

A Reply To Criticism: Part 2 A Plea For a Balanced Understanding of EGW'S Writings

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Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

The last newsletter (No 87) on "The Use of Ellen White to Interpret Scripture," generated a wide range of responses, all the way from strong condemnation to wholehearted commendation. After reading these responses, I found myself in a dilemma: Should I ignore the comments received and keep my promise to present in this newsletter an exegetically analysis of the seven texts mentioning the 1260 days prophecy (Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 11:2; Rev 11:3; Rev 12:6; Rev 12:14; Rev 13:5)? Or, Should I deal first with the responses received and postpone the study of 1260 days prophecy until the next newsletter?

I opted for the second possibility, because I sense that the issue is not so much what a fresh look at the texts in questions might bring out, but whether or not as an Adventist scholar I have the right to conduct a new investigation of these texts. It is evident that some of our fellow believers strongly feel that it is plain arrogance for anyone to dare to reexamine the traditional interpretation of this prophetic period, which has been fully endorsed by the "Pen of Inspiration." For them what Ellen White wrote on this subject settles the question, because they view her writings as the inspired, final interpretation of the Bible.

For example, an Adventist sister wrote to me: "The traditional Adventist interpretation [of the 1260 days] came from *The Great Controversy* by Ellen White who told us that all her writings came straight from God in vision. . . . It seems that if some Adventists believe the view you put forth, they are forced to abandon Sister White's claims of prophetic gift. So I am wondering if you are still Adventist and an adherent to Ellen White's writings." It is unfortunate that many fellow believers like this dear sister hold to an idealized and glorified view that all of Ellen White's "writings came straight from God in vision." Those who hold this view will be shocked to read the testimonies of those who helped Ellen White to find the historical sources for *The Great Controversy*.

The question raised by Adventist fellow believers like this dear sister, deserves serious consideration. Two major issues confront us. The first is the nature of the inspiration of Ellen White. Did she receive "all her writings came straight from God in vision" as many Adventists are led to believe? Or, did she use available sources to find information needed for her historical books? Did her trusted assistants help her to locate the information needed for some of her books?

The second issue is the proper use of EGW's writings. Do Adventists have the right to investigate the Scriptures independently of Ellen White's interpretations? If Biblical research can only be conducted in strict adherence to the interpretations found in EGW's writings, then no original investigation of Scripture is possible in the Adventist Church. One ends up examining what Ellen White has to say about a text or a doctrine, rather than endeavoring to understand what the Bible itself teaches.

The proper use of EGW's writings in interpreting Scripture is a most serious issue facing the Adventist church today. There is an urgent need for our church to settle such fundamental questions as these: Are EGW's writings to be used as a helpful guide in the study of the Bible or as a straightjacket to ensure that no deviation occurs from historical

interpretations? Are we as Adventists free to investigate the Scriptures or are we boxed into a system of beliefs that admits no independent Biblical research?

This newsletter attempts to address the critical and sensitive question of the role of Ellen White in resolving doctrinal and historical questions. This is the longest newsletter I have ever sent and it may prove to be the most important. Feel free to share it with your friend. It may lead them to a balanced understanding of Ellen White's prophetic ministry. The last newsletter generated hundreds of new subscriptions. Let your friends know that they can receive this newsletter free of charge, simply by emailing their request at <sbacchiocchi@qtm.net>.

Historically Adventists have been led to believe that Ellen White is the final interpreter of Scripture and history. If this prevailing understanding is correct, then I cannot in good faith undertake a fresh investigation of the 1260 days prophetic period or of any other subject. To do so would mean to reject the final authority of our Adventist church.

The issue is not the merits or demerits of the proposed new interpretation of the 1260 days, but whether Scripture or EGW's writings are our ultimate authority for testing the validity of such interpretation.. If our Adventist church prohibits any Biblical research that contradicts the teachings of Ellen White, then as a loyal Adventist I cannot and will not in good conscience engage in a fresh Biblical study of our beliefs.

The only option available to me is to devote my time and efforts to reaffirm what we believe. Indeed, this is what I have done for many years by writing 16 books designed to enrich our understanding of such fundamental beliefs as the Sabbath, the Second Advent, the State of the Dead, Temperance, and Christian lifestyle.

Reaffirming and enriching what we believe is a vital ministry for our spiritual growth. For me it is heartwarming to receive messages from many parts of the world expressing appreciation for a new understanding and experience of our fundamental beliefs gained from reading my books. But the question remains: Should all the research and writings be apologetic, that is, defensive of what we believe? Do Adventist thinkers have the right to be trailblazers and open new paths of understanding biblical teachings, especially when it comes to prophecies?

Personally I want to respect the directives of our church, because I am a deeply committed Seventh-day Adventist. This means that if at this time our church prohibits any reexamination of our traditional interpretation of Bible prophecies, then I will not proceed with a fresh exegetical analysis of the seven texts mentioning the 1260 days. But, I do not believe that it is necessary to postpone this research project, because our Adventist church has been historically committed to defend the freedom and right of its members to investigate biblical teachings without being constrained by EGW's writings. The freedom to investigate Scripture without the constraints of historical interpretations has been and is acknowledged by our church leaders, scholars, and official statements of our church.. We shall cite these statements in the final part of this essay.

THE OUTLINE OF THIS NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is divided in four major parts. The first part is personal. I wish to show that I do accept and respect the prophetic gift of Ellen White as a guide not only for my devotional life but also for the study of Scripture. Over the years I have used her writings, not only for spiritual enrichment, but also to gain insights into biblical teachings. My intent is to refute the allegation that for me the value of EGW's writings is only devotional, not doctrinal or exegetical.

In the second part I wish to share a sampling of the responses received, because they will help us understand the major attitudes existing today among Seventh-day Adventists toward the inspiration and authority of Ellen White. The level of approval or disapproval of my last newsletter, is directly related to the attitudes of the respondents toward the Spirit of Prophecy. For the sake of clarity, I will divide the responses under three major categories:

- 1) Strong Disagreement
- 2) Uncertain
- 3) Strong Agreement

These three categories do not fully represent those responses which show only a slight disagreement or agreement with my previous newsletter. They only serve to give a broad overview of the major views of the Spirit of Prophecy existing in our church today.

The third part looks at the nature and function of the prophetic gift in the NT church. We shall see that the gift of prophecy was among the spiritual gifts given to the church (1 Cor 12:1, 10, 29). The function of the gift of prophecy is said to be for the "upbuilding, and encouragement, and consolation" (1 Cor 14:3) of the congregation. Believers are admonished to evaluate the messages of the prophets (1 Thess 5:19-22; 1 Cor 12:10; 14:29), because they could be mixed in quality, containing truths and errors. This important NT teaching provides the key to understand and accept the limitations we find in Ellen White's prophetic ministry and writings.

The fourth part looks at the historic view of Ellen White's inspiration and authority from the perspective of the 1919 Bible Conference. This important conference was held only four years after her death at a time when our church was facing the same issues confronting us today. Our General Conference leaders, editors, and educators, devoted considerable time to a frank and open discussion of the proper use of EGW's writings in teaching Bible and history.

You will see that the issues we face today regarding the use of Ellen White, were discussed in a frank and constructive way at this Conference by our church leaders. Some of them had been closely associated with Ellen White for many years, helping her in the revision of her writings. It is unfortunate that their proposal to educate the church at large regarding the inspiration of Ellen White and the proper use of her writings, was never implemented because of the fear of shaking the faith of some members in her prophetic gift. The outcome of this neglect is that the problem is still with us, compounded by years of accumulated misconceptions.

The ultimate goal of this essay is to foster a balanced understanding of Ellen White's prophetic ministry and writings. Her prophetic ministry, which has spanned over a period of 70 years, has been and continues to be a great blessing to our Adventist church and our lives. It is unfortunate that over the years extreme positions have developed which idealize and glorify Ellen White as a super-woman who wrote over 100,000 under the constant inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These misconceptions have exposed Ellen White to much undesirable criticism.

Paradoxically, some of the most devoted supporters of Ellen White have in time become her most bitter enemies, when they discovered that their idealistic view of her

inspiration and writings, was discredited by their findings.. They have written books like *The White Lie*, and have produced scores of websites, exclusively devoted to defame her as a false prophet. This sad situation could largely have been avoided if over the years the prophetic gift of Ellen White has been presented in its true light.

During the past 20 years our Church Leaders have endeavored to rectify prevailing misconceptions about Ellen White by publishing articles in our leading papers and holding workshops in our schools and campmeetings. But, judging from the critical comments received, it is evident that there is still much educational work to be done.

A significant number of our Adventist fellow believers still hold to an idealized and glorified view of Ellen White which makes her the final interpreter of Scripture and the infallible authority on questions of history, prophecy, science, health, education, etc. It is my fervent hope and prayer that the efforts that went in preparing this essay will help at least some of our Adventist believers to come to a balanced understanding of the prophetic gift of Ellen White.

We need today more than ever before the Ellen White's prophetic guidance which we find in her writings, because they speak to our moral and spiritual needs with divine authority. But we must not fall into the trap of idolizing Ellen White, by making her into a kind of Madonna, similar to the veneration of Mary in the Catholic Church.

AN EXAMPLE OF MY RESPECT FOR ELLEN WHITE

Several respondents to my last newsletter have suggested I am on the road to apostasy, because I limit the value of EGW's writings to my devotional life. This allegation is totally untrue for two reasons. First, because I am a deeply committed Adventist, who firmly believes in our message, because it is biblically sound. Whatever is the nature of Ellen White's inspiration, it does not affect my commitment to the Adventist message. I accepted this message at 15 years of age, when I knew very little about Ellen White. Through the years I have faced considerable opposition for taking a stand for our Adventist beliefs. This I say to reassure my critics that I am not on the road to apostasy.

Second, during the past 30 years of biblical research, time and again I have found that Ellen White offers correct interpretations of Scripture and profound theological insights. If you take time to read my books, you will find that in numerous places I quote her writings, and in some books I devote a whole chapter to her teachings. But I have never used her writings as the final and authoritative interpretation of Scripture. Rather, I have referred to her writing to show that her interpretation harmonizes with the finding of my research. In other words, I test her writings by Scripture, not vice versa. I would like to submit one example to prove my point. I trust that my critics will take note of what I am about to write.

