

Dealing with EGW and the Challenges Raised

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The Purpose of the Spirit of Prophecy

"God has, in that Word, promised to give visions in the "last days"; not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and **TO CORRECT THOSE WHO ERR FROM BIBLE TRUTH...** {EW 78.1}

"...for there is instruction that the Lord has given me for His people. It is light that they should have, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. This is now to come before the people, because **IT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO CORRECT SPECIOUS ERRORS AND TO SPECIFY WHAT IS TRUTH...** {3SM 32.2}

"God is either teaching His church, reproving their wrongs and strengthening their faith, or He is not. **THIS WORK IS OF GOD, OR IT IS NOT. GOD DOES NOTHING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SATAN.** My work for the past thirty years bears the stamp of God or the stamp of the enemy. There is no halfway work in the matter. The Testimonies are of the Spirit of God, or of the devil... {4T 229.2}

"THE MESSAGES THAT GOD HAS GIVEN ME HAVE BEEN COMMUNICATED TO HIS PEOPLE BOTH BY WORD OF MOUTH AND IN PRINTED FORM. Thus my work has been made doubly sure. I am instructed that the Lord, by His infinite power, has preserved the right hand of His messenger for more than half a century, in order that **THE TRUTH MAY BE WRITTEN OUT AS HE BIDS ME WRITE IT FOR PUBLICATION, IN PERIODICALS AND BOOKS. Why?—BECAUSE IF IT WERE NOT THUS WRITTEN OUT, WHEN THE PIONEERS IN THE FAITH SHALL DIE, THERE WOULD BE MANY NEW IN THE FAITH WHO WOULD SOMETIMES ACCEPT AS MESSAGES OF TRUTH TEACHINGS THAT CONTAIN ERRONEOUS SENTIMENTS AND DANGEROUS FALLACIES...** {Lt136-1906.8}

"I am now looking over my diaries and copies of letters written for several years back, commencing before I went to Europe, before you were born. I have the most precious matter to reproduce and place before the people in testimony form. While I am able to do this work, the people must have these things to revive past history, that they may see that **THERE IS ONE STRAIGHT CHAIN OF TRUTH, WITHOUT ONE HERETICAL SENTENCE, IN THAT WHICH I HAVE WRITTEN.** This, I am instructed, is to be a living letter to all in regard to my faith.{Lt329a-1905.3}

"In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. **IN THESE DAYS HE SPEAKS TO THEM BY THE TESTIMONIES OF HIS SPIRIT.** There was never a time when God instructed His people more earnestly than He instructs them now concerning His will and the course that He would have them pursue. (Testimonies Vol 5, pg 661)

"The Holy Ghost **IS THE AUTHOR OF THE SCRIPTURES AND OF THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY** (Letter 92, 1900)

"In his teaching, Elder Simpson showed that **THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY HAS AN IMPORTANT PART TO ACT IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TRUTH.** {Lt400-1906.10}

"When men venture to criticize the Word of God, they venture on sacred, holy ground, and had better fear and tremble and hide their wisdom as foolishness. God sets no man to pronounce judgment on His Word, **SELECTING SOME THINGS AS INSPIRED AND DISCREDITING OTHERS AS UNINSPIRED. THE TESTIMONIES HAVE BEEN TREATED IN THE SAME WAY; BUT GOD IS NOT IN THIS.**"—Letter 22, 1889

"WE MUST FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS GIVEN THROUGH THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY. We must love and obey the truth for this time. This will save us from accepting strong delusions. (Testimonies For The Church 8:298)

"One thing is certain: Those Seventh-day Adventists who take their stand under Satan's banner **WILL FIRST GIVE UP THEIR FAITH IN THE WARNINGS AND REPROOFS CONTAINED IN THE TESTIMONIES OF GOD'S SPIRIT.** (Letter 156, 1903)

"Satan is . . . constantly pressing in the spurious--to lead away from the truth. **THE VERY LAST DECEPTION OF SATAN WILL BE TO MAKE OF NONE EFFECT THE TESTIMONY OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD.** "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov. 29:18). **SATAN WILL WORK INGENIOUSLY, IN DIFFERENT WAYS AND THROUGH DIFFERENT AGENCIES, TO UNSETTLE THE CONFIDENCE OF GOD'S REMNANT PEOPLE IN THE TRUE TESTIMONY.** .(Letter 12, 189)

"It does not become anyone **TO DROP A WORD OF DOUBT HERE AND THERE THAT SHALL WORK LIKE POISON IN OTHER MINDS, SHAKING THEIR CONFIDENCE IN THE MESSAGES WHICH GOD HAS GIVEN,** which have aided in laying the foundation of this work, and have attended it to the present day, in reproofs, warnings, corrections, and encouragements. **TO ALL WHO HAVE STOOD IN THE WAY OF THE TESTIMONIES,** I would say, God has given a message to His people, and His voice will be heard, whether you hear or forbear. Your opposition has not injured me; **BUT YOU MUST GIVE AN ACCOUNT TO THE GOD OF HEAVEN, WHO HAS SENT THESE WARNINGS AND INSTRUCTIONS TO KEEP HIS PEOPLE IN THE RIGHT WAY.** You will have to answer to Him for your blindness, for being a stumbling block in the way of sinners. (GCDB APR.13,1891)

"Some are acting the part of Aaron, to help on the work of apostasy. They have been weighed in the balances, and have been found wanting. Men are spoiling their record, and are proving that they are not to be trusted, but that they will betray the interests of the cause of God, making them the sport of sinners. **THE MESSAGES OF HEAVENLY ORIGIN THAT GOD HAS SENT TO HIS PEOPLE,** to prepare them to stand in the last days, **THEY HAVE SNEERED AND SCORNEED.** But the evidence we have had for the past fifty years of the presence of the Spirit of God with us as a

people, will stand the test of those who are now arraying themselves on the side of the enemy and **BRACING THEMSELVES AGAINST THE MESSAGE OF GOD.** (Testimony to members of the B. C. Church, October 24, 1907)

"THE ENEMY HAS MADE HIS MASTERLY EFFORTS TO UNSETTLE THE FAITH OF OUR OWN PEOPLE IN THE TESTIMONIES, AND WHEN THESE ERRORS COME IN THEY CLAIM TO PROVE ALL THE POSITION BY THE BIBLE, BUT THEY MISINTERPRET THE SCRIPTURES. They make bold assertions, as did Elder Canright, and misapply the prophecies and the Scriptures to prove falsehood. **AND, AFTER MEN HAVE DONE THEIR WORK IN WEAKENING THE CONFIDENCE OF OUR CHURCHES IN THE TESTIMONIES,** they have torn away the barrier, that unbelief in the truth shall become widespread, and there is no voice to be lifted up to stay the force of error. **THIS IS JUST AS SATAN DESIGNED IT SHOULD BE,** and those who have been preparing the way for the people to pay no heed to the warnings and reproofs of the **testimonies of the Spirit of God will see that a tide of errors of all kinds will spring into life. THEY WILL CLAIM SCRIPTURE AS THEIR EVIDENCE, AND DECEPTIONS OF SATAN IN EVERY FORM WILL PREVAIL.**-- Letter 109, 1890, p. 5. (To W. C. White and J. E. White and wife, Dec. 6, 1890.)

"What a battle I am obliged to fight! **MY BRETHREN SEEM TO JUDGE ME AS TAKING POSITIONS THAT ARE NOT NECESSARY. THEY DO NOT SEE THAT GOD IN HIS OWN WISDOM HAS MADE REVELATIONS TO ME WHICH CANNOT BE SUCCESSFULLY CONTRADICTED OR DISPUTED.** Nothing can rub out that which has been presented to me and imprinted on the tablets of my soul. All the oppositions or gainsaying **TO MAKE MY TESTIMONY OF NONE EFFECT ONLY COMPELS FROM ME, BY THE URGENCY OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD, A MORE DECIDED REPETITION,** and to stand on the light revealed with all the force of the strength God has given me.-- Manuscript 25, 1890, p. 1 (Untitled Manuscript, January 7, 1890.)

"SATAN HAS ABILITY TO SUGGEST DOUBTS AND TO DEVISE OBJECTIONS TO THE POINTED TESTIMONY THAT GOD SENDS, AND MANY THINK IT A VIRTUE, A MARK OF INTELLIGENCE IN THEM, TO BE UNBELIEVING AND TO QUESTION AND QUIBBLE. Those who desire to doubt will have plenty of room. God does not propose to remove all occasion for unbelief. He gives evidence, which must be carefully investigated with a humble mind and a teachable spirit, and all should decide from the weight of evidence." [Testimonies for the Church 3:255 (1873).

"IF YOU LOSE CONFIDENCE IN THE TESTIMONIES YOU WILL DRIFT AWAY FROM BIBLE TRUTH. I have been fearful that many would take a questioning, doubting position, and in my distress for your souls I would warn you. How many will heed the warning? As you now hold the Testimonies, should one be given crossing your track, correcting your errors, would you feel at perfect liberty to accept or reject any part or the whole? That which you will be least inclined to receive is the very part most needed." [Testimonies for the Church 5:98 (1882).]

“SOME EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS THAT THE TESTIMONY OF SISTER WHITE CANNOT BE RELIABLE. This is all that many unconsecrated ones want. The testimonies of reproof have checked their vanity and pride; but if they dared, they would go to almost any length in fashion and pride. God will give all such an opportunity to prove themselves and to develop their true characters.” [Testimonies for the Church 3:313 (1873).]

"IT IS SATAN'S PLAN TO WEAKEN THE FAITH OF GOD'S POEPL E IN THE TESTIMONIES. Next follows skepticism in regard to the vital points of our faith, the pillars of our position, then doubt as to the Holy Scriptures, and then the downward march to perdition. When the Testimonies, which were once believed, are doubted and given up, Satan knows the deceived ones will not stop at this; and he redoubles his efforts till he launches them into open rebellion, which becomes incurable and ends in destruction. {4T 211.2}

God has been pleased to give you line upon line and precept upon precept. But there are not many of you that really know what is contained in the Testimonies. You are not familiar with the Scriptures. If you had made God's word your study, with a desire to reach the Bible standard and attain to Christian perfection, you would not have needed the Testimonies. It is because you have neglected to acquaint yourselves with God's inspired Book that He has sought to reach you by simple, direct testimonies, calling your attention to the words of inspiration which you had neglected to obey, and urging you to fashion your lives in accordance with its pure and elevated teachings. {5T 664.3}

"I referred them to ancient Israel. God gave them His law, but they would not obey it. He then gave the ceremonies and ordinances, that, in the performance of these, God might be kept in remembrance. They were so prone to forget Him and His claims upon them that it was necessary to keep their minds stirred up to realize their obligations to obey and honor their Creator. Had they been obedient and loved to keep God's commandments, the multitude of ceremonies and ordinances would not have been required. {5T 666.3}

Now, of course, this is perfectly impossible if Mrs. White herself was teaching error!

Should EGW White be use as a Test of Fellowship?

I was shown in regard to the church at Marquette (Wisconsin) that an unwise course was taken in regard to the visions at the time of organization. There were those who were God's people and yet suspicious of and doubting in regard to the visions being of God, and not attaching that importance to them as occupying that place in the church which the body believed they should.

Some were skeptical, and they had had sufficient reason to be skeptical. The pretensions of Sister Steward to have visions, the fanaticism of the most wretched,

revolting kind being the fruits, and the influence of the false exercises by different ones upon the cause in Wisconsin, were sufficient to make minds jealous of everything bearing the name of visions and spiritual exercises. All these things should have been taken into consideration and wisdom exercised, and no trial should exist against, or labor be taken up, with those who have never seen the individual having visions and have had no experience with the influence of the visions. Such should not be restricted from entering into organization and receiving the benefits and privileges of the church if their Christian course is correct.

