

ADVENTURE NOT SIG TO FOR THE FUTURE, EXCEPT AS SHOULD NOT FORGET THE LORD HAS ENJOY US, AND HIS TEACHING IN OUR PAST HISTORY.

Review

SPECIAL
EDITION

Meet
Ellen
White
for
Yourself



Meet Ellen White for Yourself

WILLIAM G. JOHNSON

By what strange forces do time and place, genes and family, come together to thrust one individual up from the sea of humanity? Who could predict that from a hatmaker's family in the village of Gorham, Maine, would arise one of the great women in American history?

Ellen White.

By any measure laid down by friend or critic, she demands examination. Her place in the roll call of people who influenced America and the world is too large for her to be passed by (see the tribute on the facing page). Who was she, and what made her what she was?

This entire issue attempts to provide some answers. But we do not, cannot, claim to have solved fully the mystery of Ellen White. For at every turn her life and work hit us with amazing contrasts, seeming contradictions:

— She suffered from poor health, but worked prodigiously, traveled extensively, lived in three countries, spoke—without the aid of a microphone—to vast audiences, and died in old age.

— She had minimal education, but she authored thousands of pages of books and articles, becoming one of the most prolific Christian writers of all time.

— She received no formal training in theology and never pastored a congregation, but she preached often and powerfully, and through her writings continues to nurture men and women in Christian living.

— She was never elected or appointed to leadership, nor did she aspire to office, but her counsels helped found and shape a movement that has become the most widespread Protestant church on the face of the globe.

You can't get very far in trying to grasp the enigma of Ellen White without encountering something radically different from the sea of humanity, something that causes you to stand back and take a hard look. It is this: Ellen White believed that God spoke to her directly—not just as every Christian may hear God's voice, but in a prophetic sense, as His messenger.

That's a heavy claim. It caused discussion and division among the people to whom she first said or wrote "The Lord

has shown me . . ." And it still causes discussion and division. It's not surprising that Ellen White has critics.

No one ever faulted her personal life. There was never a whiff of moral looseness or financial wheeling and dealing: Ellen White didn't use her influence and messages for personal gain. She was a model of Christlike probity, kindness, and hospitality.

But that claim to receive visions and dreams, to be called by the Lord to deliver His messages—what shall we make of it? Each of us must decide on the answer. We must meet Ellen White for ourselves.

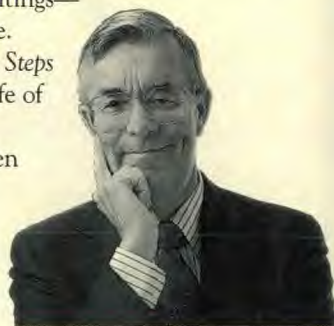
Let me quickly lay to rest a few conclusions that her claim could lead you to. For Seventh-day Adventists—members of the church she helped found—Ellen White is not another Joseph Smith. She pointed to the Bible as the only standard of faith, character, and doctrine. Her writings are not an addition to Scripture, a third canon. She described the Scriptures as the "greater light," her work as the "lesser light." And certainly Ellen White is no mother figure, an Adventist version of Mary.

I hope this special issue of the *Adventist Review* will help you get acquainted with Ellen White. If you hadn't even heard her name before picking up the issue, I want to introduce you to a remarkable and wonderful person. If you already know about her—in fact, if you believe as I do that God called and used her as His messenger—I hope you will know her better after reading this issue.

My greatest wish, however, is that this issue will not be an end in itself, but a beginning. I hope you won't be satisfied to read *about* Ellen White and her writings—I hope you will read what *she* wrote. Start with her beautiful little book *Steps to Christ* and go on to her classic life of Christ, *The Desire of Ages*.

That's the best way to meet Ellen White for yourself.

William G. Johnson is editor of the Adventist Review.



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"Mrs. E. G. White"

Mrs. White is a woman of singularly well-balanced mental organization. Benevolence, spirituality, conscientiousness, and ideality are the predominating traits. Her personal qualities are such as to win for her the warmest friendship of all with whom she comes in contact, and to inspire them with the utmost confidence in her sincerity. Whatever she has suffered through calumnies occasioned by the unpopularity of the cause with which she has been connected, has emanated from those who are unacquainted with her daily life. Notwithstanding her many years of public labor, she has retained all the simplicity and honesty that characterized her early life.

"As a speaker, Mrs. White is one of the most successful of the few ladies who have become noteworthy as lecturers, in this country, during the past 20 years. Constant use has so strengthened her vocal organs as to give her voice rare depth and power. Her clearness and strength of articulation are so great that, when speaking in the open air, she has frequently been distinctly heard at the distance of a mile. Her language, though simple, is always forcible and elegant. When inspired with her subject, she is often marvelously eloquent, holding the largest audiences spellbound for hours without a sign of impatience or weariness.

"The subject matter of her discourses is always of a practical character, bearing chiefly on fireside duties, the religious education of children, temperance, and kindred topics. On revival occasions, she is always the most effective speaker. She has frequently spoken to immense audiences in the large cities on her favorite themes, and has always been received with great favor. On one occasion in Massachusetts, 20,000 persons listened to her with close attention for more than an hour.

"Mrs. White is the author of numerous works that have had a wide circulation. Her writings are characterized by the same simplicity and practical nature that are conspicuous in her speaking. They enter into the home life of the family circle in a manner that rivets the attention of the candid reader, and cannot fail to instruct in the solemn duties of practical life. Her printed volumes aggregate more than 5,000 pages."

—*American Biographical History of Eminent and Self-made Men of the State of Michigan* (1878), p. 108

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PHOTO BY JOEL SPRINGER

She Called Herself “Messenger”

BY KENNETH H. WOOD

THE TIME WAS MAY 1856, AND THE PACE of activity had stepped up dramatically in the homes of Adventist believers

throughout Battle Creek, Michigan. Small wonder, for the *Review and Herald* had published a notice that a large conference would be held in the city, with delegations coming from Michigan, other states, and Canada. Adding to the excitement, the notice had promised that the local church would “entertain all who come for the worship of God, according to their best ability”! Thus all over Battle Creek rooms were being cleaned, beds were being improvised, and food was being stocked in preparation for a large influx of visitors.

In one home the activity was so intense that a distracted worker had forgotten to empty a large tub of water sitting on the kitchen floor. With the tub unattended, the family’s 21-month-old baby boy discovered it and proceeded to play “boat,” pushing a wooden bucket around with a stick. One of the helpers streaked through the kitchen to pick up kindling in the backyard and greeted the little boy with a casual “What are you doing?” but failed to warn him that he might fall in.

However, a few minutes later, after hearing a strange sound in the kitchen, she hurried back and found the young “captain” on his head in the tub, with only one foot visible. In a single motion she scooped up the wet little boy and screamed, “He’s drowned! He’s drowned!”

Startled by the scream, the baby’s mother rushed from the living room and, taking in the situation in a glance, asked in a half-shout, “Was the water hot or cold?”

Ignoring the question, the woman responded, “He’s drowned! He’s drowned! He’s dead! He’s dead!”

The mother grabbed the woman by the shoulders, shook her vigorously, and demanded, “Tell me, was the water hot or cold?”

“Cold.”

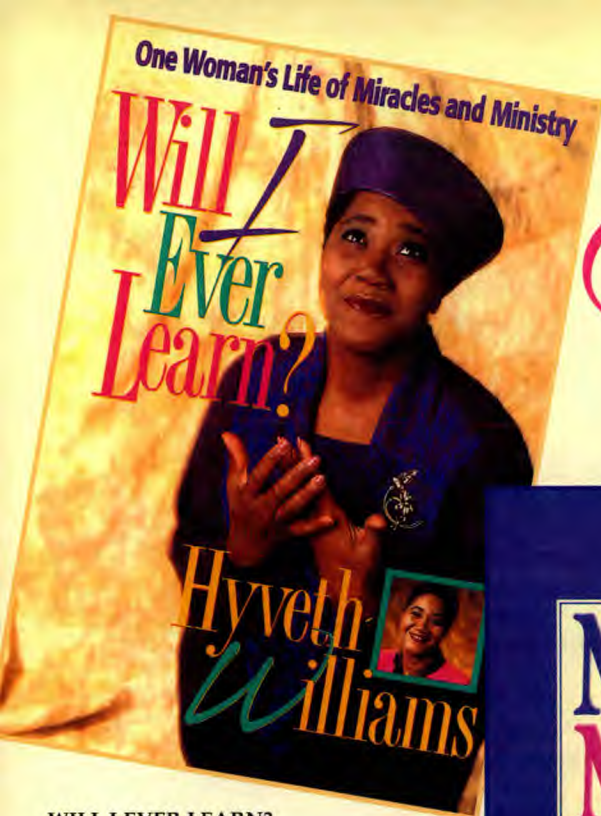
“Then give me the child; you send for the doctor and call James.”

With the little boy in her arms, the mother rushed to the front yard, cut off his wet clothes, and began to roll him on the grass. His arms and face were blue, and he was apparently lifeless, but she kept rolling him as water poured from his nose and mouth. Occasionally she lifted him into a sitting position to look for signs of life.

Neighbors gathered to watch the determined mother work strenuously to resuscitate her baby. Ten minutes passed. Then 15. Still there was no sign of life. Some onlookers urged the mother to stop trying. One woman exclaimed, “How dreadful to see her handling that dead child! Someone take that dead child away from her.” But the mother, undaunted, continued her efforts.

After 20 minutes she saw faint signs of life—a flicker of





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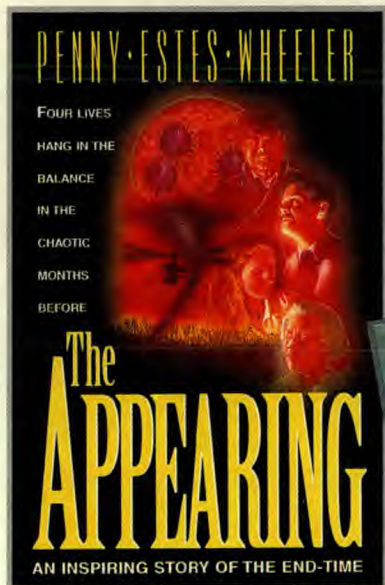
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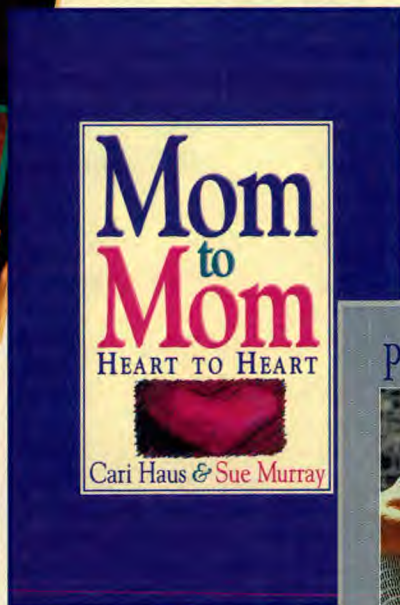
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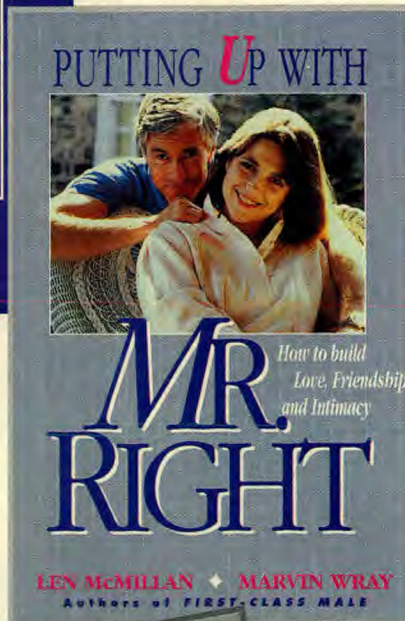


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an eyelid and a slight puckering of the lips. Holding him to her breast, she kissed the baby and carried him into the house, where she briefly warmed him by the fire, then laid him in his crib. With the help of others, she wrapped him in heated cloths, changing them frequently. Forty-five minutes later her little one was conscious and breathing normally. The perseverance that characterized every aspect of this woman's life was rewarded.

Who Was This Mother?

Who was this loving, persistent mother? Mrs. James White, or as she is more commonly known, Ellen G. White. And who was the “drowned” baby? W. C. (Willie) White, who, until his death at 83, served with distinction as a minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

This crisis incident in her home reveals much about Ellen White, who, meeting all the biblical tests of a true prophet, helped found the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Typically, when she saw what needed to be done, she did it. Faced with a challenge, she put forth her best effort. Though others urged her to give up, she persisted until she got results.

Ellen and her twin sister, Elizabeth, were born to Robert and Eunice Harmon on November 26, 1827, near the village of Gorham, Maine. At the age of 9, while living in Portland, she was severely injured when a schoolmate threw a rock that hit her in the face. In 1840, at the age of 12, she attended a Methodist camp meeting in Buxton, Maine, and there gave her heart to God. She was baptized in 1842 in Casco Bay, Portland. She and her family attended Adventist meetings and accepted the views presented by William Miller. They eagerly looked forward to the return of Christ to this earth on October 22, 1844. With thousands of others, the family was bitterly disappointed when He did not return on that day.

In December 1844, when only 17, Ellen received her first vision. She traveled and shared it with others, and on one trip met a young Adventist preacher, James White, then 23 years of age. James and Ellen were united in marriage late in August 1846. During the decades that followed, the Whites traveled widely, preaching, encouraging, and instructing church members, and establishing medical and publishing

Her writings seem as fresh as today's newspaper.

institutions. James White died in Battle Creek on August 6, 1881, at the age of 60. Ellen White continued her work as God's messenger, spending two years in Europe and 10 in Australia, writing, preaching, and establishing institutions. She died in 1915 at her home near St. Helena, California.