The example is taken from my book *Wine in the Bible* where I devote the whole chapter 8 to "Ellen White and Alcoholic Beverages." If you take time to read the book, you will be surprised to discover that I defend the "prohibitionist" position held by Ellen White over against the new "concessionist" position adopted by our Adventist church about 20 years ago. Let me explain what I mean.

Ellen White clearly believed and taught that the Bible consistently prohibits the use of alcoholic beverages. God never made allowance for their use. In her book *Temperance*, she writes: "There are many solemn warnings in the Scriptures against the use of intoxicating liquors."¹ She continues by quoting in full Deuteronomy 29:6, Proverbs 20:1, 23:29-32, 31:4, Amos 6:6, and Ecclesiastes 10:17. She closes saying, "The Lord has given special directions in His word in reference to the use of wine and strong drink. He has forbidden their use, and enforced His prohibitions with strong warnings and threatenings."² It is evident that Ellen White strongly believed that total abstinence is a principle clearly taught in the Scripture by examples, warnings and threatenings.

During the year I spent researching *Wine in the Bible*, time and again I found that Ellen White's "prohibitionist" position to be biblically sound. My method has been to establish first what the Bible teaches regarding the use of alcoholic beverages, and then to find out if Ellen White agrees with the Bible. There is no question that she does. The reason the chapter on Ellen White comes at the end of the book, is because I wanted to test her teachings by the Bible, and not vice versa. And I found her teachings to be biblically correct.

It is unfortunate that during the past 20 years our Adventist church has moved away from Ellen White's "prohibitionist" teachings, adopting instead what I call "the concessionists" position. According to this new position, God allowed without endorsing the use of alcoholic beverages because of the hardness of human hearts. In other words, like in the case of divorce, God allowed the use of alcoholic beverages, without approving them.

An example of the new Adventist position can be found in the 1982 special temperance issue of *Adventist Review*, which affirms: "Total abstinence is but one of a number of areas where the Bible gives no explicit directives."³ Note the difference the difference between this statement and Ellen White's emphatic position: "The Lord has given special directions in His word in reference to the use of wine and strong drink. He has forbidden their use, and enforced His prohibitions with strong warnings and threatenings."

The concessionist view is found even in the book *Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, which says: “In interpreting such Scriptural passages [about the use of wine and strong drinks], it is helpful to keep in mind that God does not necessarily endorse all what he permits.”² The same view that God allowed the use of alcoholic beverages, without endorsing them, is found in *The Seventh-day Adventist Commentary*.⁵

A careful study of all the relevant biblical texts clearly shows that Ellen White is correct in affirming that God never allowed the use of alcoholic beverages. Much of the confusion stems from the failure to recognize that the Hebrew and Greek terms for “wine” used in the Bible (*yayin* and *oinos*), are generic terms used to describe the juice of the grapes, whether fermented or unfermented.

The adoption of the concessionist position that God allowed without endorsing the use of alcoholic beverages, has led our Adventist church to promote abstinence as a medical, rather than a moral issue, sickness rather than sin. In my view promoting abstinence on the basis of health reasons alone is not enough. Ellen White recognized that it takes more. It takes not merely *biological ethics* but primarily *Biblical ethics*.

In her book *Temperance*, Ellen White shows that it is only when Christians recognize that drinking is not only a bad habit that can harm their health, but also a transgression of a God-given principle to ensure health and holiness, that they will feel compelled to abstain from intoxicating substances. I fully concur with Ellen White, and I am grateful for her theological insights. It is unfortunate that our Adventist Church has abandoned the strong Biblical basis for total abstinence taught by Ellen White. The result has been the weakening of the moral convictions and the concomitant increase in the consumption of alcoholic beverages among Adventists.

For the sake of brevity I will omit several other examples of Ellen White’s doctrinal insights which I discuss in my books *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness*, *Christian Dress and Adornment*, *The Christian and Rock Music*, *Women in the Church*, *The Marriage Covenant*, and *God’s Festivals in Scripture and History*.

Over the years I have been amazed at the profound theological insights of Ellen White into certain Bible texts or stories. Some of her insights have escaped the attention even of our respected Adventist scholars. For example, in *Divine Rest For Human Restlessness*, I quote a statement from *Desire of Ages* page 285, where Ellen White explains why Christ and the priests were guiltless in working on the Sabbath, namely, because of the redemptive nature of their ministry. She brings out the redemptive meaning of the Sabbath in several places—a vital meaning that is ignored even by the contributors to the symposium *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, published in 1982 by the Review and Herald.

Whether Ellen White understood the redemptive nature of Christ’s Sabbath ministry through divine revelations or through the investigation of other books on the life of Christ, it is irrelevant. The fact is that she offers a unique theological insight into the redemptive meaning of the Sabbath—an insight ignored even by Adventist authors.

The foregoing examples should suffice to respond to the allegation that I limit the value of EGW’s writing to devotional use. The fact is that through the years I have found in her writings profound doctrinal and theological insights. But, true to Ellen White’s teachings and the position of our Church, I have never used her writings to settle doctrinal, historical, or prophetic questions. Her writings must be tested by Scripture, not vice versa. I stand for the Protestant principle of “Sola Scriptura,” a principle upheld by our Adventist church.

A RADIO INTERVIEW ON WINE AND THE SABBATH

The previous mention of *Wine in the Bible*, reminded me of the very animated interview I had last week on the Christian Radio Station KCRO in Omaha, Nebraska. Marty Stacy, the host of the radio talk-show, called today to inform me that for several days there has been a follow up to the discussion we had on the Biblical imperative of total abstinence.

He proposed to feature me as a regular guest to discuss several of my books, including the Sabbath. I am mailing him today the Sabbath books for our next interview on Wednesday of next week. I wish to thank God for opening another door of opportunity to share the Good News of the Sabbath rest and peace for our tension-filled and restless lives.

NO SPECIAL OFFERS ON THIS NEWSLETTER

In view of the unusual length of this newsletter, I have decided to leave out this time all the announcements and special offers. If you have missed the opportunity to order our brand new VIDEO and DVD SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR, consisting of 8 one-hours presentations, feel free to call me at (616) 471-2915. I would be glad to extend to you the special 50% discount offer.

The only information you will find at the end of this newsletter is the schedule of my weekend seminars for August and September.

A SAMPLING OF RESPONSES TO MY LAST NEWSLETTER

It has not been my practice to include in my newsletters a sampling of responses received. The reason for doing it this time, is because they help us to understand how Adventists feel about Ellen White. The responses to my last newsletter range from strong condemnation to wholehearted commendation, with various shades in-between. The degree of agreement or disagreement is largely related to the respondent's view of Ellen White. For the sake of brevity I will divide the responses under three major categories:

- 1) Strong Disagreement
- 2) Uncertain
- 3) Strong Agreement

RESPONSES EXPRESSING STRONG DISAGREEMENT

Surprisingly the responses expressing strong disagreement were relatively few—not more than 5% of the 400 plus responses received. Yet, they are significant because they come from deeply committed Adventist believers. I will cite four of them which fairly represent the rest.

First Critical Response

The most comprehensive negative critique was prepared by Larry Kirkpatrick, who is currently pastoring the Mentone SDA Church in California. Since he has posted his 22 pages response in his website greatcontroversy.org, I will mention him by name.

Kirkpatrick deals with two major issues. The first, is my analysis of the limitations and inaccuracies of *The Great Controversy*. The second is my interpretation of the 1260 days prophecy. Since I will examine this prophecy in my next newsletter, I will briefly reply to his comments about the first issue.

Kirkpatrick writes: "Although we do not believe he [Bacchiocchi] intended to be perceived as attacking the book *Great Controversy*, still we note that in effect, this is what he has done. . . . God could have brought improved historical information to light in Ellen G. White's day. He could have caused great Adventist scholars to arise in her day and bring to light these improved facts at that time— before *Great Controversy* ever saw print. Was God behind because He did not do this? God has not put His prophets under the authority of scholars, nor assigned the writings of prophets mere devotional status."⁷

My Response.

My intent in pointing out some of the existing inaccuracies in *The Great Controversy*, is not to attack but to enhance the credibility of this book which has been providentially used by the Lord to lead countless people to accept our Adventist message. The purpose of the book, as recognized by Ellen White herself, is not to serve an authority on history, but rather to help believers understand the unfolding of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan.

The historical setting of her visions were reconstructed with the help of historical books. This is a known fact that prompted the 1911 revision of the book. If some inaccuracies still exist, there is no reason to postpone indefinitely the needed corrections. Two of the closest associates Ellen White who contributed to the 1911 revision, namely, Arthur Daniells and W. W. Prescott, did not hesitate to propose correcting the remaining inaccuracies. Their testimonies will be cited shortly.

There is no reason to fear that a revision of *The Great Controversy* will shatter the faith of many in Ellen White's prophetic gift. It is only a matter of explaining how the prophetic gift operates in the NT. Its function is not to enlighten believers on historical or doctrinal matters, but to serve for the "upbuilding, and encouragement, and consolation" (1 Cor14:3) of the congregation. We shall soon see that Paul admonishes to test the

messages of the prophets and to retain what is good (1 Thess 5:19-22; 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:29).

Regarding the writing of *The Great Controversy*, we simply need to explain to our members how the process worked. Ellen White was shown in vision the broad outlines of unfolding of the great controversy, and then she reconstructed the historical settings using available historical sources. Telling the truth about how Ellen White wrote her historical books, makes her more human, and at the same more credible. Then, people can read *The Great Controversy*, knowing that the book is a blending of divine and human elements. The visions of the unfolding of the great controversy are divine, but the reconstruction of historical events is human. This factual information will ultimately enhance the credibility of Ellen White and our Adventist message.

There is no doubt that God could have raised up “great Adventist scholars in her day and bring to light these improved facts at that time — before *Great Controversy* ever saw print.” But the fact is that God chose to do it differently. Don’t ask me, why? I wish I knew it. Why did Ellen White had to revise *The Great Controversy* in 1911? Couldn’t God have guided her to write the book accurately in the first place? Why did she ask people to point out all the inaccuracies that needed to be corrected? Why did she ask competent workers in Europe and America to help her locate the historical sources needed to make the necessary corrections?

