspired is that they meet the test of the Bible statement, “Ye shall know them by their fruits” ([Matthew 7:16](#)). When I spend time with Ellen White’s writings and give careful heed to their counsel, my spiritual experience deepens, my awareness of God’s presence is sharpened, my judgment is improved. In general, Adventists who are deeply committed to the counsel set forth in the writings of Ellen White grow in grace. Those who are indifferent

to it, seem to make little growth. Often they lose their vision of the uniqueness of the remnant church and with this erosion of faith they give greater room to the world and less to the Holy Spirit in their lives.

The final chapters in the two books *The Great Controversy* and *The Ministry of Healing* are special favorites of mine. The excitement of the final crisis, depicted in *The Great Controversy*, together with Christ's final triumph over evil and the cleansing of the vast universe from every trace of sin, always captures my imagination and increases my confidence in the reality of the conflict between Christ and Satan. The final chapters in *The Ministry of Healing* spell out the practical aspects of Christianity and are filled with gems of wisdom and inspiration. Here are a few samples:

“Trials and obstacles are the Lord's chosen methods of discipline and His appointed conditions of success.”—Page 471.

“Let us remember that while the work we have to do may not be our choice, it is to be accepted as God's choice for us. Whether pleasing or unpleasing, we are to do the duty that lies nearest.”— [219] Pages 472, 473.

“In the future life the mysteries that here have annoyed and disappointed us will be made plain. We shall see that our seemingly unanswered prayers and disappointed hopes have been among our greatest blessings.”—Page 474.

“We need to beware of self-pity.”—Page 476.

“Of all the gifts that heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor.”—Page 478.

“God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as coworkers with Him.”—Page 479.

“Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service of God supreme, will find perplexities vanish and a plain path before their feet.”—Page 481.

“In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, have faith in God. He is working out His will, doing all things well in behalf of His people.”—Page 482.

“In the life of Christ, everything was made subordinate to His work, the great work of redemption which He came to accomplish. And the same devotion, the same self-denial and sacrifice, the same subjection to the claims of the word of God, is to be manifest in His disciples.”—Page 502.

Truly God has given to His remnant people rich treasures of wisdom through Ellen White and her writings. With many others, I am grateful for this gift. As never before I am convinced of the truth of the statement: “Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper” (2 [Chronicles 20:20](#)).

*Takoma Park, Maryland*

*October 15, 1972*

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### Jean Zurcher

**Jean Zurcher, presently secretary of the Euro-Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists, authored *Ny Apokalypsy* (Commentary on the book of Revelation in the Malagasy language), *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, *Christian Perfection*, and numerous magazine articles.**

**From 1960-1970 Dr. Zurcher was president of French Adventist Seminary, Collonges-sous-Salève, France; exchange professor at Atlantic Union College; president, Indian Ocean Union Junior College, Madagascar, and education secretary of the Indian Ocean Union; Bible teacher at French Adventist Seminary, in addition to radio and evangelistic activities.**

**He received his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Geneva.**

## Chapter 29—Everything I Needed

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Confidence in Ellen G. White has never been merely a point of doctrine with me. It may have been at the very beginning of my Christian way, since I did acknowledge that the gift of prophecy had been manifested in her life and writings before I had opportunity to experience it personally. I believed because my spiritual advisers told me, and I had full confidence in them. However, as I continued to study and search for truth, my confidence in the testimony of others gave way to that faith which is rooted in personal experience, the word put to test. Soon I came to realize that a true understanding of her writings—of the Bible—can be acquired only by putting their teachings into practice as they are learned.

My first experience, although rather commonplace, made a deep impression on me, all the more vivid because I was only seventeen years of age, had just accepted the Advent message, and was in my first year at an Adventist college. As I had not been reared in an Adventist home, nor had I had any contact with our institutions; everything was new to me. Even the smallest details of the life and faith of a Seventh-day Adventist Christian impressed me deeply because of my newness in the church.