Here in Marquette there was a great mistake made upon this point. Some, I was shown, could receive the published testimony readily, judging of the tree by its fruits. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Matthew 7:20. Others are like doubting Thomas, they cannot believe the published testimonies or receive evidence through the testimonies of others, but must see and have the evidence for themselves. Such must not be thrust aside, but long patience, kindly forbearance, and brotherly love should be exercised toward them until they find their position and become established for or against. If they fight against the visions of which they have no knowledge, and souls are endangered through their influence, then it is soon enough to take up labor against such, that the weak be not led astray or corrupted through their influence. 1LtMs, Ms 3, 1862, par. 1 - 1LtMs, Ms 3, 1862, par. 3

Q. - Upon what ground were unbelievers in the **Testimonies disfellowshipped?** {1907 JNL, COOD 168.2}

A. - **This question has reference to those who make war on those who believe the Testimonies.** The instruction in these cases is given in the writings themselves. See "Testimonies for the Church," Vol. I, pages 228, 229, 382. On pages 250, and 251 of the same volume is reference to a case which, if the laborer had patiently waited for a few weeks, the man spoken of was violating the Sabbath, and might have been excluded from the church for that offense. {1907 JNL, COOD 168.3}

In the last vision given at Battle Creek I was shown that an **unwise course was taken** at----in regard to the visions at the time of the **organization of the church there.** There were some in----**who were God's children, and yet doubted the visions.** Others had no opposition, **yet dared not take a decided stand in regard to them.** Some were skeptical, and they had sufficient cause to make them so. The false visions and fanatical exercises, and the wretched fruits following, had an influence upon the cause in Wisconsin to make **minds jealous of everything bearing the name of visions.** All these things should have been **taken into consideration, and wisdom exercised.** There **SHOULD BE NO TRIAL OR LABOR WITH THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER SEEN THE INDIVIDUAL HAVING VISIONS, AND WHO HAVE HAD NO PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE VISIONS.** Such should **not be deprived of the benefits and privileges of the church, if their Christian course is otherwise correct, and they have formed a good Christian character.** {1T 327.3}

Some, I was shown, could receive the published visions, judging of the tree by its fruits. **Others are like doubting Thomas; they cannot believe the published Testimonies, nor receive evidence through the testimony of others; but must see and have the evidence for themselves.** Such must not be set aside, but **LONG PATIENCE AND BROTHERLY LOVE SHOULD BE EXERCISED TOWARD THEM UNTIL THEY FIND THEIR POSITION AND BECOME ESTABLISHED FOR OR AGAINST.** If they fight against the visions, of which they have no knowledge; **if they carry their opposition so far as to oppose that in which they have had no experience,** and feel annoyed when those who believe that the visions are of God speak of them in meeting, and comfort themselves with the instruction given through vision, the **church may know that they are not right.** God's people **should not cringe and yield, and give up their liberty to such disaffected ones.** God has placed the gifts in the church that the church may be benefited by them; and **when professed believers in the truth oppose these gifts, and fight against the visions, souls are in danger through their influence, and it is time then to labor with them, that the weak may not be led astray by their influence.** {1T 328.1}

- ***It has been very hard for the servants of God to labor in -----, for there has been a class of self-righteous, talkative, unruly ones there, who have stood in the way of the work of God. If received into the church, they would tear it to pieces. They would not be subject to the body, and would never be satisfied unless the reins of church government were in their own hands. {1T 329.1}***
- ***Brother G sought to move with great caution. He knew that the class who opposed the visions were wrong, that they were not genuine believers in the truth; and therefore, to shake off these clogs, he proposed to receive none into the church who did not believe the third angel's message and the visions. This kept out some few precious souls who had not fought against the visions. They dared not unite with the church, fearing that they should commit themselves upon that which they did not understand and fully believe. And there were those at hand ready to prejudice these conscientious ones, and to place matters before them in the worst possible light. Some have felt grieved and offended because of the condition of membership, and since the organization their feelings of dissatisfaction have greatly increased. Strong prejudice has governed them. {1T 329.2}***

I was shown the case of Sister H. She was presented before me in connection with a professed sister who was strongly prejudiced against my husband and myself, and opposed to the visions. This spirit had led her to love and cherish every lying report in regard to us and the visions, and she has communicated this to Sister H. She has had a bitter spirit of war against me, when she had no personal knowledge of me. She was unacquainted with my labors, yet has nourished the most wicked feelings of prejudice against me, and has influenced Sister H, and they have united

together in their bitter remarks and speeches. The person shown me in connection with Sister H was a strong-minded woman, sanguine, and exalted in her own estimation. She has thought that her views were correct, and that others must rely upon her word, when she only darkened counsel by words, and manifested the spirit of the dragon host to war against those who would be united on the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus. {1T 329.3}

Since Sister H has been at-----, she has despised the visions, and has related hearsay reports, as though she knew that they were true. She has resisted no influence calculated to injure me. She did not know but that the visions were of God; she had no personal acquaintance with the humble instrument; and yet she has united with unconsecrated ones in-----to exert a strong influence against me. They have strengthened one another by loving and reporting false stories coming from different sources, and in this way have nourished their prejudice. **There can be no union between their spirit and the spirit of the messages which the Lord sees fit to give for the benefit of His humble people. The spirit which dwells in their hearts cannot harmonize with the light given of God.** {1T 330.1}

Many poor souls do not know what they are doing. They unite their influence with Satan's forces, and aid him in his work. They manifest great zeal and earnestness in their blind opposition, as though they were verily doing God's service by fighting against the visions. All who desire to do so can acquaint themselves with the fruits of these visions. For seventeen years God has seen fit to let them survive and strengthen against the opposition of Satan's forces, and the influence of human agencies that have aided Satan in his work. {1T 330.2}

I have been shown that some, especially in Iowa, make the visions a rule by which to measure all, and have taken a course which my husband and myself have never pursued. Some are unacquainted with me and my labors, and they are very skeptical of anything bearing the name of visions. This is all natural, and can be overcome only by experience. **If persons are not settled in regard to the visions, they should not be crowded off.** The course to pursue with such may be found in Testimony No. 8, pp. 328, 329 [**AS QUOTED ABOVE**], which I hope will be read by all. **Ministers should have compassion of some, making a difference**; others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire. God's ministers should have wisdom to give to everyone his portion of meat and to make that difference with **different persons which their cases require.** **The course pursued with some in Iowa who are unacquainted with me has not been careful and consistent. Those who were, comparatively, strangers to the visions have been dealt with in the same manner as those who have had much light and experience in the visions. Some have been required to endorse the visions when they could not conscientiously do so, and in this way some honest souls have been driven to take positions against the visions and against the body which they never would have taken had their cases been managed with discretion and mercy.** {1T 382.1}

- **Some of our brethren have had long experience in the truth and have for years been acquainted with me and with the influence of the visions. They have tested the truthfulness of these testimonies and asserted their belief in them. They have felt the powerful influence of the Spirit of God resting upon them to witness to the truthfulness of the visions. If such, when reprov'd through vision, rise up against them, and work secretly to injure our influence, they should be faithfully dealt with, for their influence is endangering those who lack experience. {1T 382.2}**

IN THE PRACTICE OF THE CHURCH IT HAS NOT BEEN CUSTOMARY TO DISFELLOWSHIP ONE BECAUSE HE DID NOT RECOGNIZE THE DOCTRINE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE CHURCH, PARTICULARLY THE GIFT OF PROPHECY AS REPRESENTED IN THE WORK OF MRS. WHITE. However, if one should develop unbelief, and begin to oppose the position held by the church on the subject of spiritual gifts, the church **has considered it necessary to labor for such members the same as they would in the cases of those who opposed any other doctrine held by the church.** They have justly become subjects for labor, not because of their lack of faith in the spirit of prophecy, but **because of their spirit of opposition to a cherished faith held by the church.** {2BIO 494.3}

Uriah Smith:

But I have not believed, as past volumes of the *Review* will testify, that these, or any other manifestation of spiritual gifts, stood on a level with the Scriptures, **OR THAT THEY SHOULD BE MADE A TEST OF FELLOWSHIP.** I see as yet no occasion to change my views in any of these respects. -RH Supplement, Aug. 14, 1883.

George I. Butler:

Our enemies try very hard to make it appear that we make **THE VISIONS A TEST OF FELLOWSHIP. OUR LEADING MEN HAVE NEVER DONE THIS, AND THE VISIONS THEMSELVES TEACH THAT IT SHOULD NOT BE DONE. NO; WE DO NOT MAKE THE VISIONS A TEST, AND NEVER HAVE.** But we do claim the right to believe them, to talk about them freely, and to **read them in private and in public,** and shall no doubt continue to exercise that right, regardless of the spite of those who hate us. -"The Visions: How Are They Held Among S.D. Adventists," RH Supplement, Aug. 14, 1883.

Francis M. Wilcox:

IN THE PRACTICE OF THE CHURCH IT HAS NOT BEEN CUSTOMARY TO DISFELLOWSHIP ONE BECAUSE HE DID NOT RECOGNIZE THE DOCTRINE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS. A member of the church should not be excluded from membership because of his inability to recognize clearly the doctrine of spiritual gifts and its application to the second advent movement. -*The Testimony of Jesus* [RH, 1944], pp. 141-43, taken from Chapter 17: "Relation to Church Fellowship," pp. 136-43.

How to use EGW Materials

“During her lifetime, Ellen White was a prolific author. Before her death she wrote over 40 books, more than 5000 articles and pamphlets, in addition to many thousands of unpublished letters, manuscripts and diaries. As well as this, she frequently preached sermons at Church services and at Conferences, a good deal of which were transcribed and preserved. These documents, typed by persons other than Ellen White, are often treated no differently to what she penned with her own hand. **THERE IS HOWEVER A DISTINCTION BETWEEN WHAT WAS WRITTEN BY ELLEN WHITE HERSELF AND THE SECOND-HAND RECORDED TRANSCRIPTIONS OF HER TALKS AND SERMONS.** Ellen White had literary assistants who transcribed her sermons and talks during deliveries. These transcribers are called stenographers. Stenography is the art of shorthand for rapid and succinct note-taking. Shorthand was usually used to make a temporary record with a transcription or longhand copy to be made soon after.

Because of the inevitable human error effect that result from a stenographer work, Ellen Whites would often make handwritten notations on some manuscripts to say that she had read and approved them or offered adjustments before they were published. That was how those stenographer reports were processed for publishing (before her death).

However, there are lots of these stenographer’s reports that have remained as they were written by these stenographers but there are no evidence that Ellen White ever read and approved them. These reports exist largely under the section “Sermons and Talks” in the White Estate. The presence of a signature, unless it can be proved to be an original handwritten signature, is not conclusive, as her staff had a rubber stamp of her signature made for filed manuscripts. Without an original hand signed copy, it is impossible to prove that she personally sighted and approved of a transcript. Some of the transcripts may have come into her archives after her death. The only certain way to authenticate that Ellen White signed off on an account is if ***she made notations upon the transcribed manuscript or personally hand-signed the document.*** Without these evidences to authenticate these stenographic reports (sermons and talks), We can only have an idea of what she might have said. These reports need to be treated as unauthentic and cannot be used to establish what Ellen White stood for or believed.

An example to show the unreliableness to these stenographers’ reports is the case of Talk in the Battle Creek College Library, 2:30pm, April 1, 1901. This single talk given by Ellen G. White has five manuscripts written by five different stenographers. At mid-afternoon on Monday the first of April (the day before the 1901 General Conference session began) Ellen White addressed many delegates in the Library of the Battle Creek College. The content of this address is preserved in Manuscripts 43, 43a, 43b, 43c and 43d of 1901. Being able to compare these five manuscripts

allows us to explore the room for variation in stenography and/or the subsequent transcribing for a specific talk.

What MS 43 records as “**new power**”, the MS 43b (in agreement with the other manuscripts) reads “**new blood**”. Another example is where 43a manuscript says “**He wants every living soul to deal with His machinery as God’s machinery**” and MS 43d says “**He wants every living soul to deal with his machinery as good [God’s?] machinery**”. At one point Manuscripts 43 and 43b say “**God wants you to make straight paths for your feet**” while Manuscripts 43a and 43d say “**He wants you to make straight paths for your feet**” and MS 43c says “**I want you to make straight paths for your feet**”.

One last example (though these variations are numerous) is MS 43a and MS 43d say “**He wants the Holy Ghost to come in**”, MS 43c manuscript says “**He wants the Holy Ghost king**”.

By these examples, it is clear that stenographers were not 100% accurate and could not be trusted fully to have reported with precision what Ellen White had presented, unless where Ellen White herself read and approved them. Our only safety therefore, is to confirm these unauthenticated reports with the authentic writings. There is a principle that Ellen White gives concerning her writings. She said:

*“And now to all who have a desire for truth I would say: **DO NOT GIVE CREDENCE TO UNAUTHENTICATED REPORTS AS TO WHAT SISTER WHITE HAS DONE OR SAID OR WRITTEN. IF YOU DESIRE TO KNOW WHAT THE LORD HAS REVEALED THROUGH HER, READ HER PUBLISHED WORKS.** Are there any points of interest concerning which she has not written, do not eagerly catch up and report rumors as to what she has said.” (Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5, p. 696)*

Where there is uncertainty or question with a report of a verbal presentation, the safest place to go, based on Ellen White’s principle above, would be to her personally written works or writings she approved.

Ellen White writings may be categorized into **two groups: Authentic and Unauthentic**. This is not a question of **published and unpublished**. Most of the difficulties that arises in the truth about the Godhead may be perfectly settled when one understands this basic principle of reading her writings. **If it was published when she was alive, it’s authentic. If it was published after her death, we may trust it as far as her son was the trustee. If it was published posthumously, look at the source. If the source is from her own pen, it is authentic. If the source is not what she penned herself but a report, if there is evidence of her annotation, it is authentic. If the source is from her literary assistants, and those source are extant as they were written, but there is no evidence of her interaction with the reports, it is not authentic. If it is what she wrote herself but unpublished, it is authentic.** So, it is very wise to use

authentic sources to establish what she meant whenever you come to statements that seem to contradict the general tenor of her belief of a certain topic.