Similar questions can be asked about the Bible. Why didn’t God explain to David and Solomon that they should be faithful to one wife? Why didn’t God strongly condemn in the OT the taking on several wives and concubines? Why didn’t the Holy Spirit ensure that the Gospel writers would report important events of Christ’s life without discrepancies? It is evident that God chooses to operate in a different way, allowing considerable freedom to His chosen agents. Thus, the whole argument is based on gratuitous assumptions which are negated by the divine way of operating.

Second Critical Response

Another Adventist pastor writes: “You have always been suspect in my thinking. Now that you have presented your take on the prophetic 1260 year date, I am convinced you are receiving two pay checks.” The implication is that I receive a pay check from the Adventist church and a second pay check from the Vatican for serving as a Jesuit spy.

My Reply

I wish that I could receive at least one pay check at this time. The truth is that since I took an early retirement at the age of 62 on July 1, 2000 in order to devote myself more fully to Biblical research and lecturing, I receive no pay check at all at this time. I need to reach the age of 65 before I will receive the Social Security and sustenance benefits.

The Vatican has never offered to pay for my services, because they have proven to be detrimental to their church. Thousand of people, including Catholic priests, have accepted the Sabbath after reading my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday*. The book was published by the Pontifical Gregorian University with the Catholic *imprimatur*—approval. Pope Paul VI donated me a gold medal for earning the academic distinction of *summa cum laude*. The reason for the approval, is not because I agreed to serve as a Jesuit conspirator, but simply because the dissertation provides compelling documentation and argumentation that supports the historical Catholic claim to have been responsible for changing the Sabbath to Sunday.

What my detractors ignore is that the Pontifical Gregorian University never envisioned that *From Sabbath to Sunday* would stir up so much controversy in the dominant Catholic countries of Central and South America. To remedy the problem, the book has been removed from all the Catholic bookstores and institutions.

Providentially the Lord gave me the foresight to buy the copyright before the controversy broke out. This has made it possible for me to reprint the book 18 times without interference. If you do not have a copy, feel free to call me at (616) 471-2915. I would be glad to mail you a copy next week when the new reprint comes off the press.

Third Critical Response

An Adventist sister writes: "You have greatly disappointed me. . . . If you question the 538-1798 time period of church history, aren't you also rejecting the date of 1844? For if 1798 is wrong, how can 1844 be right?"

My reply

My answer is simple. The 1260 days prophecy is not connected to the prophecy of the 2300 days. The two prophetic periods have different characteristics and cover different time periods. The beginning of the 2300 days prophecy of Daniel 8:14 can be established by linguistic and conceptual links that exists between Daniel 8 and 9. But the seven texts that mention the three and a half years prophecy do not provide time delimiters for the beginning of this period. This point will become clear in the next newsletter.

Incidentally, some readers will be pleased to learn that after receiving some compelling observations, I am reconsidering some aspects of my previous interpretation. As I told you, I AM THINKING ALOUD without claiming infallibility. The vast majority of our subscribers are thinkers who appreciate being stimulated intellectually by new biblical research. I appreciate this opportunity to dialogue with thinking Adventists.

Fourth Critical Response

A Departmental Director of our North American Division wrote to me a passionate lengthy message, expressing his genuine concerns about my future. He fears that I may become victim of Satan's efforts to deceive "even the very elect." He continues, saying: "It appears to me that you are starting down a road that many good men before you have traveled and lost their way. Once you minimize the value of the EGW material, by saying that it is only devotional and that EGW was limited in her understanding and abilities, you will soon follow Numbers, Rae, Ratzlaff and scores of others."

My Response

I wish to reassure my dear brother, whom I highly esteem, that his fears are unfounded for two reasons. First, I am a BIBLICAL ADVENTIST, not a denominational apologist. Through the years I have accepted and defended our Adventist Message, because I find it to be biblically sound. Whether or not there are limitation in EGW's writings, my commitment to the Adventist church is not affected by it, because I believe that our message is solidly grounded in Scripture. Incidentally, when I was baptized in the Adventist Church in 1954 in Rome, Italy, I knew very little about EGW's writings. I was only familiar with *Step to Christ*, a booklet that I sold for five Summers.

Second, my pleading for a balanced understanding of the inspiration and authority of EGW's writings, is not intended to minimize the value of EGW's writings. On the contrary, ultimately it will maximize their value, by enabling people to benefit from her prophetic messages, without fearing deception.

My position fully reflects what Ellen White herself taught and what her closest associates have often stated regarding the nature of her inspiration and the proper use of her writings when dealing with biblical or historical questions. Shortly we shall quote the testimonies of men such as Willie White, her own son, Arthur Daniells, the General Conference President who spent over 30 years with Ellen White, and W. W. Prescott, Field Secretary of the GC and major contributor to the 1911 revision of *The Great Controversy*. These men, among others, recognized the limitations of EGW's writings and

warned about the need to educate our members on this matter in order to avoid the crisis that we are facing today. Unfortunately their warnings were ignored by those who wanted to use Ellen White as the final authority to settle all questions and thus maintain unity in the church. The result is that today Ellen White is being attacked like never before, especially by disillusioned former Adventists who at one time were her most loyal supporters.

The problem with men like Ronald Numbers, Walter Rea, and Dale Ratzlaff, and others who have become bitter enemies of Ellen White, is their perception to have been deceived. During the course of their studies they found in EGW's writings limitations, inaccuracies, and considerable dependency upon other authors. This discovery destroyed their belief that God communicated to Ellen White all what she wrote.

My situation is radically different because I have never believed in the verbal inspiration of Ellen White. Through the years I have known that the prophetic gift of Ellen White is similar to that of the NT prophets. The gift of prophecy does not make the prophet an infallible interpreter of Scripture, or a final authority on historical, exegetical, or prophetic questions. The NT teaches that the prophetic gift enables prophets to speak "for the upbuilding and encouragement, and consolation" (1 Cor 14:3) of the church—not to serve as historical or doctrinal authorities. The NT recognizes the limitations of the prophets and expects the believers to evaluate their messages (1 Cor 14:29; 1 Thess 5:19-21). This important point will be developed later.

My understanding of the limitations of Ellen White is shared by respected Adventist scholars whose testimonies will be cited later. This facts should dispel the fear that I am walking on the slippery road leading to apostasy. Instead, I have reasons to believe that I am walking together with responsible Adventist church leaders and scholars who are committed to do justice to Ellen White, by helping our members understand her limitations, on the one hand, and her incredible contributions, on the other hand.

RESPONSES EXPRESSING UNCERTAINTY

A number of responses came from fellow believers who are uncertain about the merits or demerits of my latest newsletters, but they feel that such fresh investigation should be encouraged as part of our progressive understanding of truth.

It is encouraging to know that there are Adventists who are open-minded and willing to explore fresh interpretations of our historical positions. For them the criteria for testing new biblical research, is not conformity to traditional interpretations, but harmony with Scripture. The following five responses offer a representative sampling of this category.

A brother from North Carolina writes: "I don't know if you are right or not, but I appreciate your stand. I am praying that the Lord may protect you in all your travels as you continue to proclaim the Sabbath. I do not know if your views are correct, yet I believe that you have the right to investigate Bible truths. Don't lose faith in the Advent message." It is comforting to know that I have the right to investigate Bible truths.

An Adventist sister wrote these perceptive comments: "We are instructed to search for truth, but there will always be those who do not want to learn anything new. They are convinced that they already have it all sown up. Jesus called them blinds leading the blinds and they will both fall into a ditch. I commend your stand and pray that the Holy Spirit continues to guide your studies." How true it is that some people do not want to learn anything new. They are satisfied with their old views. The result is that ignorance breeds arrogance.

Another Adventist sister makes perceptive remarks on the tendency to classify people as either "saints" or "sinners." She continues saying: "People don't like their 'Saints' messed with by pointing out their inconsistencies or other faults. There is a tendency to 'stone' detractors first and then turn and 'stone' the perceived 'detractee.' . . . Many who nastily oppose your view now, could turn and shortly apply that same attitude towards the SDA church. Truth seekers will carefully weigh your words and search and pray for an understanding of truth." There are profound truths in this statement.

An Adventist brother wrote: "I found your work most interesting and at the cutting edge of Truth. It takes a big man to take on such monumental works. Have no fear and forge ahead. The truth will set us free." These are encouraging words.

A final comment is from Steven Poenitz, who is pastoring a lovely congregation in Tennessee. I dare to mention his name, because I have known him over the years and we have gained mutual respect for one another. Pastor Poenitz asks a most pertinent question: "Where do we draw the line on the revision of EGW's material? While I don't see her as the final authority (the Bible is our final authority), what boundaries do we establish for revisions?"

Note that Pastor Poenitz does not question the need for revisions, but ask how can we develop responsible criteria for accomplishing this task. This is a vital question that our church leaders needs to consider with urgency. A responsible committee must be set up to develop criteria for continuing the revisions that began during Ellen White lifetime.

RESPONSES EXPRESSING STRONG AGREEMENT

By far the largest number of responses came from readers who expressed strong support for the appeal of the last newsletter to develop a balanced view of Ellen White. I have clipped the most significant statements and pasted them together to facilitate my selection. They add up to 25 pages of text. For the sake of brevity I will quote only brief excerpts from six of them. Surprisingly most of the positive comments come from pastors who have been struggling over the years with the proper use of Ellen White.

An Adventist Pastor from Atlanta, Georgia

The first response is from Mike Leno, a keen thinker who is currently pastoring a church in Atlanta, Georgia. He has invited me several times to speak at his churches in the Northwest and now in Atlanta. I mention his name by permission.

Leno wrote: "Grace and peace and encouragement to you! I just couldn't resist sending you a thank you note for your last newsletter. I just wanted to respond quickly to your attitude toward Biblical issues and Ellen White. You are supportive and constructive in the way you tackle this difficult issue. You also prove yourself to be a devoted Bible scholar because you refuse to be pressured by tradition or by those who believe that E. G. White always has the last word on absolutely everything (something I know she would abhor). You have shown courage and grace at the same time. In a sense, what we believe on individual passages or issues is secondary to the locus of our authority. If we regard Ellen White as THE infallible interpreter of the Bible, we are no longer Bible students. We are an Ellen White cult."

Do you agree with Mike? I do. Our real issue is not so much how we interpret a Bible text or a prophetic period, but rather "the locus of our authority." In other words, Do we test our views by the normative authority of Scripture or by the teachings of the Spirit of Prophecy? I thank God for Adventist pastors like Leno who understand the issues and are committed to help their congregations develop a healthy understanding of Ellen White.