Ellen White was truly a remarkable person. Consider these facts. She had poor health throughout her life, yet accomplished more than most people with abundant health. She had little education, yet even today her writings on a broad range of subjects challenge the thinking of scholars. She came from a family without inherited wealth, but by practicing thrift and faith, she always had money to help advance God's work. She was naturally timid, yet became a public speaker who attracted large audiences. She was a serious Bible student, an evangelist, a writer, a founder of institutions, a temperance leader, a world traveler, a health reformer, an enemy of racism, a counselor to church leaders, and with it all, a faithful wife and mother.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen White's impressive accomplishments and lasting influence for good are attributable not to natural talents or professional training, but to the fact that in her youth God bestowed upon her one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of prophecy. During the 70 years of her ministry God gave her approximately 2,000 visions. Some visions were short—lasting only a few seconds; others were long, continuing for nearly four hours.

In response to God's commission “Make known to others what I have revealed to you” (*Early Writings*, p. 20) Ellen White wrote out for the benefit of others much of the knowledge and counsel received through these supernatural experiences. Not all of her writings found their source in visions. Many were inspired by Bible study. Still others were the result of reading historical and religious books and periodicals. But the intimate spiritual

encounters with God that took place in the visions gave her special information and unique insights. The benefits of the visions were many, seven of which are: (1) they provided an understanding of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, thus laying the foundation for a coherent theology; (2) they provided supernatural wisdom to deal with Satan's attacks against the church; (3) they enabled her to define truth and help Bible students separate truth from error; (4) they offered glimpses of God's intimate involvement in human history; (5) they helped apply biblical principles to practical, everyday living; (6) they broadened the church's vision of its soul-winning commission; and (7) they enabled the church to understand and interpret many prophecies of the Bible.

During her lifetime Ellen White wrote more than 5,000 magazine articles and 26 books. But in the decades since her death numerous compilations have been made from the approximately 55,000 pages of manuscript left in her files.

Today more than 100 titles are available in English. Many believe that she is the most translated woman writer in the entire history of literature, and the most translated American author of either gender. Her powerful but simple book on beginning and continuing a personal relationship with Christ—*Steps to Christ*—has been published in more than 135 languages. Her writings cover a broad range of subjects, including education, health, social relationships, evangelism, publishing, prophecy, nutrition, and management, and in all of them she lifted up Christ as the hope of the world.

One characteristic of her writings that always impresses readers is that they seem as fresh as today's newspaper. Though written during a time of great turmoil and confusion in the worlds of medicine, nutrition, social relations, and education, they set forth truths that are fully compatible with studies and findings in the twentieth century. Decades before it was popular to do so, she opposed the use of

The Loss of a Son

In 1860 James White was away for meetings in Chicago, but he and his wife kept in touch. She wrote to him:

"Our nameless little one grows finely; weighed him last Wednesday. He then weighed ten pounds and one quarter. He is well. Willie is reading to Sister Benedict. He has lessons every day and I can see he progresses fast. My hand trembles so; fear you cannot read it.

"In much love, your Ellen" (letter 10, 1860).

On Monday, October 22, she wrote to James. He had been gone nearly two weeks.

"Thought I would pen a few lines. My health is improving. The children are well and obedient. We shall keep help if we can get it for a few weeks. Help is scarce. The little nameless one is fat and rugged, and very quiet. Has not had a cold yet. . . .

"We have just weighed the yet nameless one. He weighs twelve pounds and a half, good weight. The children are doing well; are quite steady; are not perfect. This we do not expect of children. . . ."

On November 19 she wrote James, reporting: "We are as well as usual. Babe is fat and healthy, weighed last Thursday fifteen pounds. He promises to be a very rugged boy. . . . Babe is quiet and good nights, but I will tell you one thing, he is so hearty it will cost you quite a bill to keep me and him. He eats and throws it up and is just as greedy to eat again. My appetite is good. Food sets well" (letter 14, 1860).

In mid-November Ellen had taken the children by train to the country and stayed with the Glover family. It must have been in connection with this trip that the virulent germs of erysipelas, to which infants are very susceptible, were picked up.

On Wednesday, November 21, she wrote a short note to James:

"Dear Husband: I put a letter in the [post] office yesterday for you and told you that we were all well but Monday night our child has taken sick in the night and all day yesterday was very sick—dangerous. Today not so much distressed, but he is not out of danger. He is a very sick child. I thought you ought to know this and then you could do as you pleased about returning. Sister Benedict was with me all day yesterday. Sat up

alcoholic drinks and tobacco and advocated a balanced vegetarian diet. One authority in the field of nutrition has declared: "In spite of the fact that the works of Mrs. White were written long before the advent of modern scientific nutrition, no better overall guide is available today" (Clive M. McCay, in *Review and Herald*, Feb. 26, 1959). In the field of education, a prominent professor wrote: "Recently the book *Education*, by Ellen G. White, has been brought to my attention. Written at the turn of the century, this volume was more than 50 years ahead of its times. . . . The breadth and depth of its philosophy amazed me. Its concepts of balanced education, harmonious development, and of thinking and acting on principle are advanced educational concepts" (Dr. Florence Stratemeyer, in *Review and Herald*, Aug. 6, 1959).

As I personally review the life and ministry of Ellen G. White, I thank God for the blessings that have come to the world through this humble, inspired instrument.

Especially am I thankful for the way in which she constantly pointed to the Bible and lifted up Christ and His "matchless charms." Listen to and heed the appeal of this modern prophet: "Search the Bible, for it tells you of Jesus. I want you to read the Bible and see the matchless charms of Jesus. I want you to fall in love with the Man of Calvary, so that at every step you can say to the world, His 'ways are ways of pleasantness and all' His 'paths are peace' (Prov. 3:17)" (*In Heavenly Places*, p. 354).

Kenneth H. Wood, retired editor of the *Adventist Review*, is president and board chair of the Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.



with the child all night and is with me today. . . . In haste, Ellen" (letter 15, 1860).

The heartbreaking sequence was recounted by Ellen White when it was over: "My dear babe was a great sufferer. Twenty-four days and nights we anxiously watched over him, using all the remedies we could for his recovery, and earnestly presenting his case to the Lord. At times I could not control my feelings as I witnessed his sufferings. Much of my time was spent in tears, and humble supplication to God" (Spiritual Gifts, vol. 2, p. 296).

Although erysipelas is extremely contagious, and these were days before germs or viruses were known, neither Ellen nor any other member of the family was stricken. It must have been during this three-week period that the child was given a name—John Herbert White. Ellen White picks up the sad story:

"December 14 (Friday), I was called up. My babe was worse. I listened to his labored breathing, and felt his pulseless wrist. I knew that he must die. That was an hour of anguish for me. The icy hand of death was already upon him. We watched his feeble, gasping

breath, until it ceased, and we felt thankful that his sufferings were ended.

"When my child was dying, I could not weep. I fainted at the funeral. My heart ached as though it would break, yet I could not shed a tear.

"We were disappointed in not having Brother Loughborough to conduct the funeral services, and my husband spoke upon the occasion to a crowded house. We followed our child to Oak Hill Cemetery, there to rest until the Life-giver shall come, and break the fetters of the tomb, and call him forth immortal.

"After we returned from the funeral, my home seemed lonely. I felt reconciled to the will of God, yet despondency and gloom settled upon me" (*ibid.*).

The year 1860 had opened with James and Ellen White in the Loughborough home witnessing the death of their friends' only child. The year closed with the vivid memories of the death of their own child, a babe of 3 months, casting a gloom that would not soon pass away. It had been a year with but little joy.

—From *Ellen G. White: The Early Years*, pp. 426-431.

“Oh, Jesus, How I Love You!”

BY JAMES R. NIX

THE FIVE-FOOT-TWO-INCH LADY STOOD AT the pulpit preaching. It was Sabbath morning, and as usual, everyone was listening. As Ellen White talked about the matchless love of Jesus, she suddenly paused. Seeming to forget that the audience was there, she looked heavenward, as if gazing into the very face of Jesus, and exclaimed, “Oh, Jesus, how I love You! How I love You! How I love You!”

Years later a witness recalled, “A deep hush came over the audience. Heaven seemed very near” (personal interview with Ella M. Robinson, July 25, 1967).

Today many Seventh-day Adventists seem to have forgotten—or never have heard—that Ellen White was first and foremost deeply in love with Jesus. In 1872 she confided in her diary, “My whole being longs after the Lord. I am not content to be satisfied with occasional flashes of light. I must have more” (manuscript 20, 1892, p. 1).

Ellen White’s extensive writings *must* be read in that context. What some see as narrow, legalistic lifestyle restraints she saw as aids in developing a vibrant relationship with Christ. The “don’ts” become “do’s” for those who seek to draw closer to Christ and who want more than anything else to please Him.

Ellen saw Jesus not as some historic figure, but as her personal friend and Saviour. On January 1, 1891, she wrote in her diary, “Jesus alone is my dependence. In Him I trust. He loveth even me. He is at this moment standing at the altar of incense presenting before the Father my prayers, my heart-longing desires for His grace” (manuscript 40, 1891, p. 1).

By far the most traumatic experience of Ellen’s childhood was being hit in the face by a stone thrown by an angry teenage girl. Carried home and unconscious for three weeks, Ellen was expected to die (*Spiritual Gifts*, book 2, pp. 7, 8). At the time of the accident, Ellen’s father was on a business trip to Georgia. When he returned, he did not recognize his daughter—her face was so changed (*ibid.*, p. 10).

Unable physically to resume her schooling, Ellen turned to the Lord for consolations (*ibid.*, p. 11). She maintained this habit the rest of her life. In 1897, for example, she

wrote in her diary, “I awoke at three o’clock a.m. I feel deeply the need of casting my helpless soul upon Jesus Christ. He is my helper. He is my all and in all. I am weak as water without the Holy Spirit of God to help me” (diary entry for Oct. 11, 1897, manuscript 177, 1897, p. 14).

In 1840 William Miller gave a series of lectures in Portland about the soon return of Christ. Along with many others, Ellen attended the meetings. During one of the later calls she went forward, though in her heart she did not feel worthy to be called a child of God (*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 15, 16).

The following summer Ellen went to a Methodist camp meeting with her parents. Writing about it years later, she recalled, “While bowed at the altar with others who were seeking the Lord, . . . the language of my heart was: ‘Help, Jesus, save me or I perish!’ . . . As I knelt and prayed, suddenly my burden left me, and my heart was light. . . . Jesus seemed very near to me” (*ibid.*, pp. 16, 17).

For Ellen everything had now changed. She wrote, “As we neared our home in Portland, we passed men at work upon the street. They were conversing with one another upon ordinary topics, but my ears were deaf to everything but the praise of God, and their words came to me as grateful thanks and glad hosannas. Turning to my mother, I said, ‘Why, these men are all praising God, and *they* haven’t been to the camp meeting.’ I did not then understand why the tears gathered in my mother’s eyes, and a tender smile lit up her face, as she listened to my simple words” (*ibid.*, pp. 18, 19).

In June 1842 William Miller held a second series of lectures in Portland on the prophecies. It caused even more of a stir than his meetings two years earlier. But confusing thoughts ran through young Ellen’s mind. Why did people who professed to be sanctified get so angry at Miller’s message about Jesus’ soon return? What would happen to those not saved? Having been taught to believe in an eternally burning hell, Ellen thought God’s justice eclipsed His mercy. She felt unprepared for Jesus’ return.

“Total darkness settled upon me,” she wrote, “and there seemed no way out of the shadows.” Sometimes she would spend the entire night in prayer (*ibid.*, pp. 21-26).



HEART OF HER LIFE: Ellen White claimed to have seen Jesus while in vision, and according to those close to her, she mentioned that the above picture carried a resemblance. "I well recall," wrote Abbie Kellogg Norton in 1935, "seeing Brother and Sister White coming to our home many times when I was a child . . . and Sister White never failed to comment upon the picture and its likeness to the Saviour as she had seen Him in visions." In 1925 Willie White wrote that his mother "considered it the most nearly correct of any picture she had seen." There is no mention of the picture in Ellen White's writings themselves.

During this low point in her Christian experience, Ellen had a dream in which she seemed to climb a stairway, at the top of which was a doorway. After being told to lay down the things she had brought with her, the door was opened and she stood face-to-face with Jesus. "There was no mistaking that beautiful countenance," she recalled. "That expression of benevolence and majesty could belong to no other." Placing His hand upon her head, He said, "Fear not." The dream gave her hope (*ibid.*, pp. 28, 29).

As the time neared when Ellen and the other Millerites expected Jesus to return, their fervor for others became more intense. Ellen

later wrote, "The salvation of souls was the burden of my mind, and my heart ached for those who flattered themselves that they were living in security, while the message of warning was being given to the world" (*Life Sketches*, p. 48).

Speaking years later about the time leading up to the expected return of Christ, Ellen would recall, "This was the happiest year of my life" (*ibid.*, p. 59). "I seemed to dwell in a heavenly atmosphere. I expected Jesus to come and make me immortal, when I could . . . ever feast upon His glory, and praise Him in perfect strains" (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 29).

Just weeks after the Great Disappointment, God gave Ellen the first of the many visions she would receive during the next 70 years. It occurred while she was kneeling in worship with four other women. Included in that first vision

was a depiction of the second coming of Christ.

Ellen White was privileged to see Jesus many more times in the years to come. One who witnessed several of Mrs. White's public visions said: "When beholding Jesus our Saviour, she would exclaim in musical tones, low and sweet, 'Lovely, lovely, lovely,' . . . always with the greatest affection" (Martha D. Amadon, "Mrs. E. G. White in Vision," *Notebook Leaflets*, volume 1, No. 44, p. 1).