Three Holiest Beings in Heaven

“You are born unto God, and you stand under the sanction and the power of the three holiest beings in heaven, who are able to keep you from falling. You are to reveal that you are dead to sin; your life is hid with Christ in God. Hidden “with Christ in God,”—wonderful transformation.” 7 MR 267.2 (Manuscript 95, 1906)

The phrase “three holiest beings” is the report of a sermon preached in Oakland California on the 20th of October, 1906. ***This is the only manuscript where Ellen White, seemingly, uses the expression “three beings”***. It is the only instance she is reported to have referred to the Holy Spirit as a being. Tim Poirier has released scanned copies of the relevant pages of this manuscript from Ellen White’s 1905-1906 letter book (Ellen White’s Trinitarian Statements: What Did She Actually Write? pp. 23- 25). These contain no annotation or any other evidence that Ellen White interacted with this transcript. We are therefore left with her authentic writings to establish what she believed as she advises. “...Do not give credence to unauthenticated reports as to what Sister White has done or said or written. If you desire to know what the Lord has revealed through her, read her published works...” {5T 696.1}

Following this counsel, she had stated in her authentic writings the following statements:

1. *“Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father— one in nature, in character, in purpose—THE ONLY BEING THAT COULD ENTER INTO ALL THE COUNSELS AND PURPOSES OF GOD.” — Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 34*
2. *“Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven the King declared that NONE BUT CHRIST, THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF GOD, COULD FULLY ENTER INTO HIS PURPOSES, and to Him it was committed to execute the mighty counsels of His will.” — ibid p. 36*
3. *“Christ the Word, the only-begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father,— one in nature, in character, and in purpose,—THE ONLY BEING IN ALL THE UNIVERSE THAT COULD ENTER INTO ALL THE COUNSELS AND PURPOSES OF GOD.” — The Great Controversy, 493*
4. *“In order that the human family might have no excuse because of temptation, Christ became one with them. THE ONLY BEING WHO WAS ONE WITH GOD LIVED THE LAW IN HUMANITY...” — ST October 14, 1897, par. 3*

From authentic testimonies, there is only one being in the whole universe that could enter the full counsel and purposes of the Father, that is, the Son of God. That leaves us with two options: Either the Holy Spirit is a Being who could not enter into full counsel and purposes of the Father or the ***unauthentic stenographer report is inaccurate.***

Compiling of EGW Materials

Testimonies Garbled by Eli Curtis

There is another fact that should be stated here. I am not responsible for all that has been printed as coming from me. About the time that my earliest visions were first published, several articles did appear purporting to have been written by me, and to relate what the Lord had shown me, but sanctioning doctrines which I did not believe. These were published in a paper edited by a Mr. Curtis. Of the name of the paper I am not certain. In the years of care and labor that have passed since then, some of these less important particulars have been forgotten, but the main points are still distinct in my mind. {1SM 60.4}

This man took articles that came from my pen, and wholly transformed and distorted them, picking out a sentence here and there, without giving the connection, and then, after inserting his own ideas, he attached my name to them as if they came direct from me. {1SM 61.1}

On seeing these articles, we wrote to him, expressing our surprise and disapprobation, and forbidding him thus to misconstrue my testimonies. He answered that he should publish what he pleased, that he knew the visions ought to say what he had published, and that if I had written them as the Lord gave them to me, they would have said these things. He asserted that if the visions have been given for the benefit of the church, he had a right to use them as he pleased. {1SM 61.2}

Some of these sheets may still be in existence, and may be brought forward as coming from me, but I am not responsible for them. The articles given in Early Writings did pass under my eye; and as the edition of Experience and Views published in 1851 was the earliest which we possessed, and as we had no knowledge of anything additional in papers or pamphlets of earlier date, I am not responsible for the omissions which are said to exist. {1SM 61.3}

The Publishing of Compilations

I can see plainly that should every one who thinks he is qualified to write books, follow his imagination and have his productions published, insisting that they be recommended by our publishing houses, there would be plenty of tares sown broadcast in our world. Many from among our own people are writing to me, asking

with earnest determination the privilege of using my writings to give force to certain subjects which they wish to present to the people in such a way as to leave a deep impression upon them. {1SM 58.1}

It is true that there is a reason why some of these matters should be presented: but I would not venture to give my approval in using the testimonies in this way, or to sanction the placing of matter which is good in itself in the way which they propose. {1SM 58.2}

The persons who make these propositions, for aught I know, may be able to conduct the enterprise of which they write in a wise manner; but nevertheless I dare not give the least license for using my writings in the manner which they propose. In taking account of such an enterprise, there are many things that must come into consideration; for in using the testimonies to bolster up some subject which may impress the mind of the author, the extracts may give a different impression than that which they would were they read in their original connection.-- The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies to the Church, pp. 25, 26. {1SM 58.3}

Private compilations.--There are some who, upon accepting erroneous theories, strive to establish them by collecting from my writings statements of truth, which they use separated from their proper connection, and perverted by association with error. Thus seeds of heresy, springing up and growing rapidly into strong plants, are surrounded by many precious plants of truth; and in this way a mighty effort is made to vindicate the genuineness of the spurious plants.--Letter 136, 1906, pp. 3, 4. (To Brethren Butler, Daniells, and Irwin, April 27, 1906.) {5MR 154.1}

They come to me, those that are copying my writings, and say, "Now here is the better revised words, and I think I will put that in." Don't you change one word, not a word. The revised edition we do not need at all. We have got the word that Christ has spoken Himself and given us. And don't you in my writings change a word for any revised edition. There will be revised editions, plenty of them, just before the close of this earth's history, and I want all my workers to understand, and I have got quite a number of them. I want them to understand that they are never to take the revised word, and put it in the place of the plain, simple words just as they are. They think they are improving them, but how do they know but that they may switch off on an idea, and give it less importance than Christ means them to have. {Ms188-1907}

And now to all who have a desire for truth I would say: Do not give credence to unauthenticated reports as to what Sister White has done or said or written. If you desire to know what the Lord has revealed through her, read her published works. Are there any points of interest concerning which she has not written, do not eagerly catch up and report rumors as to what she has said. {5T 696.1}

Trustees admission of Changes

Early Writing Preface

"FOOTNOTES GIVING DATES AND EXPLANATIONS, AND AN APPENDIX GIVING TWO VERY INTERESTING DREAMS, WHICH WERE MENTIONED BUT NOT RELATED IN THE ORIGINAL WORK, WILL ADD TO THE VALUE OF THIS EDITION. ASIDE FROM THESE, NO CHANGES FROM THE ORIGINAL WORK HAVE BEEN MADE IN THE PRESENT EDITION, EXCEPT THE OCCASIONAL EMPLOYMENT OF A NEW WORD, OR A CHANGE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SENTENCE, TO BETTER EXPRESS THE IDEA, AND NO PORTION OF THE WORK HAS BEEN OMITTED. NO SHADOW OF CHANGE HAS BEEN MADE IN ANY IDEA OR SENTIMENT OF THE ORIGINAL WORK, AND THE VERBAL CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE UNDER THE AUTHOR'S OWN EYE, AND WITH HER FULL APPROVAL."

THE TWO COMPANION BOOKS WERE ALSO REISSUED AS A SINGLE VOLUME IN 1882 UNDER THE TITLE EARLY WRITINGS. IN 1906 THE TYPE WAS RESET TO MAKE THE THIRD AMERICAN EDITION, WHICH HAS HAD WIDE DISTRIBUTION, MEETING THE EVER-INCREASING DEMAND. THE PAGING OF THIS EDITION BECAME THE STANDARD FOR ALL REFERENCE WORK AND THE SUBSEQUENTLY PUBLISHED INDEXES TO THE WRITINGS OF MRS. WHITE.

THE FOURTH EDITION OF EARLY WRITINGS WAS PUBLISHED IN 1945. FORTY YEARS OF PRINTING AND REPRINTING MADE NECESSARY NEW PRINTING PLATES. AS THE TYPE WAS RESET THE CONTENT WAS HELD PAGE FOR PAGE WITH THE EDITION IT SUCCEEDED. MODERN SPELLING AND CURRENT FORMS OF PUNCTUATION WERE EMPLOYED AND A NEW PREFACE REVIEWED BRIEFLY THE HISTORY OF THE BOOK.

TODAY WE ARE REMOVED BY MORE THAN A CENTURY FROM THOSE HEROIC TIMES. THE READER MUST KEEP THIS CLEARLY IN MIND. THE HISTORY WHICH WAS SO WELL KNOWN TO THE CONTEMPORARIES OF ELLEN WHITE WE SHALL NOW REVIEW, TOUCHING SOME OF THE HIGH POINTS OF THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SABBATHKEEPING ADVENTISTS DURING THE DECADE OR TWO PRECEDING THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THE MATERIALS THAT APPEAR HERE.

WHILE THERE IS NOT A GENERAL CALL FOR THE REPUBLICATION OF ALL OF THE ARTICLES IN THEIR ENTIRETY, THERE IS A DESIRE TO HAVE A CHOICE GROUP OF ARTICLES DEVOTED LARGELY TO DOCTRINAL SUBJECTS REPRINTED IN THEIR COMPLETENESS OF COVERAGE. MANY OF THESE ARE OUTSTANDING IN THEIR PRESENTATION OF THE CENTRAL TRUTHS OF THE ADVENT MESSAGE. THESE PRICELESS MESSAGES ARE HERE PRESENTED FOR THE MOST PART IN THEIR ENTIRETY, GIVING THE READER THE BENEFIT OF EACH STATEMENT IN ITS FULL SETTING. **THERE ARE A FEW EXCEPTIONS WHERE THERE WERE LARGE SEGMENTS OF AN ARTICLE THAT WERE NOT CLOSELY RELATED TO THE DOCTRINAL PRESENTATION, AND IN THESE**

CASES DELETIONS HAVE BEEN MADE AND INDICATED IN THE USUAL WAY. THE CAREFUL STUDENT OF THE WORD OF GOD WILL REJOICE TO SEE THESE CHOICE DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS--ALL OF WHICH CENTER IN CHRIST OUR LORD--APPEAR IN THIS PERMANENT FORM.--WHITE TRUSTEES. {1SM 210.3}

Changes in GC and why?

A statement not found in other editions

The term Babylon, derived from Babel, and signifying confusion, is applied in Scripture to the various forms of false or apostate religion. But the message announcing the fall of Babylon must apply to some religious body that was once pure, and has become corrupt. It cannot be the Romish Church which is here meant; for that church has been in a fallen condition for many centuries. But how appropriate the figure as applied to the Protestant churches, all professing to derive their doctrines from the Bible, yet divided into almost innumerable sects. The unity for which Christ prayed does not exist. Instead of one Lord, one faith, one baptism, there are numberless conflicting creeds and theories. Religious faith appears so confused and discordant that the world know not what to believe as truth. God is not in all this; it is the work of man,--the work of Satan. {4SP 232.2}

Sarah Peck, an education specialist, joined Ellen White's staff at the turn of the century. One of her assignments was to assemble Mrs. White's writings on the principles of education. Miss Peck soon saw that these materials divided themselves into **two groups**. Those most **appropriate for the church** now appear in certain sections of the Testimonies, volume 6 (1900) and Counsels to Parents and Teachers (1913); **those suitable for the general public** are in Education (1903).

While helping his mother prepare the 1911 edition of The Great Controversy, W. C. White wrote to the Publication Committee: "In Great Controversy, Volume IV, published in 1885, in the chapter 'Snares of Satan,' **there are three pages or more of matter that were not used in the later editions**, which were prepared to be sold to the multitudes by our canvassers. **It is most excellent and interesting reading for Sabbathkeepers, as it points out the work that Satan will do in persuading popular ministers and church members to elevate the Sunday sabbath, and to persecute Sabbathkeepers.**

"It was not left out because it was less true in 1888 than in 1885, but because Mother thought it was not wisdom to say these things to the multitudes to whom the book would be sold in future years....

"With reference to this, and to other passages in her writings which have been omitted in later editions, she has often said: **'These statements are true, and they are useful to our people; but to the general public, for whom this book is now being prepared, they are out of place.** Christ said, even to His disciples, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." And Christ taught His

disciples to be **"wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."** **Therefore, as it is probable that more souls will be won to Christ by the book without this passage than with it, let it be omitted.**

"Regarding changes in forms of expression, Mother has often said: 'Essential truths must be plainly told; but so far as possible they should be told in **language that will win, rather than offend.**'"

Ellen White's sermons were often published as articles in the Signs of the Times or the Review and Herald. However, preparing them for the Review was much easier than preparing articles for the Signs. Why? **Because readers of the Review were mainly Seventh-day Adventists, and those of the Signs, primarily the general public.** MOL 112.7 - MOL 113.4

Inspiration

Verbal Inspiration or Thought Inspiration?

God communicated His messages not through mechanical dictation but through acts and words that men and women could understand. The prophets who heard God speak directly to them conveyed these messages through the thought processes of their day, and through the idioms and analogies that their hearers could understand.

Understanding the revelation/inspiration process correctly prevents distressful concern when people see in the Gospels clear differences between reports of the same event, even the same messages of Jesus. Nothing disturbs some sincere students more than to observe the different ways Bible writers describe the same event, "quote" the same conversation, or report the parables of Jesus. Even having two versions of the Lord's Prayer, as recorded in Matthew 6 and Luke 11, upsets those who mistakenly believe that the Bible writers wrote, word for word, as the Holy Spirit dictated.

- **Verbal, inerrant inspiration implies that the prophet is a recording machine, transmitting mechanically and unerringly God's message. Belief in mechanical inspiration forbids differences in reporting a message or event. Verbal inspiration requires prophets to transmit the exact words supplied by the heavenly Guide even as a court stenographer types what is being said by the witnesses. No room is given to prophets to use their own individuality (and limitations) in expressing the truths revealed to them.**

One of the obvious problems for those who believe in verbal inspiration is what to do in translating the Bible, either from Old Testament Hebrew/Aramaic or New Testament Greek, into other languages.

Another problem is Matthew 27:9, 10 where Matthew refers to Jeremiah rather than Zechariah 11:12 as the Old Testament source for a messianic prophecy. This might be a copyist's mistake. But if it is Matthew's, it is a human mistake any teacher or minister might make, a mistake that will cause no problem for thought inspirationists. Why? **Because thought inspirationists know what Matthew meant!**

Or, what did Pilate actually write on the sign placed on Christ's cross? Matthew 27:37; Mark 15:26, Luke 23:38, and John 19:19 report the sign differently. To thought inspirationists, the message is clear; to verbal inspirationists, a problem! MOL 16.2 - MOL 16.7

A Case of plagiarism

When God speaks to prophets He does not install a dictionary or an encyclopedia in their minds. Prophets take the inspired message and do their best to convey that message in language and thought forms that will do justice to the message. Some (such as Peter) needed others to help them with their grammar; others (such as Luke) gathered as much as they could from contemporary sources in order to set forth the truth that burned within them. Paul used contemporary writers to better establish contact with his Grecian audiences.