A Pastor Who Wants to Be a Thinking Person

The next response is also from an Adventist pastor who took time to share with me his pilgrimage of faith through various religious movements before joining our Adventist church. He earned graduate degrees from several reputable seminaries. He holds a Doctor of Ministry degree and is currently serving as an Adventist pastor. I will not mention the name of his conference, because his frank remarks could be used against him.

For the sake of brevity I will quote only the first and last paragraph of his lengthy testimony. "Thanks for your recent newsletter which has reassured me that my decision 28 years ago to become an SDA was on track and that I can still in good conscience receive my paycheck from the Conference. There have been times when I have felt otherwise. Let me explain . . .

"I became an SDA in 1974 because of the Bible. Even though I am a denominational employee, I must still pledge allegiance only to Scripture, not to denominational traditions, some of which have no basis in Scripture. Your latest newsletter article (coming as it does from a respected SDA scholar) has given me permission to still be a thinking person, as well as a loyal SDA. Thanks for your willingness to speak the truth. It can't hurt us. We're still perceived as a cult by many other Christians. Our abuse/misuse of EGW is a major reason for this. Your recent piece has gone a long way in publicly pleading for a responsible biblical hermeneutic of her writings and for a further deepening and clarification of biblical truth. Keep it up!"

What an encouraging testimony! It is reassuring to know that there are pastors and lay members who want to be thinkers and loyal Adventists at the same time. They share the same commitment to the normative authority of the Bible, and the same concern to develop a responsible method for using EGW's writings.

A Former Adventist Pastor Who is Still Adventist at Heart

While reading this testimony from the previous Adventist pastor who has struggled during the past 28 years to be “a thinking person as well as a loyal SDA,” I was reminded of another response received from a former Adventist pastor. He resigned from the ministry 20 years ago, largely over the way EGW’s writings were used to silence his theological convictions. This pastor is well educated and challenges me regularly with compelling critiques of my writings. He holds a doctorate and is now serving on the pastoral staff of one of the largest Protestant churches in America with about 15,000 members. He faithfully responds to each one of my newsletter, sometimes mentioning that he would still be an Adventist today, if the Conference leaders had been more open-minded toward his theological struggles.

For the sake of brevity, I will quote only the first paragraph of his lengthy response: “Thanks for your clarification concerning your views on Ellen G. White. I think that is what I have been asking from you ever since I began responding to your newsletters. No one should be in any doubt about where you stand in regard to her authority in relationship to the Bible. Had that position been acceptable in Adventism twenty years ago, I would no doubt still be an Adventist pastor. Now that the deed has been done I do not look back with any regret, for it has provided a freedom to consider possibilities that were not open to me before. Of course, I do have regrets in regards to my ‘calling,’ since joining some other ministries has not been an option to me, because I still remain very much an Adventist on such issues as ‘the state of man in death.’ The last 20 years have been spent occupationally doing lots of stuff that was not my first love. That I regret.”

I shared this response simply to show how the arbitrary use of EGW’s writings to silence personal theological struggles, has caused even some pastors to resign from the Adventist ministry. It is a sad day when this happens, because our church should welcome a fresh investigation of biblical truths and provide a forum for an open discussion of new views. I wish that a way could be found to welcome back into our church former pastors who are still Adventists at heart. Will you join me in praying for this former Adventist pastor who in many ways is still committed to our message? May the Lord bless his ministry with His wisdom and grace.

An Adventist Pastor from the Northwest

The next response is from an Adventist pastor serving in the Northwest. I will quote most of his message, because it speaks eloquently about the issue we are discussing in this newsletter. He wrote: “I received your ‘Issue No. 87’ last night and quickly realized you were sharing some very new ideas. You must have hit the ‘send’ key with some trepidation and prayers. I have no doubt this issue will capture attention and flood your server with an over abundance of reactions, both positive and negative. [How true it has been!]

“I believe you have uncovered a sore spot among many Adventist believers. While we as Adventists correctly denounce the doctrine of Papal Infallibility, and don’t even teach Biblical inerrancy and verbal inspiration, nevertheless, as a church we have not found an acceptable way to teach the proper use of EGW, except to present her as the ‘doctrinally infallible,’ inerrant interpreter of the Bible, and the Holy-Spirit-edited ‘prophetess’ of our movement.

“Therefore it really is predictable and unavoidable that your words will be shattering to many. The question will always be: How can such comforting views change without people ‘throwing out the baby with the bathwater’? The either-or, black or white mindset has caused untold numbers of ‘products’ of Adventist education or evangelism to lose all confidence in the prophetic gift of Ellen White.

“You have made it clear that this is not your intent. And this is why you tremble, for we both know it will happen anyway. We will keep praying that God will hold on to those who have come to trust in Him.”

It is my fervent hope and prayer that this open discussion of how to develop a balanced understanding and use of EGW’s writings, will not weaken, but strengthen the confidence in the prophetic gift of Ellen White. The reason for my hope is that we are not disputing the prophetic gift of Ellen White, which continues to bless our church beyond estimation. Rather we want to do justice to Ellen White by helping our believers understand the divine and human elements in the manifestation of her prophetic gift.

An Unusual Response from a Presbyterian Member

It came as a total surprise to receive a response to the last newsletter (No. 87) by regular mail from a member of the Presbyterian Church of America. He is a regular subscriber to this newsletter. His letter contained even a generous check for my ministry. When I called the man to express my gratitude for his gift, I asked him permission to quote his letter and to mention his name. He was delighted to grant me both, verbally and by email.

His name is Carleton G. Goodnow and lives in Malvern, PA. From the conversation and the correspondence, he appeals to me as a well-educated professional man. In the telephone conversation he explained to me that after reading my book *From Sabbath to Sunday* he accepted the validity of the Sabbath, though he still attends his Presbyterian church. He also told me that the reading of *The Great Controversy* led him to appreciate the Adventist message. Contrary to some of my critics, the discussion of the inaccuracies of *The Great Controversy*, did not weaken in the least his appreciation for the prophetic ministry of Ellen White, because he understands the limitations of the gift of prophecy.

Here are some excerpts from Goodnow’s letter: “You are a gutsy individual, and your response is very brave. . . . You will receive much criticism for what you have written about Ellen White. You will need divine strength to withstand it. To that extent you are in my prayers. Adventists will absolutely not wish to hear that Mrs. White may have been factually inaccurate, because it does not square well with the idea of her being an authentic prophetess.

“Your approach—using Ellen White’s own words of how she perceived her work in comparison to Scripture—is quite effective. From my own Presbyterian viewpoint, Adventists need to hear a balanced perspective of how her work was divinely intended to contribute toward the establishment of God’s Kingdom. Personally I applaud your interpretation.”

In the next paragraph Goodnow expresses the hope that our Adventist church will NOT follow the policy of his own PCA denomination in requiring rigid allegiance to the *Westminster Confession* by all ordained persons. Let us remember Goodnow in our prayer. There is no question that he appreciates our Adventist message. The Holy Spirit is working in his heart and I believe that one day he will join our church. Feel free to email him a note of encouragement at <CGranbery@aol.com>.

Conclusion

The sample of responses to my last newsletter (No. 87) have served to highlight two major issues. First, the inspiration and authority of Ellen White is perceived differently by different Adventist members. Some view her writings as the infallible interpretation of Scripture and the final authority for deciding doctrinal questions and prophetic interpretations. Others accept her prophetic gift, but recognize at the same time her limitations and the existence of inaccuracies in her writings.

Second, there is an urgent need to develop a balanced understanding of Ellen White's prophetic gift. This requires courage. Courage to lay to rest the "myth" that has developed over the years about the supernatural way in which her "Pen of Inspiration" wrote about 100,000 pages. Courage to help our people understand her limitations without discrediting the immeasurable contributions of her prophetic gift to our church.

The next part of our newsletter attempts to meet this challenge by studying first the NT understanding of the nature and function of the gift of prophecy, and then the 1919 Bible Conference. In this historic conference our leading brethren who had been closely associated with Ellen White for many years, addressed the very issues we are facing today regarding EGW's writings. Let us see what we can learn from the wisdom of the past.

A SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The preparation of this newsletter has been facilitated by several valuable manuscripts received from colleagues and subscribers. One manuscript deserves special mention because it provided me with a wealth of information unknown to me before. The author of this 200 pages manuscript is Graeme Bradford, a Professor at Avondale College in Australia. He has devoted many years of his life to a close examination of the prophetic ministry of Ellen White.

In his Introduction, Prof. Bradford states: "This book has been 20 years in preparation. It comprises material I have shared in workshops with pastors and lay people in Australia, New Zealand, England and the United States of America. Some of it was shared in a workshop in the General Conference Pre-Ministerial Meetings in Toronto, Canada in 2000."

Four years ago I heard Bradford lecturing on Ellen White at the South Queensland Campmeeting, near Brisbane. His open, frank, and factual approach caught my attention. He fully accepts the prophetic gift of Ellen White, but he tries to clear the air of prevailing misconceptions which have caused unnecessary conflicts in our times.

Bradford clearly states the objective of his book, saying: "Let me say from the outset, I write this book as one having great confidence in the prophetic gift as it has been used in the ministry of Ellen White. After reading and studying the evidence for and against her work, I emerge as a strong believer. However, I also realize that the Adventist Church has not always used this gift wisely. Despite her protests during her lifetime, after her death unrealistic expectations were placed upon her writings by those who saw her as a means to settle questions on a variety of subjects. It is imperative that the Church places her ministry where the Bible would have it placed. If this is not forthcoming then the gift that God designed to be a blessing can become counterproductive."

The manuscript is currently being reviewed by two respected Adventist scholars and will soon be published with the approval of Elder Laurie Evans, President of the South Pacific Division. I would urge you to purchase this timely book as soon as it comes off the press. The tentative title is *MORE THAN A PROPHET*. If you wish to receive your copy as soon as the book is released, feel free to reserve your copy now by asking Prof. Bradford to put your name on the list. His email address is <graeme.bradford@avondale.edu.au> .

THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

The sampling of responses to the previous newsletter, have shown that some Adventists are fully convinced that there are no inaccuracies in EGW's writings. In fact, they get terribly upset when someone suggests otherwise. The majority, however, recognize the limitations of Ellen White and accept them as part of the human dimension of the gift of prophecy. As we shall see, the latter view was held by Willie White, A. G. Daniels, and W. W. Prescott, each of whom worked very closely with Ellen White for many years.