In her 219-page *Spiritual Gifts* (volume 1, 1858), the forerunner of the Conflict of the Ages Series, Ellen devoted 45

pages to the ministry of Christ. Between 1870 and 1884 she wrote the four-volume intermediary set called *The Spirit of Prophecy*. Volumes 2 and 3 of this set, each about 400 pages, were about the life and ministry of Christ. Finally, in 1898 her crowning volume on the life of Christ, *The Desire of Ages*, was published. Because Ellen had written much more than could be contained in that one volume, two related books were also published—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* in 1896 and *Christ's Object Lessons* in 1900.

Still Ellen feared she would not be able to find words adequate to convey her deep feelings about Jesus. In 1892 she wrote in a letter to Elder O. A. Olsen, "Oh, how inefficient, how incapable I am of expressing the things which burn in my soul in reference to the mission of Christ! . . . I know not how to speak or trace with pen the large subject of the atoning sacrifice. I know not how to present

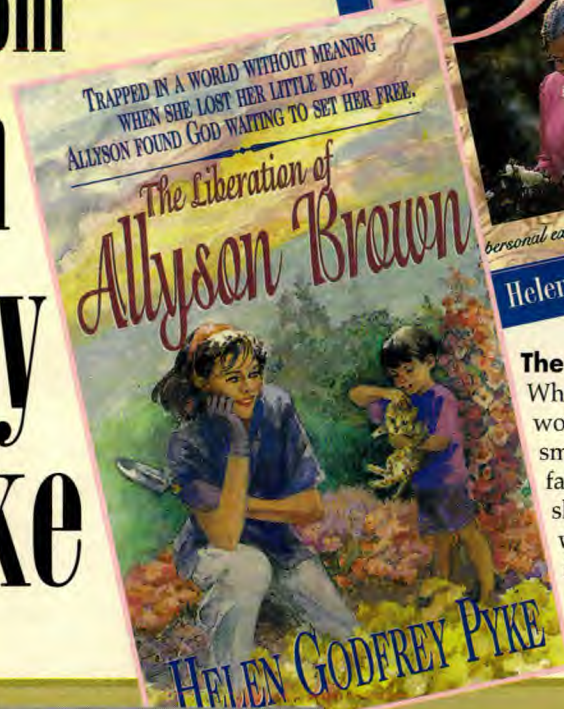
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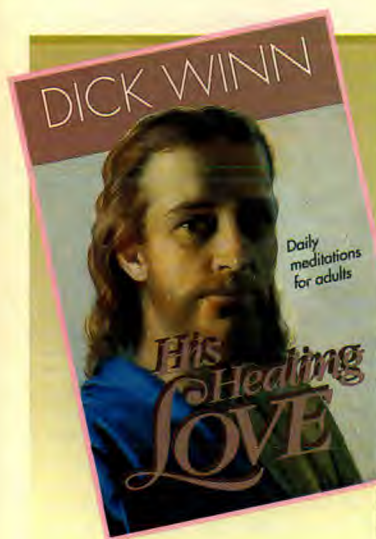
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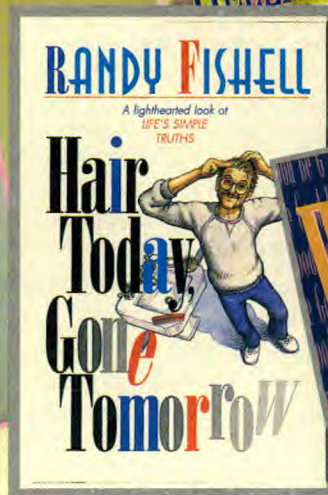
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subjects in the living power in which they stand before me. I tremble for fear lest I shall belittle the great plan of salvation by cheap words" (letter 40, 1892, p. 4).

In her diary on July 29, 1897, Ellen White wrote, "I awaken at half past two, and offer up my prayer to God in the name of Jesus. . . . In writing upon the life of Christ I am deeply wrought upon. I forget to breathe as I should. I cannot endure the intensity of feeling that comes over me as I think of what Christ has suffered in our world" (manuscript 70, 1897, p. 1).

This intense feeling never left her. Less than a year before her death, Ellen remarked to her secretary, Clarence Crisler, "I find tears running down my cheeks when I think of what the Lord is to His children, and when I contemplate His goodness, His mercy, [and] His tender compassion" (E. G. White interview with C. C. Crisler, July 21, 1914, White Estate Document File 752).

Through the years, Ellen continually expressed her deep love for Christ in her private diaries, in letters, in articles for church papers, and in talks. In 1894 she wrote to Dr. J. H. Kellogg, "You know that my whole theme both in the pulpit

and in private, by voice and pen, is the life of Christ" (letter 46a, 1894, p. 5).

Other publications specifically about Christ also came from Ellen's pen. Among these were *Steps to Christ* (1892) and *Christ Our Saviour* (1896; now called *The Story of Jesus*), plus several pamphlets.

At the 1888 "righteousness by faith" General Conference session, held in Minneapolis, Ellen's heart thrilled in response to the sermons by A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner.

In one of her own morning talks during the pre-session, Ellen closed by describing her deep love for Jesus: "Oh, I love Him. I love Him, for He is my love. I see in Him matchless charms, and oh, how I want that we shall enter in through the gates into the city. Then shall every crown be taken off from every head and cast at the feet of Jesus our blessed Redeemer. He has purchased it for me; He has purchased it for you, and we shall acknowledge Him Lord of all. . . . We shall shout, 'Glory to God in the highest.' I wish we would learn to praise Him more" (in A. V. Olson, *Thirteen Crisis Years*, p. 262).

And praise Him she did! Wherever Ellen White went,



Ellen G. White delivers the keynote address, "The Ministry of Healing" at the dedication service for the Loma Linda Sanitarium on April 15, 1906.

"Surely a study of the providences that have marked the beginning and growth of the work in Loma Linda must lead to the conviction that this institution is designed of God to act an important part in the training of efficient workers for the world-wide field."

*Ellen G. White
Loma Linda Messages*



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Christ was uplifted and sinners were pointed to Him. In churches and schools, tents and train stations, on board ships and at open street meetings, in rented theaters and at a skating rink, in prison and even at an improvised meeting in a beer hall in Europe, she shared her love for Jesus with all who would listen.

In fact, her love for Him sometimes kept her from sleeping at night. On November 20, 1893, she wrote in her

diary, "I was unable to sleep much last night, not because of sorrow but because my heart was welling up to God with joy and praise to the Lord Jesus Christ for His great goodness and lovingkindness to the children of men and His great love manifested to me" (manuscript 87, 1893, p. 9).

Ellen White's choice of hymns further reflected her deep love for Jesus. Among her favorites were: "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" (her favorite hymn) (letter 324, 1906, p. 1); "I Will Follow Thee, My Saviour"; "Have You No Room for Jesus?"; "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"; "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"; and "Rock of Ages" (Ella M. Robinson, "Hymns Loved and Sung by Ellen G. White," pp. 2-4, 7; and "Hymns Ellen White Loved," pp. 3-6, White Estate Document File 245g). Visitors in her home often heard her singing or humming the stanzas of these hymns as she went about her work.

On Sabbath, February 13, 1915, Ellen White fell and broke her hip at her Elmhaven home in northern California (*Life Sketches*, p. 442). As days turned into weeks, it became apparent that she would not recover from her accident. But life's lengthening shadows did not cast gloom across her disposition. Three weeks after the accident she commented to her nurse, "Jesus is my blessed Redeemer and I love Him with my whole being" (handwritten note in White Estate Document File 753).

Whenever possible, Ellen's family and friends visited her in the large writing room where she had done so much work during the years at Elmhaven. From her bed Ellen would listen to her family and friends sing to her.

One Sabbath not long before her death, Ellen listened to the group singing around her bedside. Someone began singing "There's a Land That Is Fairer Than Day." As others picked up the strain, Mrs. White tried to join them. In her weak, trembling voice—little more than a whisper—she sang, "We shall sing on that beautiful shore the melodious songs of the blest, and our spirits shall sorrow no more, not a sigh for the blessing of rest."

To those present, it seemed as though Ellen was singing in anticipation of the angel choir in the earth made new (Ella M. Robinson, "Hymns Ellen White Loved," p. 7).

A few days later she spoke her last words to her son, W. C. White: "I know in whom I have believed."

A Letter to Grandma

BY MABEL R. MILLER

"O precious, loving, long-suffering, long-forbearing Jesus, how my soul adores Thee! That a poor, unworthy, sin-polluted soul can stand before the Holy God, complete in the righteousness of our Substitute and Surety! Wonder, O Heavens, and be astonished, O earth, that fallen man is the object of His infinite love and delight. He rejoices over them with celestial songs, and man defiled with sin, having become cleansed through the righteousness of Christ, is presented to the Father free from every spot and stain of sin, 'not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing' " (Eph. 5:27).



FRIENDS OF ELLEN: Mary Kelsey White, with daughters Mabel Eunice, and Ella May.

While reading Ellen G. White's devotional for October 31, 1991, in *Our Father Cares*, I was deeply impressed with the above quotation. It is so different from most of her writings—like a sudden burst of adoration and love.

Imagine my surprise to learn that this quote was taken from a letter that Ellen White had written to my grandmother Mary Kelsey White, Willie White's first wife, who was dying of tuberculosis at age 33. Six months later—on June 18, 1890—she died. (My mother, Ella May, was 8 at the time.)

Mabel Miller writes from National City, California.



James R. Nix is vice director of the Ellen G. White Estate.



For Myself

ANDY NASH

I met Ellen G. White at a felt board. I was a second grader in a church school classroom; Ellen was a felt schoolgirl about to be smacked in the head by a felt rock hurled by her felt classmate. As the rock hovered in the air, our teacher—who was also my mom but whom I called “Mrs. Nash” during school hours—narrated.

“Ellen whirled around just as the rock was thrown,” said Mrs. Nash. “It struck her right in the face.”

We clutched our faces and groaned, each trying to outgroan the others. We couldn’t imagine the pain. Snowballs in the face were bad enough. What would a rock feel like?

“Did she die?” a girl asked.

“No,” replied Mrs. Nash, “but she was sick in bed for a very long time.”

The episode lingered in my mind for hours—even through recess. After school I told the story to my friend Michelle Hill, who regularly came to my house to play. Michelle wasn’t an Adventist, but she was patient, and so she listened as I relayed every detail of Ellen White’s childhood tragedy, which we then discussed. The one positive, we decided, about getting hit by a rock was that you wouldn’t have to go to school. Still, pain was pain, and we didn’t want any part of it.

By the end of the week I had taken Michelle through Ellen’s recovery, the Great Disappointment, and her first vision. “Those who kept their eyes on Jesus stayed on the path,” I explained. “But if anyone looked away or tried to show off too much, they fell.”

“After they fell, could they get back on?” asked Michelle.

“I don’t know,” I said. “We haven’t gotten there yet.”

Ellen G. White’s life was exciting to Michelle and me. After all, how many people did we know who could hold an 18-pound Bible *straight out* for a half hour, fly with angels while in vision, and describe heaven in detail? Not many. So we had great admiration for this young woman. And we couldn’t wait to learn more wonderful things about her. . . .

Twelve years later.

I sit reading on a beanbag in a college dorm room. The felts have long since finished, Michelle has moved away, and the word lately is that Ellen G. White isn’t so wonderful after all. Again and again I have listened to church members, classmates, even teachers, ridicule her. It’s almost as if they wished that that rock would have taken her out altogether.

For 12 years I’ve let others influence my opinion of this “messenger.” But now I’m doing something completely radical—checking out Ellen G. White for myself. And, surprise of surprises, things are getting exciting again.

I’m halfway through the final chapter of *The Desire of Ages*.

My heart races as I peek in on the greatest welcome-back party in history. Jesus has just risen from the Mount of Olives and is bound for the kingdom, *His* kingdom. All of heaven is astir as they prepare to escort Him in. The angels are beside themselves. Thirty-three years they have waited for this moment. “They are eager to celebrate His triumph and to glorify their King.”

But what’s this?

“He waves them back. Not yet; He cannot now receive the coronet of glory and the royal robe. He enters into the presence of His Father. He points to His wounded head, the pierced side, the marred feet; He lifts His hands, bearing the print of nails. . . . He declares: Father, it is finished. I have done Thy will, O My God. I have completed the work of redemption. If Thy justice is satisfied, ‘I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am’ (John 17:24).”

I’m overwhelmed. The homecoming of homecomings—and all He can think about is His friends on earth. Those who ditched Him just a few weeks earlier are the ones with whom He wants to spend eternity. And He won’t rest until their reservations—until *my* reservations—are confirmed.

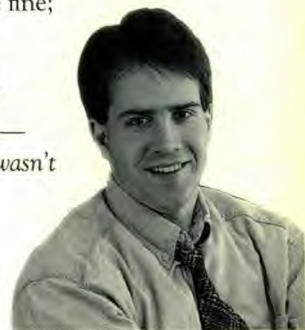
“The voice of God is heard proclaiming that justice is satisfied. . . . The Father’s arms encircle His Son, and the word is given, ‘Let all the angels of God worship him’ (Heb. 1:6).”

I join them.

On a rainy April evening my freshman year of college, I decided that people could tell me that Ellen G. White wasn’t real and wasn’t relevant. That would be fine; let them pitch their pebbles. But they *couldn’t* tell me that what stirred in my heart as I read a century-old account of Jesus’ unfathomable love for this planet—they couldn’t tell me that that stirring *wasn’t real and wasn’t relevant*.

Because it was.

Andy Nash is assistant to the editor at the Adventist Review.



Sisters in Service

Ellen White's influence on selected Black female contemporaries

BY ROSA TAYLOR BANKS

ELLEN GOULD HARMON WHITE LIVED IN a man's world. Yet from her first vision in 1844 to her death in 1915, she ministered to both men and women of all races, encouraging them to invest their talents in gospel service.