Old Testament writers often depended on oral reports or earlier documents in preparing their messages. Moses did not need visions to describe the story of his birth or to recount the historical narratives he placed in Genesis. The books of Joshua and Judges were probably compiled during David's monarchy, according to internal evidence. The authors of Kings and Chronicles obviously used sources that they often referenced. In fact, the authors at times quoted from other Old Testament books without crediting their sources: compare 2 Kings 19:1, 2 with Isaiah 37:1, 2, and 1 Chronicles 10:1-3 with 1 Sam. 31:1-3.

The New Testament presents many instances of borrowing from non-Biblical sources, such as the Wisdom of Solomon, 1 Enoch, Testimonies of the Twelve Patriarchs, and the Palestinian Targums.

Ellen White forthrightly explained why she used various historians as she traced "the history of the controversy in past ages." She wrote: "In pursuance of this purpose, I have endeavored to select and group together events in the history of the church in such a manner as to trace the unfolding of the great testing truths that at different periods have been given to the world."

- **How did she use these historians? She noted: "In some cases where a historian has so grouped together events as to afford, in brief, a comprehensive view of the subject, or has summarized details in a convenient manner, his words have been quoted; but in some instances no specific credit has been given, since the quotations are not given for**

the purpose of citing that writer as authority, but because his statement affords a ready and forcible presentation of the subject. In narrating the experience and views of those carrying forward the work of reform in our own time, similar use has been made of their published works." MOL 378.7 - MOL 379.4

As all prophets did, Ellen White had to supply the human language to convey the grand thoughts and arching panoramas that she either saw in vision or sensed in other times of divine communication. Her capacity to supply appropriate language and style matured as the years went by—as any study of her personal manuscripts and published writings will indicate. At times she recognized that others had written with beauty and precision on certain subjects that she wanted to make clearer in her writings. To better clothe those divinely revealed truths she utilized borrowed expressions. Speed truth along with as much human grace as possible was her compelling motivation.

Some have raised two questions regarding both Biblical writers and Ellen White: How does borrowing affect the authority of the writer? Does the borrowed material become inspired? The questions arise because inspiration is misunderstood as mechanical dictation (verbal inspiration).

- ***Probably the two questions would not be asked if it were understood that prophets are permitted to find the best methods at their disposal to convey the thoughts God has given them.***

What, then, is the value of the borrowed material? It seems logical that if God revealed His message to prophets, He would also assist them in conveying the message in human language. Ellen White noted that God "guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was entrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, nonetheless, from Heaven."

- ***In a way, God did not expect the Biblical writer to "reinvent the wheel." He led Paul to borrow from the apocrypha in developing a substantial part of Romans 1. He led him to find useful material, at least to hearers in his day, in the Jewish Targums (Aramaic translation or paraphrase of a portion of the Old Testament) in developing 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 and 2 Timothy 3:8. He led John to find generous help from contemporary sources such as the Targums and 1 Enoch. If the language already available seemed to help the Biblical author to speed his message preparation along, he prudently borrowed for his purpose. No doubt many of his contemporaries recognized quickly from where the writer had borrowed his material. To the receivers of the prophet's message, such borrowing was no problem: they saw the big picture of the writer's message.***

Likely many in Christ's day recognized His references to extra-Biblical sources that He used to develop His messages—messages that were truly original.

But His use of sources had nothing to do with the authority or originality of His messages.

- ***Does borrowed material become inspired? Only in the sense that it assists the writer to state his message more clearly. This may lead to another question: Why did not Paul and John give credit to the authors of the borrowed material? Perhaps they believed, as did Ellen White, that "every gleam of thought, every flash of intellect, is from the Light of the world." This conviction that God is the Author of all truth may have been one reason for not feeling the need to reference their frequent borrowings. MOL 379.5 - MOL 380.2***

Prophets obviously mix common, everyday information with the divine message. When Paul referred to contemporaries with appreciation, that was not the divine message. When he asked Timothy to find the cloak and books that he had left at Troas and to "come before winter," that was common, everyday talk (2 Timothy 4:9-21). When we read the genealogy of the families of Israel since Adam, we are reading common historical information, not a message given by revelation. (1 Chronicles 1-8).

- ***Ellen White recognized this distinction between ordinary information and the divine message: "There are times when common things must be stated, common thoughts must occupy the mind, common letters must be written and information given that has passed from one to another of the workers. Such words, such information, are not given under the special inspiration of the Spirit of God. Questions are asked at times that are not upon religious subjects at all, and these questions must be answered. We converse about houses and lands, trades to be made, and locations for our institutions, their advantages and disadvantages."***

This distinction appeared in a 1909 letter where Ellen White was "troubled" about the former manager of the Paradise Valley Sanitarium, E. S. Ballenger. She wrote that Ballenger was "denying the testimonies as a whole because of what seems to him an inconsistency—a statement made by me in regard to the number of rooms in the Paradise Valley Sanitarium." In an earlier letter she had commented that the sanitarium had forty rooms, when it had only thirty-eight. MOL 380.3 - MOL 380.5

- ***She continued: "The information given concerning the number of rooms in the Paradise Valley Sanitarium was given, not as a revelation from the Lord, but simply as a human opinion. There has never been revealed to me the exact number of rooms in any of our sanitariums; and the knowledge I have obtained of such things I have gained by inquiring of those who were supposed to know.... For one to mix the sacred with the***

common is a great mistake. In a tendency to do this we may see the working of the enemy to destroy souls."

Students of prophetic writings should know how to separate the sacred from the common. Sometimes the question is asked in terms of what is inspired and what is not. (Obviously the distinction should not be based on whether we agree with a particular portion of a prophet's writings.) The 1909 incident regarding rooms at the Paradise Valley Sanitarium is one example of a "common" reference. Other examples are found in Mrs. White's hundreds of letters wherein she spoke of the weather, shopping lists, the garden, or her grandchildren. But sooner or later she would direct the reader's thought to his or her spiritual needs or some church activity. That shift would be a clear signal to readers that they were now listening to a message that went beyond "common" themes.

- ***Only a small percentage of Ellen White's published writings deal with "common" topics, as anyone may readily see. She could write: "In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision—the precious rays of light shining from the throne.' It is true concerning the articles in our papers and in the many volumes of my books."***

Mrs. White makes no distinction between the inspiration of her books, articles, or letters when they are giving spiritual counsel. This eliminates the position some have made that only her books are inspired. Those taking that position forget that much in her books was first written in article form.

Further, it is clearly the case that Bible writers "mixed" extra-Biblical sources with their vision-based messages. One cannot then dismiss a prophet's work simply because some portion of the book contains material from sources other than divine revelation. If prophets include the writings of others to better express truth, that material is not understood as merely "common" in the sense we have been using the term. MOL 380.6 - MOL 381.3

"The work of explaining the Bible by the Bible itself is the work that should be done by all our ministers who are fully awake to the times in which we live."

In her personally written introduction to *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White recorded how "the scenes of the long-continued conflict between good and evil" had been revealed to her: "From time to time I have been permitted to behold the working, in different ages, of the great controversy between Christ ... and Satan." MOL 386.1 - MOL 386.2

How did she "behold" these mighty scenes? She continued: "As the Spirit of God has opened to my mind the great truths of His word, and the scenes of the past and the

future, I have been bidden to make known to others that which has thus been revealed."

- ***How much detail did she see? The evidence is that she saw the great "scenes" but that the details involving dates, perhaps even geographical sites, she did not always "see." The same was true for Isaiah as he struggled for words to describe the throne of God (Isaiah 6) and for Daniel as he tried to describe the awesome visions of beasts and horns, etc. Ellen White saw the big picture, the basic concepts, the overall sweep of the forces of good and evil played out in human history. Her task was to "fill in" this big picture through research in the Biblical story and in common sources of historical information.***

Just as God did not give Daniel words to describe the beasts of Daniel 7, so He did not give Ellen White the historical dates and events to fill in the great controversy story. Even as Luke searched out the best sources to complete his Life of Christ (Luke 1:1-4), so Mrs. White did what all prophets do when they had a message that had to be conveyed in human words and comprehended by historically oriented men and women. Thus, we look to Luke, not necessarily for historical accuracy for all statements made, but for his contribution to the big picture, the message about the ministry of Jesus. MOL 386.3 - MOL 386.5

- ***Would there be instances of possible errors? Probably. Henry Alford, the highly respected author of New Testament for English Readers, wrote: "Two men may be equally led by the Holy Spirit to record the events of our Lord's life for our edification, though one may believe, and record, that the visit to the Gadarenes took place before the calling of Matthew, while the other places it after that event; though one in narrating it speaks of two demoniacs—the other, only of one...."***
- ***"And not only of the arrangement of the Evangelic history are these remarks to be understood. There are certain minor points of accuracy or inaccuracy, of which human research suffices to inform men, and on which, from want of that research, it is often the practice to speak vaguely and inexactly. Such are sometimes the conventionally received distances from place to place; such are the common accounts of phenomena in natural history, etc. Now in matters of this kind, the Evangelists and Apostles were not supernaturally informed, but left, in common with others, to the guidance of their natural faculties.... The treasure is ours, in all its richness: but it is ours as only it can be ours—in the imperfections of human speech, in the limitations of human thought, in the variety incident first to individual character, and then to manifold transcription and the lapse of ages."***
- ***In other words, the human phase of the divine-human communication system will be beset with occasional discrepancies—simply because of***

human finiteness. Stephen's eloquent sermon (Acts 7) contains an incidental reference to the number (75) of Jacob's family who went into Egypt to live with Joseph. However, the Genesis reference (46:27) states that 70 of Jacob's family went into Egypt. What shall we make of this difference? If we believe that Genesis is the only historical source that Jews in the first century had for this information, then we simply understand that the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Prophecy) guided Stephen in reciting the big picture, but did not intervene on details. Prophets do not necessarily become "authorities" on historical data. Their inspirational value lies in their messages, not in some of the details that are incidental to the big picture. MOL 386.6 - MOL 387.2

- **"Mother has never laid claim to verbal inspiration, and I do not find that my father, or Elder Bates, Andrews, Smith, or Waggoner put forth this claim. If there were verbal inspiration in writing her manuscripts, why should there be on her part the work of addition or adaptation? It is a fact that Mother often takes one of her manuscripts, and goes over it thoughtfully, making additions that develop the thought still further...."**

"Mother's contact with European people had brought to her mind scores of things that had been presented to her in vision during past years, some of them two or three times, and other scenes many times. Her seeing of historic places and her contact with the people refreshed her memory with reference to these things, and so she desired to add much material to the book *The Great Controversy* ."

- **A few months later, W. C. White wrote to S. N. Haskell, a stalwart pioneer who leaned dangerously toward a verbal-inspiration viewpoint at that time: "Regarding Mother's writings, she has never wished our brethren to treat them as authority on the dates or details of history. When 'Great Controversy' was written, she oftentimes gave a partial description of some scene presented to her, and when Sister Davis made inquiry regarding time and place, Mother referred to what was already written in the books of Uriah Smith and in secular histories. When 'Controversy' was written, Mother never thought that the readers would take it as authority on historical dates and use it to settle controversies, and she does not now feel that it ought to be used in that way ... MOL 387.6 - MOL 388.2**

"It seems to me that there is a danger of placing altogether too much stress upon chronology. If it had been essential to the salvation of men that he human beings should have a clear and harmonious understanding of the chronology of the world, the Lord would not have permitted the disagreements and discrepancies which we find in the writings of the Bible historians, and it seems to me that in these last days there ought not to be so much controversy regarding dates.... I believe, Brother Haskell, that there is danger of our injuring Mother's work by claiming for it more

than she claims for it, more than Father ever claimed for it, more than Elder J. N. Andrews, J. H. Waggoner, or Uriah Smith ever claimed for it."

That same day, W. C. White wrote a virtually identical letter to W. W. Eastman, publishing director at the Southern Publishing Association. But in closing the letter, he added: "I have overwhelming evidence and conviction that they are the descriptions and delineation of what God has revealed to her in vision, and where she has followed the descriptions of historians or the expositions of Adventist writers, I believe that God has given her discernment to use that which is correct and in harmony with truth regarding all matters essential to salvation. If it should be found by faithful study that she has followed some exposition of prophecy which in some detail regarding dates we cannot harmonize with our understanding of secular history, it does not influence my confidence in her writings as a whole any more than my confidence in the Bible is influenced by the fact that I cannot harmonize many of the Biblical statements regarding chronology."

- ***In summary, for verbal inspirationists Ellen White's writings, unfortunately, have become an authority on historical dates and places. For thought inspirationists, that would be an unwarranted use of a prophet's work. Thought inspirationists focus on the big picture, the message; possible discrepancies in historical detail are considered incidental to the message, and of minor importance. MOL 388.3 - MOL 388.5***

Everyone wants to be understood. Often misunderstandings arise when a statement has been lifted out of context. Thus, everyone who has been misunderstood appeals to fairness and asks that the context be considered. Context includes both internal and external clues that will establish the truth about any statement under consideration.

Internally, we usually get a clear picture of "what" an author meant by reading the words, sentences, paragraphs, even chapters, surrounding a puzzling statement.

Externally, we ask further questions that may help us to understand, such as when? where? why? and perhaps how? "Time," "place," and "circumstances" apply to the external context as we shall soon see. MOL 388.6 - MOL 389.1

Lesser Light vs Greater Light issue

- ***"Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light."***

In early 1903 Ellen White, burdened about the decline in colporteur work (literature evangelism), wrote an article for the Review. In that article she expressed appreciation for the successful promotion of Christ's Object Lessons. She also wrote: "Sister White is not the originator of these books.... They contain the

precious, comforting light that God has graciously given His servant to be given to the world. From their pages this light is to shine into the hearts of men and women, leading them to the Saviour."

