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History and Background of The Desire of Ages

The writing and publishing of books in the 19th century demanded more involvement of the authors than has been the custom until the present time. The development of modern technology and high labor costs have made it both possible and necessary for writers to handle the production, editing, and proofreading of books. For Ellen White, who had only the most limited formal education and whose responsibilities in church leadership through guidance and counseling demanded much in the way of writing, travel, and speaking, the management of book production called for some special arrangements.

Throughout my college years, early ministry, and even seminary classwork, I had the impression that Ellen White wrote The Desire of Ages. In my mind the picture of Ellen White with her lapboard across the arms of her chair reinforced the understanding that she composed the book chapter by chapter as she reflected on the gospel stories of the life of Christ. Her visions would have added insights not obvious in the reading of the Bible text. Once she had completed a chapter the rough draft would go to her assistants who, as I had been led to imagine, took the text and corrected the spelling, punctuation, and grammar as they copied the text for publication. This same very limited

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editorial assistance would also have prepared the articles written by her for the various church publications.

It is now widely known among North American Adventists and by many others throughout the world field that this reconstruction description of Ellen White's writing methods has no basis in fact. Perhaps my understanding was colored by what my religious devotion wanted me to believe, and was not the result of my Adventist education. I do know that I was not alone in holding this view as to the way Ellen White produced her books.

The White Estate through its representatives has used various means over the last decade to correct such false impressions and to provide further information on how Ellen White wrote her books.¹ As widespread as their efforts have

¹I refer here to the following publications which have been footnoted (with or without annotation) in Chapter I of the Introduction: Ellen G. White: The Australian Years by Arthur L. White (Volume 4 of his biography of Ellen White); two series of articles by Arthur L. White published in the Adventist Review ("Toward an Adventist Concept of Inspiration," January 12, 19, 26, and February 2, 1978, and "The Ellen G. White Historical Writings," July 12, 19 26, and August 2, 9, 16, and 23, 1979); Selected Messages, Book 3, Section III, "The Preparation of the Ellen G. White Books," (a compilation of comments from the writings of Ellen White); three monographs by Robert Olson: Ellen G. White's Use of Uninspired Sources; How the Desire of Ages Was Written; and pages 64-111 of One Hundred and One Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White; and E. G. White's Literary Work: An Update by Ron Graybill (then Associate Secretary of the E. G. White Estate). Apart from Selected Messages, Book 3 (which is available through local Adventist Book Centers), the other items, including a reprint of the Adventist Review

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been through published books, pamphlets, and articles, in workshops for ministers and teachers, and in various types of public presentations, I cannot be sure that all those who may be interested to review this report will be acquainted with that background material.

This chapter, therefore, attempts to fulfill two objectives. Its primary purpose is to furnish a connected account of the history and background of Ellen White's writings on the life of Christ, particularly The Desire of Ages. By including this information the report stands on its own as a complete statement. All the basic knowledge necessary for making sense of the study and the report is provided for the reader.

A secondary motivation behind the writing of this chapter has to do with setting forth the evidence for the claims we have made elsewhere in the report in respect to Ellen White's writings and for the operating assumptions which have influenced the research methodology and text presentation and analyses. It is not only to provide the background information on the way Ellen White wrote her books, for those who have not had access to this history; there is also the need to make an independent statement.

articles, are available from the Ellen G. White Estate Office at the General Conference headquarters in Washington, D. C.

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This project was sponsored by the General Conference and designed to be a study outside the White Estate's sphere of influence. Naturally I was to have complete access to the White Estate documents, and total freedom to select whatever materials in my judgment related to the investigation. Even though these arrangements were partially influenced by charges that the White Estate had been involved in some kind of a "coverup," and for this reason could have resulted in a very difficult or strained working situation, nothing of this order ever developed. Robert Olson, Arthur White, and all those connected with the White Estate, its employees, and its Board of Trustees, were most cooperative. They were anxious to do whatever I requested yet never tried to direct or even influence my research.

Readers who have consulted the White Estate documents relating to Ellen White's use of sources, the role of her literary assistants, and her work on The Desire of Ages will recognize that I included much of the same evidence as they have. This correspondence has been unavoidable due to the fact we are using many of the same documents and treating the same questions. The White Estate documentation includes evidence from Ellen White letters after 1898 and other sources I did not research. This presentation of the historical and literary context to the DA text is not

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intended to be an exhaustive treatment of Ellen White's writing practices.

The careful reader who is acquainted with these writings on the topic of Ellen White's use of sources and secretaries will note several additional differences in the following comments from those of the White Estate. My remarks, as would be expected given the nature of this report, are limited to Ellen White's writings on the life of Christ. Secondly, the evidence is limited to the primary sources. That is to say, the statements of Ellen White and Marian Davis provide the major evidence for the arguments. They were the central figures in the writing process. W. C. White's comments are limited to claims on what he did to assist in the task. His comments on how his mother wrote are not included here, though the reader should not infer that I am assuming his word to be unduly biased or not worthy of trust. His comments, like those of A. G. Daniels, W. W. Prescott, and other contemporaries of Ellen White, apart from statements of their own involvement with the writing process, provide secondary evidence and would extend the scope of this report beyond its limitations.¹

¹I am aware of the inquiries by students about the work of H. C. Lacey, the influence of W. C. White, and the issues raised in the letters of G. W. Amadon, J. H. Kellogg, W. W. Prescott, and W. C. White, et al. To adequately treat these concerns would have required a review of post-1898 letters

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Finally, a third difference is in the selection and arrangement of the evidence. Since neither the White Estate reports nor my own present the entire available textual base, it is inevitable that different interpreters will select different excerpts to sustain their arguments. Fortunately the White Estate materials mentioned above are available and can be checked against the evidence which follows. Hopefully, the White Estate will soon make the entire collection of materials accessible in facsimile form for investigation.

Now that we have described the general objectives of this chapter and the kind of evidence we shall employ, it remains for us to set out the general approach to our topic. Though some overlap will be apparent due to the nature of the evidence, the major divisions of the chapter fall into three fields of interest.

In the first division we shall retrace the history and tradition of Ellen White's major writings on the life of

and documents of Ellen White and those associated with her. Documentation filed in the office of Adventist archives would also have to be reviewed. These questions are important for a complete portrayal of how Ellen White produced her writings. Hopefully others will join the task of reconstructing the life, times, and thought characterizing early Adventist history, and the attitudes, motivations, and roles of our founding fathers. The earlier histories of Adventism and of the pioneers, written without the documentation now available for our use, need to be updated.

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Christ. Our emphasis will be on the earlier published texts, the working manuscript of the DA, and the final struggles to produce the DA text. Some attention will also be given to Ellen White's other works on the ministry of Christ.

The second segment will look at Ellen White's writing skills and methods, not from the evidence of the text itself, which is the major concern of the project, but from Ellen White's claims (or lack thereof) and those of her literary assistants. We were not able altogether to avoid alluding to Ellen White's method of writing in our attempt earlier to briefly survey the literature leading up to this research. For the most part, however, we have in the first chapter presented the views of Ellen White's interpreters who based their positions on a more limited text sample and/or on both primary and secondary sources.

The third and final part of our discussion in this chapter moves the focus from Ellen White to her literary assistants. Who were these helpers and what duties did they perform? What do they say they did, and how does Ellen White describe their activities?

It is important to bear in mind that we are not in this chapter attempting to anticipate the conclusions of the project. The summary and conclusions are in the main developed from the textual evidence, not from the statements

of Ellen White and Marian Davis in which they describe their work. Once the textual evidence is studied it will be possible to compare the results of the text analysis with the description of their work as given here. A careful review of the following documentary materials should also give some indication of the degree to which the general church membership would have been aware of the process Ellen White used in producing her writings.

The History of The Desire of Ages Text

The Desire of Ages is the only single volume in the English language by Ellen White covering the life of Christ. In addition to numerous articles on episodes in the life of Jesus and on aspects of the ministry and teachings of Christ, Ellen White published several works which treat in part the life of Christ. All of this literature in one way or another is related to the writing of the DA text. The following account briefly outlines the history and nature of those relationships.

Spiritual Gifts. The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald of September 9, 1858, announced the publication of Spiritual Gifts, Volume I, which was also titled, The Great Controversy Between Christ and His Angels and Satan and his Angels, covering the entire history of salvation from the fall of

Satan until the final destruction of Satan in the second death. This work included eight chapters on the life of Christ. The major portion of this brief treatment of the life of Christ is dedicated to the suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. Only two chapters are given to the days of Christ's ministry. Though occasionally Ellen White prefaces her account with comment to the effect that she "was shown" or otherwise was informed through vision, her narrative for the most part reads like a paraphrase of Scripture.

Though there seems to have been very little direct effect of the text itself on Ellen White's later writings on the life of Christ, the general outline of the volume covering the great controversy theme evidently influenced her later writings. Volumes III and IV which had to do with Old Testament history followed in 1864. Ellen White must have sensed the need to place the story of the plan of redemption in a chronological order, and to present it in much greater detail. In 1870 she came out with a revision of the Old Testament section in the first volume of a new series titled Spirit of Prophecy.

Spirit of Prophecy. The first major treatment of the life of Christ is presented as part of a four-volume work called Spirit of Prophecy. In a letter to her children late

in 1872 she writes: "We shall try to write and get out my second volume of Spirit of Prophecy."¹ A few days later a notice in her diary reads, "Wrote ten pages to Elder Littlejohn, after writing closely all day upon my matter for Spirit of Prophecy."² The duplication of material found in her writings is to be expected when manuscripts destined for her books also find their way into the church papers. During February of 1873 she wrote: "We arose early, prepared eight pages of manuscript for the Review, which matter is to go into my Spirit of Prophecy, Volume Two."³

Evidently Volumes II and III were being prepared at the same time. In June of 1873 she "wrote fifteen pages on sufferings of Christ,"⁴ which became part of Volume III of SP. In August of the same year she records in her diary, "looked over several pages of manuscript--The Temptation of Christ."⁵ Some of the life of Christ was also prepared in article form for the Instructor.⁶ Her commentary on the temptations of Christ is separated out of her general writings on the life of Christ and published in pamphlet form. She notes in her diary, Sabbath, September 27, 1873:

¹Ltr W-23-1872, Dec. 24 to Edson and Willie.

²MS 3, 1873.

³MS 4, 1873.

⁴MS 8, 1873.

⁵MS 10, 1873.

⁶MS 11, 1873.

This is a beautiful day; not a cloud in the heavens. I spent the day in writing and reading over manuscript for printer, upon the temptations of Christ in the wilderness. I am anxious to get this before the people, for they need it.¹

The manuscript on the temptations of Christ was no doubt related to the pamphlet on the same topic published in 1874.² That the manuscript did not include her full comment on the topic may be inferred from a later diary entry for October 26, 1873, in which she remarks that "I had some freedom in writing upon the temptation of Christ."³

Throughout the next several years Ellen White kept to her task of preparing these new books on the life of Christ. Several letters from 1876 contain references to the pressure she felt to complete the work. Writing from her home in California to her husband who was then president of the General Conference she clearly indicated what her priorities were:

I cannot see any light shining to Michigan for me. This year I feel that my work is writing. I must be secluded, stay right here, and I must not let inclination or persuasion of others shake my resolution to keep closely to my work until it is done.⁴

¹Ibid. We shall have an occasion below to comment on Ellen White's checking her own manuscripts for publishing, and on her freedom to do this work on the Sabbath.

²"Redemption, or The Temptation of Christ in the Wilderness," 96 pp. See Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1963), p. 3197.

³MS 12, 1873.

⁴Ltr 63, 1876 (March 25, 1876).