While thousands of women must have been influenced by the prophet, the names of only 323 surface in the church's major biographies and indexes. All but three were Caucasian.

But Ellen White inspired Black women too. She saw in them a reservoir of talent and ability needed to round out the church's employment and volunteer service forces. To pave the way for greater consideration of Black workers, she exhorted Adventists to their duty to the "colored people." Her efforts and writings inspired a widespread mission enterprise in the South, resulting in the development of Black male—and later female—involvement in the spreading of the Advent message.

Sadly, most of their involvement was not recorded. From the album of history we see only a few snapshots of Black women achievers.

Sojourner Truth

Perhaps the most popular Black woman of all time was **Sojourner Truth**. Born as Isabella Van Wagener around 1797 in Ulster County, New York, she was the first woman of African ancestry to see and know the prophet up close.

Though Truth was more than 30 years older than White, the two had much in common. Both spoke

out about temperance, abolition, and equal rights. Both were leading dress reformers (though Truth's focus in regard to fashionable dress was not the same as Ellen White's).¹

Both were sought-after speakers—in church and in public settings. Truth spoke at least twice at the 1843 Millerite camp meeting in New England, a year before Ellen White had her first vision. Twelve years later both were frequent speakers at the Battle Creek Sanitarium, the 4,000-seat Dime Tabernacle, and Battle Creek College. Truth visited and spoke so often at the Tabernacle that some associated her attendance with membership.

Both moved to Michigan within months of each other. Ellen and James White moved to Battle Creek, Michigan, in November 1855. In 1856 Sojourner Truth moved to Harmonia, Michigan, and later relocated to nearby Battle Creek.

Truth and Ellen White had common friends: John Byington, Uriah Smith, Dr. J. H. Kellogg, and other prominent SDAs.²

After Sojourner Truth's death on November 26, 1883, in Battle Creek, one of several memorial services was held at the Battle Creek Tabernacle. After Ellen White's death on July 16, 1915, the last of her three funeral services was held at the Tabernacle. Both women were laid to rest in the Oak Hill Cemetery of Battle Creek, though some 32 years apart.

Jennie B. Allison

Jennie B. Allison was also a friend of Ellen White's. Born in 1858 near Edgefield Junction, Tennessee, Jennie is documented as the first Black woman to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A member of a Black company of believers organized in 1886 in Edgefield Junction, she attended church with Caucasians as early as 1883.

Ellen White occasionally visited the Allison home,³ where they discussed personal and private matters. Following one of those counseling



occasions, Allison took the prophet's advice and encouraged her son to move from Chicago to Tennessee. Later, after leaving the glamour and glitter of big-city life, her son became an Adventist minister. Though Allison was never a church employee, she was a faithful volunteer in the local church.

Etta Littlejohn

A convert of Edson White's *Morning Star* boat mission and one of the first 16 students to enroll in 1896 at Oakwood Industrial School (now Oakwood College), **Etta Littlejohn** was Ellen White's caregiver. According to Dr. Mervyn Warren, "Etta became one of the sanitarium students assigned to care for Ellen White. . . . The fledgling nursing student felt privileged to care for her church's prophetess, and Sister White must have been pleased to see evidence that the inspired counsel she shared on working for Blacks was bearing excellent results."⁴

Etta later married a Seventh-day Adventist minister, Robert Lee Bradford, and used her talents to instill Christian principles in her children while serving the church any way she could.

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Mabel R. Miller

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Lottie Isbell Blake

Another friend of Ellen White's was **Lottie Isbell Blake, M.D.**, the first Black Adventist physician. Born on June 10, 1876, in Appomattox Court House, Virginia, Dr. Blake labored as the director of Rock City Sanitarium in Nashville, Tennessee, the forerunner of Riverside Sanitarium and Hospital.

According to her grandson, Paul Brantley, a professor of education at Andrews University, Dr. Blake's treatments involved natural remedies patterned after those used by Dr. J. Harvey Kellogg. The sanitarium became so widely respected that Ellen White came there for treatment of a knee problem.

Among her many other contributions to the church, Dr. Lottie Blake organized the first nurse's training program at Oakwood College in 1903.

Other Notables

Three other Black women achievers are believed to have known or been influenced by Ellen White.

The first is **Anna Knight**—the first Black female missionary to India (1901), the first Black female employee of the church (1909), and one of the champions of Christian education.

The second is **Rosetta Douglass Sprague**, daughter of the prominent emancipator Frederick Douglass, with whom Sojourner Truth occasionally shared the platform. Baptized in 1883, Sprague held membership in Washington, D.C., and is reported to be among the first Black female converts to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The third is **Mary Britton**, a classmate of Dr. Lottie Blake's at the College of Medical Evangelists (now Loma Linda University). Britton was editor of a newspaper, *The Standard*, which promoted vegetarianism and health care.

These contemporaries of Ellen White's represent the many unsung Black heroes of the nineteenth century. We may never be able to document their contributions to the church, but we take comfort in knowing that in the kingdom of heaven the full story will be told.

¹ Carleton Mabey, *Sojourner Truth: Slave, Prophet, Legend* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), p. 192.

² *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1976), p. 1503.

³ Louis B. Reynolds, *We Have Tomorrow* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1984), p. 110.

⁴ Mervyn Warren, "The Legacy of Etta Littlejohn," *Adventist Review*, May 24, 1990, p. 15.

Rosa Taylor Banks is the associate secretary and director of the Office of Human Relations for the North American Division.



A Typical Day, an Extraordinary Life

What's it like to wake up to Ellen White every morning? No one knows better than the staff of the E. G. White Estate—except, of course, James.

BY KAREN CARLTON

MY PHONE RINGS AGAIN. IT'S BEEN ringing steadily most of the morning. Most callers want to know where a quote is located or what Ellen White said on a particular topic. As I hang up, I see the second tour group arriving. It includes visitors from Australia, South America, and Spain. I rush to find one of the bilingual members of our department to help with the tour.

Just a typical day at the Ellen G. White Estate.

I've learned a lot working here on the bottom floor of the General Conference. I've learned a lot about Ellen White *the person*—and what a godly person she was. I try to share what I've learned with visitors from all over the world. The White Estate is one of the high points of the General Conference tour. People love to see the original manuscripts and letters—and the big Bible (see photo) that Mrs. White held in vision.

Our 16-member staff keeps busy doing research and answering your questions—most of them along the lines of “Did Mrs. White say . . .?” Following are some of the most commonly asked questions and brief answers:

The Big Eight

Did Mrs. White's family become Seventh-day Adventists?

Both Ellen's and James's parents became Adventists. One of Ellen's sisters and one brother also became believers. Another sister, Mary, accepted Adventist teachings but was never baptized. Ellen's twin sister, Elizabeth, never became a member. Her sons Edson and Willie were both Adventist ministers.

How did Mrs. White earn a living?

Her main source of income was the royalties she received from her books. She used this money to pay her living expenses and the salaries of her secretaries. She gave large portions of the royalties to the church. The royalties from *Christ's Object Lessons* went to education; those from *The Ministry of Healing* went to health. She also helped establish several schools and paid for many students to attend.

In her later years Mrs. White received a small salary from

the General Conference.

Why does the White Estate keep assembling compilations?

In her will Mrs. White requested that compilations be prepared as needed. Many of her books are actually compilations. *Steps to Christ* and the nine volumes of *Testimonies for the Church* are compiled from her letters, manuscripts, and articles. She also requested that her writings be translated into other languages. *Steps to Christ*, the most widely translated, now comes in more than 135 languages.

How many visions did Mrs. White have?

It is estimated that she had about 2,000 visions and prophetic dreams—including 200 public visions between 1844 and 1884. Her first public vision was in Portland, Maine; the last was in Portland, Oregon. These public visions were usually accompanied by physical phenomena, such as not breathing. She received dreams and visions throughout her ministry. The longest recorded vision was four hours; the shortest was less than 30



HEAVY READING: Willie White examines the 18-pound Bible that his mother, Ellen, then 17, held in an outstretched left arm for 20 to 30 minutes while in vision. The event took place during Harmon family worship in Portland, Maine, in 1845, but was not recorded until 1892—in J. N. Loughborough's *Rise and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists*. The episode, wrote Loughborough, convinced many early Adventists that the visions were of supernatural origin. In 1919, however, General Conference president A. G. Daniells (himself a believer in Ellen White's ministry) cautioned Adventists against using physical phenomena as proof of a spiritual gift. (Photograph taken in the 1930s.)

seconds. Some of the visions covered as many as 20 different topics.

How many letters did she write?

More than 5,000 letters are preserved at the White Estate. About one fourth of these were written to family members. Obviously, hundreds of early handwritten letters were not preserved. Our files also contain about 3,000 manuscripts, which include sermons, diaries, and other such material.

Since Mrs. White traveled so extensively, did she do much entertaining in her home?

Mrs. White frequently fed and housed people traveling through her area. She periodically kept orphans from the ages of 3 to 16 in her home until she could find a permanent home for them (see *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 34).

Did Mrs. White speak for nonreligious functions?

Outside the church Mrs. White was also a well-known public speaker. Her favorite topic was Christian temperance.

How big was her largest audience?

Her largest audience was at a camp meeting in Groveland, Massachusetts. There she spoke to about 20,000 people without a microphone.

Still Ministering

This is just a sampling of the questions we receive. It is a privilege to pass on information about a woman who has done so much for the Adventist Church.

As I learn more about Mrs. White's personal life, I realize that she was a real person with emotions and discouragements, like us. Yet her close relationship with God enabled her to continue ministering until her death—and, through her writings, beyond.

The E. G. White Estate manages all of Mrs. White's original writings. The 13 E. G. White research centers around the world have copies of her manuscripts and letters for people to read. The newest research center opened last fall at the Adventist seminary in Zaokski, Russia.

Karen Carlton, a secretary at the Ellen G. White Estate, lives in Columbia, Maryland.



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The Meeting a 14-Year-Old Girl Never Forgot

BY ARTHUR L. WHITE

Nellie Sisley was 14. A few years earlier, she and her mother and brothers had moved from England to Battle Creek, Michigan.

James and Ellen White also lived in Battle Creek.

On Friday evening, June 12, 1868, Nellie and her mother went to the prayer meeting at the church. About 200 people were there. Elder and Mrs. White had been traveling for some time. Now they were back, and everyone hoped they would speak at the meeting.

Elder and Mrs. White sat on the lower platform. After a song and prayer, Elder White spoke for about 10 minutes. Then he said, "I know it is Mrs. White you want to hear, so we will turn the meeting over to her."

Mrs. White began to talk. She told the congregation that they needed to prepare to meet Jesus. "Jesus is coming soon," she said. "We need to live for the future, and get ready for heaven." After speaking about 30 minutes, Mrs. White fell backward to the floor. But she didn't drop with a thud; it seemed as if angels' hands were gently letting her down.

Nellie and her mother, who had never seen Mrs. White in vision, thought she had fainted, and so did many of the audience. The people opened the windows wider. A glass of water was brought for Mrs. White. Then Elder White said, "Don't be alarmed; Mrs. White has not fainted—she is in vision." A quietness came over the audience.

"It seemed as if heavenly beings were in that church," said Nellie years later.

"We weren't frightened. Mrs. White was on the lower platform, quiet and unconscious.

"Then Elder White said, 'There may be some in this congregation who have doubts regarding Mrs. White's inspiration and visions. If there are any such, we would be glad to have you come forward and try the physical tests given in the Bible.'"

Nellie knew that occasionally her mother had doubted the visions, so she said, "Mother, why don't we go up as Elder White has invited us to do?"

Nellie and her mother went up front and stood by Mrs. White. They could see that she did not breathe. Her eyes were open, and there was a pleasant expression on her face.

Other people in the congregation also came up—including two large men who worked at the institution. They stood on either side of Mrs. White. Elder White

said, "The entire congregation has seen Mrs. White fall. You know she has lost her natural strength. Now we wish to see if she has been supernaturally strengthened."

Mrs. White's hands were clasped lightly on her chest. Elder White spoke to the two strong men. "I want you to move her hands apart. Just pull her hands. You have two hands to her one." So they tried. They pulled and pulled. Some of the people became anxious. Nellie thought they would hurt Mrs. White. Elder White said, "Don't be anxious. She is safe in God's keeping. You can pull until you are perfectly satisfied."

They said, "We are satisfied now. We don't need to pull any more."

Then Elder White said, "Take one finger at a time and try to pull them apart." But they couldn't. They couldn't even move one finger.

Soon Mrs. White moved her hands apart and made graceful gestures. Elder White said, "Now I want you to hold her arms." The strong men took hold of her wrists. But they couldn't stop the motion.

The whole time she was looking upward with a natural expression in her eyes, but her eyelids never closed. Elder White took the shade off a brightly burning lamp and shone the lamp in her eyes. Nellie thought for sure that Mrs. White would move her eyes, but she didn't. She wasn't conscious of anything around her. The same natural expression remained—her eyes were not starry or glassy.

"Now," said Elder White, "we must see if there is any breath in her body." Someone borrowed a mirror and held it close to her face. No moisture gathered on the mirror, but her heart continued to beat regularly and the color in her face did not change.

Occasionally Mrs. White spoke. The sentences were short, and she spoke of some of the things being shown to her in vision. Sometimes her face became animated and excited; at other times her face looked sad, and she seemed to be shrinking back from what she saw.

When she came out of the vision, she took three long, deep breaths. Her lungs had been empty. Elder White assisted her to a chair and said to her, "The congregation would be very



interested in the vision. I'm sure they want to know what you have seen."