Then she amplified this connection between God's light and her writings, and where her writings, as all other prophetic writings, would lead readers: "The Lord has sent His people much instruction, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light."

- ***In her larger context, Mrs. White seems to be referring to how all biblical prophets are lesser lights leading their people "to the Saviour" the "Light of the world" (John 8:12; 9:5; 12:46)—even as John the Baptist "came ... to bear witness of the Light" (John 1:7, 8). Because people in her day were giving "little heed ... to the Bible" (which was to lead people to Christ, the Light of the world) the Lord spoke to her as a "lesser light" (even as John the Baptist and all other biblical prophets were lesser lights) to lead people to Christ, the "greater light."***

From another point of view, no one can question that Ellen White regarded the Bible itself as a "greater light" with its centuries of inspired writings and its gold-standard acceptance as the Word of God.

Numerous are the references, from her earliest days to her last, that exalted the Bible, such as: "The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His God's will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience."

She saw clearly the relationship of her writings to the Bible. They were not only to exalt the Bible, they were to "attract minds to it," to call "attention to the words of inspiration which you have neglected to obey," to "impress vividly upon the heart the truths ... already revealed," "to awaken and impress the mind ... that all may be left without excuse," "to bring out general principles," and to "come down to the minutiae of life, keeping the feeble faith from dying." MOL 408.1 - MOL 408.7

What did she mean by saying her writings were a "lesser light"? Three metaphors have been used in past years:

The "testing instrument" and "that which is tested."

Displayed in the National Bureau of Standards at Gaithersburg, Maryland, is the National Prototype Meter No. 27 which was the national reference for line measurement from 1893 until 1960. It is made of 90 percent platinum and 10 percent iridium. Today the national standard is measured by an even more accurate method involving light emitted by electrically excited atoms of krypton-86. If anyone

is unsure about his "yardstick," he or she may take it to the national standard for comparative analysis.

The application is obvious: the national standard is the "greater light." Copies of this national standard (called "working standards") or industrial tools requiring exact precision and accuracy that meet the standard of the "greater light," would be "lesser lights." Yet, for all practical purposes, these "copies" function as well as the standard. A prototype standard ("greater light") exists by which all other measures ("lesser lights") are tested—but the local hardware yardstick ("lesser light") is no less faithful to its task than the "greater light," if it has passed the "test." Thus, the reliability of the yardstick is, for all practical purposes, the same as the platinum-iridium bar in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

The comparison of forty candles with one candle.

The analogy here is that the Bible was written by about forty authors—forty candles; Ellen White is one candle. Thus, the Bible is the "greater light." Both the "greater light" and the "lesser light" give sufficient light to dispel darkness. The quality of light in the "greater light" is the same as that of the "lesser light."

National map and the state maps.

Many road atlases have a two-page map of the forty-eight contiguous states followed by the state maps. The national map with its coast-to-coast display of the Interstate highway system is the "greater light": the state maps, though possessing more detail, are the "lesser light." Each has its special function. Both the "greater" and the "lesser" lights have equal authority in presenting truth.

The telescope analogy.

Mrs. S. M. I. Henry, well-known in the late nineteenth century as a leader in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, became a Seventh-day Adventist while a patient at the Battle Creek Sanitarium. She and Ellen White soon developed a close friendship, largely because of their common life experiences. One of Mrs. Henry's challenges was to present the Sabbath truth to her friends in the W.C.T.U., especially because they were often the leaders in promoting Sunday legislation.

However, accepting a prophet in the Adventist Church was not easy for Mrs. Henry. After close study, she saw the role of Ellen White to be akin to a telescope through which to look at the Bible. Mrs. Henry described her new insight in an article for the January 1898 issue of Good Health: **"Everything depends upon our relation to it telescope and the use which we make of it. In itself it is only a glass through which to look; but in the hand of the divine Director, properly mounted, set at the right angle and adjusted to the eye of the observer, with a field, clear of clouds, it will reveal truth such as will quicken the blood, gladden the heart, and open a wide door of expectations. It will reduce nebulae to constellations; faraway points of light to planets of the first magnitude.... The failure has been in understanding what the Testimonies are and how to use them. They are not the heavens, palpitating with countless orbs of truth,**

but they do lead the eye and give it power to penetrate into the glories of the mysterious living word of God."

- ***Ellen White saw this article and asked permission to have it republished in Australia. She thought that Mrs. Henry had captured the relationship between the Bible and her work "as clearly and as accurately as anyone could ever put into words." For Mrs. White, the Bible was always the "greater" light from which she derived her theological principles. MOL 408.8 - MOL 409.11***

Degrees of Inspiration: Canonical vs Noncanonical

At least eight prophets mentioned in the Bible wrote for their times but their works were not included in the canon. The Biblical story not only does not hint of any difference in the quality of their inspiration, it describes their work as of equal authority with the canonical prophets. We find no difference in how they received their messages or in how they communicated them and how their contemporaries responded to them. Non-canonical prophets spoke for God and were regarded as God's spokesmen by their contemporaries.

With the suggestion that some prophets were granted a higher degree of revelation/ inspiration than other prophets, comes the inescapable question: **Who will decide? Can an uninspired person sit in judgment on a prophet's work and decide whether he or she is a first, second, or third-degree prophet? The gift of prophecy, as other spiritual gifts, is given to men and women "according to His own will" (Hebrews 2:4), not man's will.**

In 1884 the president of the General Conference, George I. Butler, attempted to contribute to a clearer understanding of this subject by authoring ten articles for the church paper. In these articles he discussed "differences in degrees" of inspiration.

- ***Ellen White waited five years to respond, hoping that he would catch his own mistake. But when others began to pick up on Butler's point of view and teach it in Battle Creek College, she wrote: "Both in the Battle Creek Tabernacle and in the college the subject of inspiration has been taught, and finite men have taken it upon themselves to say that some things in the Scriptures were inspired and some were not. I was shown that the Lord did not inspire the articles on inspiration published in the Review, neither did He approve their endorsement before our youth in the college. When men venture to criticize the Word of God, they venture on sacred, holy ground, and had better fear and tremble and hide their wisdom as foolishness. God sets no man to pronounce judgment on His Word, selecting some things as inspired and discrediting others as uninspired. The testimonies have been treated in the same way, but God is not in this."***

Writings are the product of inspiration or they are not. Prophets are genuine or they are impostors. Other than the difference between the common and the sacred, which should be obvious to everyone, no one is able to divide a prophet's writings into the inspired and the less inspired. As soon as one tries, the final arbiter is human reason. Each person then believes that his own reason is more dependable than anyone else's.

Through the years some have suggested that Ellen White's articles in periodicals were not as inspired as her books. Or that her letters were not inspired, only her published books. In 1882 she wrote a candid letter on "slighting the Testimonies" to be read in the Battle Creek, Michigan, church: **"Now when I send you a testimony of warning and reproof, many of you declare it to be merely the opinion of Sister White. You have there-by insulted the Spirit of God. You know how the Lord has manifested Himself through the Spirit of prophecy.... This has been my work for many years. A power has impelled me to reprove and rebuke wrongs that I had not thought of. Is this work of the last thirty-six years from above, or from beneath?"**

"When I went to Colorado, I was so burdened for you, that, in my weakness, I wrote many pages to be read at your camp meeting. Weak and trembling I arose at three o'clock in the morning to write to you. God was speaking through clay. You might say that this communication was only a letter. Yes, it was a letter, but **prompted by the Spirit of God**, to bring before your minds things that had been shown me. In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision—the precious rays of light shining from the throne." MOL 410.1 - MOL 411.1

The suggestion that prophets can be categorized by degrees of authority is similar to the previous discussion of differences in degrees of inspiration. Such appeals to categories of inspiration and authority would reduce some prophets to merely an inspirational, pastoral role or function, without divine authority.

Sometimes this proposed categorizing of prophets rests on the difference between canonical and noncanonical prophets: Noncanonical prophets are considered pastoral/inspirational; canonical prophets are considered authoritative.

Try out that reasoning in the Bible story. How much authority did David believe Nathan had? And how did Nathan understand his role—inspirational or authoritative? "The Lord sent Nathan to David..." (2 Samuel 12:1). Later David (a canonical prophet) had a similar experience with another noncanonical prophet—Gad, "David's seer" (1 Chronicles 21:9). Again, the noncanonical prophet was conscious of his authority: "Gad came to David and said to him, 'Thus says the Lord ...'" (1 Chronicles 21:11). Further, "So David went up at the word of Gad, which he had spoken in the name of the Lord" (1 Chronicles 21:19).

In his last sermon, the late associate Review editor Don F. Neufeld said: "Through His witness to the New Testament prophets, Jesus predicted that prophetic activity, as one of many spiritual gifts, would continue in the church. In other words, the testimony of Jesus to His people was not to cease once the books that make up our present canon of Scripture would be written. Prophetic activity would continue beyond the close of the canon.

- ***"This brings us to an important question. If in all prophetic activity it is Jesus who is speaking, whether in Old Testament times, in New Testament times, or in post-New Testament times, can we logically draw a distinction and say that what Jesus said in any one period is more or less authoritative than what He said in any other period?..."***
- ***"For example, could something that Jesus said in the first century A.D. be more or less authoritative than what He said in the 19th century A.D.? The answer, I think, is obvious. It doesn't make any sense to argue for degrees of inspiration, as if what Jesus (through the Spirit of prophecy) said in one generation was more inspired than what He said in another."***

When Josiah (621 B.C.) recognized the long-lost Scriptures (probably Deuteronomy, see 2 Chronicles 34:14), he trembled at the impending judgments foretold on God's people as a consequence of apostasy. He was perplexed as to whether he and his leaders had enough time to institute national reform. His loyal religious leaders—Shaphan, the scholar, Hilkiah, the high priest, and many teaching Levites—were equally troubled. They all wanted to know the meaning of the Scriptures that promised both doom and blessing. Where did they turn for counsel? To the prophetess, Huldah!

Josiah appreciated and respected his committed scholars and religious counselors. These trusted leaders were illuminated by the Spirit of God. But they, too, with Josiah, needed a higher authority to explain what these Scriptures had meant in Moses' day and what they should mean in their day. For that authority they turned to the prophetess.

Josiah and his counselors recognized that "the authority of a message is derived from its source." They perceived the "same divine Source in both the Bible ... and in the message of a contemporary prophet." In comparing Huldah and Ellen White, we note that both "intensified" the importance of the written Word, both focused the Word on the current situation, both "exalted" the Scriptures, and both "attracted" the people to apply the Bible to their lives, leading to reform. MOL 411.2 - MOL 412.1

A Case of infallibility and Biblical Models of Inspiration:

All prophets use their own language, imperfect as all human language is and always will be. Prophets use the language of their own family, community, and time. As the years go by, through study and travel, they improve their ability to understand and present God's messages. This growth in perception and communicative skills makes their prophetic role even more effective.

- ***But prophets are not perfect; they make mistakes. Sometimes they have faulty memories; sometimes they make a slip of the tongue (lapsus linguae); sometimes they misuse grammar. When Matthew wrote "Jeremiah" instead of "Zechariah" when he found an Old Testament analogy to Judas's thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 27:9, 10; Jeremiah 32:6-9; Zechariah 11:12), he made a mistake of memory or lapse of thought. In a similar fashion, Ellen White attributed to Peter the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:14: "The love of Christ constraineth us," the apostle Peter declared. This was the motive that impelled the zealous disciple in his arduous labors in the cause of the gospel."***

The Holy Spirit corrects the prophets when their counsel, for whatever reason, may adversely affect their work. Note how Nathan was told to change his counsel to David (2 Samuel 7) and when Ellen White changed her counsel regarding the closing of the Southern Publishing Association.

But the Holy Spirit does not correct the prophets' human finiteness in the use of their communication skills. MOL 412.2 - MOL 412.5

Revelation is the work of God as He "speaks" to the prophet. Inspiration describes the many ways God works through His prophets in conveying His message to people. Biblical prophets and Ellen White have used at least six "models" of inspiration.

Visionary Model

Most often we connect prophets with visions and dreams. But God also has revealed Himself in what we call "theophanies," in which the actual presence of a heavenly being is seen or heard. We think of Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:4) and Joshua before Jericho (Joshua 5:13-15). On another occasion, "the Lord opened the eyes of the young man Elisha's associate and he saw ... the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire" (2 Kings 6:15-17).

Often visions and dreams are so graphic that the prophet has difficulty distinguishing them from normal reality. 23 Isaiah confidently could say, "I saw the Lord.... I heard the voice of the Lord" (Isaiah 6:1, 8). Ellen White had many visions and dreams where the "reality" of the dream/ vision experience overwhelmed her, as it did for Daniel or Ezekiel.

Witness Model

God, at times, prompted certain Biblical writers to give their own account of what they had seen and heard. John exemplified this model when he wrote 1 John 1:1-3: "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.... These things we write to you that your joy may be full." The Gospels of Matthew and John are examples of the witness model—they did not need a vision to write out their messages. Here the Holy Spirit was using a different kind of model of inspiration, in addition to the vision/dream model.

Ellen White wrote many pages reflecting this witness model. Her words in such a mode are as qualitatively inspired as her writings that were prompted by a dream or vision.

Historian model

Luke and Mark did not write their Gospels after receiving dreams and visions. Neither were they witnesses to the revelation as Matthew and John. Mark, it is generally agreed, depended largely on Peter's "witness." But Mark was not an "eyewitness": he was a faithful historian.

Luke candidly describes his method of telling the gospel story in his preface addressed to Theophilus: "Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which are most surely believed among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed" (Luke 1:1-4.)