Before examining how some of Ellen White's closest associates viewed her prophetic gift, it is instructive to look at the NT understanding of the gift of prophecy. The OT predicted that the gift of prophecy would be manifested in a special way in "the latter days" (Joel 2:28-32)—a phrase signifying the Messianic age inaugurated by the coming of Christ.

Peter acknowledged the fulfillment of this prediction at the outpouring of God's Spirit on the day of Pentecost: "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days and they will prophesy." (Acts 2: 17-18)

The fulfillment of the OT promise resulted in a larger manifestation of the gift of prophecy in the Apostolic church. This explains why Paul lists the gift of prophecy among the spiritual gifts given to the church (1 Cor 12:1, 10, 29; Eph 4:11; Rom 12:6). In fact, he encourages believers in 1 Corinthians 14:1 to "eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy."

Prophetic Ministry of Exhortation and Consolation

It is impossible to establish how widespread was the gift of prophecy in NT congregations. It would appear that in most congregations there were some Christians divinely endowed with a prophetic message of encouragement and exhortation. This is suggested by Paul's instructions on how the prophets should function in the church: "Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged" (1 Cor 14:29-31).

The implications of Paul's instructions is that all God's people are potentially prophets. Not all of them will exercise this gift, but all of them are encouraged to seek it. The nature of the gift of prophecy is said to be for the "upbuilding, and encouragement, and consolation" (1 Cor 14:3) of the congregation. Most likely the prophetic messages delivered to the congregation consisted of exhortation to holy living, personal encouragement and testimonies. They were designed to strengthen, comfort, and inspire the congregation to live their faith in their pagan and hostile society.

There are no indications in the NT that prophets expounded biblical texts or explained the historical fulfillment of prophecies. This ministry was fulfilled by teachers and preachers. Prophets were not an authority in doctrines or history. Their ministry consisted in passing on messages of exhortation received from God for the strengthening of the believers.

Ellen White Ministry of Exhortation and Reproof

In many ways this is the nature of the prophetic ministry Ellen White was called to fulfill. Throughout her 70 years of service, she delivered thousands of messages of encouragement, guidance, and reprove. In fact, the vast majority of her writings contain exhortations to godly living. Only in few books she deals with historical and doctrinal

questions. And it was when writing on these questions that she used the best sources available to her.

Her own son, Willie White, recognizes this fact, saying: "The class of matter written by Mrs White, in which she used the writings of others, is comparatively small when considering the vast field covered by her writings. ***It is in the delineation of prophetic and doctrinal exposition that we find that she used the words of others*** or had closely paraphrased them. In the vast field covering thousands of pages of messages of ***encouragement, reproof, and spiritual instruction***, she worked independent of all other writers, also in her divine prediction of future experiences through which the church must pass."⁸

Apparently Ellen White developed early this concept of her ministry of exhortation, because speaking of her joint-ministry with her husband, she wrote: "Our meetings were usually conducted in such a manner that both of us took part. My husband would give a doctrinal discourse, then I would follow with an exhortation of considerable length, melting my way into the feelings of the congregation. Thus my husband sowed and I watered the seed of truth, and God did give the increase."⁹ In this statement Ellen Whites differentiates between the doctrinal preaching of her husband and her own messages of exhortation which followed.

Evaluating the Prophetic Messages

Several times Paul speaks of evaluating Christian prophecy (1 Thess 5:19-22; 1 Cor 12:10; 14:29). The human limitations and inaccuracies in the prophetic messages seem to have been so apparent, that some Christians despised them. Thus, in 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 Paul goes as far as warning the congregation against rejecting them: "Do not *despise* prophesying, but *test everything*; hold fast what is good."¹⁰ The admonition to *test* the messages of the prophets, and retain what is good, suggests that their messages were a mixed bag, with positive and negative elements.

The same admonition to carefully evaluate the speech of the prophets is given in 1 Corinthians 14:29: "Let two or three prophets speak, and the others weigh what is said." The implication of the Greek word *diakrino*, here translated "weigh what is said," is that members were to listen critically, sifting the good from the bad.

Scholars who have examined these texts agree that in the NT church, the messages of the prophets were subject to the evaluation of the congregation. For example, David Aune, writes: "In several places within his letters Paul directly addresses the subject of evaluating Christian prophecy (1 Thess 5:19-22; 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:29). These references are all-important since they constitute the earliest evidence that Christian prophecy was subject to some form of community control... The injunction to test everything is a general principle; in all circumstances and situations, including that of congregational prophecy, the will of God must be discerned so that the good may be accepted and the evil rejected... Rather than reject prophesying out of hand, Paul recommends that they allow the Spirit of God to speak through prophets and then retain that which is good and profitable and reject that which is regarded as evil and worthless...."¹¹

It is hard to imagine that an Old Testament prophet like Isaiah would have invited the people to critically evaluate his message and to accept only what they viewed as sound. This suggests, as Donald Carson points out, that "any one New Testament prophetic oracle is expected to be mixed in quality, and the wheat must be separated from the chaff. Moreover, there is no hint of excommunication as the threatened sanction if the prophet occasionally does not live up to the mark."¹²

The same point is made by Wayne A. Grudem in his dissertation on *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*. Incidentally, Grudem wrote a Foreword to my book *Women in the Church*. He notes: "The prophets at Corinth were not thought by Paul to speak with a divine authority of actual words."¹³ This conclusion is supported by the following verse:

“What! Did the word of God originate from you, or are you the only ones it has reached?” (1 Cor 14:36). This statement implies that the word of God had come forth from Paul and the other apostles; thus even prophets in the local churches were to be subject to apostolic authority and teachings.

It would appear that the eminent authority exercised in the OT by such prophets as Samuel, Elisha, Isaiah, Ezekiel, is replaced in the NT by the authority of the Apostles, who were also prophets. In fact, in Ephesians 2:20, the apostles/prophets are mentioned together as the foundation of the church, suggesting that they were the same persons. There are no indications in the NT that the prophets played a foundational role in establishing the Christian Church. They are not the authors of Scriptures like the Old Testament prophets and they are subject to the authority of the Apostles.

Conclusion

The gift of prophecy in the NT is somewhat different than the OT counterpart. Acts 2:17-21 implies that since Pentecost the gift of prophecy would be manifested more widely in order to provide encouragement and exhortation to the mission of the Christian church. Believers are admonished, not to despise, but to test the messages of the prophets, because at times even genuine prophets may be saying things that are inaccurate. Their human limitations may be reflected in the messages they deliver. This does not mean that we must reject them as false prophets, because the NT does not make infallibility the test of a true prophet.

The NT understanding of the gift of prophecy, provides us with a biblical basis for evaluating the prophetic ministry of Ellen White. Like the messages of the NT prophets, the writings of Ellen White must be tested by the normative authority of Scripture. If in some instances there are inaccuracies in her writings, this is not a reason for rejecting her prophetic gift and the value of her writings for our Christian life today. Her messages of encouragement, exhortation, and reproof are especially needed today, as we are called to live in a secular-minded and perverse society.

THE 1919 BIBLE CONFERENCE

For the Seventh-day Adventist Church the year 1919 marked a significant new orientations toward the future. The world peace of 1918 at the end of WWI, afforded the opportunity to convene six major conventions in 1919: Bookman's convention in April, Educational convention in late April, Evangelistic convention in May, Editors's convention in June, Bible Conference in July 1-19, and Bible and History Teachers Council from July 20 to August 1.

With the establishment of educational institutions there developed a growing interest to upgrade the quality of teaching and to come together to discuss pressing theological issues. After some unsuccessful attempts, the Bible Conference met from July 1 to 19, 1919. It was attended by our leading administrators, editors, and college Bible and history teachers. The conference was followed immediately by the Bible and History Teachers Council that met from July 20 to August 1. The Council was attended by Bible and history teachers, editors, and members of the General Conference Committee.

This important Council was held four years after the death of Ellen White at a time when questions were raised about her inspiration and authority. In his opening remarks, Elder Arthur Daniells, President of the General Conference at that time, stated: "The one great object of this conference is to unite in a definite, practical, spiritual study of the Word of God."

Daniells then quoted at length a statement from Ellen White where she counsels to investigate biblical truths, without fear of controversy: "The fact that there is no controversy or agitation among God's people, should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine. There is reason to fear that they may not be clearly discriminating between truth and error. When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves, to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition, and worship they know not what."¹⁴

This statement is most encouraging because it challenges us to investigate anew biblical truths without fear of controversy. Those who have warned me against posting a fresh interpretation of the 1260 days prophecy, need to reread this statement. Our pioneers were not afraid to discuss controversial issues. The pages of *The Review and Herald* are filled with debates about our beliefs and prophetic interpretations. Even the 1919 Bible Conference discussed a dozen of doctrines, including a new interpretation of the 1260 days prophecy. Today we are afraid to discuss fresh interpretations for fear of causing dissensions in the church. But, I still believe that it is possible to discuss fresh responsible interpretations in the spirit of unity and mutual respect.

It is unfortunate that the records of this important 1919 Bible Conference were lost until December 1974, when Dr. F. Donald Yost, Archivist of the General Conference, found two packages containing 2400 pages of typewritten material, transcribed from stenographic notes taken during the conference.

I spent many hours reading the records of the discussions on the Spirit of Prophecy that took place on July 30 and August 1, 1919. I am impressed by the open and frank discussion of three major sensitive issues we still face today: (1) How to deal with the historical inaccuracies found in EGW's writings; (2) Should theological or exegetical differences be resolved by appealing to EGW's writings? (3) Should the laity be informed about the limitations and inaccuracies found in EGW's writings? Let us take a brief look at how these three questions were addressed.

HOW TO DEAL WITH INACCURACIES FOUND IN EGW'S WRITINGS

In the last newsletter I pointed out some historical inaccuracies that still exist in *The Great Controversy*. I proposed preparing a new revision of the book to make it a more credible and effective witnessing tool. Some reacted harshly to my proposal, accusing me of rejecting the prophetic gift of Ellen White. This accusation is completely false. It ignores the NT view of the limitations of the prophetic gift and Ellen White's own admissions of her limitations.