Mrs. White replied that she would gladly tell the people what was shown to her in vision. For about a half hour she talked. She had seen in vision the bright and glorious home the Lord is preparing for His people. She had also seen the destruction of the wicked. What troubled her greatly was that some Seventh-day Adventists were among the lost. They had started on the narrow pathway to the heavenly home, but for different reasons had turned aside. Some had become discouraged. Some were very much in love with the pleasures of the world. Others were more interested in making money than in serving the Lord.

As she spoke about the New Jerusalem, she said, "Oh, I wish I could describe it! I have no language with which to tell you even a little of what has been shown to me. If you could have been there and seen what I saw, you would never allow anything on this world to tempt you to live in such a way as to be in danger of losing eternal life."

"It is not the large sins that we do, but the little things. Carelessness. Not fully accepting responsibility. We are spending too much time and thought on our present interests. Some of these things may be all right in themselves, but they crowd out the heavenly things."

For a time after the vision, she could not see very well. She told the people, "Now, you may not understand why I cannot see well. If you turn your face toward the sun for a while, then turn away, you will understand. Heaven is brighter than the sun."

As Nellie and her mother went home, they said, "How glad we are that we went to prayer meeting tonight! Now we have seen Mrs. White in vision. We know that God gives her the visions." And they determined in their hearts to study the counsels and apply them to their lives.

Mrs. White soon wrote out what she was shown. It was printed in a little pamphlet called *Testimony for the Church*, Number 16, August 25, 1868. It is found today in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 2, pages 112-199. Again and again you will find reference to the

vision given on June 12, 1868.

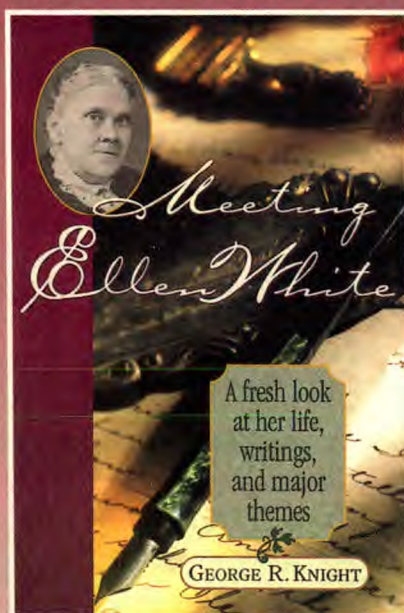
Nellie married a young minister and spent most of her life serving the Lord in America and Australia. While in Australia she often traveled with Mrs. White, and at times she and her husband lived at the Whites' home. Nellie never

forgot that Friday evening when she and her mother went to prayer meeting and saw Mrs. White in vision.

(Based on the accounts given by Mrs. Nellie Sisley Starr, James White, and others.)

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The Dynamics of Inspiration

A close look at the messages of Ellen White

BY JUAN CARLOS VIERA

In the sacred pages of the Bible we discover at least six models, or patterns, of inspiration. These models shed light on the mysterious process by which God communicates to humanity and help us understand better the dynamics of Ellen White's inspiration.

1. The "Visionary" Model of Inspiration

Many Christians think of the "visionary" model—God speaking through prophetic visions and dreams—as the unique and only way God reveals His will to the prophets. This model suggests visions of a supernatural character in which the prophet exhibits signs of being controlled by a supernatural power. Such signs as being breathless or with unusual strength—or lack of strength—can be found in the testimony of biblical prophets as well as in Ellen White.¹

The visionary model also includes experiences apart from visions and dreams, such as theophanies, in which the real presence of a heavenly being is seen or heard. Moses in the Midian desert and Joshua on the plains of Jericho received their messages in person from real, present divine beings.² In other instances, the eyes of the prophet are opened to see the unseen world of the spiritual beings involved in the great controversy between good and evil.³

Visions are so real to the prophets that sometimes it is hard for them to distinguish between vision and reality.⁴ They can tell the people, "I saw the Lord" and "I heard the voice of the Lord" (Isa. 6:1, 8).^{*} Supernatural visions assure the honest and the sincere that God is speaking to them through the voice and the pen of the prophets.

But the Bible includes several models of inspiration apart from the visionary.

2. The "Witness" Model of Inspiration

In the "witness" model God seems to inspire the prophet to

give his or her own account of things seen and heard. John could write: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, . . . that which we have seen and heard we declare to you" (1 John 1:1-3).

Being a witness means to relate the story as seen—or perceived—by the individual. Technically, a witness is not allowed to refer to views or opinions given by others. God inspires a person to give his or her own account without additional dreams or visions, but still the message is the result of divine inspiration, because the Holy Spirit impresses the mind of the prophet and inspires him or her to write as a witness.

The Gospels of Matthew and John are the result of the witness model. These apostles did not need a supernatural revelation to tell the story of Jesus; they were part of the story. The Gospels are no less inspired than the visionary writings just because they are not the result of a vision. They were inspired in a different way—the Holy Spirit was using a different model.

Some Adventist believers have a difficult time trying to understand how inspiration works when Ellen White gives her own testimony in autobiographical works, or when she tells the story of the Advent movement as she experienced it. Are these accounts less inspired than the ones that begin with "I saw"? No. We do not believe in "levels" or "grades" of inspiration; rather we believe God uses different ways to inspire the person to write a message.

3. The "Historian" Model of Inspiration

Whereas the Gospels of Matthew and John result from a "witness" model, Mark's and Luke's come from what we might describe as a "historian" model of inspiration. Luke tells us candidly that his story of Jesus did not come through visions and dreams, but through research. "Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us . . . it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus" (Luke 1:1-3).

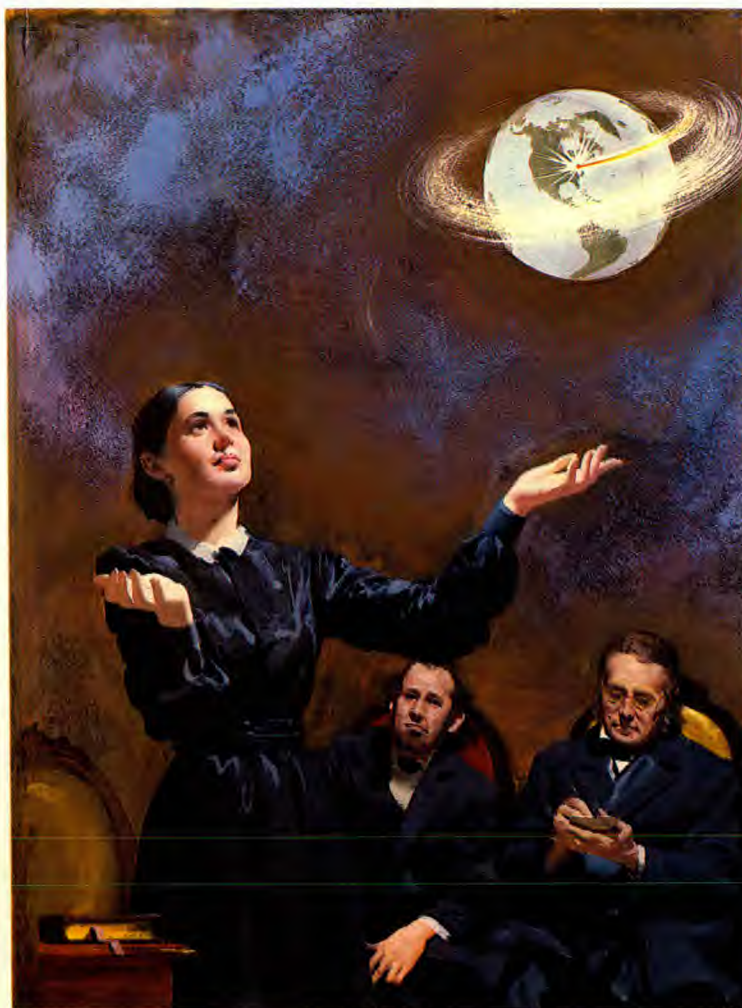
In the historian model, God inspires the prophet to look

for information in sources such as historical records, eyewitness accounts, and oral or written recollections. We may be assured that He leads His servants to go to reliable persons, to ask the right questions, and to quote from the proper sources.

Apart from Mark and Luke, books such as Acts, Exodus, Joshua, Ezra, and Esther illustrate how some historical records, including travel diaries, became part of the inspired writings. Neither Moses nor Luke needed a special revelation to record the history of the Exodus or the apostolic church. However, the Lord knew those narratives would not only encourage His people at later times but also counsel and warn them. Consequently, He inspired His servants to record those travels and circumstances surrounding God's people.

The historian model of inspiration also allows us to better understand why Ellen White included historical records—many times from secular sources—within her inspired writings. A secular quotation becomes an integral part of an inspired writing not because of an alchemistic change in substance, but because of the freedom God allows the prophet to use whatever source he or she considers necessary to make the final text of the message clear and complete.

The historian model of inspiration helps us to understand the use of religious sources other than visions and prophetic dreams. Just as Luke went to religious people in search of information about the story of Jesus, Ellen White went to religious books looking for



expressions and literary figures that would allow her to give “a ready and forcible presentation of the subject” she had been inspired to present.⁵

4. The “Counselor” Model of Inspiration

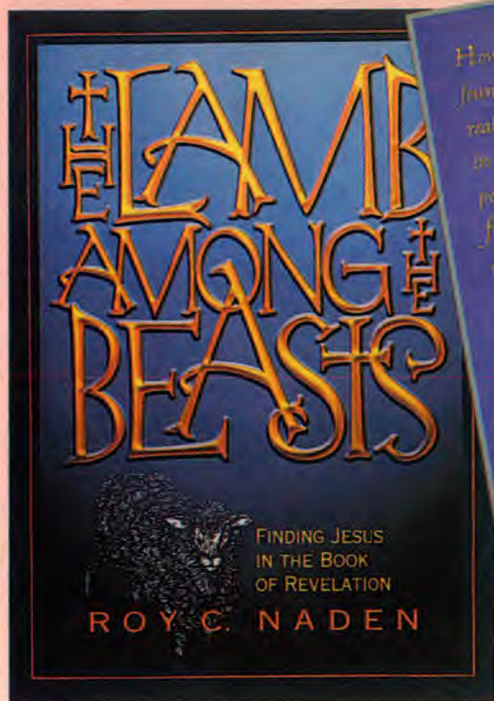
In the “counselor” model the prophet acts as an adviser to God’s people. For example, Paul dealt with family matters in his first letter to the Corinthians. In some instances, he had a “command” from the Lord (1 Cor. 7:10). In other instances he did not have a special

revelation (verse 25), but that did not prevent him from giving inspired counsel—counsel coming from a mind filled with the Spirit of God (verse 40).

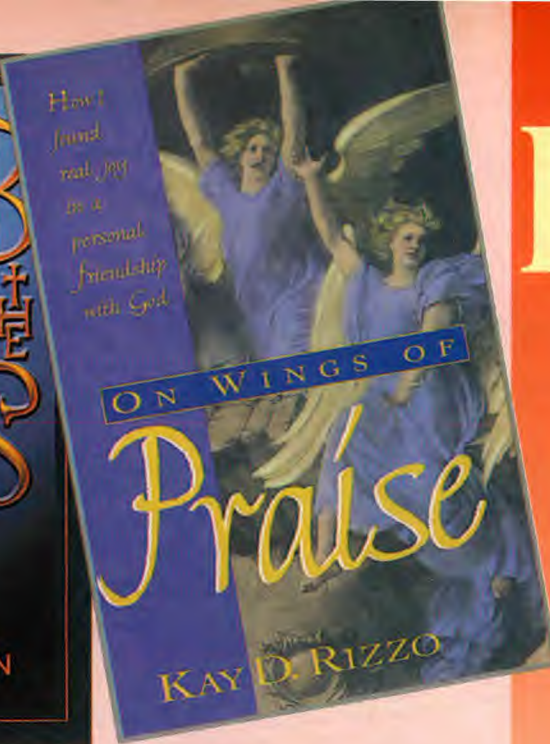
A large part of Ellen White’s writings comes under the counselor model of inspiration. Many times she used the term “I saw” when giving counsel to parents and teachers, when advising children and young people, or when bringing warnings to ministers and administrators; but many times she did not. We should not give lesser value to advice for which a special revelation was not stated. That would limit the Lord to a single method of communication. God inspired the prophet to use her own judgment⁶ in giving advice—advice coming from a mind illuminated by the same Spirit who gives visions and dreams.

5. The “Epistolary” Model of Inspiration

Letters from James, John, Paul, and Peter brought inspiration, devotion, instruction, and correction to the



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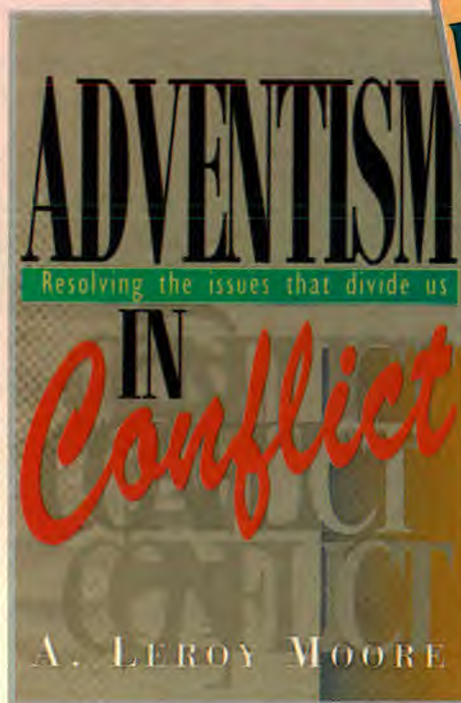


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believers of the first century as well as to Christians of all ages. However, in the framework of the dynamics of inspiration, epistles confront us with new dilemmas: first, how to handle personal letters now made public through their insertion in the biblical canon; second, how to understand inspiration when the prophet writes greetings, names, circumstances, or even common things that do not require a special revelation.