Thus, in the historian model God expects His messengers to use all pertinent historical records, oral or written, to fill out the message. God provides the message and helps the messengers find suitable material to make the message understandable to their readers. As we discovered in earlier pages, 25 certain parts of the New Testament were imported from extra-Biblical sources. These secular and non-Biblical sources became part of the "inspired" message.

Ellen White, at times, reflected the historian model, especially in the Conflict of the Ages Series. MOL 412.6 - MOL 413.4

Counselor model

Some of Paul's letters, such as those to Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and portions of the Corinthian letters, are classic letters of Christian counsel. None of these letters is solely theological. In 1 Corinthians 7 we find a mix of vision truth and inspired counsel. In verse 10 Paul said: "Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband." In verse 25 he followed with his counsel: "Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy." In verse 40

he reminded the church that the wife "is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment—and I think I also have the Spirit of God."

If someone would suggest that vision counsel is inspired and non-vision counsel is not, we would be dividing what Paul never did. What part of the Timothy letters is more inspired than other parts? Paul would say, "I have the Spirit of God."

A large part of Ellen White's Testimonies would be classified as counsel from one who had "the Spirit of God." Whoever she was writing to, whether parents, children, teachers, medical workers, administrators, or ministers, she used the words, "I saw." This does not always mean that she had a special vision for specific counsel. In her years of receiving visions, she had developed a keen sense of rightness and propriety. Her collected inspired wisdom gave her a rich store from which to draw, even as Paul would do in writing his counsel to individuals and to churches. Whether transmitting judgments derived from a vision or counsel based on years of listening to God, both communications came from one mind inspired by the same Spirit.

Epistolary Model.

Letters to congregations and individuals was the most common method used by New Testament writers. Some of the letters were private; others were meant to be read publicly. It seems most probable that Paul never thought that his letters to Philemon, Timothy, and Titus would become public. But we are all thankful that they did. In these letters we see a mix of common matters with obviously spiritual counsel and instruction. These New Testament letters help us understand better how to relate to Ellen White's many letters that often were private and frequently mixed the common with the sacred. MOL 413.5 - MOL 413.8

If the Lord permitted Paul's private letters to be included in the canon for universal distribution, it would be appropriate to believe that the letters of His modern prophet might also bring encouragement and corrective counsel to those who do not have the benefit of her personal ministry.

Literary model

The Bible contains portions such as the Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes where the writer expresses his most intimate feelings through poetry and prose. Again, it seems improbable that David or the other psalmists thought that their songs would eventually be in print and circulated the world over. Their deepest emotions, elation as well as anxiety, flow like an artesian well. In God's wisdom these human emotions were meant to be preserved for the benefit of all who struggle in their daily lives.

Although Ellen White was not a poet, she also expressed her keenest emotions in thousands of diary pages. We are reminded of the apostle's words in Hebrews 1:1 that God has "at various times and in different ways" spoken to us throughout human history. In listening to David or Ellen White, we often hear our own cries of anxiety, even discouragement, as well as our joy.

God has indeed spoken to us "in different ways." Through visions and dreams, through those who witness of their own account of things seen and heard, through those who are inspired by the Spirit to research the providences of God, through those who are gifted to counsel God's people regarding His will for them, through letters of instruction and correction, and through the vehicle of emotional expression of one's deepest thoughts—through these "different ways" God has spoken to the heads and hearts of men and women "at various times."

Thus, we can see that not all prophets had visions nor did all write letters. Some prophets laid their hearts bare to others while others were more objective in witnessing to what they had seen in the lives of others—or in recording the providences of God—as they did historical research. Some foretold the future, others were forth-tellers of God's will in their time.

In four ways Jesus is the best example of how true prophets perform their responsibilities:

1. He is the Messenger, the Revealer, of the mind of God.
2. He amplified the meaning of previously written Scripture.
3. He applied the Scripture to current circumstances.
4. He clarified the meaning of previously written Scripture.

MOL 413.9 - MOL 414.10

When are we supposed to quote EGW?

One of the most important lessons to be learned from the 1888 experience is that Ellen White was more concerned with living the truth than in discussing it. She made that clear on many occasions. If an un-Christlike spirit motivated a Bible student, that suggested for her that there might be something wrong with his/her theology!

Another emotionally laden event occurred the day before the 1901 General Conference session in Battle Creek. Many were the challenges that the delegates faced, but probably the greatest was the need to reorganize the General Conference which, for many years, involved only a few leaders with too much authority. Ellen White called it "a king-like, kingly ruling power."

Close to this root problem, the leaders had to face the enormous denominational debt, the amount and kind of commercial printing being done at the Review and Herald publishing house, and the growing contention with Dr. Kellogg.

Yet, underneath all these visible problems flowed a stream of inertia to change.

This inertia not only resisted improved policies of church governance, it also resisted openness to present truth and to a deepening of spiritual attitudes. Ellen White reminded the leaders of her counsel she had been giving them for years: “Enough has been said, over and over and over again, but it did not make any difference. The light shone upon them, just the same, professedly accepting it, but they did not make any change. That is what frightens me.” The root of this spiritual problem was that Mrs. White’s counsel, though often used, was misapplied to suit one’s point of view, and the principles were ignored: “He God wants you to eat His principles: to live His principles;—but those that are there now present church leaders never will appreciate it. They have had their test, ... they have had their warnings, and now there must be a change.”

Ellen White wanted no more lip service to her counsel: “Lay Sister White right to one side.... Do not you ever quote my words again as long as you live, until you can obey the Bible. When you take the Bible and make that your food ... and make that the elements sic of your character, when you can do that you will know better how to receive some counsel from God. But here is the Word, exalted before you today. And do not you give a rap any more what ‘Sister White said’—‘Sister White said this,’ and ‘Sister White said that,’ and ‘Sister White said the other thing.’ But say, ‘Thus saith the Lord God of Israel,’ and then you do just what the Lord God of Israel does, and what He says.”

She wanted the church leaders to live out the principles of the gospel—not to hide behind quotations from her as if meeting some of her counsel on church work could make up for their lack of Christian character. Her many testimonies regarding the seamless union of medical missionary work with the ministry had been generally ignored. Her counsel regarding the relationship of the mind and a healthy body had also been largely disregarded.

In this 1901 setting at Battle Creek, Ellen White was not discussing the relationship of her writings in the development of doctrine when she said further: “Do not you quote Sister White. I do not want you ever to quote Sister White until you get your vantage ground where you know where you are. Quote the Bible. Talk the Bible. It is full of meat.... Carry it out in your life, and you will know more Bible than you know now.... And I ask you to put on the armor, every piece of it, and be sure that your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel.”

She was simply telling these church leaders that appeals to her writings for whatever purpose was missing the mark when they were not, generally speaking, internalizing the principles of the gospel found either in the Bible or in her writings. Living the gospel was more important than “playing church” no matter how many quotations about the gospel were in their heads. MOL 417.8 – MOL 418.4

Why the Bible?

In her writings, Ellen White stated that the "Bible was given for practical purposes." She urged her readers to join her in taking "the Bible just as it is, as the Inspired Word" and that in "obeying the Word ... not one of you will be lost."

And what are those "practical purposes"? Mrs. White's ministry, from start to finish, continually focused on the place of the Bible in bringing salvation to its readers. Studying the Bible is not primarily an academic, intellectual venture; the Bible is a rich mine from which honest people discover the truth about God and how best to relate to Him. In respect to "higher education," she wrote: "The true higher education is gained by studying and obeying the Word of God. But when God's Word is laid aside for books that do not lead to God and the kingdom of heaven, the education acquired is a perversion of the name."

The purpose of the Bible, in Ellen White's thinking, is to help honest seekers relate to the cosmic conflict in such a way that God's purpose to restore sinners will be achieved. For her, Bible study and character development are inseparable.

This conceptual consistency, this linkage between the Bible, character development, and the Great Controversy Theme, is one of the primary characteristics of Ellen White's writings. This threefold linkage defines the way her writings should be understood in relation to her use of the Bible. She never saw herself as an exegete. Or as a historical scholar. Thus her readers should not look to her, primarily, as an exegete or historian. Part of her job description was to serve as God's messenger in these last days to help prepare a people to meet the Lord. The Bible was her textbook in defining what that preparation means. It was her personal guide for her close walk with God. In her hands it became the textbook for others as she exhorted them to join her in this life-changing relationship. MOL 420.6 - MOL 421.1

About creeds and Seventh-day Adventist Church

Because of God's plan to unfold truth as fast as His people are able to understand it, each generation is blessed with additional truth. Thus, we know more today about God's will than did earlier generations. Not that truth is evolving in some kind of evolutionary scheme, but our perception of truth is continually progressing.

Within the Bible story we find a built-in "capacity for self-correction of understanding." The Old Testament understanding of God's plan for this world and how He will intervene and create a "new world" was clarified in later revelations, in the New Testament. This is a practical example of how God always "meets people where they are, yet knows all along where He is going!"

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a forward-looking church. Its members and leaders have not let the past be the measure for the future. The primary value of

the past has been in its unique ability to reveal the leading of God and His "big picture" that He is constantly unfolding.

Through the years Ellen White "was consistently ahead of the leaders. She had the ideas and the energy to set them before the people." What was the reason? She understood by concept and experience that God is always leading His people into greater light, as fast as they are able to receive it, as fast as they are willing to obey it.

Mrs. White was opposed to a creedal approach to Adventist doctrine. During the 1888 General Conference, resolutions were proposed that **"nothing should be taught in the college contrary to what has been taught."** She noted that she **"felt deeply, for I knew whoever framed that resolution was not aware of what he was doing."** Such a resolution would not only perpetuate errors then taught (for example, verbal inspiration of the Bible), but would also slam the door against the Spirit of God who might have further light for honest truth-seekers.

In another letter Ellen White wrote: **"I could not let the resolution pass, that nothing should be taught in the college but that which had been taught during the past year", that there was to be special light for God's people as they neared the closing scenes of this earth's history. Another angel was to come from heaven with a message and the whole earth was to be lightened with his glory. It would be impossible for us to state just how this additional light would come. It might come in a very unexpected manner, in a way that would not agree with the ideas that many have conceived. It is not at all unlikely, or contrary to the ways and works of God to send light to His people in unexpected ways. Would it be right that every avenue should be closed in our school so that the students could not have the benefit of this light? The resolution was not called for."**

For Ellen White, "the best way to deal with error is to present the truth." To paper over discussion with resolutions that often conceal opposition to truth and serious discord was not her way.

She spoke also to the present generation when she addressed the 1888 General Conference session: "No one must be permitted to close the avenues whereby the light of truth shall come to the people. As soon as this shall be attempted, God's Spirit will be quenched, for that Spirit is constantly at work to give fresh and increased light to His people through His Word." Christians until the end of time, and throughout eternity, will be listening to the Spirit as He continues to build on the tree of truth with new branches that extend the broad outlines understood in the past. MOL 422.6 - MOL 423.4

In Battle Creek, October 5, 1861, when the Michigan Conference was organized, the wording of the resolution included **"covenanting to keep the commandments of**

God, and the faith of Jesus Christ." Some felt strongly that even these words suggested a creed.

J. N. Loughborough declared that **"the first step of apostasy is to get up a creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth is to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And fifth, to commence persecution against such. I plead that we are not patterning after the churches in any unwarrantable sense in the step proposed."**

After others spoke, James White, in his inimitable fashion, made a comprehensive statement that had lasting significance. It included: "I take the ground that creeds stand in a direct opposition to the gifts. Let us suppose a case: We get up a creed, stating just what we shall do in reference to this thing and that, and say that we will believe the gifts too.

"But suppose the Lord, through the gifts, should give us some new light that did not harmonize with our creed; then, if we remain true to the gifts, it knocks our creed all over at once. Making a creed is setting the stakes, and barring up the way to all future advancement. God put the gifts into the church for a good and great object; but men who have got up their churches, have shut up the way or have marked out a course for the Almighty. They say virtually that the Lord must not do anything further than what has been marked out in the creed.

"A creed and the gifts thus stand in direct opposition to each other. Now what is our position as a people? The Bible is our creed. We reject everything in the form of a human creed. We take the Bible and the gifts of the Spirit; embracing the faith that thus the Lord will teach us from time to time. And in this we take a position against the formation of a creed. We are not taking one step, in what we are doing, toward becoming Babylon." MOL 426.6 - MOL 427.3

The 1919 Bible Conference, one of the most heated Sessions in Adventist history discussed passionately topics as the Eastern question, the Arian-Trinity controversy, the two covenants, the "daily" (Daniel 8:11-13), beginning and ending of the 1260 years, and the king of the north (Daniel 11). At the heart of it was the issue of how to interpret Ellen White and her say on these topics. Should she be understood in the light of verbal or thought inspiration? Missing in that conference was W. C. White but why? Herbert Douglass tries to give a glimpse of this:

(1) Some wonder why W. C. White was not present at the 1919 meetings. As a member of the General Conference Committee, he was automatically a delegate and did receive the mimeographed invitation. Perhaps, after looking over the agenda, which included nothing on the work and relevance of Ellen White, he felt his time would be better spent in the Elmshaven office. Working alone after his mother's staff had dispersed in 1915 (no budget allotted by the Trustees, not even

provision for a letterhead), White felt pressure to finish compiling Counsels on Health to satisfy the requests from medical leaders. If anyone had been able to predict that two long days of discussion (that arose spontaneously) would have been devoted to his mother's prophetic role, "he doubtless would have made a greater effort to attend." MOL 438.8 - MOL 439.1

W. C. White, the most valuable source person available, could have answered some of the questions more accurately, more constructively, than anyone else. Perhaps, with his experience and communicative skills, he could have helped to focus more clearly the issues that were seriously dividing church leaders and laypeople at that time, and for years to come. That focus would have led to a careful, forthright examination of the facts regarding the work of a prophet in modern times. Cutting away mistaken ideas would have been painful for some, but the healing would have been quicker and longer lasting than the widening gap of confidence that followed the Conference/Council.