During a class discussion on diet and health, our professor thought it an opportune time to review some of the basic principles of healthful living. I do not remember everything that was said that day, but I shall never forget the counsel regarding the drinking of water with meals. At that time I suffered distress and bloating following my meals, and I could not understand why. When the teacher mentioned that the drinking of water during the meal was harmful to digestion, I traced the relation from cause to effect and realized that this could be my difficulty. I decided to investigate further.

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I reread the counsel given by Ellen White: “Food should not be washed down.”—[Counsels on Health, 119](#). “Many make a mistake in drinking cold water with their meals.... And the colder the water,

the greater the injury to the stomach.... The more liquid there is taken into the stomach with the meals, the more difficult it is for the food to digest.”—[Counsels on Diet and Foods, 420](#).

I decided to put this counsel to test, to prove it as quickly as possible. I did not have to wait very long. The experiment supplied conclusive evidence. Not only was there a definite improvement in my well-being, but, even more important, my confidence in Ellen White was confirmed. As insignificant as it was, that experience provided me, a very young Seventh-day Adventist, with proof of the worth of her counsels, and the starting point for a personal conviction that has continued to grow through the years. Thanks also to this experience, the principles of health reform have never seemed restrictive nor coercive to me. I view them rather as divine revelation, pointing out dietary errors in order to correct all kinds of bad eating habits—with a healthier, happier life in view.

[223] My second experience proved to be decisive in my choice of service to God’s cause. It happened in 1941, the year that *Messages to Young People* was first published in the French language. Reading that book led to what I believe was a God-directed decision in my life. I had just completed the ministerial course at the French Adventist Seminary at Collonges, France, and the problem of knowing whether I should enter the work immediately or continue my studies at the university loomed up before me. The leaders of our work whom I consulted offered differing opinions, making it difficult for me to find the answer I needed, one that I could recognize as being a clear statement of God’s will.

Fortunately God Himself revealed the solution to me. He led my eyes to the inspired passage found on page 176 of *Messages to Young People*, written for every young man in the situation in which I found myself: “It is right that you should feel that you must climb to the highest round of the educational ladder. Philosophy and history are important studies; but your sacrifice of time and money will avail nothing if you do not use your attainments for the honor of God and the good of humanity. Unless the knowledge of science is a stepping-stone to the attainment of the highest purposes, it is worthless.”

I could not hope for a more definite answer; to me, it was God’s personal reply. And as such, it went infinitely beyond what I had

dared to ask in my prayers. My immediate concern had been only to know whether I should start my university study program at that time. God's answer, which I accepted to the letter, seemed also to indicate the courses I should pursue. As a result, I refused an offer to study medicine and devoted myself completely to the study of history and philosophy. More than that, I took to heart the advice contained in that divine message, and it has served as a constant reminder of the uselessness of study, whatever the subject may be, if that study is not dedicated to the service of God and the good of mankind. That counsel in *Messages to Young People* verily became my goal in life: to advance my education as high as possible and to employ all my knowledge to the honor of God and the good of humanity.

Ellen G. White's writings have always been a marvelous source of counsel for me: in my life as a student in quest of knowledge, as well as in my service as a teacher, a worker in foreign lands, or a leader in God's church. I have learned through manifold experiences that there can be no failure for one who works in harmony with God's direction as given through the Spirit of Prophecy writings.

Some years later, when I considered writing a thesis leading to a doctorate, I promised myself that I would not undertake the work simply to acquire another degree. Instead, I would devote the time of my research to a subject worthy of my effort and interest and useful to the cause of God. I had no trouble finding such a subject. For several years the statement found on page 588 of *The Great Controversy* had attracted my attention: "Through two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome." [224]

In the study of philosophy, is there a more classical subject than the immortality of the soul? The fact that Ellen White points it out as one of the two great errors leading to the final conflict seemed to indicate to me that I should try to expose, thoroughly and convincingly, that monstrous error, as much from the viewpoint of philosophy and pure logic as from the point of view of theology and Biblical exegesis. The more I thought about it, the more convinced I became that this should be the subject of my thesis. Supporting this conviction

was the significant passage from *The Story of Redemption*: “Those who would stand in the time of peril must understand the testimony of the Scriptures concerning the nature of man and the state of the dead.”—Page 398.