Surely Paul never imagined that his letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon would become public domain. But the Lord planned those letters to be part of the canon to bring inspiration, instruction, and comfort to many young ministers and believers confronting similar circumstances.

Likewise, Ellen White never imagined that her personal letters, especially those addressed to her husband and children, would become public domain. In deciding to make these available, the White Estate board of trustees considered two principles: first, Ellen White herself stated that testimonies that had been directed to a single individual to instruct, correct, or encourage that person in a particular situation would be helpful to others also.⁷ Second, if the Lord allowed Paul's personal letters to be in the Bible to serve a wider audience, why should He not do the same with a later prophet?

Paul's correspondence with the Corinthians reveals his emotions—feelings of discouragement and even repulsion for the heavy sins allowed in the church. The Holy Spirit did not enter the scene with a special revelation or vision. Rather, the Spirit inspired God's servant to express himself with his own feelings and sentiments. But in case some believers would consider this message only a letter coming from a concerned pastor, the apostle reminded them that whatever he preached or taught—or even wrote—was the result of the teachings of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:1-13).

Ellen White's personal letters show the prophet corresponding with her audience, expressing her burdens and feelings. Many times there is no "I saw" at the beginning of the letter. But this does not mean that she is writing only her personal feelings or opinions. She is well aware of the divine source of her writings.⁸

6. The "Literary" Model of Inspiration

In the "literary" model the Holy Spirit inspires the prophet to express his or her intimate feelings and emotions through the means of poetry and prose, as in the psalms.

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inspiration, instruction, correction, and comfort, as in any other portion of the inspired writings.

But there is a further dimension to the dynamics of inspiration. In conveying His message, God not only uses human beings but also human language. And both are imperfect. How do these imperfect vehicles affect God's perfect message?

1. An Imperfect Messenger

The fact that prophets were called "holy men of God" (2 Peter 1:21) neither means they were sinless nor prevents us from recognizing their weaknesses as human beings. Any attempt to make the biblical prophets "perfect" will be confronted by the Bible record itself.

Think of King David. Though he was a prophet, he committed gross sins. When his relationship with God was broken by sin, God sent another prophet to correct His servant (2 Sam. 12:1-13). After David's repentance the way of communication was once again open, and he was inspired to write the beautiful psalm of confession (Ps. 51).

We should not build our confidence in the biblical prophets on the basis of the prophets' perfect record. Neither should we do so with a modern prophet—the authority of the prophetic word is not based upon a perfect life or perfect behavior. Ellen White never claimed perfection or infallibility. "In regard to infallibility, I never claimed it; God alone is infallible. His word is true, and in Him is no variableness, or shadow of turning."⁹ From her diaries and personal letters, we know that sometimes she was discouraged; sometimes she had disagreements with her husband; many times she had to ask forgiveness; she made mistakes.

2. A Mistaken Prophet

In the biblical record we find instances in which a prophet had to be corrected because of preconceived ideas. The apostles first believed that only the Jews could be saved. The Holy Spirit had to correct that idea if the gospel was to be carried to all the world. A vision in Peter's case (Acts 10, 11) and special revelations in Paul's case (Eph. 3:3-6) enlightened the apostles and thereby the whole church.

In the Advent movement we also find instances the prophet had to be corrected because of preconceived ideas. Our pioneers were greatly limited in their comprehension of mission by a theological error carried over from the

Ellen White never claimed perfection or infallibility.

Millerite movement—the shut door doctrine, the belief that the door of mercy was closed. Even Ellen White accepted it. In successive visions, the Spirit corrected the idea, first in her mind and then, through her, in the entire movement.¹⁰

The fact that the Holy Spirit corrected any mistaken doctrine related with global mission in the minds of Peter, Paul, and Ellen White gives us the assurance that the Spirit is in control of the inspired message.

In other instances a prophet had to be corrected because the counsel or suggestion was different from the Lord's plan. Thus we find Nathan the prophet first approving David's plan to build a house for the Lord, but the Lord corrected that idea.

We find parallels in Ellen White's ministry. In 1902 our publishing house in the South of the United States was struggling financially. The leaders of the church sought inspired counsel. After some consideration Ellen White endorsed the decision of the leaders to close the publishing house. But during the following night God corrected His messenger. She had to write a different message.¹¹

Again, all the New Testament writers believed Jesus' return was near. Although we cannot follow the exact chronological manner in which the Holy Spirit dealt with this issue, we know the apostles received further information. For instance, in his First Letter to the Thessalonians, Paul gave the impression that he expected to be alive for the Lord's coming (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). However, additional information between the two letters led him to caution the church not to expect the Lord to come immediately (2 Thess. 2:1-4).

Likewise, John was convinced he was living in "the last hour" (1 John 2:18). Further visions gave him the opportunity to tell the church, surely with sadness, that many things would happen—including fierce persecution—before the coming of the Lord. Undoubtedly, the book of Revelation was the answer of the Spirit to many questions arising in the mind of the beloved apostle.

All the believers in the Advent movement, the Lord's special messenger included, shared the conviction that the Lord's coming was near. We do not need to be embarrassed

by the fact that Ellen White expressed her expectations, as did Paul, Peter, and John in biblical times. Once again the Holy Spirit had to correct some ideas and give additional information to guide the church in the right direction.

In 1856 Ellen White was shown that some believers attending a meeting would be alive until the coming of Jesus.¹² In the years that followed, the Lord gave her an extended vision of the great controversy with additional information about the journey that was still ahead. It was also revealed that "we may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years."¹³

3. Imperfect Language

Seventh-day Adventists do not believe in verbal inspiration (the idea that God dictates the exact wording to the prophet). With the exception of the Ten Commandments, all the inspired writings are the result of the combined efforts of the Holy Spirit, who inspires the prophet with a vision, an impression, a counsel, or a judgment; and the prophet, who begins to look for sentences, literary figures, and expressions to convey God's message accurately.

God gives the prophet freedom to select the kind of language he or she wants to use. That accounts for the different styles of the biblical writers and explains why Ellen White describes the language used by inspired writers as "imperfect" and "human."

Because "everything that is human is imperfect,"¹⁴ we must accept the idea of imperfections and mistakes in both the Bible and Ellen White's writings. This means at least two things: 1. The prophet uses his or her common, everyday language learned from childhood and improved through study, reading, and travel; there is nothing supernatural or divine in the language used. 2. The prophet can make orthographical or grammatical mistakes, as well as other kinds of language imperfections such as *lapsus linguae* (a slip of the tongue) or *lapsus memoriae* (a slip of the memory), which need to be corrected by an editor before the text is ready for publication. The editor corrects not the inspired message, but rather the noninspired language.

We find a *lapsus linguae* in Matthew's Gospel, when he quotes Zechariah but mentions Jeremiah in connection with the 30 pieces of silver (Matt. 27:9, 10; Zech. 11:12, 13; Jer. 32:6-9). For a person who believes in verbal inspiration, this raises serious questions; but for those who accept that the Lord speaks to human beings in imperfect speech, this illustrates how the divine message reaches us through an imperfect language.

The following statement of Ellen White, when she quotes Paul but mentions Peter, is similar: "The love of Christ constraineth us," the apostle Peter declared. This was the motive that impelled the zealous disciple in his arduous labors in the cause of the gospel."¹⁵

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Fortunately, we have enough evidence in the Bible, as well as in the history of the Advent movement, to show us that the Holy Spirit always corrected His messengers in matters important to the church.

The Lord surprises us with His marvelous and sometimes strange ways. In communicating with His people, He has selected human beings dedicated but faulty, using an imperfect human language, as His instruments to convey His message. We must be grateful to our heavenly Father that He did not select a "superhuman" language understood by only a few select persons, but chose to use our own imperfect, common way of seeing and understanding things.

In accepting His ways, we also must be careful not to confuse the content with the container. We must not discard the "treasure" inside just because the "vessel" is imperfect and sometimes unworthy.¹⁶

* Bible texts in this article are from the New King James Version.

¹ For a biblical illustration of supernatural strength, see Judges 13-16. For lack of strength while in vision, see Daniel 10:7-11. Many reliable witnesses state that Ellen G. White was breathless while in vision.

² See Ex. 3; 4; Joshua 5:13-15.

³ See 2 Kings 6:15-17.

⁴ See 2 Cor. 12:1-4.

⁵ *The Great Controversy*, p. xii.

⁶ Ellen G. White suggests both ideas: (1) that her own judgment was "under the training of God" (*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 60); and (2) that her mind and judgment were controlled by "the mind and judgment of the great I AM" (*Spalding and Magan Collection*, p. 87).

⁷ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 660.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁹ *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 37.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 64.

¹¹ Letter 208, 1902, in *Spalding and Magan Collection*, p. 282.

¹² See *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 131, 132.

¹³ *Evangelism*, p. 696.

¹⁴ *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 20, 21.

¹⁵ *Review and Herald*, Oct. 30, 1913; see Paul's statement in 2 Cor. 5:14.

¹⁶ See *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 26.

Juan Carlos Viera, D.Miss., is director of the Ellen G. White Estate.



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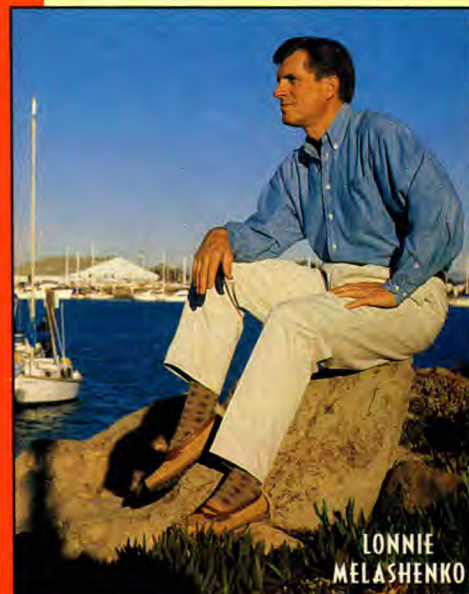
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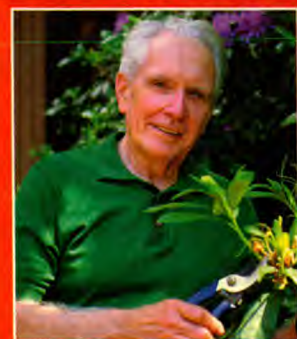
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Ellen White and the Black Experience

A veteran leader reflects on his roots.

BY CHARLES E. BRADFORD

MY ROOTS IN THE SEVENTH-DAY Adventist Church reach back a century, and Ellen White played a key role.

The Adventist work in the South was opened by Edson, Ellen White's son. He and his crew came down the Mississippi in the *Morning Star*, the boat Edson had built (see photo). They docked in Vicksburg, then moved up to Yazoo City. In Yazoo City, according to some, they docked the boat at the home of my mother's sister, Aunt Lucy, on the river.

My mother told me that they had lots of music and singing on the boat, and that they invited the people to come. They preached from the landing.

At that time (1895-1900) they were setting up schools all through the South, because everybody wanted to learn. These were almost like the English language schools in some countries today. Later Oakwood College supplied the teachers for these schools.

By the early 1900s Oakwood was a "normal" school—that is, a training college for elementary teachers. In the South in those days a high school education was a big thing, and anyone with a diploma could teach, with a little additional normal training.

Mother went to Oakwood, and when she got everything they had there, somehow she got up to the New England Sanitarium. Her cousins went to our college in Battle Creek, but she went to New England.

Ellen White visited the "san" when my mother was there, and they asked her, "Would you like to be Sister White's chamber girl?"

She said, "Oh, yes." So she waited on Ellen White. I have no great revelations that Sister White gave her, no prophecies or predictions. She once said that Sister White mentioned she was interested in the Oakwood school and wanted to see it prosper, but she didn't talk a great deal. Ellen White was not a great talker at that stage of her life—she wasn't all that young. My mother went to Boston with her when she preached there.

Some of us feel that Ellen White's speaking influenced my mother. Mom was what they called in those days a dramatic

reader. It was a big thing then. They would have soirees—evening programs—and they would say, "Mrs. Bradford, recite," and she would recite some biblical passage or poem. I remember the public readings.

Black Adventists in general have high regard for Ellen White. They look upon her as a mother and a counselor, a prophet of the Lord. Because of her counsels, the Adventist Church has been able to stay together—unlike the separate Black churches that have arisen within the Methodists and Baptists, there has not been a separate Black Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Ellen G. White used her office as God's messenger to the church to badger, cajole, and persuade the fledgling church to take up the work among the recently freed population in the South. In Ellen G. White's vocabulary the Southern work was the Adventist mission to African-Americans.

"For Christ's sake," she says in 1890, "let us do something now. Let every church whose members claim to believe the truth for this time look at this neglected, downtrodden race, that, as a result of slavery, have been deprived of the privilege of thinking and acting for themselves. . . . When freedom was proclaimed to the captives, a favorable time was given in which to establish schools and to teach the people to take care of themselves. Much of this kind of work was done by various denominations, and God honored their work. Those who attempted to work for the black race had to suffer persecution, and *many were martyrs to the cause*" (*The Southern Work*, p. 13; italics supplied).

African-Americans have always felt that they had an understanding friend and advocate in Ellen White. There has never been a major attack on the Spirit of Prophecy launched from within the African-American Adventist community. African-Americans, though perplexed by some of Ellen White's statements on race, have no serious quarrel with her status as prophet.

But African-Americans have developed their own method of interpreting her writings. Some of her statements have been used by various people in ways harmful to Blacks, and Blacks have had to come to terms with the writings.



In volume 7 of *Testimonies for the Church* Ellen White speaks about Blacks and Whites being equal—their names being together in the book of life, that you shouldn't be ashamed to shake hands on the street, and all that. She makes wonderfully idealistic statements about Christ recognizing no caste.