It is clear that she is referring in the quote above to her writing on the life of Christ. In a letter to James White only a few days later she adds:

I am writing and having freedom in my writing. Precious subjects I am handling. The last I completed or about completed yesterday--Jesus healing the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda [sic].¹

Volume II of Spirit of Prophecy was published in 1877. The chapters of this enlarged commentary on the life of Christ from birth to the entry into Jerusalem were published separately as a pamphlet series called Redemption, numbers 1, 3 through 6 the same year (with the exception of the chapter on the wilderness temptations which had already been printed in 1874 as number 2).² Numbers 7 and 8 came out the next year with the printing of SP, Volume 3.

About two-thirds of Volume III (20 chapters) of Spirit of Prophecy was published early in 1878. Ellen White's vision of the value of her works extending far beyond the ranks of Adventism is clearly indicated by her thoughts on marketing. Notice the following comment in a letter to William and his wife.

We received yesterday the third volume of Spirit of Prophecy. I have thought if the covers were made for all three volumes, with a different title and these books were introduced in the bookstores in Boston,

¹Ltr 1, 1876 (March 31, 1876).

²Comprehensive Index to the Writings to Ellen G. White,
op. cit.

Rochester, Battle Creek and other places, it would scatter the light and do good.¹

In addition to furnishing the text for several articles,² the SP text provides the basic material for several foreign-language translations of Ellen White's life of Christ.³ Because of certain modifications to the text I have chosen to treat these translations as a separate stage in the transmission of the DA text.

La Vie de Jesus-Christ notre Seigneur (The Life of Jesus Christ our Saviour). This is the earliest use we found of Ellen White's two volumes of the SP text as a separate one-volume work carrying the title so commonly used by 19th-century writers. If the French edition (and no doubt the other non-English texts as well) were only a translation we could hardly argue that it represented a further development of the text. Several innovations in this life of Christ merit its special place in the history of the DA text.

The December 15, 1890, issue of Bible Echo, published in Melbourne, Australia, carried the following announcement among its advertisements.

This new volume from the pen of the above gifted author is written in a simple, yet terse and interesting

¹Ltr W-10-1878.

²Ltrs 12 & 13, 1876, to James White (April 21 & 24).

³Our comments are based on our study of an undated copy of the second American edition of the French text published by the International Tract Society, Battle Creek, Michigan. There were also German, Swedish, and Danish translations.

narrative style, and brings out many gems of truth in the life and works of Christ which cannot but awaken new interest and arouse a deeper love for the Saviour of mankind.

The narrative of the four evangelists is skillfully woven into the work, and they are shown to be in harmony throughout. While the work will be found to harmonize strictly with the Bible, it at the same time so thoroughly interests the reader that it is with reluctance that he lays it down until the last page has been read.

"The life of Christ" is printed in clear, large type, from new plates, on fine calendered paper, and contains 600 pages.

Issued only in French, German, Swedish, and Danish.

The Life of Christ in English is supplied in two volumes known as THE GREAT CONTROVERSY, VOLS. II & III.

My efforts to trace the origins of the French life of Christ were not entirely successful. We know that Ellen White had several workers with her when she set up headquarters in Basel, Switzerland. Among these were Marian Davis and L. R. Conradi and his wife.¹ We also know that during this period in Europe Ellen White and her assistants were working on the text for Patriarchs and Prophets, which represented the revision of Spirit of Prophecy, Volume I.² Arthur White informs us that not much work was done at this time on Ellen White's life of Christ project.³ Evidently a measure of work was carried forward on this task because the

¹Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White/Volume 3/The Lonely Years/1876-1891 (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1984), p. 339.

²Patriarchs and Prophets was published in 1890 after Ellen White returned to America.

³Arthur White, op. cit., pp. 443, 444.

French edition departs from the SP text in several aspects. How much of this revision was on the way before Ellen White and her staff arrived makes an interesting question. It is possible the major task of translation/revision had been accomplished by workers at the Basel publishing house prior to this time because we are told in a letter from W. C. White in December of 1888 that there had been "continued demand" for this single-volume Life of Christ in French (and the other languages).¹ In fact, it "was making its way in Europe, and an English edition was contemplated."²

At any rate the revision pleased Marian Davis because she later mentions the volume and how her work on the DA text was influenced by this new Life of Christ for Europe. These are her words:

Ten or eleven years ago, when her life of Christ was published in French and German, the matter was arranged and prepared with the counsel of Sister White, W. C. W., M. K. W., and Sister E. J. Burnham. The decisions then reached have guided me also in the preparation of the chapters of the new book as far as they have gone, though I have not yet reached the closing scenes in the Saviour's life.³

¹Arthur White, op. cit., p. 444; cf. pp. 435, 445. I refer here to the revision of Volumes II and III of the SP text.

²Ibid.

³Marian Davis to J. E. White, December 22, 1895. A smaller work, written as a children's book (for which J. E. White was to be responsible) and prepared from the manuscripts Ellen White was producing for the DA text, was published in 1896 as Christ Our Saviour. The initials W. C. W. and M. K. W. stand for William White, another son of Ellen White, and Mary White his wife.

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The French edition has 55 chapters against 52 chapters of the SP text. Part but not all of this difference may be explained by an altered arrangement of the same material. There are, however, portions of the DA text which do not appear in the earlier SP volumes. Our comparison of the materials on the birth and ministry of John the Baptist revealed that selections which later appear in Patriarchs and Prophets but are not part of the SP text show up also in the French work. There are other sentences which appear to be, upon translation into English, closer to the DA text than to the SP text. We also found sentences in the French edition which we were not able to find elsewhere in Ellen White's writings. Perhaps these materials originated from the writings Ellen White was preparing at the time and while translated for the European editions were not preserved for the English text of either Patriarchs and Prophets or the DA.

In addition to the differences between the French edition and the SP account of the life of Christ there are also positive connections to be noted between the French work and the later lives of Christ composed from the writings of Ellen White. We have in mind here the order and arrangement of the narrative presentation.

Marian Davis was concerned that all new editions of Ellen White's books on the life of Christ agree on their

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presentations of the details relating to Jesus. In the letter to Edson from which the previous quotation was taken she makes a further reference to the French text.

In the suggestions made as to detail and arrangement, I have followed, as nearly, as seemed feasible, the French L. C. [Life of Christ].¹

After going into further explanation of the changes to be made in the book Edson was handling, she comments as follows:

The above arrangement is that which we shall probably follow in the new book, and it is very undesirable to have different books disagree, especially now when they have such wide circulation.²

There can be no doubt that the French edition had a definite impact on the developing tradition of Ellen White's writings on the life of Christ. It seems reasonable to view the one-volume European Life of Christ by Ellen White as constituting a distinct stage in the history of the DA text. These books were not simply translations of the SP volumes. That this was also recognized by others may be inferred from the plan, later aborted, to prepare an English edition of this single-volume life of Christ.³

The Desire of Ages. In a letter of 1895 to Dr. J. H. Kellogg Ellen White made a revealing remark about the focus of her life. "You know that my whole theme both in the

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Arthur White, op. cit., pp. 444, 445.

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pulpit and in private, by voice and pen, is the life of Christ."¹ No doubt this comment most directly refers to the burden she was carrying in regard to the completion of her major volume on the life of Christ. But one who reads through her letters and manuscripts cannot avoid the impression that this woman was throughout her life possessed by this subject. Over and over again one reads brief notices of her sermons on the sufferings of Christ or on His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, evidently two of her favorite topics.

One of the earliest hints that Ellen White had in mind to write the book we know as The Desire of Ages may be found in a letter to her children in 1880, only two years after SP, Volume III, was published.

We are now deciding to spend this winter and next summer in preparing books. First, I get articles prepared for Signs. 2. I get out articles for private testimony, Health institutions. 3. Get out testimony No. 30. 4. Letters to her children by a Mother. 5. Volume Four. 6. Life of Christ, both books. The most sharp and interesting matter in one large book for canvassers to use for public sale. So you see we have work to do. We dare not go South and will remain here this winter in Michigan. In summer we may go to Colorado.²

Perhaps this desire prompted the format of the European editions which combined the two SP volumes into a single book. It should also be noted that in this letter we

¹Ltr K-4-1895.

²Ltr W-43-1880.

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additionally find the controlling purpose that will influence the selection of the material and its style of presentation. Ellen White wants to publish a book on the life of Christ for colporteurs to use. The projected popular reader audience may have lent some direction in Ellen White's choice of sources. At any rate a number of the "lives" she consulted were of this type.

It was also quite evident to Marian Davis at least, that the SP volumes on the life of Christ were in need of revision. The "old book" mentioned in the following selection taken from a letter to W. C. White refers to the SP text.

Whatever plan we follow, there is much work to be done if the book is finished at all as it should be. Considering that the very cream has been taken from a large part of the old book, and has been put into everybody's hands, it seems a pity that this new work should have nothing fresh for many of its most important chapters. It seems a pity too, that the most important part of the book should be the part to be hurried and slighted. Again, the chapters as they stand in the old book need a thorough revision and rearrangement for the new. You know what criticisms that will excite. If we can add fresh matter it will help the case. I do not write these things to complain of difficulties, but because I think, so far as possible, you should understand the situation just as it is.¹

About two years after returning home from her European trip Ellen White notes in a letter that she is "now commencing the work on Vol. I and II, and Life of Christ."²

¹Marian Davis to W. C. White, August 9, 1897.

²Ltr F-30-1889.

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From June, 1891, onward, we begin to find references to her "writing" in her letters and diary notations. They usually read as follows: "I have devoted most of four days to writing on the life of Christ," or, "In afternoon I wrote a few pages on the miracles of Christ."¹

In 1891 Ellen White went to Australia and took her staff with her. Early in 1892 she recounted in her diary how just prior to her leaving home she collected from her writings those materials she had written on the life of Christ.

I attended the Lansing camp meeting and malaria fastened itself upon me. But I was enabled, by the strength given me of God, to look over an accumulated mass of writing and select those things I had written in regard to the life of Christ. This book was so much needed that in counseling with my brethren it was thought advisable to take my workers with me and remain in Australia until the Life of Christ was ready for the press.²

Ellen White's health problems slowed her progress at times. Earlier she had entertained the thought that her illness might have a positive value for her writing plans. In a letter to Lucinda Hall she suggested that "It may be that I am a cripple in order to do this work so long neglected."³ Disappointingly, it did not turn out that way. Her health problems hindered her work. In May she wrote to Elder Haskell:

¹MS 43, 1891 (Diary, June 5 & 10).

²MS 40, 1892 (Feb. 13).

³Ltr H-90-1892 (Jan. 23).

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I am trying to write a little. The rheumatism is still upon me. In some respects I am physically better. I think the malaria has been mastered, for the present. I have great difficulty in using my hands, for my arms and shoulders are full of soreness and the pain I suffer with sciatica in hips and knees makes them stiff and painful. Yet I do not lose my courage; I will trust in the Lord.¹

Nevertheless she kept faith in the Lord and pressed on with her writing.

I believe now that my sickness in this strange country is a part of God's plan. I have been able to sleep but very little, yet my memory is good, my head clear. My arms and hands I feared would become helpless; but although painful, I can use my right hand, and every mail I have sent to America between one and two hundred pages of letter paper written by my own hand. Last mail bore away from me one hundred and seventy-five pages. I can sit up only a short time in one position. I can write best as I am now, half sitting and half reclining, bolstered up with pillows.

My heart is full of happiness, and of love, and gratitude to God.²

By midsummer of 1894 plans were being made for publishing the book even though there was still much writing to be completed. At first they considered printing the book at the Australian publishing house.