In her appendix to a draft copy of the second volume of *Spiritual Gifts*, she makes this request: "A special request is made that if any find incorrect statements in this book they will immediately inform me. The edition will be completed about the first of October; therefore send before that time."¹⁵

One professor tried to convince me that the "divinely revealed history" of *The Great Controversy*, is more accurate than "the archives we keep and comb through." Another professor came to visit me at our home, in order to convince me that the historical data found in *The Great Controversy*, are more trustworthy than those found in secular history books. We had a friendly dialogue and parted praying for each other.

It is evident that not only lay members, but even some teachers view EGW's writings as the final authority on both historical and doctrinal matters. This mindset is puzzling because during the past 20 years our church has published several articles and held numerous workshops designed to clarify the limitations of Ellen White.¹⁶

The question of the inaccuracies in EGW's writings is not new. Our leading brethren addressed this problem at the 1919 Bible Conference. It is instructive to read how they dealt with this sensitive question in a frank and objective way. W. W. Prescott, who had served as editor of the *Review and Herald* and was then Field Secretary of the General Conference, presented six specific examples of changes made at his suggestion in matters of history and interpretation to 1911 revision of *The Great Controversy*.¹⁷

One example given by Prescott is his interpretation of Babylon as being the great apostasy headed up by the papacy—a view contrary to old edition of *The Great Controversy*. He writes: "I have tried to maintain personal confidence in this gift to the church, . . . but I will tell you frankly that I held to that position on the question of Babylon for years when I knew it was exactly contrary to *Great Controversy*, but I went on, and in due time I became orthodox. I did not enjoy that experience at all, and I hope you will have to go through it"¹⁸

The question of historical accuracy was further discussed with reference to the writings of *The Great Controversy*, *Desires of Ages*, and especially *The Life of Paul*. Much of the historical information contained in these books was drawn from other books, which were not always accurate.

A. G. Daniells, who had worked closely with Ellen White for over 30 years, first in Australia and then in America, discussed the problems caused by the copying of sources needed to put together *The Life of Paul*. Ellen White's editorial assistants took considerable material from Conybeare and Howson's *Life of Paul*, in order to fill the gaps in EGW's manuscripts. Unfortunately they never gave any credit to the sources used.

Referring to this sad episode, A. G. Daniel said: "Now take that *Life of Paul*,—I suppose you all know about it and knew what claims were put up against her, charges made of plagiarism, even by the authors of the book, Conybeare and Howson, and were liable to make the denomination trouble because there was so much of their book put into *The Life of Paul* without any credit or quotation mark. Some people of strict logic might fly the track on that ground, but I am not built that way. I found it out, and read it with Brother Palmer when he found it, and we got Conybeare and Howson, and we got Wylie's *History of the Reformation*, and we read word for word, page after page, and no quotations, no credit, and I really did not know the difference until I began to compare

them. I supposed it was Sister White's own work. The poor sister said: 'Why, I did not know about quotations and credits. My secretary should have looked after that, and the publishing house should have looked after it.'¹⁹

Daniells continues, saying: "I wished a different course had been taken in the compilation of the books. If proper care had been exercised, it would have saved a lot of people from being thrown off the track"²⁰ To avoid embarrassment and litigations, the book was withdrawn from circulation. Daniells' faith in Ellen White was not shaken by this unfortunate episode, but other people were hurt by it. He writes: "Personally that has never shaken my faith, but there are men who have been greatly hurt by it, and I think it is because they claim too much for these writings. Just as Brother [Willie] White says, there is a danger in going away from the Book, and claiming too much [for EGW's writings.]"²¹

It is unfortunate that over the years the limitations of Ellen White on historical and doctrinal matters were largely concealed in order to make her writings the final authority to settle controversies. Ellen White herself rejected this concept. An indication is the comment she wrote at the end of her son's letter to S. N. Haskell: "I approve of the remarks made in this letter, [signed] Ellen White." In the letter Willie White wrote: "Regarding Mother's writings, she has never wished our brethren to treat them as authority on history... When *Controversy* was written, Mother never thought that the readers would take it as an authority on historical dates and use it to settle controversies..."²²

Ellen White was aware of her limitations and invited readers to point out any incorrect statement they found, not only in *The Great Controversy*, but in other writings as well. We noted earlier that in her appendix to a draft copy of the second volume of *Spiritual Gifts*, she makes this comment: "A special request is made that if any find incorrect statements in this book they will immediately inform me. The edition will be completed about the first of October; therefore send before that time."²³

The Need to Correct Inaccuracies

The proposal of my last newsletter to correct the inaccuracies found in EGW's writings, was condemned outright by some as a plain rejection of Ellen White's inspiration and a denial of the Adventist faith. It is reassuring to know that our leading brethren who worked closely with Ellen White for many years, did not feel that way. They openly spoke about the need for revisions at the 1919 Bible Conference. The reason for their openness is their knowledge of how the information was gathered and of how Ellen White called for help to identify and correct the inaccuracies found in the old edition of *The Great Controversy*. We discussed this issue in the previous newsletter. She never claimed to be an authority on historical or doctrinal matters. For the sake of brevity I will cite only the testimony of the two leading spokesmen at the Bible Conference.

The first statement is from A. G. Daniells who said: "Sister White never claimed to be an authority on history, and never claimed to be a dogmatic teacher on theology. She never outlined a course of theology, like Mrs. Eddy's book on teaching [Christian Science]... She never claimed to be an authority on history... she **was ready to correct in revision such statements as she thought should be corrected**. I have never gone to her writings, and taken the history that I found in her writings, as the positive statement of history regarding the fulfillment of prophecy."²⁴

He continues, saying: "I have felt that I should deal with history [of *The Great Controversy*] in the same way as I am exhorted to deal with the Bible, prove it all carefully and thoroughly, and then let her go on and make such revisions from time to time as seen best."²⁵ For Daniells the procedure to follow was to establish first of all the accuracy of the historical facts, and then proceed to propose the necessary revisions in EGW's writings.

The reason Daniells believed that Ellen White would authorize corrections in her writings, is because, as he puts it: "We talked with her about that when *The Great*

Controversy was being revised, and I have letters in my file in the vault there where we were warned against using Ellen White as a historian. She never claimed to be that. We were warned against setting up statements found in her writings against the various history that there is on a fact. That is where I stand."²⁶ Daniells saw no problem in correcting inaccuracies in EGW's writings, because he knew first hand that "**she was ready to correct in revision such statements as she thought should be corrected**"²⁷

The second statement about the need to correct inaccuracies in EGW's writings is from Elder W. W. Prescott, who assisted Ellen White in revising *The Great Controversy*, and was serving as field secretary of the General Conference at the time of the Bible Conference.

Prescott wrote a revealing letter to Willie White (son of Ellen White, saying: "It seems to me that a large responsibility rests upon those of us **who know that there are serious errors in our authorized books and yet make no special effort to correct them.** The people and our average ministers trust us to furnish them with reliable statements, and they use them as sufficient authority in their sermons, but we let them go on year after year asserting things we know to be untrue... The way your mother's writings have been handled and the false impression concerning them which is still fostered among the people, have brought great perplexity and trial to me. It seems to me that what amounts to deception, though probably not intentional, has been practiced in making some of her books, and that no serious effort has been made to disabuse the minds of the people of what was known to be their wrong view concerning her writings. But it is no use to go into these matters. **I have talked to you for years about them, but it brings no change. I think, however, that we are drifting toward a crisis which will come sooner or later and perhaps sooner. A very strong reaction has already set in.**"²⁸

Prescott's letter reveals that both Willie White and himself held the same view about the existence of "serious errors" in Ellen White's writings and on the need to correct them. The difference between the two men was on the way to resolve the problem. Prescott felt that the corrections should be made and our people should be informed about this problem. He predicted that failure to address the problem would result in a future crisis of confidence in the prophetic gift of Ellen White. His prediction is finding unprecedented fulfillment today, as the attacks against Ellen White are multiplying every day.

Willie White was not prepared to take the risk. He feared that the revelation of the human limitations of Ellen White, and of the existence of inaccuracies in her writings, would undermine the confidence in her prophetic gift on the part of those who accepted her writings as the final authority to settle any doctrinal, theological, historical, educational, or medical questions. This policy of concealment has fostered the perpetration and magnification of misconceptions which have caused untold damage to the credibility of Ellen White and of the Adventist message.

SHOULD THEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES BE RESOLVED BY APPEALING TO EGW'S WRITINGS?

My proposed new interpretation of the 1260 days prophecy was rejected outrightly by those who believe that the endorsement given by Ellen White to the traditional interpretation of 538 to 1798, precludes any new interpretation. Such criticism raises the question: Should theological differences be resolved by appealing to the EGW's writings? Are her writings the final court of appeal for determining the legitimacy of any new Biblical interpretation?

It is instructive to read how this question we face today was discussed on July 20, 1919 at the Bible and History Teachers Council. The topic of the meeting was: "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in our Teachings of Bible and History." The first question from the floor was posed to A. G. Daniells by C. L. Taylor, a Bible teacher at Canadian Junior College: "I would like to ask you to discuss for us the exegetical value of the Testimonies. . . . May we accept the explanations of scripture that she gives? Are those dependable?"²⁹

In his reply Daniells explained that over the years he found that EGW's writings "clarify and elucidate the thought in the text of scripture."³⁰ I would add that in most instances Ellen White offers correct and insightful interpretation of Bible texts. Then Taylor sharpened the questions, by submitting an example: "Suppose that two brethren, both of them believers in the *Testimonies*, and of course, believers in the Bible primarily, have a difference of opinion on a certain text: Is it right for them, in their study of that text, to bring in the spirit of prophecy to aid in their understanding of it, or should they leave that out of the question entirely?"³¹

Daniells responded by affirming emphatically that the Bible should be its own expositor "without resorting to the Testimonies to prove up on it." He then took time to respond to those who believed that "the only way we could understand the Bible was through the writings of the spirit of prophecy." He emphatically stated: "This is not our position, and it is not right that the spirit of prophecy is the only safe interpreter of the Bible. That is a false doctrine, a false view. It will not stand. Why, my friends, what would all the people have done from John's day down to the present if there were no way to understand the Bible except through the writings of the spirit of prophecy! It is a terrible position to take! That is false, it is error. It is positively dangerous!"³²

Daniells continues complaining about those who "will hunt around to find a statement in the *Testimonies* and spend no time in deep study of the Book. . . . The earnest study of the Bible is the security, the safety of a man. He must come to the book itself and get it by careful study, and then whatever he finds in the spirit of prophecy or any other writings that will help him and throw light and clarify his vision on it,—that is alright. Does that cover your point?"³³

There is no question that Daniells made his point and stated his position clearly and emphatically. It is unfortunate that few extreme conservatives learned from secondary sources about Daniells' position and began a successful defamatory campaign against him.