However, another aspect must be considered: For many church leaders, at the Conference and in the field, **W. C. White was suspect, and had been for twenty years, as being one of the "liberals." Why? Because he had been emphasizing that his mother's writings should always be understood in context with "time, place, and circumstances" determining their meaning and application. W. C. White, with Daniells, Wilcox, and later Prescott, represented those who were thought-inspirationists, though that term had not been used at that time.**

- ***Often at the heart of the controversy with Dr. J. H. Kellogg and A. T. Jones was the issue of how to interpret the statements of Ellen White. These two articulate leaders eventually used Mrs. White's writings only when they seemed to support their views. Part of Jones's attack on Daniells was based on Mrs. White's comments regarding the unreliability of General Conference leadership in 1897, and then charging that the same statements applied in 1906. On other occasions, when they found difficulty with her writings, their response was that "someone" had told her wrong information. Often that "someone" was, in their mind, her son W. C. White.***

From 1919 to his death in 1937, W. C. White's contribution to the facts surrounding the prophetic ministry of his mother was enormously helpful.

(2) Beneath the differences of the delegates (and many of the ministers and lay-people in the churches) over such agenda topics as the Eastern question, the Arian-Trinity controversy, the two covenants, the "daily" (Daniel 8:11-13), beginning and ending of the 1260 years, and the king of the north (Daniel 11), was the issue of how to interpret Ellen White. Accusations of disloyalty to her, of unfaithfulness to her authority by picking and choosing her writings as to what was inspired, of unsafe

leaders leading the denomination down a fearful path without the guidance that she had given the denomination for seventy years—all such spirited words directed at General Conference officers and those among the teachers in the colleges who supported them did not bring out the best in people, on either side.

The Conference/Council was charged with tension the moment it opened. At stake, each side believed, was the authority of Ellen White. Each side further believed that on this issue would hang the future of the church.

(3) Both sides, verbal- and thought-inspirationists, had much of value to hold on to. But neither side saw the heart-truth for which the other was contending. Thus they missed the transcending, healing nature of the ellipse of truth. Neither side saw clearly the biggest reason why the ministry of Mrs. White had made such an enormous impact on their lives, though each appealed to their own experience under her guidance as undeniable. Neither side could see clearly that her distinctive message, her coherent, integrating theological principles, were the foundation for her guiding concepts in education, health, mission, and the Adventist theological teachings.

The foundation principles, understood as the Great Controversy Theme, were the reasons why the policies these leaders had followed were so effective. They had been living so close to the rapidly developing church and the equally rapid change in national and world conditions that most of them had not stepped back far enough to see the big picture. Both sides saw these undeniably wonderful results (in education, health, and rapid church growth) and they wanted to protect their divinely guided messenger from the use or misuse of her writings. Each side saw the other as the ultimate problem when they perceived what seemed to be a lack of appreciation for the gift of prophecy in their midst. MOL 439.2 - MOL 440.2

(4) But the downside of these two positions was played out in the lives of some of the most eloquent partisans. Many contributing influences affected Dr. John Harvey Kellogg but probably none was more crucial than his understanding of how revelation and inspiration works. The eventual drift of A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner, spiritual heroes of 1888 and the early 1890s, was largely caused by the same misunderstanding. Kellogg and Jones, especially, held to a rigid concept of virtual verbal inspiration without using the contextual principle for understanding Mrs. White's statements.

(5) But some of those contending for thought inspiration found themselves on the other side of the slippery slope. Though they had a clearer grasp of how God speaks to the minds of prophets, few seemed to possess the inner core of Ellen White's message that provided the theological

structure for her global contributions to theology, education, health, mission, etc.

As time passed, some of these otherwise able leaders had nothing to hang on to when they began to separate what was inspired from what was not. When they said that Ellen White could not be trusted in historical and medical matters, or even in administrative and theological issues—where would they stop? If Ellen White could not be considered an authority in these matters, how could she be considered authoritative in others?

- ***We do not know the motivation behind the written or public statements of either verbal or thought-inspirationists. Generally, however, thought-inspirationists contended for the freedom to interpret Ellen White on the basis of sound hermeneutical principles—such as the application of time, place, and circumstances. Such sought the principle behind the policy. This approach had been best articulated by W. C. White in his remarks regarding the 1911 revision of The Great Controversy. F. M. Wilcox, in a general way, at the Council, also asserted this coherent, integrating approach to the writings of Ellen White: "I would like to ask Brother Daniells if it could be accepted as a sort of rule that Sister White might be mistaken in details, but in the general policy and instruction she was an authority."***

Others who contended against the verbal-inspirationists did not accept, or perhaps did not understand, this larger, more constructive reasoning. The thought would be expressed, for whatever reason, "While I believe that Ellen White is a prophet of God, I do not believe that all she writes and all she says is inspired; in other words, I do not believe in verbal inspiration."

- ***That kind of thinking, if not severely modified, is an open door through which many have walked away from the Adventist Church over the years. Such thinking leads to personal judgment as to what a "prophet" means and to personal judgment as to what is inspired and what is not. This is truly a slippery slope if there is not a prevailing, fundamental message to hold on to.***
- ***At least verbal-inspirationists knew, in their minds, how to hang on to authority—even if it might not have been for the right reasons. Those of this group (and there were many) who remained in the church as strong leaders in administration and evangelism, believed that they were the only ones left who could save the denomination from apostasy. They could point to many who tried to "reinterpret" Ellen White as examples of where such thinking would lead others—men such as the Ballenger brothers (A. F. and E. S.), J. H. Kellogg, A. T. Jones, W. A. Colcord, E. J. Waggoner, L. R. Conradi, and W. W. Fletcher.***

Common to all these highly visible leaders who defected was their decision "that the Spirit of prophecy could be **divided into 'inspired' and 'uninspired' portions**. It seems relevant that, in most cases, those who began to make such determinations eventually **lost confidence in the Spirit of prophecy**."

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(7) On the other, J. S. Washburn, a highly visible representative of those who opposed Prescott and Daniells on their positions concerning the "daily," the Eastern question, etc., wrote an open letter to Daniells and the General Conference Committee, expressing the concern of many. In referring to "this so-called Bible Institute" where "teachers were undermining the confidence of our sons and daughters in the very fundamentals of our truth," he quoted "one of our most faithful workers" who said that the Institute "was the most terrible thing that had ever happened in the history of this denomination."

(8) The issues that surfaced in the 1919 Conference/Council remain today, reflected in at least three of the four positions that divide Christians generally and Adventists specifically:

(a) Those who believe that Biblical writers and Ellen White were inspired but were not given propositional truth;

(b) Those who hold that Biblical writers and Ellen White received divinely dictated truth and that their messages were given as God wanted the writings to be read or heard:

(c) Those who believe that the Bible and the writings of Ellen White are divinely inspired by God impressing thoughts on the prophets' minds who would then convey the message in the best language and thought frames at their disposal; (THIS IS MY POSITION)

(d) Those who believe that the Bible and the writings of Ellen White are generally inspired but their value is more pastoral than theological.

MOL 440.3 - MOL 441.7

How was the Bible given?

The Bible is not given to us in grand superhuman language. Jesus, in order to reach man where he is, took humanity. The Bible must be given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect. Different meanings are expressed by the same word; there is not one word for each distinct idea. The Bible was given for practical purposes.

The stamps of minds are different. All do not understand expressions and statements alike. Some understand the statements of the Scriptures to suit their own particular minds and cases. Prepossessions, prejudices, and passions have a strong influence to darken the understanding and confuse the mind even in reading the words of Holy Writ.

The disciples traveling to Emmaus needed to be disentangled in their interpretation of the Scriptures. Jesus walked with them disguised, and as a man He talked with them. Beginning at Moses and the prophets He taught them in all things concerning Himself, that His life, His mission, His sufferings, His death were just as the Word of God had foretold. He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. How quickly He straightened out the tangled ends and showed the unity and divine verity of the Scriptures. How much men in these times need their understanding opened.

The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers.

It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words and thoughts 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.—Manuscript 24, 1886 (written in Europe in 1886). 1SM 20.2 - 1SM 21.2

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. 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.

Through the inspiration of His Spirit the Lord gave His apostles truth, to be expressed according to the development of their minds by the Holy Spirit. But the

mind is not cramped, as if forced into a certain mold.—Letter 53, 1900. 1SM 22.1 - 1SM 22.2

The Lord speaks to human beings in imperfect speech, in order that the degenerate senses, the dull, earthly perception, of earthly beings may comprehend His words. Thus is shown God's condescension. He meets fallen human beings where they are. The Bible, perfect as it is in its simplicity, does not answer to the great ideas of God; for infinite ideas cannot be perfectly embodied in finite vehicles of thought. Instead of the expressions of the Bible being exaggerated, as many people suppose, the strong expressions break down before the magnificence of the thought, though the penman selected the most expressive language through which to convey the truths of higher education. Sinful beings can only bear to look upon a shadow of the brightness of heaven's glory.—Letter 121, 1901. 1SM 22.3

Why did EGW have editors?

This is another question raised to cast doubts on her writings but it should be remembered that Jeremiah, Peter and Paul had scribes for helping in writings messages that formed part of the Canon.

- ***Ellen White employed literary assistants for the same reasons that Biblical writers did. She recognized her own limitations of time and literary skills. In 1873, she wrote in her diary: "My mind is coming to strange conclusions. I am thinking I must lay aside my writing I have taken so much pleasure in, and see if I cannot become a scholar. I am not a grammarian. I will try, if the Lord will help me, at forty-five years old to become a scholar in the science. God will help me. I believe He will."***

She was often interrupted while writing and this left tangled copy. Commenting on this need for editorial assistance, she wrote: **"Doing as much writing as I do, it is not surprising if there are many sentences left unfinished."**

In a letter to G. A. Irwin, General Conference president, Willie White noted that his mother sought literary assistance because she recognized the **varying quality in her writings**: "Sometimes when Mother's mind is rested, and free, the thoughts are presented in language that is not only clear and strong, but beautiful and correct; and at times when she is weary and oppressed with heavy burdens of anxiety, or when the subject is difficult to portray, there are **repetitions and ungrammatical sentences**." MOL 109.13 - MOL 110.3

- ***He further described the guidelines that his mother set for her literary assistants: "Mother's copyists are entrusted with the work of correcting grammatical errors, of eliminating unnecessary repetitions, and of grouping paragraphs and sections in their best order.... Mother's***

workers of experience, such as Sisters Davis, Burnham, Bolton, Peck, and Hare, who are very familiar with her writings, are authorized to take a sentence, paragraph, or section from one manuscript and incorporate it with another manuscript where the same thought was expressed but not so clearly. But none of Mother's workers are authorized to add to the manuscripts by introducing thoughts of their own."

By 1881 Willie served as the **editorial coordinator for his mother's literary assistants**. Because Ellen White was either traveling or writing new material most of the time, she chose not to be involved in editorial details. She knew that **she would review all documents before they would be published unless she gave, on occasion, specific permission to a periodical editor to abridge to fit space. The record shows that they made few changes.**

A "hierarchy of responsibility" developed. For example, **for minor editorial work**, Marian Davis was authorized to decide matters herself; **larger questions were to be submitted to W. C. White**. Ellen White would make **the final decisions** as to editorial changes after both William and Marian had done their work. MOL 110.4 - MOL 110.6

Marian Davis had occasions to describe her work as she saw it: "I have tried to begin both chapters and paragraphs with short sentences, and indeed to simplify wherever possible, to drop out every needless word, and to make the work, as I have said, more compact and vigorous."

The publishers hoped to keep Ellen White on their schedule, which was not easy during her heavy duties in Australia. Marian wrote to Willie: "Sister White is constantly harassed with the thought that the manuscript should be sent to the printers at once.... Sister White seems inclined to write, and I have no doubt she will bring out many precious things. I hope it will be possible to get them into the book. There is one thing, however, that not even the most competent editor could do—that is prepare a manuscript before it is written."

At times Ellen White reached out beyond her immediate helpers for assistance. She explained this procedure to W. H. Littlejohn in 1894: **"I have all my publications closely examined. I desire that nothing shall appear in print without careful investigation. Of course I would not want men who have not a Christian experience or are lacking in ability to appreciate literary merit to be placed as judges of what is essential to come before the people, as pure provender thoroughly winnowed from the chaff. I laid out all my manuscript on Patriarchs and Prophets and on Spirit of Prophecy Vol. IV before the book committee for examination and criticism. I also placed these manuscripts in the hands of some of our ministers for examination. The more criticism of them the better for the work."**

When she wrote of medical matters, her office helpers asked **medical specialists to review the manuscripts with care**: "I wish that in all your reading you would note those places where the thought is expressed in a way to be especially criticized by **medical men** and kindly give us the benefit of your knowledge as to how to express the same thought in a more accurate way."