And now my letter writing is to be cut down wonderfully, and I will not be diverted from the main work. Talk with our brethren in regard to the printing of Life of Christ at the Echo office.³

Some thought was given to publishing the DA text in three separate books. It is possible that the publishing of

¹Ltr H-16d-1892 (May 7).

²Ltr W-28-1892 (July) [to P. W. B. Wessels].

³Ltr W-135-1894 (Aug. 6) [to W. C. White].

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the little volume on Christ's sermon on the mount triggered the idea. The depression in Australia's economy may also have influenced this suggestion. Marian Davis offered her ideas on this possibility to W. D. Salisbury of the Echo office.¹

"Life of Christ," is progressing slowly, but it is progressing. Why would it not be a good plan to issue this book, not only as one large volume, but as three smaller ones? We could use the same plates, or rather another set, changing folios, and running titles, and making each book independent of the others, and put them out in a cheap form. Many would buy them who could not take the large book; and others would prefer to have the matter in a form more easily handled.²

During the year of 1895, in addition to pushing ahead with the writing and publishing plans for the life of Christ there was a constant flow of mail between Australia, England, and the United States of America in regard to the publication of Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing which was finally completed a year later.³

¹The Bible Echo was the Australian version of The Signs of the Times.

²Marian Davis to W. D. Salisbury, February 28, 1895.

³The dummy proofs arrived in January, 1896, but Ellen White was not pleased with them (Ltr P-90-1896). Evidently the Battle Creek publishing house went ahead with the publication because she was so disappointed with the illustrations that she would not send a copy of the book to Elder Haskell. In answer to one of his letters, she wrote on June 1: "You speak of the book Mount of Blessing, the book I do not wish to give to anyone. I have written to the ones who published it a very decided disapproval. It is a shame to get out such pictures upon such a beautiful subject, such elevated themes. If I get a book that I can approve, you shall have a copy, but I would not insult my friends with

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We shall have more to say on the publication of this book when we discuss the roles of Ellen White and her assistants in the production of her writings.

At this time Ellen White was projecting three and possibly four volumes on the life of Christ, with Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing as the first book. In a letter to her children she spoke of her plans.

We will have two volumes of the life of Christ and a small book upon the parables, and may have to have one on the miracles of Christ, but the lives of the disciples and apostles is yet to be prepared. Then I ought to get out an important book--the second volume of Old Testament History.¹

The DA became the second volume and the "parables" book evidently was Christ's Object Lessons, published in 1900. Since many miracle stories made their way into the DA text no further book on this topic ever materialized.

Because the parables of Jesus are woven into the gospel narratives of the life of Christ they do not lend themselves as easily to a separate treatment as did the sermon on the mount. The publishers apparently thought it would be possible to put out the "parable" book while waiting for Ellen White to complete her commentary on the life of Christ. Even though we catch a little glimpse of how Marian Davis served in her capacity as "book-maker," a topic to be

such illustrations as are in that book. So you will excuse my not sending you a book." (Ltr H-167-1896).

¹Ltr W-140-1896 (Jan. 23).

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discussed later, the following excerpt from one of Marian Davis' letters to C. H. Jones of the Pacific Press furnishes some insights on the complexities of unraveling the textual tradition behind the DA text.

You ask me if I cannot, by this mail, send to the press the MS of the parables. You also ask when the balance of the MS for the last book will be ready. And you request Sr. White to write on the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. I fully agree with you that the "Life of Christ" should be closed up as soon as possible. But let me state the situation: Considerably more than a year ago Sr. White began writing on the trial and crucifixion of Christ. She has a number of MSS unfinished. It is her intention to gather these together as soon as possible and complete them for the book. Of late she has had a very heavy burden for the General Conference, as well as for individuals, and the work in South Africa and in Cooranbong. But now that the Conference is over, and she has written quite fully in regard to these other cases, she fully intends to devote her time to the MS. I have been almost consumed with anxiety to complete the book. I prepared some chapters with what material I had, thinking that she would not write on these subjects. She did write on them, however, and I had my work to do over. Then I concluded it would be wiser to wait until the matter was ready.

About the parables: Before we send the book for the press, Sr. White must read it. She must concentrate her mind on the subject. She will no doubt wish to fill out some points, and will perhaps add several parables--possibly the Rich Man and Lazarus and the Unjust Steward. Now should she be called off from the "Life of Christ" to attend to this? Do you want the parables more than you want the large book? It is altogether safe to say that not one-twentieth of her time is given to book work. I might almost say, not one-fiftieth. But she has written some very precious things for Book 2, and I hope she will be able to complete the book soon.

I trust that the request I made about two months ago in regard to the parables will not be neglected. I want to be sure we are right before going ahead. Since last mail I have thought that we might cut down the

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parables, condensing the narrative and expository part, and omitting most of the personal application or exhortation. Then they could be combined, bringing several into one chapter. It might be better to use them in this way. I hope those who have an interest in the arrangement of the book will take the trouble to consider this matter now, while their criticism or suggestion will do some good. It would be so much better than regretting afterward that the book does not suit them.

On one hand the book will be incomplete without the parables. On the other, unless they are considerably condensed, I fear it will be a little heavy with them. But there is some narrative connected with them, and perhaps they ought to be condensed enough for the book. I feel that I must have counsel. But let it be remembered that the work is not finished. The articles still need some more editing. I have already had three of the four parable articles copied that would go in the first book. Sr. White has read them. So far as this first book is concerned, the use of the parables will require little extra labor. And it would not take so long to prepare parables and the life of Christ together as separately. With the last three chapters transposed to part 2 (the last three that are now in the book, I mean) the insertion of the parables in this first book would add to it only about a dozen pages of MS.¹

The disappointment over the first edition of Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing drove Ellen White to select the Pacific Press in Oakland, California, as her publishers. Writing to Edson and his wife Emma she clearly spoke her mind on this point.

We are now just sending off in this mail the first twenty chapters to Pacific Press. I cannot conscientiously have my book go through the press at Battle Creek. There has been so little dealing upon straight lines of principle, I can put but little reliance in anything they may say. If the devil tempts them to make it hard and trying for me, they will not

¹Marian Davis to C. H. Jones, March 11, 1897.

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see, they will not discern the evil. Judging from the past, therefore, I shall not place Life of Christ in their hands. I am sorry, so sorry.¹

A few weeks later she wrote to a friend, "My revised Life of Christ, the first book, has just gone to Pacific Press for them to handle, which means two thousand dollars American money."² The work referred to here must be Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing. The "revised" "Life of Christ" was not yet published if by that title one would understand Ellen White to be referring to the DA text. The expenses must have to do with the extra costs incurred in switching publishers and perhaps also the costs of obtaining the new illustrations.

Further evidence for this reconstruction of this history of Ellen White's writings on the life of Christ is furnished by an excerpt from what appears to be a letter written in 1897. It is not difficult to understand from this background why she was looking in the direction of a Christian publisher outside the Adventist organization.

I expected that the sale of Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing would help me to help in advancing the work in Australia. But the way the book was kept back in America, after being in the hands of the publishers for two years, and then coming out in a style that I could in no wise accept, had disappointed me greatly. The delay also on the "Life of Christ," preparing suitable cuts, is another drawback. The means I hoped to obtain have not answered my expectations, and now I must do all I possibly can to help in various ways the cause in this

¹Ltr W-152-1896 (July 5).

²Ltr C-132-1896 (Aug. 30).

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missionary field. . . .

Some felt very much dissatisfaction that Steps to Christ was given to Revell. I have received quite a sum of money, more than has come to me from some books; and I think more would come to me if he had more of my books to handle. He has written to me to send him writings on the childhood and life of Christ. He sent me copies that he had been using, but said that he would prefer my style of writing, and thought he could produce books better adapted to the necessities, and which would find a more ready sale than any they had on hand. I shall place more books in his hand as soon as I can get them prepared, for I can receive better satisfaction than I have received from the Battle Creek publishing house. There is an advantage in doing this, because they get the truth before a class that we will not reach.¹

As the time for publishing this major work on the life of Christ drew near the question of the book's title became an important issue to settle. E. M. Morrison suggested the name "The Desire of Ages" in a letter to C. H. Jones, manager of the Pacific Press Publishing Company.² He had taken the title from a poem by Frances Ridley Havergal. Marian Davis notified Jones in March of 1897 that of the two titles being suggested by Jones, "Desire of Ages" and "Desire of All Nations," "Sister White prefers the former, as I do, with all others who have expressed an opinion."³

The year of 1897 was evidently a particularly trying one

¹MS 80, 1897 (July 4) [No addressee].

²E. M. Morrison letter of August 24, 1896, White Estate Document File 89.

³Marian Davis to C. H. Jones, March 11, 1897. I am indebted to Robert Olson for supplying the documents from the file on C. H. Jones. Other titles under consideration were: "Christ Our Brother" (Marian Davis to C. H. Jones, Aug. 3 and 9, 1896), and "The Sunlight of Heaven" (Marian Davis to C. H. Jones, Nov. 9, 1896).

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for Ellen White. She was pressed to complete the book on the life of Christ, to furnish articles for church journals, and to speak at various meetings. It would seem that she also sensed a deep personal obligation to work for the souls of those she felt faced eternal loss unless they turned to God. She tried several ways to accommodate these demands. Instead of writing for the magazines and much for the book it would appear she elected to concentrate on the life of Christ by allowing her writings to be worked into articles by others. Then Marian Davis would take some of the articles and from them construct chapters on the life of Christ. She explained this system in a letter to Jones.

Meanwhile Sister White is stirred up to write on the matter for the second part. I think my work on the first part has roused her to finish the book. She has written quite largely on some points, and is having much of the matter copied and sent out in place of writing especially for the mail.

. . . So you see we are short of help. However, the work on the new manuscript will be pushed forward as rapidly as possible. We intend to keep all our editing force on this as far as we can. When the great masses of matter are edited for the papers, it is much less work to select and compile for the book.¹

The attempt to combine her writing effort extended also to her personal letters. A letter to W. C. White includes three short sentences in this regard:

I am now writing on the feet-washing ordinance and on the Lord's Supper. Will send you the matter. I have decided from henceforth no letters go from me only of

¹Marian Davis to C. H. Jones, April 11, 1897.

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such a character as Bible subjects so that if I wish to use them in books I can do so.¹

The double editing of Ellen White's writings on the life of Christ and the final selection process for the completed text of the DA explains why in the search for literary sources used by Ellen White we had to study the pre-edited texts where still available. These documents could be expected more accurately to reflect the work of Ellen White. In addition, the earlier manuscripts, letters, and articles would provide a broader and more realistic textual base than the limited compilation chosen for the DA text. It is only to be expected that some manuscript material will appear in the journals and also in the DA text; other portions of the text will be found in either the DA text or in article form; and still other will exist only in its manuscript stage. In most chapters where this process was evidently followed to some extent we have attempted to show the textual relationships through a table listing the sentences in parallel. Sentences from an earlier document not used in the DA text would be indicated by the missing sentence numbers for that manuscript or periodical article.²

Ellen White also hoped to handle the pressure of work through limitation and veiled threats to discontinue book

¹Ltr W-189-1897 (March 11).

²The table is identified as Table A.

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publication unless she received more help and better cooperation from the publishers. Both her anguish and her hope came through in a letter to W. C. White.