This phase of the discussion finished with F. M. Wilcox reading in full an article of James White published in the *Review and Herald* in 1851, where he emphasizes the primacy of the Bible over the Spirit of Prophecy: "We say, Let us have a whole Bible, and let that, and that alone, be our rule of faith and duty. Place the gifts where they belong, and all is harmony."³⁴

Contemporary Application

In theory our Adventist church upholds the position articulated by A. J. Daniells. Our general consensus is that our doctrines and practices are derived exclusively from the normative authority of the Bible. This is the position of Ellen White herself: "*The*

Testimonies of Sister White should not be carried to the front. God's Word is the unerring standard. *The Testimonies* are not to take the place of the Word of God. . . . Let us prove all our positions from Scripture and substantiate every point they claim from the revealed Word of God³⁵

In practice, however, Ellen White remains for many sincere Adventists the final interpreter of Scripture. This became evident when I attempted to propose a new interpretation of the 1260 days prophecy. Some rejected a priori my proposal, not because it violated the relevant Bible texts, but because it contradicted EGW's writings. Incidentally, I will be examining this sevenfold prophecy during the coming weeks, and the results of this investigation may prove to be different from the original proposal. My concern is to be true to what the Bible tell us. This should be our primary goal to let the texts speak for themselves.

An Unresolved Dilemma

The relationship between the authority of EGW's writings and that of Scripture still remains a largely unresolved issue in our Adventist Church. The reason is because our church wishes to affirm two conflicting beliefs. As expressed in the 27 Fundamental beliefs, on the one hand we believe that "The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines" (*Fundamental Beliefs*, No. 1). But on the other hand we also believe that "As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provides for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction" (*Fundamental Beliefs*, No. 17).

This conflict between the Bible as "the authoritative revealer of doctrines" and EGW's writings as "authoritative source of truth," poses the problem of two conflicting "authoritative" sources. This problem is reflected in the statement prepared by an ad hoc committee of the General Conference in response to requests for a clarification of the relationship between the Bible and EGW's writings. The statement affirms that "The ministry and writings of Ellen White were a manifestation of the gift of prophecy, that her writings . . . are applicable and authoritative especially to Seventh-day Adventists." But it also denies that "the writings of Ellen White function as the foundation and final authority of the Christian faith as does Scripture."³⁶

The dichotomy remains. Her writings are not supposed to be normative for interpreting scripture or formulating doctrines, yet they are inspired and authoritative. It is easy to see how different Adventists can appeal to one or the other set of statements, to defend either the authority of Scripture or the authority of EGW's writings.

These two positions that in practice coexist in our Adventist church, make it impossible to offer a unanimous answer to the question we posed at the outset: Should theological differences be resolved by appealing to EGW's writings? In theory the answer in "NO!" but in practice the answer of many sincere Adventist is "YES!," because for them Ellen White remains the final interpreter of Scripture.

Ultimately the dilemma we are facing is whether or not we as Adventists are free like our Pioneers to pursue a fresh investigation of Scripture. Are we locked in into a set of traditional teachings that precludes any fresh investigation of doctrinal teachings and prophetic interpretations? In discussing this issue with colleagues, I find that we have brilliant Adventist scholars today who are not free to examine Scripture because of the constraints of the Spirit of Prophecy.

To avoid unpleasant controversies, some Adventist scholars stay away from controversial research. This explains, for example, why no significant study has been produced on the meaning of the Book of Revelation to its original readers. Yet there are unmistakable internal evidences that they were expected to read and understand the book (Rev 1:3). Rest assured that after the controversy generated by my attempt to propose a new interpretation of the 1260 days prophecy, I have no desire to undertake a

fresh study of Revelation. Yet it would be fascinating to study the contemporary apocalyptic literature to find out how the symbols of Revelation were understood by the recipients of the book.

Any religion that discourages fresh investigation and settles all differences by silencing differing view points, ultimately becomes victim of superstition and blind credulity. We must work together in constructive ways to ensure that this will not happen to our beloved Adventist Church.

The Testimony of Two Outstanding Adventist Leaders

Let me share the comments of two respected Adventist leaders who have wrestled with this issue. The first is from A. G. Daniells, an outstanding General Conference President, who was deeply committed to both the authority of Scripture and to the prophetic gift of Ellen White. We have heard a lot from him in this newsletter, but it merits to hear from him again.

Daniells wrote: "The question is to what extent men are free to pursue an original investigation of the Scripture, and to follow the honest conclusions at which they arrive. I personally stand for liberty... it looks to me as though we have another question to settle, and that is **whether we are a free people, in the matter of biblical research**, and in the matter of following the light that comes to us from such research."³⁷ Personally I applaud Daniells for standing for freedom in biblical research. He was a man ahead of his times.

The second statement is from Edward Heppenstall, a respected Seminary professor whose teachings on righteousness by faith during my seminary days contributed immeasurably to stem the tide of legalism in our Adventist church. (Incidentally Dr. Heppenstall officiated at our wedding ceremony on December 21, 1961). With unmistakable eloquence he wrote: "Ellen White calls upon us to make sure that all the truths we hold are firmly established upon the Scriptures. Therefore we deplore the idea that anything else should have prior authority over the Bible. **Let her writings be our guide but not our jailer, our shield but not our straightjacket.** The Scriptures comprise God's final word to us."³⁸ Heppenstall's eloquent words fittingly express my conviction that EGW's writings should be "our guide but not our jailer, our shield but not our straightjacket."

SHOULD THE LAITY BE INFORMED ABOUT THE LIMITATIONS AND INACCURACIES PRESENT IN EGW'S WRITINGS?

Most of the participants at the 1919 Bible Conference, strongly felt that it was imperative to inform church members about the limitations of EGW's writings and their relationship to Scripture. With almost prophetic foresight they predicted that failure to meet this challenge would set the church "*drifting toward a crisis*"³⁹

One of the participants at the Bible Conference who expressed eloquently this concern, was by J. N. Anderson, Bible Teacher at the Washington Foreign Mission Seminary (Later Columbia Union College). He said: "I think we have come to quite a unanimous opinion about this matter among ourselves here, and we stand pretty well together, I should say, as to what position the *Testimonies* occupy — their authority and their relation to the Bible, and so on—but the question in my mind, and the mind of some others too, I think, is: What shall we as teachers do when we stand before our classes and some historical question comes up, such as we have spoken of here, where we have decided that Sister White's writings are not final? We say there are many historical facts that we believe scholarship must decide, that Sister White never claimed to be final on the historical matters that appear in her writings. Are we safe to tell that to our students? Or shall we hold it in abeyance? And can we hold something in the back of our head that we are absolutely sure about, and that most of the brethren stand with us on? Can we hold those things back and be true to ourselves? And further more, are we safe in doing it? Is it well to let our people in general go on holding to the verbal inspiration of the *Testimonies*? When we do that, aren't we preparing for a crisis that will be very serious some day?"⁴⁰

Anderson's prediction reveals prophetic foresight to any Adventist who has lived through the unprecedented attacks levelled against EGW's writings during the past 20 years. Most of the issues raised by Walter Rae and a host of former Adventists who have constructed websites devoted exclusively to defame Ellen White as a false prophet, could have been avoided if church members had been told about the extensive use of sources by Ellen White and her limitations on historical and doctrinal questions.

Anderson continued his speech offering a wise proposal: "It seems to me that the best thing for us to do is to cautiously and very carefully educate our people to see just where we really should stand to be consistent protestant, to be consistent with the *Testimonies* themselves, and to be consistent with what we know we must do, as intelligent men, as we have decided in these meetings."⁴¹

The Backlash to the 1919 Bible Conference

It is unfortunate that Anderson's proposal "to cautiously and very carefully educate our people" about Ellen White, was never implemented. A major reason was the immediate negative reaction of few fanatic Adventists who set in motion a very successful defamatory campaign. The most conspicuous leader was J. S. Washburn, a longtime Adventist minister. On the basis of reports he received secondhand, he labeled the Bible Conference as the "Council of Darkness" and "Diet of Doubts." In a 36-page open letter, Washburn accused Daniells of seeking to destroy confidence in Ellen White's inspiration.⁴² This accusation is totally false, because Daniells reaffirmed his commitment to the prophetic gift of Ellen White in the book *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, which was published in 1836, just before he died.

Later Washburn claimed that his "Open Letter," which was widely circulated before the 1922 General Conference, was largely instrumental in defeating Daniells' bid for reelection to the General Conference presidency.⁴³ This is altogether possible because Adventists were influenced at that time by the Protestant fundamentalist battle against liberalism and higher criticism. Any attempt to weaken the authority of Ellen White was seen in the light of the liberal trend to undermine the authority of the Bible.

Daniells was so upset by the negative reactions of the ultra conservatives, that he did not even dare to circulate the minutes of the Bible Conference. They remained buried in the archives of the General Conference for the next 55 years. It appears that all the participants to the Bible Conference were also so intimidated by the extreme conservatives, that they chose to keep quiet.

In his book *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, Daniells reaffirms his undiminished commitment to the prophetic gift of Ellen White, but he makes not attempt to inform the average church member about the issues discussed at the 1919 Bible Conference. Apparently he thought it prudent to avoid divisiveness at a time when extreme conservatives were in control of the church.

The policy of concealment adopted after the 1919 Bible Conference, remained in effect for the next 55 years until the minutes of the Conference were rediscovered in 1974. The dissemination of this new information regarding EGW's writings during the past 25 years has had a devastating impact on many former-Adventists who feel deceived by the misinformations they had been fed about Ellen White. It is sad to think that some of the most devoted believers in Ellen White, have now become her most bitter enemies.

The policy of concealment is a sad chapter of our past Adventist history. It has been largely responsible for much of the defamatory campaign against Ellen White we are witnessing today. Such a policy can no longer be maintained today because the breakthrough in communication, makes it imperative to be open and frank about the production and limitations of EGW's writings. Today any information can be easily obtained, copied, and broadcasted all over the world.