But it seems that when she comes to volume 9 of the *Testimonies* she temporizes: she becomes pragmatic, practical. She monitors herself in her expressions and says, in effect, "We can't do as if there were no prejudice here. It's a vexing question and always will be. I don't think the spirit of slavery is over." She makes some statements in Australia that sound almost despairing as she is discussing matters with the brethren. She says she doesn't know what's going to become of the country, tells our people that they can't do what they could in Michigan when they go down to Alabama or Mississippi. She says to let the Colored people have their own places of worship and not to cut off the ears of the White people by fraternizing too freely with Blacks.

Seeing the church as proclamation and missionary, she wanted to get the message out to all classes of people. That ideal community of equality would have to wait. In order to keep the doors of opportunity open, it would be necessary for the Blacks to be provided with meeting places of their own.

She also said that for several reasons White men should be the leaders. So she trims her sails—volume 9 is quite different from volume 7.

I haven't made a definitive study of this matter, but my assessment—my resonance—is that conditions at the time she wrote volume 9 played a major part in her counsel. Adventists hadn't been in the South before, and now her own son, Edson, was there. Our work had begun in New England and had spread west, but it took a long while before we went south. We had very few believers there, and Ellen White was wondering how to reach the people. She could see that an interracial church simply wouldn't be acceptable to the White society.

Now until the 1920s and 1930s, when Blacks began to think about their position in the church and to protest against

segregation, some leaders used her volume 9 statements as frozen texts

that were for all time. Many Black people were very incensed, and some lost their way over this. In order to remain Adventists, they had to develop a hermeneutic for interpreting Ellen White. The other alternative was to accept their status and be Uncle Toms.

So they got into it. Some of them said, "This can't be. Ellen White has done so much and is so far ahead—far ahead of even Lincoln—that we just can't accept this as being for all time. The matter of church attendance, of marriage, of social relationships, of leadership—this can't be a text for all time. This is simply ad hoc counsel to save the church, to preserve its witness, but not to be used as rules to govern the community of faith from here on to the Eschaton."

I think that's one of the main reasons that Blacks have not had as much of a problem with Ellen White and her use of sources, etc. They have developed a hermeneutic for her: they look on her as a fine mother, a good counselor, but they could not take every word she said as being eternal in its application and universal for all time. They had to make some adjustment in it, or they could not remain Adventists and be honest people.

By 1940 change was the order of the day. Intelligent Black laypersons found the situation in the church untenable. Enlightened White members shared their feelings. The volume 9 mentality had to give way to a more enlightened social consciousness in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We still have a long way to go, but I am thoroughly convinced that there will be no return to the unpleasant past.

Adapted from The Wit and Wisdom of Charles E. Bradford, compiled by William and Noelene Johnsson (Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1990).

Charles E. Bradford, a revered leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, served as president of the North American Division before his retirement in 1990.



Beyond Sound Bites

A baby buster urges his peers to pull up a comfortable chair and read Ellen G. White for themselves.

BY ALEX BRYAN

BOB EDWARDS, ANCHOR OF NATIONAL Public Radio's *Morning Edition*, spoke to a collegiate audience a couple years ago. Following his remarks, Edwards fielded questions. One question especially captured my attention: "So, Mr. Edwards, what do you think of Rush Limbaugh?"

"I think he's a hoot," said Edwards. "But Rush Limbaugh is in a different business than I am. I'm in the news business. Rush is in the entertainment business. What Rush does is take a little bit of truth and stretch it . . . and stretch it . . . and stretch it." As Edwards repeated "stretch it" he moved his arms farther and farther apart.

Bob Edwards is right. Rush Limbaugh often takes a sound bite and uses it in ways the voice behind the sound bite did not necessarily intend. But Rush is not alone. The news media, from CBS to *Newsweek*, have become experts in sound bites. A one-hour video interview becomes a one-minute blip on *World News Tonight*. A two-hour speech becomes one memorable quote in tomorrow's *USA Today*. We live in a sound bite society. But do we really *understand* what's being said?

In my twenty-sixth year as an Adventist and eighteenth year of Adventist education, I have heard the Adventist media—teachers, school administrators, preachers, parents, Sabbath school teachers, and classmates—quote one person more than any other: Ellen G. White. Some quotes were as long as a page. Some were no more than several words. But quoted she was, and quoted she is. With her writings now on CD-ROM, quoted she will continue to be.

I don't know your opinion of our church's prophet. If you're like me, your opinion varied a lot growing up—from apathy to frustration to respect to excitement. Depending on the most "recent" quote, she could be the meanest old lady or the sweetest grandmother. The harshest judge or the kindest advocate.

So who is Ellen White? How does she fit into an Adventist Christian's spiritual journey? Will the real Ellen G. White *please* stand up?

As a typical baby buster, I'd like the answer right now, thank you. I'd like a short, concrete explanation—perhaps in the form

Secondary encounters miss the "live" experience.

of an infomercial between MTV's hottest hits. In fact, following a brief *who*, give me a list of *whats*. You know, *what* she says about jewelry and *what* she says about the Sabbath and *what* she says about the end of time.

Baby busters, beware! A quick fix takes us into the minefield of sound bites. Instead, I offer an approach that has begun to work for me: *reading her for myself*.

Reading her for myself doesn't mean playing around with the Ellen G. White CD-ROM reference system. It doesn't mean collecting quotations on a given subject. It doesn't even mean studying her writings with theological zeal. Reading her for myself means simply *reading*.

In college I studied history. Two professors taught most of my history courses. Both were exceptional: well prepared, thorough, professional, insightful, and challenging. My fellow history majors and I agreed that the classroom experience with these teachers was rewarding.

One day we heard that Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., advisor to President John F. Kennedy, would be speaking at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. As avid history buffs living just a couple hours away, we looked forward to a trip to hear this significant American personality.

The van ride was filled with expectation. We arrived early and sat near the front. Following what seemed like endless introductions, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., began his lecture. For nearly an hour he talked about the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban missile crisis, domestic change in the early 1960s, and many other events encountered by the Kennedy administration. For nearly an hour we sat, riveted to Schlesinger's every word.

Though our professors had given competent lectures, something about Schlesinger proved to be far greater. The excitement on the way home outweighed any postlecture interest generated by our able teachers. Something was different. We had not just heard *about* the players in American history; we had

heard from one of them. We were not picking apart a secondary historical source in the classroom; we were taking in firsthand stories and historical thoughts from a primary American figure.

Listening to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., was like watching a sporting event "live." If you've been to a baseball game, you know what I'm talking about. The smells of grass, peanuts, and nachos are "live." The feel of sunshine, cool breezes, and violently shaking stands is "live." The sounds of the crack of the bat, cheering crowds, and the PA announcer are "live." There's something special about being there. My living room recliner and 19-inch television just don't cut it.

This is what I've discovered about Ellen White. To hear a sermon in which she is quoted, to read a book in which she is referenced, to hear a church member use her to prove a point, or to swallow an argument strung together with Mrs. White's quotes is a limited experience. Secondary encounters with the prophet miss the "live" experience and the potential prophetic impact.

One of the best things about being Adventist is that God gave a prophet to our special niche in the Christian family. As a member of the newest generation of adult Adventists, I am thrilled that Ellen White helped found this church. I am thrilled that she wrote prolifically and prophetically. I am thrilled that she wrote about Jesus Christ and me.

It would be easy for my generation of Adventists to discount Ellen White. It would be easy to discount her because her gift has been abused. It would be easy to discount her because she wrote in another time and needs to be read in that historical light. "All I need is the Bible" would be a nice, clean approach. But, my fellow soon-to-be twenty-first century Seventh-day Adventist Christians, to discount her would be to give up an incredible gift.

Our generation can read Ellen White. We can allow her contributions to enrich our lives and our church. We can and *must* do this. The spiritual potency of Ellen White's prophecies must be a force in our future. The effectiveness of our movement depends on it.

Adapted from The Ride of Your Life: Being a Young Adventist Is Not for the Faint of Heart—a new Review and Herald book (co-authored by Alex Bryan, Victor Czerkasij, and Andy Nash) to be released in August.

Alex Bryan, 26, will graduate in August from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan.



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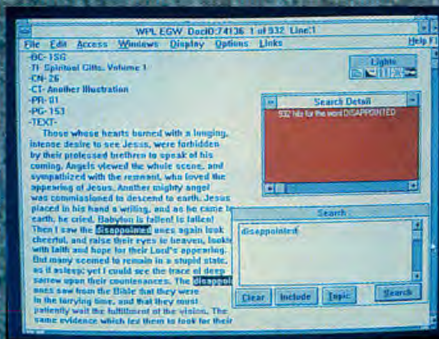
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Joseph Smith, Ellen White, and the Great Gulf

Ellen White and Joseph Smith have a great deal in common.

For one thing, they both claimed the prophetic gift. For another, the year 1844 was significant in their lives. For Ellen White, 1844 was the year of her first vision; for Joseph Smith, it was the year he met his death at the hands of a mob at the Carthage, Illinois, jail.

Another similarity is that both leaders were concerned with the soon return of Jesus. That concern is reflected in the titles of the religious movements they helped to found—the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

But with those rather superficial likenesses, the similarities between these two nineteenth-century religious leaders cease. At the deeper level of their teachings they are diametrically opposed in much that they stood for.

Take, for example, their prophetic ministries as they relate to the Bible and doctrine. For Ellen White, the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments were the sum total of Scripture. The biblical canon had been closed with the book of Revelation.

The Bible, in Ellen White's eyes, was all that was needed for salvation. Thus she could write to her fellow Adventist believers, "If you had made God's Word your study . . . you would not have needed the *Testimonies*" (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 665).

She saw her prophetic function as one of "bringing [her readers] back to the word [the Bible] that they have neglected to follow" (*ibid.*, p. 663). On another occasion she penned, "Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light [her writings] to lead men and women to the greater light [the Bible]" (*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 125).

Again and again Ellen White pounded home such themes. Her career centered on pointing Adventist believers back to the Bible and its principles as the source of authority for Christians.

The same modest position for the modern gift of prophecy is not held by Joseph Smith or his followers. For them the canon of Scripture had not been closed. Thus such Smith writings as those contained in the *Book of Mormon*, the *Pearl of Great Price*, and the *Doctrine and Covenants* are considered to be canonical.

That belief has had a major impact on the Mormon approach to doctrinal development. As Mormon scholar Stephen E.

Robinson puts it, the visions and revelations of Joseph Smith "form the foundation of LDS doctrine. . . . For Latter-day Saints the highest authority in religious matters is continuing revelation from God given through the living Apostles and prophets of his Church, beginning with Joseph Smith and continuing to the present leadership" (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 1, p. 401).



Such a position is in radical disagreement with that of Ellen White and the early Seventh-day Adventist Church. According to Ellen White, "the Bible is the only rule of faith and doctrine" (*Review and Herald*, July 17, 1888). Again when detractors in 1874 suggested that Adventists had obtained their sanctuary doctrine from Ellen White's visions, Uriah Smith was able to write truthfully that

"hundreds of articles have been written upon the subject. But in no one of these are the visions once referred to as any authority on the subject, or the source from whence any view we hold has been derived. . . . The appeal is invariably to the Bible, where there is abundant evidence for the view we hold on this subject" (*ibid.*, Dec. 22, 1874).

Early Seventh-day Adventists were a people of the Bible. Historical study demonstrates that each of the distinctive doctrines developed by the Adventist pioneers in the 1840s and 1850s was developed and argued on the basis of the Bible. Ellen White's role was one of confirmation rather than origination for Adventist theology.

There is a great gulf fixed between Ellen White and Joseph Smith, between Adventism and Mormonism. The tragedy for Adventists, however, is when they forget their heritage, when they forget the facts of their faith and their history, when they think they cannot understand their doctrine or the Bible without Ellen White's aid.

Ellen White's prophetic ministry to the Adventist Church is of crucial importance, but when she is placed where she asked us not to place her, we have stepped off the platform of Adventism and onto the foundation of Mormonism.

George R. Knight is professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. He has recently authored two books on Ellen White—*Meeting Ellen White* (1996) and *Reading Ellen White* (scheduled for publication in early 1997).



The Use—and Misuse—of a Precious Gift

BY JOE ENGELKEMIER

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS SPEAK OF THE Ellen White writings as “the gift of prophecy.” It’s a gift often neglected, and sometimes misused, but one that brings rich blessings to those who appreciate and rightly use it.

John the Beloved foresaw an end-time movement that would keep the commandments of God (Rev. 12:17). It would also possess “the testimony of Jesus”—identified in Revelation 19:10 as “the spirit of prophecy.”*

The introduction to *Testimonies*, volume 2, written 1868-1871, mentions five problems coming into the church at that time: (1) a lowering of the spirituality of church members; (2) a growing love of the world and its attractions; (3) church members criticizing each other; (4) lessened giving; (5) youth leaving the church.

Let’s face it: these problems are our problems also. So the messages given at that time, as well as all the other *Testimony* volumes, are still relevant and helpful today.

Some years ago I helped develop religion books for academy students. This work gave me opportunity to introduce hundreds of college and academy youth to the *Testimonies* and to other writings of Ellen White. I developed a class called Introduction to the *Testimonies* on the college level. In it we first develop a Bible study about the prophetic gift and then survey the nine volumes of *Testimonies for the Church*. A follow-up course, *Testimony Studies*, focused on such topical studies as righteousness by faith, family life, health, the Sabbath and its observance, the Second Coming, and so on.

I have offered an academy version of the same two courses. On both the college and academy levels most students purchased or borrowed an entire set of the *Testimonies*. They seemed to enjoy getting acquainted with these books. I tried to help them see Ellen White as a person they would enjoy knowing, and directed attention to some of the hundreds of helpful and practical suggestions found in the *Testimonies*.