I shall certainly try to be excused from attending the campmeeting in Sydney and in Melbourne. I must have quietude and rest. I long for it, and these attacks of exhaustion must be avoided. I look over the congregation when I am at these meetings and see there persons whom I know will be lost unless they repent and are converted and I am then to carry the load. I cannot rest day nor night. The two last campmeetings have been meetings that have worn me terribly. I want now to complete my book if possible, but I tell you not another book will I ever consent to work as this Desire of Nations has been worked. If there is no person of a healthful mind to take the charge of my books, if I must be left with the help I now have, I am done. I am now having this one burden: to get through with that book, and I pray daily for help, but this is my one burden now.¹

As the year drew to a close Ellen White could finally declare, "The book on life of Christ is done. Thank the Lord for this."² Of course there was much left to be done in preparing the text for publication, as we shall note when discussing the work of Ellen White's literary helpers. But Ellen White could say, "I have had some most precious things for the book, the last chapter. My part is done now. Oh, thank the Lord. Praise His Holy Name He has spared my life to see the closing up of the book."³

Now that the text of the DA was finalized they could

¹Ltr W-198-1897 (Sept. 21)

²Ltr K-163-1897 (Dec. 20)

³Ltr W-211-1897 (Dec. 31)

take the extra materials relating to parables and make up the text for what came to be called Christ's Object Lessons. According to a comment in a letter to Edson and Emma White the preparation of the book on the parables of Jesus also involved more writing.

Plans were made for me to remain over the Sabbath, and speak to the people in the evenings. But I cannot do this; for the subjects upon which I speak are of such intense interest to me that every fibre of being is stirred. I must return to "Sunnyside," and prepare the book on the parables to go in this mail, if we can get it ready. But I think I shall have to withhold it until next mail. We prepared the chapters on the parables for the large book on the life of Christ, and condensed them for this purpose. They must now be made fuller, seeing that they are to be put in a book by themselves.¹

The Desire of Ages was published in 1898. There was some criticism by the literature evangelists (colporteurs) over its size and about several other features.² The continual popularity of this life of Christ after nearly a century of publication as well as its translation into numerous languages testify to the success achieved by Ellen White and her assistants in this writing venture.

The survey of the textual history behind the writing of The Desire of Ages naturally raises the question of Ellen White as a writer. In view of her admitted dependency on others to help her, what can be said about her work as

¹Ltr W-38-1898 (Feb. 2)

²For further details see How the Desire of Ages Was Written, an Ellen G. White Estate document prepared by Robert Olson, p. 43.

distinguished from the activities of her literary assistants? To find our answer let us turn to her own statements and those of her helpers.

Ellen White as a Writer

The Adventist traditions about Ellen White are rather consistent in portraying her as an indefatigable worker. Her responsibilities were many and varied as the wife of a central figure in the early leadership of the Adventist Church, and as a prophetic and charismatic spokesperson in her own right. Several biographical studies on her life and work would appear to confirm our image of a devout, courageous, and forward-thinking nineteenth century woman.¹ But what was Ellen White as a writer? What can be discovered from her own comments on this aspect of her activities and from the statements penned by those who worked closely with her? What may we conclude in respect to her writing skills and habits, and her use of sources?

¹I have in mind here the multiple-volume biography by Arthur L. White, to which we have already made reference, and the unpublished and as yet uncirculated doctoral dissertation by Ron Graybill. We await the publication of Ellen G. White and Victorian America: A Study of Prophecy, Culture and Society by Jonathan Butler. The general summary of her work is not meant as a character study. My purpose here is merely to provide a very brief sketch of the background against which we shall consider Ellen White as a writer. It is an attempt to suggest the whole within which her activities as a writer are a part.

We would remind the reader that what follows is not an exhaustive study of Ellen White as a writer. Our purpose is merely to illuminate the historical and literary context within which her writings on the life of Christ are to be viewed. The large share of the evidence presented here comes from the documents which contain these writings and those written by her coworkers which refer to Ellen White as writer or editor.

The Writing of Ellen White. There seem to have been three basic assumptions or controlling presuppositions held by Ellen White in respect to her writings. Since they appear again and again in her statements they should not be overlooked or excluded in any serious review of her as a writer.

The most fundamental of these convictions was that she was writing (or speaking) God's messages on His authority. No matter by what system, mechanism, or intermediary the impression or message was transmitted to her, the ultimate source was God. Note her comment, following, published in 1902, only four years after the DA was completed.

Sister White is not the originator of these books. They contain the instruction that during her life-work God has been giving her. They contain the precious, comforting light that God has graciously given His servant to be given to the world. From their pages this light is to shine into the hearts of men and women, leading them to the Saviour.¹

¹Colporteur Evangelist, p. 36.

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A similar statement may be found in a very early letter.

The truth is like fire shut up in my bones and I must speak that I may be relieved. I greatly regret that I have not done more the present season in going to different points. God has given me a testimony that no other one has and I am responsible for the great gift. Our people in California know but little of me, but they shall be better acquainted ere long. At the camp-meeting I shall meet many I have never seen, many who have been brought newly to the faith. I am not now studying what would be agreeable to me but what is my duty.¹

Confidence in God's selection of herself as a messenger not only gave her a sense of destiny and duty but also encouraged in her a sense of expectancy.

This is an important time just now, the closing up of the book on life of Christ. I want quiet and restfulness, that if the Lord has anything to impress upon my mind,² I can discern the subject and prepare it for the book.²

This basic orientation or self-understanding of her work carried with it an overwhelming feeling of inadequacy. The glory and majesty of God and the holiness of His thought seemed to her to be overpowering. The following two paragraphs from a letter to Elder O. A. Olsen, then president of the General Conference, are typical of expressions sprinkled all through her writings.

This week I have been enabled to commence writing on the life of Christ. Oh, how inefficient, how incapable I am of expressing the things which burn in my soul in reference to the mission of Christ! I have hardly dared to enter upon the work. There is so much

¹Ltr W-31-1878.

²Ltr W-173-1896 (Nov. 29).

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to it all. And what shall I say, and what shall I leave unsaid? I lie awake nights pleading with the Lord for the Holy Spirit to come upon me, to abide upon me.

I walk with trembling before God. I know not how to speak or trace with pen the large subject of the atoning sacrifice. I know not how to present subjects in the living power in which they stand before me. I tremble for fear lest I shall belittle the great plan of salvation by cheap words. I bow my soul in awe and reverence before God and say, "Who is sufficient for these things?"¹

Additional statements appear below in connection with Ellen White's denial of human influence.

Of particular importance for our study of Ellen White as a writer is her consistent admission she was not up to the task of putting these messages from God in writing. It was not a general feeling of inadequacy for the task of communicating the truths of God as referred to above. Here we have reference to her recognition of the lack of a specific skill, the ability to write in an acceptable manner for the reading public.

While working on SP Vol. II, she made two entries in her diary which clearly signal her self-appraisal as a writer.

We rose early to prepare to go to San Francisco. My heart is inexpressibly sad. This morning I take into candid consideration my writings. My husband is too feeble to help me prepare them for the printer, therefore I shall do no more with them at present. I am not a scholar. I cannot prepare my own writings for the press. Until I can do this I shall write no more. It is not my duty to tax others with my manuscript.²

¹Ltr O-40-1892 (July 15), cited by Robert Olson in How the Desire of Ages Was Written, p. 23.

²MS 3, 1873, p. 5 (Jan. 10), cited by Robert Olson, op.

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We rested well last night. This Sabbath morning opens cloudy. My mind is coming to strange conclusions. I am thinking I must lay aside my writing I have taken so much pleasure in, and see if I cannot become a scholar. I am not a grammarian. I will try, if the Lord will help me, at forty-five years old to become a scholar in the science. God will help me. I believe he will.¹

Ellen White's plans to "become a scholar" were not to be realized. To compensate for this natural consequence of a very limited formal educational experience, she sought the assistance of others. The work of her literary helpers will be reviewed below.

Within the framework provided by these three working presuppositions, her special calling, the importance of her responsibilities, and the need to depend upon others in preparing her communications for the reading public, Ellen White accomplished her writing and publishing goals. Her letters and diary notations are replete with reference to her writing, often citing subjects and pages. The February 4, 1873, entry records that she "Wrote twenty-seven pages upon the blessings Christ pronounced upon the mount."² On February 7 she remarked "I again resumed my writing upon Spirit of Prophecy."³

cit., pp. 10, 11.

¹Ibid., p. 5 (Jan. 11).

²MS 4, 1873.

³Ibid.

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Though she often wrote in "the night seasons" or early in the mornings these were not exclusively her writing times. She would often write throughout the day as the following excerpts disclose:

I have felt drawn out in earnest petitions to God all day. In the early morning I wrote nine pages before breakfast and wrote many pages through the day. I spoke in the hall to a good congregation.

I felt most intensely upon some points, especially the inauguration of Christ, on the banks of Jordan, to His appointed work. The dedication of Christ was not to be mingled with any human agency. What an event was this--Christ entering upon his work with the seal of divinity upon Him!¹

I have just returned from Sherman Campmeeting. I felt so stupid, so lifeless, that although I slept well nights, I would as soon as I attempted to write, lose myself, nod, and make large scrawls with my pen. I tried to the uttermost of my power to change this condition of things and I could not. Days I could not make my brain work. All the noise and hammering had not the least effect on me; when I could write I was as one who heard not, and could write all day as fast as my pen could go over the paper, then again came this benumbing, stupiness that almost drove me distracted because I could not work. I had given up all thought of attending the meeting until I was so affected with this sleepiness, then I said I cannot endure this, I will go to the meeting.²

Ellen White, to the consternation of some Adventists, extended her writing activities into the hours of the Sabbath. Her diary contains this comment for Sabbath, May 31, 1873: "I have written twenty-two pages of matter in my copy book."³ The entry for a Sabbath in August of the same

¹MS 52, 1890 (Dec. 16).

²Ltr W-11-1891 (June 29).

³MS 7, 1873 (May 31).

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year reads as follows:

We devoted some time in prayer to God alone before breakfast. We had some assurance of His presence and of His grace. We wrote twenty-one pages of foolscap. We had no rest upon the Sabbath.¹

In response to a criticism over her Sabbath-keeping, Ellen White defended her practice by an appeal to the practice by the priests of Israel who offered sacrifices on Sabbath.

I have ever been particular in regard to the observance of the Sabbath in my conversation and actions. In regard to writing, I know my duty on that point. I am no more breaking the Sabbath in my writing than the priest who offered more sacrifices upon the Sabbath than upon any other days of the week.²

It was customary for Ellen White to use what she called "scratch books." These books or journals were of various kinds and sizes. Some were the simple exercise or writing tablets very similar to what may be found today where school supplies are sold. They were bound rather than loose-leaf and the page size was approximately 6 by 8 inches. She also wrote on diaries which were outdated. The size would correspond to what we would call foolscap today (8"x12") and is probably what Ellen White referred to when she spoke of so many pages of "foolscap" being written. The content varied within one day's entry, within one book, and between books. No order or arrangement is apparent within the journals which

¹MS 10, 1873 (Aug. 23).

²Ltr C-1-1873 (Nov. 12).

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remain for our study today. Evidently Ellen White picked up one and wrote on a topic and while this material was being copied she would use another one. The lack of a system or topical index made it difficult and time-consuming to locate the previous material on any given topic. Even the corrected copies were evidently stored in boxes without the use of an indexing system to facilitate retrieval.

I have today sent you a copy of the testimony given for you some time ago, read to you and Adelia in Oregon. I would not now have taken the pains to look through stored away copy to find this and copy it if I did not feel that it would be for your good to have it. I tried many times to find it but could not. I found it last Friday, after a long and diligent search. Please read it carefully.¹

The scratch books held DA material on various chapters. Writing to W. C. White, Ellen White described her writing method.