My professors did not readily accept my proposition. Had not everything already been said on that subject? Was not the immortality of the soul a fact no longer disputed? For some people, to put it in doubt would immediately be considered as a kind of sacrilege against the hallowed shrine of philosophical thought. Whatever the chances, it seemed the opportune moment for me to unmask this flattering illusion, this most cunning of lies, the one that man has never ceased believing since the very beginning of time. At the same time, I determined to bring out into the open a Bible truth, which, according to Ellen G. White, is one of the most important: “The subjects of the Sabbath, the nature of man, and the testimony of Jesus are the great and important truths to be understood; these will prove as an anchor to hold God’s people in these perilous times. But the mass of mankind despise the truths of God’s word and prefer fables.”—*Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, p. 98.

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In undertaking to prepare a thesis on the nature and destiny of man, there was no question in my mind about going to the sources of our faith. Along with my research into philosophy and theology, this study afforded me an opportunity to dig deeply into all that Ellen G. White had written on the nature of man. As an educator, the following fundamental counsel had forced me to reflect on this subject: “In order to understand what is comprehended in the work of education, we need to consider both the nature of man and the purpose of God in creating him.”—[Education, 14](#).

What first struck me in my comparative study was the masterly way in which the subject is treated. To be sure, nowhere is it presented in a systematic way, but all through Ellen G. White’s writings one is aware of a conception of man that is diametrically opposed to the philosophical and theological thinking of her time. The outcome of a new understanding of the Bible, this discernment is expressed in a language and in terms that only those who specialize in this field of study can truly appreciate.

Although the writings of Ellen G. White contain a veritable mine of scientific, theological, and even philosophical truths, until now



only the first has challenged our study. An interesting investigation would be to compare revelations made in her writings with late findings in psychology and metaphysics. Such a study would show that she revealed an even greater understanding beyond the knowledge of her day and ours in these fields, because it is evident that scientific discoveries and the extraordinary progress that has been made in the field of medicine have not changed the fundamental ideas of our contemporaries on the nature and destiny of man. Their premises still retain mythical ideas, inherited from ancient philosophers, which traditional theological teaching has only popularized.

In Adventist circles we are so accustomed to the Biblical conception of man that it is difficult for us to realize how new this idea is. We also risk not realizing that we owe this understanding to the revelations of God through Ellen White. It is inconceivable that in her day a woman of Ellen G. White's culture could, by herself, have arrived at the conception of man that is in harmony with Bible truth and with scientific facts verified only by the most recent theological and medical research. As a specialist in this field I feel able to judge, and to me these facts all point to divine inspiration. Although I did not wait for this personal discovery to believe in the gift of the Spirit, this proof gave me an added confidence and supplied a fresh experimental basis for my faith in the divine inspiration of the writings of Ellen G. White.

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These are only a few of my experiences in relation to the writings of Ellen G. White. Of course, it would have been easy for me to enumerate multiple reasons for having unlimited confidence, but I have restricted my account to a few definite experiences. As a student I learned the counsels early in my experience. As a teacher I taught them for several years. As a believer I have had opportunity to test some of them in a very special way. Since nothing can replace personal experience, my testimony is based on what I know personally.

These experiences have become living validations of the soundness of the counsels given by God's messenger, in my life; she was everything I needed in my preparation for God's service, in the forming of my way of thinking, in my philosophy, in my faith, and in the message that I preach. To me, these writings have always been special revelations given for a better understanding of God's Word,

divine messages directed to God's last church, unique truths received from above for a people charged with a holy mission. But, above all, for me Ellen G. White's books are God-inspired counsel, leading to a personal experience that grows more real and more profound with time, so that while I am preaching to others I myself might have the joy of sharing in their marvelous promises.

*Berne, Switzerland*

*June 1972*