In my teaching I repeatedly emphasize that all the Ellen White books are rich with usable suggestions. I sometimes challenge students to take a volume of the *Testimonies*, for

example, open it to any page, and see how far they need to read before coming to a usable idea. Students almost always find something of value to them on the first page.

As an example, consider *Testimonies*, volume 2. This book is comprised largely of personal counsels to individuals and/or families that are published without names for the benefit of others with similar needs:

■ “Selling the Birthright”—to a brother about to leave the church “for the flattering prospect of present gain” (p. 38).

■ “Selfishness and World Loving”—to a stepmother who constantly scolded her husband’s children, and whose harsh ways were to the little stepdaughter “like desolating hail upon a tender plant” (p. 57).

■ “Everyday Religion”—to a wife who had an unruly tongue, and a husband who liked to talk to others about religion, but was such a poor worker that those who hired him considered him a cheat (p. 78).

■ “A Violated Conscience”—to a brother who had committed adultery and felt he had sinned too greatly to return to the Lord (p. 89).

In using the *Testimonies*, and indeed all of Ellen White’s writings, we need to employ sound methods of study. I suggest eight principles we should follow:

1. Keep in mind the nature of inspiration.

Seventh-day Adventists do not believe in verbal inspiration. Peter points out that “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). Ellen White comments that “the writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen” (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 21). They chose the words with which to express what they had been shown. God has not put Himself on trial in the Bible, nor has He done so in the writings of Ellen White.

Critics who find fault with such and such a statement need to remember, as Ellen White herself said: “Everything that is human is imperfect” (*ibid.*, p. 20). A factual error, such as a wrong date for an event, does not give reason to reject inspired writings.

2. Pray before you begin reading.

Spiritual things “are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). Prayer

helps open the heart and enables the Holy Spirit to speak through what you read.

3. Think of what you read as the voice of Jesus.

"The testimony of Jesus," John wrote, "is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10). The reverse is also true: The spirit of prophecy is the voice, not of the messenger, but of Jesus.

4. Look for pen pictures that help give you clearer pictures of Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit.

To know Jesus is to love Him. The same is true of God and the Holy Spirit. In the Ellen White writings one can find thousands of phrases, sentences, and paragraphs that offer character glimpses of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

The opening page of the *The Ministry of Healing*, for example, contains this summary statement about Jesus: "His compassion knew no limit" (p. 17). That sentence is equally true of God and the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel of John begins, "We beheld His glory, . . . full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). I have put together for my students 25 index cards with Ellen White statements about Jesus. We focus on what she said about Jesus as a child, as a youth, during His ministry, and during the final days of His life. Here are two samples from the section on His childhood:

"From His earliest years He was possessed of one purpose; He lived to bless others" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 70).

"With the voice of singing He welcomed the morning light. He listened to the lark caroling forth music to its God, and joined His voice with the voice of praise and thanksgiving" (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 5, p. 1117).

And here's one about His manner of teaching:

"The words of eternal life were presented in such simplicity that a child could understand them. Men, women, and children were so impressed with His manner of explaining the Scriptures that they would catch the very intonation of His voice, place the emphasis upon His words, and imitate His gestures. Youth caught His spirit of ministry, and sought to pattern after His gracious ways by seeking to assist those whom they saw needed help" (*This Day With God*, p. 283).

Families with older children could begin a notebook collection of similar statements. As a start invite your children to read the chapters in *The Desire of Ages* entitled "As a Child" and "Days of Conflict." They could then share their discoveries at the family Friday evening worship.

5. In your reading, look especially for personal help.

Ellen White once observed: "Christianity is always intensely practical" (*Messages to Young People*, p. 200). So are her writings. No matter what your needs—spiritual, emotional, physical, or whatever—you will find usable ideas and inspiration in all her writings. Keep a pencil handy as you read, and underline or mark in some way the things in which God especially speaks to you.

6. When uncertainty or controversy exists, study as much as possible of the available counsel on the subject.

With the Bible we can take a topic like the Sabbath, look up all the New Testament references that mention the word *Sabbath*, and almost certainly conclude that the Sabbath was not nailed to the cross.

The same principle should be used in the study of topics found in the Spirit of Prophecy. On some (leisure time, the use of tithe, proper Sabbath observance, etc.) so much is available that we generally don't need every statement to draw a safe conclusion. But where a variety of interpretations may be possible, we should locate as much content on that subject as possible.

7. Look for the underlying principle when something seems out-of-date.

"Regarding the testimonies, nothing is ignored; nothing is cast aside; but time and place must be considered" (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 57).

This helps us avoid two extremes: rigidly applying every detail even though circumstances have changed, and generalizing that almost everything is now outdated. Satan has urged both extremes.

The 100-plus Ellen White books and compilations now in print average more than 400 pages each, for a total of some 40,000 pages. A critic would be hard put to find even 40 pages of advice that no longer apply. And if we did find 40 pages, that would be one page out of every thousand, or less than 1 percent!

When we do find something that is obviously out-of-date, we will almost always be able to find an underlying principle that is still valid. The book *Education*, for example, was published in 1903 and advises that girls should learn “to harness and drive a horse” (pp. 216, 217).

What is the principle behind this advice? The need to learn practical skills. Wouldn't that principle applied to life today include the need for girls to learn something about the care of an automobile?

8. Pace yourself.

Even though she advocated reforms, Ellen White always demonstrated a wonderful sense of balance. In the area of diet, for example, she wrote: “It is slow work to obtain reform in diet. . . . We should be very cautious not to advance too fast, lest we be obliged to retrace our steps. In reforms we would better come one step short of the mark than to go one step beyond it. And if there is error at all, let it be on the side next to the people” (*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 20, 21).

Now, here are eight errors to avoid in studying Ellen White's writings:

1. Don't use them as a basis for doctrine.

“The *Testimonies* are not to take the place of the Word. . . . Let all prove their positions from the Scriptures and substantiate every point they claim as truth from the revealed Word of God” (*Evangelism*, p. 256).

2. Don't quote them to nonmembers.

“Some have taken an unjudicious course; when they have talked their faith to unbelievers, and the proof has been asked for, they have read a vision, instead of going to the Bible for proof. I saw that this course was inconsistent, and prejudiced unbelievers against the truth” (*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 119, 120).

3. Don't use them as a club or whip.

“Do not, when referring to the *Testimonies*, feel it is your duty to drive them home” (*ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 122).

4. Don't use them to support extremes.

“They have taken the extreme meaning of what has been shown in vision, and then have pressed it until it has a tendency to weaken the faith of many in what God has shown, and also to discourage and dishearten the church” (*ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 669, 670).

“Extremes frequently do more harm in a short time than could be undone by a lifetime of consistent living” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 324).

5. Don't try to become conscience for others.

The following suggestion, made in 1881 concerning the reform

dress of that era, is also applicable to other topics: “Some who adopted the reform were not content to show by example the advantages of the dress, giving, when asked, their reasons for adopting it, and letting the matter rest here. They sought to control others' conscience by their own” (*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 636).

6. Don't mix in your own words when quoting Ellen White statements.

“In reading the *Testimonies* be sure not to mix in your filling of words, for this makes it impossible for the hearers to distinguish between the word of the Lord to them and your words” (*ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 122, 123).

7. Don't quote statements out of context.

“I know that many men take the testimonies the Lord has given, and apply them as they suppose they should be applied, picking out a sentence here and there, taking it from its proper connection, and applying it according to their idea. Thus poor souls become bewildered, when could they read in order all that has been given, they would see the true application, and would not become confused” (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 44).

8. Don't dissect and find fault with the messages given.

“Do not by your criticisms take out all the force, all the point and power, from the *Testimonies*. Do not feel that you can dissect them to suit your own ideas, claiming that God has given you ability to discern what is light from heaven and what is the expression of mere human wisdom” (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 691).

“There are some professed believers who accept certain portions of the *Testimonies* as the message of God, while they reject those portions that condemn their favorite indulgences” (*ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 154).

In my class I ask students, “In your experience, which of these eight errors have you found to be most often violated?” Almost always, on both academy and college levels, the students say number 3—don't use them as a club or whip. And next to that, number 4—don't use them to support extremes.

May the Lord enrich your spiritual life as you study this precious gift. May you find, as I have, a closer walk with Jesus.

*Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version.

Joe Engelkemier is a freelance writer living in Berrien Springs, Michigan.



“Why Didn’t You Tell Me?”

Page 1 contained typical letter trivia: weather’s hot; hope you’re OK; busy as usual; just finished Michener’s new novel.

Page 2 took an unexpected turn:

“Are you familiar with the books of Ellen White?

You must be. They are distributed by the Adventist Church. I’m well into *Desire of the Ages*. . . . It is truly beautiful. . . .

I’m going to get several copies. If you haven’t read it, let me know. It’s a must-read. And if you have, why didn’t you tell me?”

“And if you have, why didn’t you tell me?”

I read that line again and again. “Why didn’t I tell you?” I thought I had!

Les Mathis and I had corresponded regularly through the years. The correspondence, though, was mostly a long-distance debate. Now retired in Oregon, he had been an English teacher, drama coach, and summer-stock actor for years. I too am an English teacher, and so we had classics, writing, drama, and poetry in common. (Plus, he was the only person I’d ever known who was a member of Mensa—the “club” for geniuses.)

But it was what we *didn’t* have in common that spurred our dialogues. Les was a die-hard atheist. Too smart for God. Most of his mailings were packed with articles on evolution, Darwinism, aliens, demons—stuff I didn’t read because it was so disgusting. Occasionally I sent him religious articles, which I’m quite sure *he* didn’t read. We spit anti-God/pro-God propaganda across the country several times a year. But I had a secret edge: I was praying for him.

I prayed because I knew his background. He had been a pilot in World War II and soon after married and finished college. He then taught school to support his wife and baby daughter. Trouble entered the home, though, when his wife began taking Bible studies and was baptized. He left and she raised the child alone.

Les remarried and had five more children. No religion in the home—that was his mandate. But that marriage ended too. I talked to him once about Christian homes and how going to church seemed to make families stronger. His reply is vivid in my memory: “Michelle, I wish I could understand all that God stuff. But it doesn’t make any sense to me. I’ve thought about it a thousand times. There just isn’t any evidence of a God.”

His surprising letter continued. He got his hair cut in a

barbershop that had a book exchange. Leave a book, take a book. One book’s title interested him: *The Desire of Ages*. He took it home.

Next letter: “I ordered six copies of *Desire of the Ages*. [He never got the title right.] I’m going to send them to all my children. Can you believe Ellen White’s grandson lives in Oregon? I hope I get to meet him sometime.”

The tone of his letters had changed from biting, sarcastic, mocking, mean, to loving, excited, positive, hopeful. From me talk to God talk.

“I’ve ordered *The Great Controversy* and *Steps to Christ*. . . .”

“Michelle, I just finished *Christ’s Object Lessons*. Thank you for sending it to me. Now I need the rest of her series. I can’t wait to read her book that explains Genesis.”

Les Mathis the atheist was sending *me* back to the Conflict of the Ages Series—just to keep up with him.

Evidence of a God? I wrote and told Les to look no further. *He* was the evidence. A life changed—the greatest evidence of all. Philosophers can’t explain it; evolutionists shake their heads. But when a lonely but brilliant man picks up a book written by a godly woman and has his life changed, that’s a miracle that can’t be denied. These days Les watches the Three Angels Broadcasting Network all day and into the night. He’s becoming an Adventist—and he’s never even been in an Adventist church.

One other thing. Les bought E. G. White books for *almost* all of his children. One of them already had them—his first little girl, the one whose mother had taken Bible studies from an Adventist worker and, by becoming baptized, lost her husband, but found her Lord.

I was that little girl. Michelle Mathis. I haven’t known my father very well on earth, but I will in heaven. My prayers of many years have been answered. And I’ve promised myself and my God that no one will ever have to say to me again: “If you knew about Ellen White, why didn’t you tell me?”



Michelle Nash teaches English at Forest Lake Academy, near Orlando, Florida.



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The Old Rugged Cross
I Choose Him Today
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(1993)



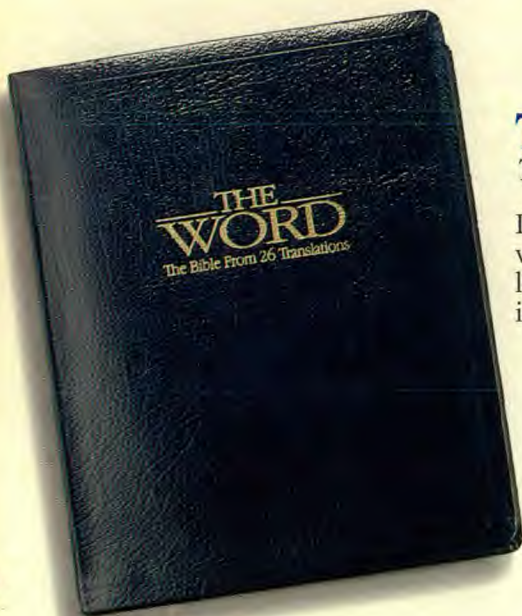
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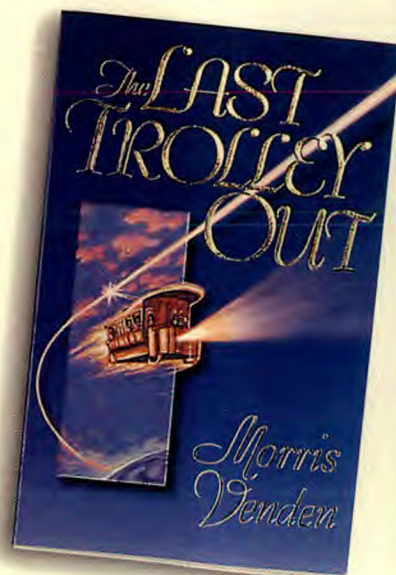
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