I write some every day on the life of Christ. One chapter sets my mind fresh upon other subjects so that I have several scratch books that I am writing upon.²

We may wish today she had been more careful about these writings. We have pages missing from some of the journals and also loose pages evidently cut out with a razor or knife from a journal. Most of the original text in its handwritten form no long exists. On the other hand we have much more of Ellen White's original or first copies than we have of many

¹Ltr V-8-1884 (Feb. 26).

²Ltr W-132-1893 (July 2).

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other writers whose works we treasure.

We can be thankful Ellen White made some effort to preserve her writings for her own use even if neither she nor her assistants established any orderly way to carry it out. She went so far as to request people to return her letters. She wrote to her son Edson, "Preserve all my letters. I may wish some selections from this for some purpose."¹ She asked the same of a church member and was careful to include her return address.

I sent you a letter written from Bourough Valley, but I did not copy it and there are some ideas which I wrote under the movings of the Spirit of God and I want to preserve them; therefore I wish you to return to me the letter. Address me: Mrs. E. G. White, Healdsburg, Cal., Box 65.

I seek to preserve every thought and every matter written when I am burdened and feel urged to write, and especially when the matter lays open before me as clearly as that did at the time I wrote. I wish it could have been received by you as truth, but as nothing seems to move you from your own determined purpose, I can say nothing further.²

This practice of preserving her writings upon a trust that others would return the original was begun early in Ellen White's writing career. In 1864 she included the following request in a letter: "Please copy and return this to me. I have to have a copy of all I send out that I can refer to the original if necessary."³

¹Letter to Edson and Emma, August 6, 1874.

²Ltr H-39-1888 (Aug. 29).

³Ltr I-15a-1864.

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It is clear that Ellen White preserved the writings of others as well. In covering this aspect of her writing methods it might be helpful also to include here her claims, denials, or references to the use of literary works in the production of her writings.

Ellen White's Use of Literary Sources. The records show that when James White was editing the Review Ellen White would spend time at the publishing house in Battle Creek, Michigan. The papers and journals coming to the editorial office provided a ready access to Christian articles and books. Several notes in her diary of 1873 refer to spending "some time in the office preparing matter for Reformer."¹ Ellen White had a "corner" in this health journal and she often included quotations from other writers, giving the name of the author and where the quotation could be found. When she and her husband were in the West the Review and Christian Weekly followed them.² She specifically mentioned in another journal entry how in visiting the home of Brother Kellogg she "borrowed a book to select piece for Reformer."³ In this same excerpt she speaks of spending the afternoon "at the

¹MS 5, 1873 (Mar. 23, 25).

²MS 9, 1873 (July 24)

³MS 5, 1873 (Mar. 26). In the entry for April 3, 1873, she mentioned the arranging of a room at the office where she could write without being interrupted. The next day she noted: "I took out pieces from papers worth preserving." (MS 6, 1873).

office selecting pieces for my department in Reformer."¹

The Reformer articles are not only unique in that they contain quotations from various authors and give the names and sources quoted, but she evidently gave someone else the right (at least in one instance) to change what she had written. In a letter to Dr. Kellogg she directed, "I send you article for next Reformer. It has been in testimonies which I have selected and arranged. You can cut down, change any portion of it, accept it or reject it as you choose."²

About six years earlier some of her readers were struck by the similarity of her material to that of other health reformers. Ellen White referred to this concern in the following comment which may be found in The Story of Our Health Message.

That which I have written in regard to health was not taken from books or papers. As I related to others the things which I had been shown, the question was asked, "Have you seen the paper, The Laws of Life of the Water Cure Journal?" I told them no, I had not seen either of the papers. Said they, "What you have seen agrees very much with much of their teachings." I talked freely with Dr. Lay and many others upon the things which had been shown me in reference to health. I had never seen a paper treating upon health.

After the vision was given me my husband was aroused upon the health question. He obtained books, upon our eastern journey, but I would not read them. My view was clear. And I did not want to read anything until I had fully completed my books. My views were written independent of books or of the opinions of others.³

¹Ibid.

²Ltr K-66-1878 (Feb. 6).

³MS 7, 1867, quoted by D. E. Robinson in The Story

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Later in her ministry she underscored the fact that her messages were of divine origin and in harmony with the Scriptures.

What a battle I am obliged to fight! My brethren seem to judge me as taking positions that are not necessary. They do not see that God in his own wisdom has made revelations to me which cannot successfully be contradicted or disputed. Nothing can rub out that which has been presented to me and imprinted on the tablets of my soul. All the oppositions or gainsaying to make my testimony of none effect only compels from me, by the urgency of the Spirit of God, a more decided repetition, and to stand on the light revealed with all the force of the strength God has given me. All the arguments of men, all their opposing influence, is of no force to me. . . .

Every word spoken is in harmony with the living Oracles, and it is only by wresting the Scriptures from their true meaning, by misapplying and misinterpreting them, and the testimonies which God has given me, that this can be gainsaid.¹

This same emphasis on the revelatory basis of her messages is found in a letter to a Bro. Larson.

I see that you regard my work and my mission as on a level with your own work. . . . When I stand before the people I do not stand in my own spirit. My words are not mine, but His who sent me, and has given me a message to bear. If you consider the words a rebuke, take them; for the Lord meant them to you as such.²

We must admit that the claims for the divine origin of her messages in the face of obvious use of literary sources does present a conundrum. I have not found it helpful to

of Our Health Message (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1943), p. 78.

¹MS 25, 1890

²Ltr L-18d-1890

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attempt a separation between her writings. Her own statements clearly indicate she did not make such a distinction with reference to the source behind them. To pick and choose among her written or spoken messages given in the context of public presentation or in private communications seems unwarranted. The following excerpt from a letter makes the point in a general way but there is no scarcity of such affirmations throughout her writings.¹

I took up this work, to be faithful in it as I would in the articles I write for our papers and the discourses given before the congregation. I must meet my work in the judgment.²

Further comment on this apparent inconsistency in Ellen White's statements in regard to the sources behind her writings may be found in the research report, particularly the last chapter. To attempt to solve the problem would take us beyond the scope of this research project.

Ellen White used what she called "scrapbooks" to preserve the items she copied from various books and papers she read. Apparently she also had scrapbooks containing her own compositions. She also stored her previously written materials in boxes. Marian Davis found this collection almost overwhelming when she was set out to gather together

¹Cf. Colporteur Ministry, p. 126 and Selected Messages, Book 3, pp. 121-124, as two samples of her views on this issue.

²Ltr W-81-1889.

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Ellen White's writings for the DA text.

You will perhaps remember some things I said last spring about the necessity of having the matter from articles and scrap-books, that might be available for use in the life of Christ, copied, so as to be convenient for reference. Perhaps you can imagine the difficulty of trying to bring together points relating to any subject, when these must be gleaned from thirty scrap books, a half dozen bound volumes, and fifty manuscripts, all covering thousands of pages.¹

Evidently somewhere among these items Ellen White was preserving her selections. In a letter written from Oakland, California, she mentioned the problem of preparing "a piece for the Reformer." In this connection she wrote: "Do not neglect to send my selections for I want them to use. Send my scrap books also."²

In my search for these "scrapbooks" and "bound volumes" I discovered only a few scrapbooks containing clippings from magazines. There were poems, sermons, stories, and miscellaneous excerpts on moral, religious, and educational topics, as well as on health and nature. In none did I find handwritten or typescript of her writings. Unless I missed something these scrapbooks did not contain materials from the "lives" she was consulting. The only bound volumes to be found were the diary journals. These number more than the "half dozen" Marian Davis used. We can only surmise that

¹Marian Davis to W. C. White, March 29, 1893.

²Ltr W-25-1877 (Oct. 16).

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the other scrapbooks have been lost. The additional journals could have been added in the years since Marian Davis started her compilation. It is also possible some journals contained other subject matter and were not counted in this listing of collected writings on the life of Christ. At any rate several of the diary journals which remain until today contain life of Christ matter.

It seems to me reasonable to assume that when Ellen White speaks of copying her own writings she is copying them in her journals or diaries. The disjunctive discourse may reflect these insertions though the lack of obvious arrangement could also reflect the frequent interruptions.

The following excerpt may be interpreted to support some such reconstruction of Ellen White's writing habits.

It is a foggy morning. A board is fastened against the wall, one for my husband and one for myself, that we can stand up and write instead of sitting down. I commenced to prepare matter for the Instructor. I wrote Brother Kellogg six pages of note paper. Sent my children four pages. Copied seven pages of matter I wished to preserve.¹

If Ellen White's use of the term "scrapbook" is understood not to apply to her diary journals but to those collections of stories and miscellaneous selections pasted into what we would recognize as scrapbooks, the quotation from a letter to a "Sister Laura Harper" is puzzling.

¹MS 3, 1873 (Jan. 7).

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Be not offended because I call you thus, for this is your true name. Since coming on this ground I find in my scrapbook a letter which should have been sent to you long ago. For some reasons it did not go to you, and I now write you a few lines. . . .

I write because I love your soul. I take no copy of this, and as you showed so little respect for my request in regard to my last letter, I shall not trust this with you. I send it to your father, and I want it returned to me. If you want to copy it, you may.¹

What are we to understand as to the form of the letter in the "scrapbook"? Had it been written directly on the page she would have had to copy it for mailing, and she does not refer to copying the letter from the scrapbook. Had it been in this form she would have had her copy in hand and would not have insisted they return her letter. We can only conclude that the letter was in her original handwriting and either lightly attached or, most likely, just "filed" between the pages of the scrapbook. Had it been in corrected form the original would have been with Ellen White's other materials and she would not have had to ask for the letter to be returned.

Perhaps our reconstruction is inaccurate. I find it difficult to make any other sense of her statement. At any rate we may conclude that some of her scrapbooks did contain her own writings in one form or another. No doubt they also contained as well, selections from the writings of others whether in paraphrased or in verbatim form.

¹Ltr H-51-1889 (May 19).

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It is also possible that Ellen White was not using her terms as technically and specifically as we have interpreted her to have. She also speaks of finding a letter in one of her "scratch books." In a note addressed to "Dear brethren Daniells, Colcord, Faulkhead, and Salisbury," she writes:

While examining my scratch books for an article which I wished to find, I came across the letter which I am sending to you. I supposed it had been copied and sent. I will have it copied and sent to you on the morrow. I dare not neglect this matter. I am sorry that for some reason there has been a delay.¹

Perhaps by "scratch books" here, as well as the "scrapbook" quotation mentioned above, she had in mind what we know as her diaries or journals.²

Since we have some of her diaries from this period we could possibly verify this assumption by looking there for a copy of this letter. The note appears to be dated January 13, 1897, but the letter to which it refers has been filed in the 1896 drawer. Evidently the copy of the letter has been preserved.

There is no problem with the manuscript material. Many of these still remain and Ellen White added to the number as she continued to prepare the DA text. Several manuscripts on the life of Christ from 1897 are still to be found among her writings.

¹Ltr D-27-1896 (Jan. 13, 1897).

²See earlier comment on "scratch books," pp. 144, 145.

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Ellen White has an intriguing statement in a letter to Elder Haskell written while she was working on the DA text. She had not time to make a copy and wanted him to copy the letter for her. Evidently he would return the original letter. The interesting comment is found in reference to the nature and source of the material she wished to preserve.

Brother Haskell, I have written this by lamplight, yesterday and this morning. If you cannot read every word then send it back and I will copy and return you a clean copy. If you can read it, copy it for me, for some things presented themselves as I wrote that I wish to preserve; they have helped me while writing. I have much good matter just come from Melbourne. I have no time to copy.¹ [Underlining supplied.]