The commitment to truth is one of the fundamental values of our Adventist church. Such a commitment demands a full disclosure of how Ellen White wrote her books and of the limitations of her work. Ultimately the truth will set free both Ellen White and our church members. The best response to *The White Lie* by Walter Rae, is to tell *The White Truth* by our Adventist Church.

The fear that telling the truth about Ellen White might unsettle the faith of the laity, is based on the assumption that many of our church members are not mature enough to accept a more human, realistic view of her prophetic gift. This assumption is only partly true, because the vast majority of Adventists are already bombarded with negative propaganda about Ellen White. They are sensible enough to distinguish between truth and error.

The best defence of Ellen White is to be found in the NT view of the gift of prophecy that we discussed earlier. We noted that prophecy is one of the spiritual gifts given to the church. Such a gift does not make the prophet an authority on history or doctrinal interpretations. Rather the gift of prophecy empowers the prophet to speak to church members "for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation" (1 Cor 14:3). We are told that the messages of the prophets have to be tested and evaluated to ensure that truth is not mixed with error (1 Thess 5:20-21; 1 Cor 14:29).

During the 70 years of her prophetic ministry Ellen White has given ample evidence of possessing the prophetic gift. She delivered thousands of messages for the encouragement, consolation, reproof, and the upbuilding of the church. Her messages still meet the spiritual needs of our souls and can help us grow unto the stature of our Lord.

Our church leaders have put forth considerable efforts during the past 25 years to tell the truth about how Ellen White wrote her books by gathering information, correcting unpublished manuscripts, and revising published books. Numerous articles have been published in *Adventist Review* and *Ministry* clarifying these questions.⁴⁴ The most ambitious project sponsored by the General Conference was a comparative analysis of the sources used by Ellen White in writing *The Desire of Ages*. Fred Veltman, a respected NT scholar from Pacific Union College, worked full time for seven years with helpers on this project. I am told that this project costed our church almost half a million dollars. A

reading of the four volumes report may be an eye-opening experience for those who are not aware of the literary dependency of Ellen White.

In the last paragraph of his report, Veltman wrote: "If there is one general conclusion generated from my countless hours spent in reading and studying her writings over the past seven years, it is this; Ellen White was above all a practical believing Christian. Her writings were written to inform and to build personal faith in and personal obedience to God's will as it comes to expression in His word, the Bible. We may wish with all our hearts that she could serve us today as scientist or psychologist, as technician or theologian, or as conference or college president, but that is not to be. My firm conviction is that she was not, nor can she be any of these for us. She was rather a woman of God, drawn by His Spirit to call us back to Himself, to His word and His ways, that living under the name of Christ we might glorify Him before those who know Him not."⁴⁵

In many ways Veltman expresses my view of Ellen White. She was a godly woman called by God "to call us back to Himself, to His word and His ways." She never claimed to be an authority in history, prophetic interpretations, and doctrinal or medical questions. It is unfortunate that some of our fellow believers have not benefited from the concerted efforts our church has put forth in recent years to tell the truth about Ellen White. May this newsletter contribute in a small way to help a few Adventists to develop a balanced understanding of Ellen White—an understanding that will encourage us to use her writings as "our guide but not our jailer, our shield but not our straightjacket."

ENDNOTES

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2. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.
3. James Coffin, "Does the Bible Condemn 'Moderate' Drinking?" *Adventist Review* (February 22, 1982):4.
4. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition of the 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, D.C.: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 1988), p. 282.
5. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C., 1953), vol. 1, p. 1002.
6. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness*, (Rome 1980), page 159.
7. Larry Kirkpatrick, "Shall Any Teach God Knowledge? A Reply to Samuele Bacchiocchi's Endtime Issues Newsletter #87: 'A Reply to Criticism, pt. 1: The Use of E. G. White's Writings in Interpreting Scripture,'" (11 August 2002), p. 2
8. W. C. White and D. E. Robinson, "Brief Statements Regarding the Writings of EGW." August 1933, pages 19-20. Emphasis supplied.
9. *Testimonies*, vol. 1, page 75).
10. Emphasis supplied.
11. David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*, (Grand Rapids, 1985), p. 219.
12. Donald A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit—A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Australia 1988), pp. 94-95.
13. (Wayne A. Gruden, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Washington, D.C., 1982), p. 73.
14. *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 706, 707.
15. *Selected Messages*, vol, 3, p. 58.
16. Among the many articles published, dealing with the nature of Ellen White's inspiration and her use of sources, see the followings: Arthur White, "Toward an Adventist Concept of Revelation," (4 parts series, *Adventist Review* 155, January 12, 19, 26, Feb 2, 1978; and "E. G. White Historical Writings," (a 7 part series), *Adventist Review* 156, July 12, 19, 26, August 2, 9, 16, 23; Neal Wilson, "The Ellen G. White Writings and the Church," *Adventist Review* 158, July 9, 1981; Warren H. Johns, "Ellen White: Prophet or Plagiarist?" *Ministry* 55, June 1982, pp. 5-19; Robert W. Olsen, "Ellen G. White's Use of Historical Sources in *The Great Controversy*," *Adventist Review* 161, February 23, 1984; Fred Veltman, "The Desires of Ages Project: The Data," *Ministry* 62, October 1990, pp. 4-7; and "The Desires of Ages Project: The Conclusions," *Ministry* 63, February 1991, pp. 15-18; and *Full Report of the Life of Christ Research Project*, 4 volumes, Washington, D. C., 1988.
17. The examples are documented by Robert W. Olson, "Historical Discrepancies in the Spirit of Prophecy," unpublished paper, EGWRes DF 920-c.
18. "The Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy" August 1, 1919, *Spectrum* vol. 10, p. 55.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
21. "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy, July 30, 1919, *Spectrum* vol 10, 1, 1979, p. 34.
22. Willie White to S. N. Haskell, October 31, 1912.
23. *Selected Messages*, vol, 3, p. 58.
24. "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy, July 30, 1919, *Spectrum* vol 10, 1, 1979, p. 34.
25. *Ibid.*
26. "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy, July 30, 1919, *Spectrum* vol 10, 1, 1979, p. 36.
27. "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy, July 30, 1919, *Spectrum* vol 10, 1, 1979, p. 34.
28. Letter of W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, April 6, 1915.

29. "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy, July 30, 1919, *Spectrum* vol 10, 1, 1979, p. 30.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
34. *Review and Herald*, October 3, 1854.
35. *Evangelism*, p. 256.
36. "The Inspiration and Authority of the Ellen G. White Writings," *Adventist Review* 159, December 23, 1982, p. 9.
37. Letter of A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, August 4, 1910).
38. "The Inspired Witness of Ellen White, by Edward Heppenstall. An unpublished paper without date. Emphasis mine.
39. Letter of W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, April 6, 1915.
40. "The Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy," *Spectrum* vol 10, 1979, p. 46.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
42. J. S. Washburn, "An Open Letter to Elder A. G. Daniells and an Appeal to the General Conference," 36 pages.
43. J. S. Washburn to A. L. White, Oct 7, 1948, DF 242: Washburn, J. S., WE; rg 21: Documents, 1920S-50S, Clippings Regarding 1922 GC Session Folder.
44. See note 16 above.
45. Fred Veltman, *Life of Christ Research Project*, vol 3, pp. 957-958.

UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the upcoming seminars for the months of August and September 2002. Every Sabbath it is a great pleasure for me to meet our subscribers who travel considerable distances to attend the seminars. Feel free to contact me at (616) 471-2915 for a special weekend seminar in your area. I still have a three weekends open in the latter part of 2002. Each of the three seminars on the Sabbath, Second Advent, and Christian Life-style is now presented with attractive PowerPoint slides which add a visual dimension to our message.

AUGUST 2-3: TROY SDA CHURCH IN DETROIT

Location: 2775 Crooks Road, Troy, MI 48084

For information call Pastor David Asscherick at (586) 825-6184 or (248) 643-6766. This rally has been planned by Pastor David Asscherick for the churches in the Detroit area.

AUGUST 9-10: WESTCHESTER SPANISH SDA CHURCH IN MIAMI

Location: 9500 SW 16th Street, Miami, FL 33165

For information call Pastor Manuel Fernandez at (305) 220-3540 or (786) 457-2746. This rally has been planned for the Hispanic churches in the Miami area.

AUGUST 16-17: DALLAS SPANISH PLEASANT GROVE SDA CHURCH

Location: 7927 Rosemont Road, Dallas, TX 75217

For information call Pastor Carlos Quintana at (817) 417-5102. This rally has been planned for the Hispanic churches in the Dallas area.

AUGUST 23-24: TORONTO RALLY OF SDA CHURCHES, CANADA

Location: Mount Zion Filipino SDA Church, 140 St. Regis Crescent, Downsview, Ontario, Canada.

For information call Pastor Edwin Martin at (416) 631-6558. This rally has been planned for the Adventist churches in the Toronto area.

AUGUST 30-31: GENTRY SDA CHURCH

Location: 21090 Dawn Hill East Road, Gentry, Arkansas 72734

For information call Pastor Tim Roosenberg at (479) 736-8808

SEPTEMBER 6-7: MT. SINAI SDA CHURCH, NEW YORK

Location: 217-10 93rd Avenue, Queens Village, New York 11428.

For information call Pastor Harris Thompson at (718) 527-0027

SEPTEMBER 13-15: SINGAPORE

Location: Balestier Road SDA Church, 120 Balestier Road, Singapore.

For information contact Pearlyn Ng at <email2pearlyn@yahoo.com>. This rally is organized by the ASI for our churches in Singapore.

SEPTEMBER 17-18: MALAYSIA - SABAH MISSION

For information contact Pastor Nelver Sikul, the President of the Sabah Mission. His email address is: <sdasab@tm.net.my>.

SEPTEMBER 19-21: MALAYSIA -SARAWAK MISSION

For information contact Elder Gilbert Tan, the Secretary of the Sarawak Mission. His email address is: <saksec@tm.net.my>.

SEPTEMBER 25-26: LOS ANGELES KOREAN CENTRAL CHURCH

Location: 1666 Michigan Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90033

For information call Pastor Jeong Im at (323) 269-0670 or (626) 291-5455. This rally is organized especially for the Korean churches in Los Angeles.

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