Regardless of wherever she received editorial help, Ellen White read everything in final form: "**I find under my door in the morning several copied articles from Sister Peck, Maggie Hare, and Minnie Hawkins. All must be read critically by me ... Every article I prepare to be edited by my workers, I always have to read myself before it is sent for publication.**" MOL 110.7 - MOL 111.3

I hope everyone are familiar with the following and it doesn't to me border any closer to verbal inspiration:

- **The Bible is not given to us in grand superhuman language.** *Jesus, in order to reach man where he is, took humanity. The Bible must be given in the language of men. **Everything that is human is imperfect.** Different meanings are expressed by the same word; there is not one word for each distinct idea. The Bible was given for practical purposes.*
- *The stamps of minds are different. All do not understand expressions and statements alike. Some understand the statements of the Scriptures to suit their own particular minds and cases. Prepossessions, prejudices, and passions have a strong influence to darken the understanding and confuse the mind even in reading the words of Holy Writ.*
- *The disciples traveling to Emmaus needed to be disentangled in their interpretation of the Scriptures. Jesus walked with them disguised, and as a man He talked with them. Beginning at Moses and the prophets He taught them in all things concerning Himself, that His life, His mission, His sufferings, His death were just as the Word of God had foretold. He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. How quickly He straightened out the tangled ends and showed the unity and divine verity of the Scriptures. How much men in these times need their understanding opened.*
- **The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. GOD, AS A WRITER, IS NOT REPRESENTED.** *Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. **The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen.** Look at the different writers.*
- **It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is**

imbued with thoughts. But the words and thoughts 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.—Manuscript 24, 1886 (written in Europe in 1886). 1SM 20.2 - 1SM 21.2

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Closing Remarks - Great Changes to take Place

Adventism at Crossroads without a Living Prophet

A Little History from 1915-1989 by Herbert E. Douglass

Because of God's plan to unfold truth as fast as His people are able to understand it, each generation is blessed with additional truth. Thus, we know more today about God's will than did earlier generations. Not that truth is evolving in some kind of evolutionary scheme, but our perception of truth is continually progressing.

Within the Bible story we find a built-in "capacity for self-correction of understanding." The Old Testament understanding of God's plan for this world and how He will intervene and create a "new world" was clarified in later revelations, in

the New Testament. This is a practical example of how God always "meets people where they are, yet knows all along where He is going!"

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a forward-looking church. Its members and leaders have not let the past be the measure for the future. The primary value of the past has been in its unique ability to reveal the leading of God and His "big picture" that He is constantly unfolding.

Through the years Ellen White "was consistently ahead of the leaders. She had the ideas and the energy to set them before the people." What was the reason? She understood by concept and experience that God is always leading His people into greater light, as fast as they are able to receive it, as fast as they are willing to obey it.

Mrs. White was opposed to a creedal approach to Adventist doctrine. During the 1888 General Conference, resolutions were proposed that "nothing should be taught in the college contrary to what has been taught." She noted that she **"felt deeply, for I knew whoever framed that resolution was not aware of what he was doing."** Such a resolution would not only perpetuate errors then taught (for example, verbal inspiration of the Bible), but would also slam the door against the Spirit of God who might have further light for honest truth-seekers.

In another letter Ellen White wrote: **"I could not let the resolution pass, that nothing should be "taught in the college but that which had been taught during the past year"**, that there was to be special light for God's people as they neared the closing scenes of this earth's history. Another angel was to come from heaven with a message and the whole earth was to be lightened with his glory. It would be impossible for us to state just how this additional light would come. It might come in a very unexpected manner, in a way that would not agree with the ideas that many have conceived. It is not at all unlikely, or contrary to the ways and works of God to send light to His people in unexpected ways. Would it be right that every avenue should be closed in our school so that the students could not have the benefit of this light? The resolution was not called for."

For Ellen White, **"the best way to deal with error is to present the truth."** To paper over discussion with resolutions that often conceal opposition to truth and serious discord was not her way.

She spoke also to the present generation when she addressed the 1888 General Conference session: "No one must be permitted to close the avenues whereby the light of truth shall come to the people. As soon as this shall be attempted, God's Spirit will be quenched, for that Spirit is constantly at work to give fresh and increased light to His people through His Word." Christians until the end of time, and throughout eternity, will be listening to the Spirit as He continues to build on the tree of truth with new branches that extend the broad outlines understood in the past. **MOL 422.6 - MOL 423.4**

In Battle Creek, October 5, 1861, when the Michigan Conference was organized, the wording of the resolution included "covenanting to keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus Christ." Some felt strongly that even these words suggested a creed.

J. N. Loughborough declared that "the first step of apostasy is to get up a creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth is to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And fifth, to commence persecution against such. I plead that we are not patterning after the churches in any unwarrantable sense in the step proposed."

After others spoke, James White, in his inimitable fashion, made a comprehensive statement that had lasting significance. It included: "I take the ground that creeds stand in a direct opposition to the gifts. Let us suppose a case: We get up a creed, stating just what we shall do in reference to this thing and that, and say that we will believe the gifts too.

"But suppose the Lord, through the gifts, should give us some new light that did not harmonize with our creed; then, if we remain true to the gifts, it knocks our creed all over at once. Making a creed is setting the stakes, and barring up the way to all future advancement. God put the gifts into the church for a good and great object; but men who have got up their churches, have shut up the way or have marked out a course for the Almighty. They say virtually that the Lord must not do anything further than what has been marked out in the creed.

"A creed and the gifts thus stand in direct opposition to each other. Now what is our position as a people? The Bible is our creed. We reject everything in the form of a human creed. We take the Bible and the gifts of the Spirit; embracing the faith that thus the Lord will teach us from time to time. And in this we take a position against the formation of a creed. We are not taking one step, in what we are doing, toward becoming Babylon." MOL 426.6 - MOL 427.3

The **1919** Bible Conference, one of the most heated Sessions in Adventist history discussed passionately topics as the Eastern question, **the Arian-Trinity controversy**, the two covenants, the "daily" (Daniel 8:11-13), beginning and ending of the 1260 years, and the king of the north (Daniel 11). **At the heart of it was the issue of how to interpret Ellen White and her say on these topics. Should she be understood in the light of verbal or thought inspiration? Missing in that conference was W. C. White but why?** Herbert Douglass tries to give a glimpse of this:

(1) Some wonder why W. C. White was not present at the 1919 meetings. As a member of the General Conference Committee, he was automatically a delegate and

did receive the mimeographed invitation. **Perhaps, after looking over the agenda, which included nothing on the work and relevance of Ellen White, he felt his time would be better spent in the Elmshaven office. Working alone after his mother's staff had dispersed in 1915 (no budget allotted by the Trustees, not even provision for a letterhead), White felt pressure to finish compiling Counsels on Health to satisfy the requests from medical leaders. If anyone had been able to predict that two long days of discussion (that arose spontaneously) would have been devoted to his mother's prophetic role, "he doubtless would have made a greater effort to attend."** MOL 438.8 - MOL 439.1

W. C. White, the most valuable source person available, could have answered some of the questions more accurately, more constructively, than anyone else. Perhaps, with his experience and communicative skills, he could have helped to focus more clearly the issues that were seriously dividing church leaders and laypeople at that time, and for years to come. That focus would have led to a careful, forthright examination of the facts regarding the work of a prophet in modern times. Cutting away mistaken ideas would have been painful for some, but the healing would have been quicker and longer lasting than the widening gap of confidence that followed the Conference/Council.

However, another aspect must be considered: For many church leaders, at the Conference and in the field, **W. C. White was suspect, and had been for twenty years, as being one of the "liberals." Why? Because he had been emphasizing that his mother's writings should always be understood in context with "time, place, and circumstances" determining their meaning and application. W. C. White, with Daniells, Wilcox, and later Prescott, represented those who were thought-inspirationists, though that term had not been used at that time.**

Often at the heart of the controversy with Dr. J. H. Kellogg and A. T. Jones was the issue of how to interpret the statements of Ellen White. These two articulate leaders eventually used Mrs. White's writings only when they seemed to support their views. Part of Jones's attack on Daniells was based on Mrs. White's comments regarding the unreliability of General Conference leadership in 1897, and then charging that the same statements applied in 1906. On other occasions, when they found difficulty with her writings, their response was that "someone" had told her wrong information. Often that "someone" was, in their mind, her son W. C. White.

From 1919 to his death in 1937, W. C. White's contribution to the facts surrounding the prophetic ministry of his mother was enormously helpful.

(2) Beneath the differences of the delegates (and many of the ministers and lay-people in the churches) over such agenda topics as the Eastern question, the **Arian-Trinity controversy**, the two covenants, the "daily" (Daniel 8:11-13), beginning and ending of the 1260 years, and the king of the north (Daniel 11), **was the issue of how to interpret Ellen White. Accusations of disloyalty to her, of**

unfaithfulness to her authority by picking and choosing her writings as to what was inspired, of unsafe leaders leading the denomination down a fearful path without the guidance that she had given the denomination for seventy years—all such spirited words directed at General Conference officers and those among the teachers in the colleges who supported them did not bring out the best in people, on either side.

The Conference/Council was charged with tension the moment it opened. At stake, each side believed, **was the authority of Ellen White**. Each side further believed that on this issue would hang the future of the church.

(3) Both sides, verbal- and thought-inspirationists, had much of value to hold on to. But neither side saw the heart-truth for which the other was contending. Thus they missed the transcending, healing nature of the ellipse of truth. Neither side saw clearly the biggest reason why the ministry of Mrs. White had made such an enormous impact on their lives, though each appealed to their own experience under her guidance as undeniable. **Neither side could see clearly that her distinctive message, her coherent, integrating theological principles, were the foundation for her guiding concepts in education, health, mission, and the Adventist theological teachings.**

The foundation principles, understood as the Great Controversy Theme, were the reasons why the policies these leaders had followed were so effective. They had been living so close to the rapidly developing church and the equally rapid change in national and world conditions that most of them had not stepped back far enough to see the big picture. Both sides saw these undeniably wonderful results (in education, health, and rapid church growth) and they wanted to protect their divinely guided messenger from the use or misuse of her writings. **Each side saw the other as the ultimate problem when they perceived what seemed to be a lack of appreciation for the gift of prophecy in their midst.** MOL 439.2 - MOL 440.2

(4) But the downside of these two positions was played out in the lives of some of the most eloquent partisans. **Many contributing influences affected Dr. John Harvey Kellogg but probably none was more crucial than his understanding of how revelation and inspiration works. The eventual drift of A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner, spiritual heroes of 1888 and the early 1890s, was largely caused by the same misunderstanding. Kellogg and Jones, especially, held to a rigid concept of virtual verbal inspiration without using the contextual principle for understanding Mrs. White's statements.**

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As time passed, some of these otherwise able leaders had nothing to hang on to when they began to separate what was inspired from what was not. When they said that Ellen White could not be trusted in historical and medical matters, or even in administrative and theological issues—where would they stop? If Ellen White could not be considered an authority in these matters, how could she be considered authoritative in others?

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At least verbal-inspirationists knew, in their minds, how to hang on to authority—even if it might not have been for the right reasons. Those of this group (and there were many) who remained in the church as strong leaders in administration and evangelism, believed that they were the only ones left who could save the denomination from apostasy. They could point to many who tried to "reinterpret" Ellen White as examples of where such thinking would lead others—**men such as the Ballenger brothers (A. F. and E. S.), J. H. Kellogg, A. T. Jones, W. A. Colcord, E. J. Waggoner, L. R. Conradi, and W. W. Fletcher.**

Common to all these highly visible leaders who defected was their decision "that the Spirit of prophecy could be divided into 'inspired' and 'uninspired' portions. It seems relevant that, in most cases, those who began to make such determinations eventually lost confidence in the Spirit of prophecy."

(6) Evidence that the Conference/Council did not appear to change anyone's mind is reflected in later comments. On one hand, A. G. Daniells wrote to W. C. White that "we stand together more unitedly and firmly for all the fundamentals than when we began the meeting." **[But was this true when he later commissioned Leroy Froom to write on the issue of the Holy Spirit; an action that gave birth to compiling Evangelism which painted an idea that was foreign to Ellen White!].**
Brackets mine

(7) **On the other, J. S. Washburn, a highly visible representative of those who opposed Prescott and Daniells on their positions concerning the "daily," the Eastern question, etc., wrote an open letter to Daniells and the General Conference Committee, expressing the concern of many. In referring to "this so-called Bible Institute" where "teachers were undermining the confidence of our sons and daughters in the very fundamentals of our truth," he quoted "one of our most faithful workers" who said that the Institute "was the most terrible thing that had ever happened in the history of this denomination."**

(8) The issues that surfaced in the 1919 Conference/Council remain today, reflected in at least three of the four positions that divide Christians generally and Adventists specifically:

(a) Those who believe that Biblical writers and Ellen White were inspired but were not given propositional truth;

(b) Those who hold that Biblical writers and Ellen White received divinely dictated truth and that their messages were given as God wanted the writings to be read or heard:

(c) Those who believe that the Bible and the writings of Ellen White are divinely inspired by God impressing thoughts on the prophets' minds who would then convey the message in the best language and thought frames at their disposal; (THIS IS MY POSITION)

(d) Those who believe that the Bible and the writings of Ellen White are generally inspired but their value is more pastoral than theological. MOL 440.3 - MOL 441.7

Brothers and sisters, here we stand and we are the generation that are to restore the truth once delivered to the saints:

Psalms 11:3

If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Jude 1:3

*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort [you] that **ye should***

earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

How can we forget the words of the Messenger!

*When waking out of sleep, she called the nurse to her side and said, “I want to tell you. **I HATE SIN (REPEATED THREE TIMES).** I am charged to tell our people, that some do not realize, that the devil has device after device, and he carries them out in ways that they do not expect. Satan’s agencies will invent ways to **MAKE SINNERS OUT OF SAINTS.** “I tell you now, that when I am laid to rest, **GREAT CHANGES WILL TAKE PLACE.** “I do not know when I shall be taken; and I desire to warn all against the devices of the devil. “I want the people to know that I warned them fully before my death. **“I do not know especially what changes will take place; but they should watch every conceivable SIN THAT SATAN WILL TRY TO IMMORTALIZE.”** {Ms1-1915}*

God needs watchmen who will stand on the walls of Zion and blow a trumpet. Can we safely say:

In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history. {LS 196.2}

Blessings