We have already indicated above that Ellen White combined at times her writing on the life of Christ and her letters to denominational leaders. Some were later made into testimonies and some of this material was also selected by Marian Davis for the DA. Often these letters contained selections paraphrased from sources. With this general background in mind it is interesting to ponder the meaning of the phrase, "for some things presented themselves as I wrote," and also the comment, "I have much good matter just come from Melbourne." Does she refer to material from a book or to impressions from God? Could it be both? Was she impressed to select items from a source? And what is the "good matter" received from Melbourne? We shall have

¹Ltr H-251-1895 (May 31).

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occasion below to refer to Marian Davis' experiences in attending the meetings being held at Melbourne. Did Marian supply Ellen White with source materials for use in the writing on the life of Christ? The ambiguous quote raises some questions which cannot be answered with certainty without further evidence.

We do have specific references to several books used by Ellen White in writing on the life of Christ. In order to establish literary dependency one must not only be able to show textual similarities. There should also be some evidence to indicate the writer had access to editions of these works dating from an earlier time. In addition to the bibliographies developed from the documents prepared for establishing the estate of Ellen White at the time of her death, we have several notations from her writings which name specific books. The Ellen White Estate collected most of these references and has circulated them, at least since 1979.¹

As early as 1876 when she was working on the SP text Ellen White mentioned to either Mary Kelsey-White or Mary Clough that "You need not send Walks and Homes of Jesus," a topical book on the life of Christ by Daniel March.² Two

¹I refer here to books mainly on the life of Christ. See under footnote no. 1, page 108, for a partial listing of the Ellen G. White Estate documents providing this information.

²Ltr 27a, 1876.

years later in a letter to Mary White, W. C. White's first wife, she requested two books. "Send books, red-covered Jewish Antiquities and the Bible Dictionary. Is Night Scenes of the Bible there? If so, send it."¹

The general titles of the first two books mentioned make specific identification problematical. The first title could refer to the work by Josephus carrying the same name, and the second work could be Kitto's dictionary. Night Scenes is Daniel March's selection of episodes in the life of Jesus which took place at night. A general letter to her sons William and Edson includes the request to Mary White to "find me some histories of the Bible that would give me the order of events."²

Several books are mentioned by W. C. White in a letter to B. L. Whitney who was connected with the publishing office in Basel, Switzerland, which handled the French and German editions of Ellen White's life of Christ.

I also enclose a list of books prepared by Sister Davis which she wishes to have examined by some of your party that we may know if any of them will be valuable to us in our Bible study or the preparation of articles on Bible subjects. After reading the memoranda as prepared by Sister Davis I see there is little I need to say. Perhaps you will want some of these in the office library. . . .

You will note what they say about the cuts in Farrar's Life of Christ. This is just the way they

¹Ltr 60, 1878.

²Ltr 38, 1885.

talked at first about those in the Child's Life of Christ. . . .

Please buy of Cassell one set [of] Wylie's Prot., one Hanna's Life of Christ, and for your library I think you would do well to have a set of Geikie's Hours With the Bible. If you have not already obtained them in New York, you ought to inquire for, and purchase for your library, The Temple and its Services, Jewish Social Life, Andrew's Life of Our Lord, a good harmony of the Gospels, and other works that will be useful to your wife in preparing notes for the Sabbath School lessons. She ought to have a copy of the latest and best Bible dictionary.¹

Here we see reference to several lives of Christ, a history of the Protestant reformation, and Edersheim's history and background to the Old Testament. Apart from the work of Child and Wiley's church history text we will meet all these books in the literary source studies made on the 15 chapters of the DA. We have no idea to which work Ellen White refers in the following note taken from her letter to Elder Littlejohn.

I received your present of the book entitled "Life of Christ" and thank you for the gift. I have been so overloaded with cares and responsibilities, having had so much writing and speaking to do, that I have not yet had time to read the book.²

While we have not found references to all the "lives" or sermons Ellen White evidently consulted in her writings on the life of Christ, it is clearly evident by her general remarks and specific references to books on the topic that

¹W. C. White Letter Book A-2 (Jan. 16, 1887), pp. 74-76.
²Ltr L-48-1894 (June 3).

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she made use of the writings of others in the composition of her own. Marian Davis admits that "In the order of chapters we followed Andrew's Harmony, as given in his life of Christ. He is generally regarded as the very best authority, and is quoted by leading writers."¹ That she would find such writings helpful is only to be expected of one who was convinced she was "a poor writer."²

In the foregoing discussion we have attempted to present Ellen White as a writer, using her own claims and those who worked closely with her. Our purpose has been to provide the context for understanding why the study was designed the way it was and to provide some background for looking at the sources Ellen White used. The focus centered on Ellen White as writer. In view of the fact that she used others in the production of her works, it is possible that further insight might be provided by approaching the basic issue from the other side. By noting what she required of her assistants we may come to better understand what work Ellen White did not undertake, whether or not, given the time, she could have done it. We may also discover those tasks which Ellen White clearly felt she did not have the ability to perform. In either case we can reasonably assume that Ellen White

¹Marian Davis to C. H. Jones, Nov. 23, 1896 (W. C. W. Letter Book 10-A, p. 17a).

²Ltr P-67-1894 (Jan. 18) to W. W. Prescott.

fulfilled those writing responsibilities not given to her helpers. We therefore turn our attention to the work of these literary assistants.

The Work of Ellen White's Secretaries

Ellen White, during the many years of active participation in the leadership (though indirectly) of the early Adventist Church, employed many assistants of various kinds. The need for help increased as her travel took on international scope, her book production expanded, and after her life companion, James White, died in 1881.

Judging from her many statements on the work of her literary assistants one cannot avoid the impression that it was in connection with her publishing activities that she felt her greatest vulnerability. Ellen White entertained no illusion over her writing skills. She knew she did not have the education required to prepare articles and books. At the same time, the nature of her writings and the authority she felt they should carry if she were to be faithful to her God-given duty required that she maintain the control over the literary productions which carried her name. That tension created by the need to depend upon others yet not surrender the independence of the text is not only felt in her use of sources but also in the use of literary

assistants. We shall have occasion in our survey of the various tasks her assistants fulfilled, to sense this tension and note how she endeavored to balance the two demands. We shall look at their activities as copyists, reporters, and editors of articles and books.

The copyists and their work. One of the earliest copyists was Lucinda Hall,¹ a friend of Ellen White. For a time "Brother and Sister Van Horn" were copying an article on the temptation of Christ for publication.² Sister Van Horn also copied material for the SP text.³ We read of a Mary Smith Abbey who attended Ellen White on one of her journeys. Of her work Ellen White wrote, "I thought she would be a good copyist, good singer and serviceable in many ways."⁴ Before coming to the East Mary Clough was doing some copying.⁵

Ellen White expected her copyists to make corrections. She desired others who checked her work to also make corrections. It was a disappointment for her when they did not improve her composition. James White and Elder Waggoner both proved to be poor copiers in Ellen White's view.

Matter at Petaluma was needed for labor there next week. I put copy in Elder Waggoner's hand to copy. He just did a miserable job. He did not change anything or

¹Ltr W-17-1871 (Nov. 10).

²Ltr W-5-1874 (Jan. 23).

³Ltr W-16-1874 (Feb. 24).

⁴Ltr W-47-1878 (Aug. 28).

⁵Ltr 4, 1876 (Apr. 7). Mary Clough, a niece of Ellen White, was not an Adventist.

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improve it at all. I prize Mary more and more every day.¹

We are driving matters on testimonies. Tell me how it comes out. I want to know how it reads. Is the composition passable? Father does not make any changes and my copist [sic] will follow copy precisely even to wrong spelling although both have been teachers.²

We have no interest here to record the names of all those who served Ellen White as copyists. A few more notations may, however, give us a better grasp of what Ellen White expected of them.

Ellen White wanted her copyist to correct spelling and general sentence construction, in addition to copying the material on the "calligraph" or typewriter.³ She did not expect them to add to the text. In a letter to Marian Davis over the difficulties being experienced with Fannie Bolton we catch a glimpse of the work of a copyist even though Fannie Bolton had other responsibilities as well.

Fannie, poor soul, does not know herself. I have talked with her, and told her that I must know of what she complains in the work she has had to do. She must tell me the real cause for all this disaffection, but all she could say was that sometimes I left sentences incomplete. I reminded her, that I was often interrupted in my writing, and sometimes in the middle of a sentence, and that when I resumed the work I would go right on, not noticing the incomplete sentence. But I had told her that when this occurred she might either hand the matter to me or else strike it out and go on. Doing as much writing as I do, it is not surprising if there are many sentences left unfinished.⁴

¹Ltr 59, 1876 (Apr. 8).

²Ltr W-62-1878 (Dec. 19).

³Cf. Ltr W-117-1893 (July 12).

⁴Ltr D-103-1895 (Nov. 12). The problem between Ellen

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The copyists had the liberty to correct the sentences, even to omitting the incomplete sentences if Ellen White was not around to finish the expression. From this we may deduce that Ellen White was practical in her approach. We know from other comments that she was aware of her tendency at times to repeat herself. The reading and proof-checking by Ellen White and her associates would also provide a control on whether, in the case of omission, the remaining text made sense.

Ellen White felt free to call upon her children to help in the task of copying. In one letter addressed to "Dear Children" a passing remark with reference to copying gives us a clue on how to evaluate the content of her letters.

I shall send you in this letter copies of letters written to Dr. Kellogg because I have not time to copy one. These letters I ask you to copy and send to him, and you can take copies for yourself. Send me a copy, for I wish to preserve all I write except such letters as I write to you now. . . .

I am so tired today--brain tired--I cannot write much, but the copy of letters sent you will perhaps make up for the lack of my writing personally to you. I am always glad to receive your letters.¹

I have not made a thorough study of all the letters

White and Fannie Bolton will be alluded to in other quotations to follow. For those interested in reading more about the claims and counter-claims to be found in the letters of Ellen White and Fannie Bolton the White Estate has further information available. Alice Gregg has written an account of the story in "Fannie's Folly," Adventist Currents, Vol. 1, No. 2, Oct., 1983.

¹Ltr W-161-1896 (Nov. 23).

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which remain from Ellen White's extensive correspondence. This notation that excludes "such letters as I write to you" may indicate that she considered her family correspondence to be outside the limits of her messages from the Lord. If this distinction is maintained by Ellen White it would offer some guidance for those compiling her material as counsel to the church. Obviously the letters to her children are important for the reconstruction of the history and background to Ellen White's other writings and activities.

Thus far we have been discussing the work of the copyists. Often the task of copying went hand in hand with work that also demanded some compositional skills. One job demanding speed and accuracy as well as writing ability was that of reporting.

The copyist as reporter. One of the earliest references to Ellen White's workers serving as reporters appears in a letter to Lucinda Hall. In this comment we are not told if the reports included quotations from the addresses of Ellen White. That the papers are newspapers of the day and not Adventist journals appears clear from Ellen White's reference to "reporters" and giving the count as 32.

Mary [Clough] worked early and late. She reported for thirty-two important papers. We had no idea she was getting so much work on her hands, but as soon as it was known by her articles the ability of her pen, she was beset by reporters to furnish reports for the various papers in which they were interested until it reached

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this number. She wrote constantly--reports varying in matter and size to accommodate different papers.¹

While Ellen White was in Australia Maggie Hare served as a reporter. When the work became too much for Miss Hare alone to handle, or when there were other writing demands to occupy her time, Emily Campbell, Ellen White's bookkeeper and secretary filled in.

We have nothing to do to call Emily off from her work. She has been at her bookkeeping. She does nothing at housework. Maggie Hare goes with me and takes my talks and writes them out.²

We are in the midst of stirring times just now. Brother Shannon, who lives in Sydney, has been arrested and prosecuted for working on Sunday. . . . My secretary, Sister Emily Campbell, was also present to take shorthand notes of the proceedings. If I can get the reports from the secular papers, I will send them to you.³

Maggie Hare also reported the lectures of W. W. Prescott. In the following portion of a letter to Edson White we also may note Ellen White's keen evaluation of Prescott's sermons. No doubt Ellen White at times drew from such sources for her writings even as she took from the writings of others when she viewed their comments as carrying the stamp of Heaven's approval. It is regrettable that this investigation could not include a serious search of Adventist writers and speakers for possible source parallels.

¹Ltr H-62-1876 (Sept. 29).

²Ltr W-142-1894 (Feb. 12).

³Ltr H-30-1894 (Aug. 13).

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There simply was no time to stretch the project's scope to this extent.

In the evening Professor Prescott gave a most powerful discourse, instruction precious as gold. The tent was full, and many were standing outside. All seemed to be fascinated with the word of God as the speaker presented the truth in new lines, separating the truth from the companionship of error, and by the divine influence of the Spirit of God making it to shine like precious jewels. . . .

Seldom can I give myself the pleasure of listening to discourses from our ministering brethren; but Sabbath forenoon I attended the meeting and heard Professor Prescott preach. I know that since coming to this place he has had the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; his lips have been touched with a live coal from off the altar. We know and can distinguish the voice of the true Shepherd. The truth has been poured forth from the lips of the servant of God as the people had never heard it before; unbelievers turn pale and say, That man is inspired. . . . Maggie Hare, my reporter and typewriter, has been taking the discourses of Professor Prescott and writing them out so that they may be published in pamphlet or tract form.¹

The move from reporter to an editor of journal articles was no doubt only one of degree. Clearly the composition of a newspaper report involved some skill in arrangement and an ability to grasp and hold the reader's attention. Ellen White, however, apparently saw these various responsibilities as differing, particularly in the amount of trust she found necessary to invest in the worker. Because of her evident distinctions also between the editing of articles and books we will treat these two activities as separate ones. The similarities between these two applications of editorial

¹Ltr W-82-1895 (Nov.).

skills will mean some overlap or duplication of Ellen White comment in the two final subsections of this chapter.

The editors of journal articles. Ellen White seems to have had no difficulty with her letters. She was satisfied that they adequately expressed her thoughts and needed only copying and correction of the obvious errors of punctuation, spelling, and fundamental grammar. Evidently she was not seriously concerned over their compositional arrangement since they were not written for publication. It was an altogether different matter when it came to her articles and especially in respect to her books which we shall cover in the next section.

When Ellen White first prepared articles and books for publication she had the assistance of James White, her children, and Mary Clough. A diary entry in 1872 gives the following account: "Read my manuscript to my husband and corrected it for printer."¹ Another journal note states: "I looked over my writings with my husband. Prepared twenty pages of manuscript for a printer."² One more entry around the middle of the year had Ellen White reading over a manuscript for the Review and correcting it while on the way to the post office. The context indicates her husband was riding alongside her and evidently looking over the text with

¹MS 4, 1872 (Sunday, July 28).

²MS 4, 1873 (Sabbath, Feb. 8).

her.¹ On one occasion when James White was away she took her pamphlet on "Sufferings of Christ" to the Review office for Uriah Smith to "criticize."² W. C. White's wife, Mary Kelsey White, was also brought into the work of "reading proof and preparing matter for paper."³ Her children had the freedom to take available material and construct articles for the Reformer. In one case she attached this note to a letter to Edson and Emma:

P.S. If my manuscript does not come in time for the Reformer, select from the matter written to the office or that I have sent you some things that will be appropriate upon health reform, or bearing upon it.⁴

Ellen White seems to have been confident in her ability to recognize when the work was done properly even though she did not have the skills to arrange the text. In one instance she wrote her husband: "This was rather a trying subject to write upon, but Mary and I have read it over this afternoon, and pronounce it excellent, excellent."⁵

The articles took less editing than did the preparation of books. A work similar to editing articles was involved in preparing, on occasion, rather lengthy letters which Ellen White wrote to several church leaders. Part of the content of one letter would be left out of the same when addressed to

¹MS 9, 1873 (Tuesday, July 22).

²Ltr W-44-1874 (July 17).

³Ltr W-5-1876 (Apr. 11).

⁴Ltr W-14-1872.

⁵Ltr W-15-1876 (Apr. 27).

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another individual. An example of this type of editing may be noted in her instructions to W. C. White.

Willie, I did not expect to write so long a letter, but I trace out this matter as I have now. If you will put this into Fanny's hands, and let her put it into shape, cutting out the stove business and anything you deem best, I will make this letter serve so that it will save me writing to Elder Haskell and some other long letters. Please consider this, and if Fanny arranges it in shape, send it back to me.¹

Fannie Bolton had the job of preparing the articles for the church papers from the writings or "articles" of Ellen White. The diary entry for July 5, 1893, records that Ellen White "arose early" in the "morning to prepare and complete articles to send to Fannie for the papers, articles on the life of Christ for Marian, letters for Willie."² Marian Davis was working on the DA text.

The nature and extent of editorial work needed to put Ellen White's work in shape for publishing is not clearly described. We get one account of this work in a letter of Ellen White to Elder Olsen. In the following excerpt Ellen White was giving an account of what George Starr told her Fannie had said.

Brother Starr came to me and talked with me in reference to things Fanny had said to him. He said he was reading from the testimonies, and making remarks in regard to the clear light presented before them for us in these last days, and spoke of the beautiful language used in a certain testimony. Fannie took him after

¹Ltr W-74-1892 (Oct. 10).

²MS 81, 1893 (July 5).

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meeting and asked him, If he thought it was right to give all the credit to Sister White, and make no mention of the workers, Marian and herself. She said the ideas and preparations of the articles were almost entirely changed from the writings of Sister White. That her writings came in such a shape that they had to be made all over and that she got all the credit, and those who were engaged in fitting up these articles received no recognition. Elder Starr said he met her squarely, and said, What do you mean by saying these things to me? He said it went like a dagger to his heart. She has talked these things to Marian and Marian I fear has been led into much of the same views, but has not done to the extent of Fannie. . . .¹

Some time later Ellen wrote a letter to Marian Davis giving more details of how Fannie had modified her writings. From these remarks of Ellen White we are able better to understand what these literary assistants were expected to do and what they were forbidden to do.

She had underscored some words in a book "Christian Education," "beautiful words," she called them, and said that she had put in those words, they were hers. If this were the truth, I ask, Who told her to put in her words in my writings. She has, if her own statement is correct, been unfaithful to me.

Sister Prescott however says that, in the providence of God that very article came to them (Brother and Sister Prescott) uncopied and in my own handwriting, and that these very words were in that letter. So Fannie's statement regarding these words is proved to be untrue.²

In this instance Ellen White insists that Fannie Bolton "claims that she has done the very things in my service I have told her in no case to do, that she has substituted her words for my words."³

¹Ltr O-59-1894 (Feb. 5).

²Ltr D-102-1895 (Oct. 29).

³Ibid.

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It is in the context of these problems between Ellen White and Fannie Bolton that Ellen White admitted her need for literary assistants. Writing to Miss Bolton Ellen White asserted:

I am sincerely sorry that I could not place in your hands articles fully prepared for the press. I have furnished one to work the typewriter and you were to prepare these articles for the press. Unfortunately I could not do this part of the work. If I could have done it, your services would not have been required.

I am sorry, truly sorry that I have not done better work, but your course of action has been such a mystery to me and so uncalled for that it has been a great discouragement to me.¹

Some months earlier when Fannie was not feeling well enough to work Ellen White wrote to Dr. J. H. Kellogg, "I am in need of editors to prepare manuscripts for the press. Persons to run the typewriter I can obtain, but these do not reach the demand."²

Ellen White did not give us the details of what the editors were to do apart from the correction of the sentences and the arrangement of the material. Some further understanding of what the editors did will be provided by Marian Davis' descriptions of her work. The one thing these literary assistants were not authorized to do was change the language. Ellen White was concerned that the writings remain hers. If it could be successfully argued that the writings

¹Ltr B-9a-1895 (Nov. 11).

²Ltr K-44-1895 (Aug. 29).

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were the products of her helpers rather than herself the writings would lose their special authority. It is this fear that seemed to drive Ellen White almost to despair. Note the following comment to the General Conference president.

I am now brought where I lie [sic] down my pen. I cannot write even on the Life of Christ, until I understand whether my writing is to come forth with Fannie's ideas and language, or with Marian's ideas and fixing up and the productions are claimed to be Marian's and Fannie's. Let this impression be made on the minds of our ministers, and of what value or force will the testimonies be to them. I will say no more now.¹

This concern over the reception of her writings as the expression of revelations from God would appear to lie behind these words written to Marian Davis.

But when she takes the position that she has made my books, my articles and is responsible for the beautiful language, it is evident that Satan can through her do me any amount of harm. She can do more to implant doubts and sow seeds of evil than any person I know. She is a dangerous helper to me.²

It seems clear to me that Ellen White was worried over the danger of emptying the messages of their power through her dependence upon the writing abilities of others. Notice how she was concerned that the books and articles not be taken as "largely" the work of others and thus she fail in what she sensed was her duty. She wrote to Fanny Bolton:

I must have an opportunity to have my writings prepared by some other hand than yours, that not one jot

¹Ltr O-59-1894 (Feb. 5).

²Ltr D-102-1895 (Oct. 29).

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or title [sic] of your valuable talent shall be mingled with the things I feel it is my duty to write. I must arrange matters so that your talent shall not be counted with my articles and book-making as to be considered as largely your work.¹ [Emphasis supplied.]

In my judgment it is basically this same burden of Ellen White's over the reception of her writings as messages from the Lord that led her not to fully disclose her dependency on literary sources. The issue of outside human influence will surface again in connection with those who helped Ellen White produce her books. Let us therefore turn to the work of her book editors.

Ellen White's "bookmakers." In view of the major thrust of this research project, it is fitting that we complete the introduction of this report with a discussion of the role of Ellen White's "bookmakers."

One of Ellen White's earliest extended comments on her need for editorial assistance appears in reference to her efforts to prepare manuscripts for the last volume in the Spirit of Prophecy series.

¹Ltr B-9a-1895 (Nov. 11). I have selected only those comments from Ellen White's letters which addressed the work of the editors and her concern for the integrity of the writings as productions directed by the Holy Spirit. I have purposely excluded the claims of Fannie Bolton because the whole question of Fannie Bolton's consistency in making her claims would have to be addressed. I have also endeavored to omit all unnecessary comment of Ellen White in regard to Fannie Bolton's statements and charges. The reader may consult the references given under footnote 4, page 163 above, for the complete story.

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I sent word that I could furnish material for Volume 4 [Spirit of Prophecy], but I must have been wild. Father needs a great deal of my time, and should I attempt to write, I must give my whole time to it. Heretofore I have had a copyist who took charge of all the proofs and who furnished a very nice copy.

You well know my deficiency in this respect. It is a great task for me to arrange my matter to be placed in the hands of the printer without any aid in the matter. If I could do as I have done, write and have a competent copyist prepare my writing for the press, I could do considerable. But as it is, I dare not promise copy to get out a form oftener than once in two weeks, even if I can do that. I will give time and attention to Father. He needs me. He has not society here as he would have at Oakland or Battle Creek. I am his constant companion in riding and by the fireside. Should I go, shut myself up in a room and leave him sitting alone, he would become nervous and restless. . . .

My health is good, but there has been such a strain on my mind in regard to Mary [Clough?] and her work. I cannot tell much about proof sheets. That great batch sent us confused me and I could not tell what to do. Father did not seem to care to perplex his mind about it. Henceforth while you are right at the heart of the work, where there are good proof readers, tell them to be critical, and send me the forms for last reading. You must, there at Battle Creek, take the burdens on yourselves. If I had Lucinda I could then be fitted with some help, but I have no one now, not one.¹ [Emphasis supplied.]

Ellen White set forth four needs in this lengthy statement from a letter to W. C. White. At that time she required copyists, help in arranging her material, and proofreaders. Finally she needed to see the text for the last reading. For it to be her writing she would need to approve the text before printing. When it came to the details of the printing process she was perfectly willing to

¹Ltr W-4d-1878 (Jan. 22).

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leave those matters in the hands of William her son and the publishers, as the following note clearly reveals.

We are glad to hear from you, but in relation to printing, binding, electrotyping and the sizes of edition of books, you that live at the great market can judge much better than I can. As far as I have any official duty in these matters, will simply say that you and those associated together in the work are at liberty to act your own judgment. My interest in the prosperity of the work prompts me to say this knowing that I should be liable to come to wrong conclusions, being ignorant of those particulars necessary to make up proper judgment.¹

William and his wife were in Battle Creek and could make the decisions in respect to the printing. Though Marian Davis had not yet joined Ellen White's staff, she was working at the "Review Office." Ellen White suggested that her son turn over the strict editing work to her and Mary Clough since he carried the responsibility to oversee the printing aspect of the book production. We read in her letter to W. C. White:

I have been broken in upon very many times, but I send it to you. Read it over and put it in the hand of Sister Marian Davis to copy. She is a critical examiner of articles. Tell her to improve it if she sees where it should be improved. I think it would be a task for you to do this with all your other cares.²

Ellen White trusted William White's judgment of matters related to the printing, and we shall note below that she desired his input on reviewing the text as well. She looked

¹Ltr W-5-1878 (Jan. 24).

²Ltr W-4b-1878 (Jan. 12).

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to him to evaluate the suggestions of others, yet she never surrendered her role of overall supervision and approval, even though in this instance she was in California writing and the book was being put together in Michigan. She had Mary Clough with her to help with putting the proof sheets together for final approval.

We present another lengthy quote from a letter to her son where she described the plan we have just outlined.

I will write on Volume IV and be company for Father.

My health is good. I can perform a great amount of labor. I sent for my manuscript to publish my book here, but I have more fully considered the matter. Mary Clough has promised to copy for me. If she is with me we can publish the book at Battle Creek and she can keep straight all the perplexing matters of proof sheets. You can do it better at Battle Creek than they can in this office, and with a saving of expense to us. Will you write us, children, at once, and tell us what you think of this matter? When would it be wisdom to print this book? You have critical proofreaders and good critics that would make it safer, we think, than to have it done here. We shall not be in Oakland when the book is published. We would feel as safe to trust the mails to Michigan as from here to Oakland. Lucinda thought it a good plan to set the book up in wide measure for Signs, and then make it up in pamphlet. But the last five weeks spent in Oakland has led me to distrust the efficiency of those in the office to take the charge of so important a book. What do you say?

We think you did right in working up as far as you could in the pamphlet setting ahead of Volume IV. We think the book all right. Go ahead and send us a few more copies at once.¹

Before the end of the year Ellen White asked for Marian Davis to become her literary helper in producing her books.

¹Ltr W-16-1878 (Mar. 13).

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She made it clear that she desired Marian Davis' "judgment of composition [sic]." Others could do the copying.¹ Marian Davis apparently joined the work force sometime between 1878 and 1883 when we read of Ellen White's refusal to attempt a "critical" reading of Sketches from the Life of Paul. Writing to W. C. White she made her point:

I am using my head some now. Yesterday for the first time wrote a few pages on my book. Life of Paul has just come to hand. Makes a neat book. Marian expects me to read it through critically, but I can do no such thing. If those who have read it cannot do this, it will go, for I would not trust my head or memory.²

It bears notice here that Ellen White was not refusing to give the work a final reading. It is the critical reading to which she was objecting. No doubt Marian Davis as a new member of the team did not yet feel confident to take over the responsibility for approving matters of spelling, syntax, construction, and other details of this kind. We shall see no such hesitancy on her part when the DA text requires this same careful scrutiny.

While Ellen White was attending meetings in Battle Creek she wrote Marian Davis that she was willing to pick up some additional workers from Michigan. One might well imagine how overwhelmed Marian Davis must have felt when she received the letter with W. C. White's intents for the winter's work load.

¹Ltr W-62-1878 (Dec. 19).

²Ltr W-21-1883 (June 13).

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Willie has been telling what is to be done this winter in the book preparation. Volume one is to be revised, Volume Two and Three to be revised and additions made. Volume Four to be finished. There are other works to be prepared.

Now, Marian, had I not better secure help from Battle Creek? I could get Sister Burnham; shall I? Can you work with her? Can she prepare copy for printer? Set her on one branch of the work, you on another. Is there any one you would choose to help you prepare copy? Will you write freely and frankly what you think about this matter? There is much to be done. Mother's influence, book on temperance, and one on the law. I want these works hastened out as soon as possible.¹

I seriously doubt that Ellen White or her son envisioned the Conflict of the Ages series when he proposed the revisions of the four volumes of the SP text.

The two years Ellen White was in Europe demanded much from her in the way of traveling and speaking. She was also anxious to have her writings translated into French and German.² In the following selections from what we think were letters to Edson White we have a brief description of how Ellen White organized her European staff.

Our family consists of Brother and Sister Ings, W. C. White, Mary K. White and Mabel White, Marian Davis, Sarah McEnterfer and a hired girl that speaks only German and French. Brother and Sister Mason we will have in our family. . . .

Sarah takes dictation from W. C. W. and writes out the Discourses I Have given which she has taken in shorthand. Sister Ings is following Marian and taking off on calligraph the chapter for Volume One. My time, when able to write, has been upon that book. I wish to get all the matter in shape for the printers if possible

¹Ltr D-16-1883 (Nov. 2).

²Ltr W-72a-1886.

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before leaving Basel. Mary White takes care of baby and is preparing morning talks that have been given in Battle Creek, and in other places.¹

Sister Ings is writing on the calligraph for Marian, getting copy all ready for printers. Mary White has every moment employed in writing, preparing manuscript, reading proof, when she is not compelled to take care of her children.²

As Ellen White's letter indicates and as we pointed out in our review of the history of the DA text in the earlier part of this chapter, the two years spent in Europe were largely spent on the revision of SP, Vol. I. To put it another way, they were working on the text of Patriarchs and Prophets. We have no special reason to conclude that Marian Davis' role expanded during the European tour. According to both Ellen White's and Marian Davis' letters dating from 1893 and 1892 onward, respectively, Ellen White's "bookmaker" appears to have exercised greater initiative after they arrived in Australia.

Marian Davis, then seriously working on the DA text, was concerned over a possible violation of copyright laws. We read of her apprehension in a letter to W. C. White.

One thing more: Since Revell copyrighted the book, "Steps to Christ" before arrangements were made to reserve the right of using any of the matter in "Life of Christ," ought there not to be some understanding with him as soon as possible? It would be quite a task, after the book is completed to remove from L. C. all the sentences and paragraphs that have been used in "Steps."

¹Ltr W-81-1887 (Unclassified L-81-1887).

²Ltr W-82-1887.

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And as I have said before, in one case--possibly two--I shall want to use rather more than a page from "Steps."¹

I did not follow the case to see how the problem was solved. The copyrighted material must have been released because material for Steps appears in the DA text.

Ms. Davis also felt free to make suggestions to Ellen White on what needed to be included in the new work on the life of Christ. Because, as we shall have reason to discuss later, Ellen White was charged with succumbing to the influence of others, her response to Marian Davis' proposals are of interest.

Marian specifies chapters and subjects for me to write upon that I do not see really need to be written upon. I may see more light in them. These I shall not enter upon without the Lord's Spirit seems to lead me. The building a tower, the war of kings, these things do not burden my mind, but the subjects of the life of Christ, his character representing the Father, the parables essential for us all to understand and practice the lessons contained in them, I shall dwell upon.²

In this comment we are able to catch a glimpse of Ellen White's principle of selection. She was not attempting to cover the entire life of Christ. She was concentrating on certain topics which in her judgment had practical value for Christian living. One may wonder how she was impressed by "the Lord's Spirit." She did not mention here how her past (or then present) visions impacted on her choices of topics.

¹Marian Davis to W. C. White, April 3, 1892.

²Ltr W-131-1893 (June 15).

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Perhaps Ellen White is influenced in a major way through her earlier writings which Marian Davis "under great difficulties," was "gathering . . . a little here and little there, to arrange as best she can."¹ If she was impressed once before to write on a given subject, no doubt Ellen White would not have needed further direction to include that material which met the general objectives of this book for colporteurs. The same might be said for topics addressed in Ellen White's letters.

In a letter to Dr. J. H. Kellogg, Ellen White expanded on the nature of Marian Davis' task.

Marian greedily grasps every letter I write to others in order to find sentences that she can use in the Life of Christ. She has been collecting everything that has a bearing on Christ's lessons to His disciples, from all possible sources.²

A reference to the life of Christ which Ellen White at one time felt would meet the need of a particular individual would no doubt serve the benefit of many more readers. These previous comments on the ministry of Christ provided text materials for Marian Davis to use and also suggested some of the topics to be included in the DA text. The following comment speaks to this point.

We sent the letter for Sydney workers to Bro. McCullagh. It was so good, I must keep all the general for my scrap books. Of late I have been using the

¹Ltr O-55-1894 (June).

²Ltr K-41-1895 (Oct. 25).

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matter gleaned from late letters, testimonies, etc. Have found some of the most precious things, some in those letters to Eld. Corliss. They have been to me like a storehouse of treasures. There's something in these personal testimonies that are written with deep feeling, that comes close to the heart. It seems to me that things gathered in this way give a power and significance to the book that nothing else does. I hope the one who copies will not forget to send me a copy of everything.¹

We have already commented on the sources where Ms. Davis obtained her basic text for compiling the DA. We learn something about the difficulties of this work from the larger context from which the earlier quote was taken.²

You will perhaps remember some things I said last spring about the necessity of having the matter from articles and scrap-books, that might be available for use in the life of Christ, copied, so as to be convenient for reference. Perhaps you can imagine the difficulty of trying to bring together points relating to any subject, when these must be gleaned from thirty scrap books, a half dozen bound volumes, and fifty manuscripts, all covering thousands of pages. Last spring an effort was made to have matter copied, but there was time to make only a beginning, or at least the work was far from being completed, as May Israel spent most of her time in copying in the MS of the sermon on Mount, which has never been completed. When she came to the school, there seemed no way of getting mine [sic] copying done, so I worked along in the old way. But while I can do tolerably well with some subjects, on which the matter is readily accessible, there are others that it is almost impossible to deal with in that way. I get so confused, hunting around in such a mass of matter,--it is impossible to bring subjects together so as to see the connection. I feel that I cannot do justice to the work in this way. I do not feel free to hire copying done, without authorization from those who have to bear the expense. I think you will see that the

¹Marian Davis to Ellen White, Nov. 25, 1895.

²See page 151 above.

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copying already done is of comparatively little value unless the work can be completed, so that I can have the matter all together, and be released from the ever-recurring task of hunting over the scrap-books and MSS.

When I first began work on the life of Christ, I suggested that it would be better to have matter copied as I now prepare, but it was thought that it would be better to work from an index, to save expense of copying. An index served very well on Steps to Christ, the book being small, and on a connected line of thought. Yet it would have been much better in the end, had I worked on the other plan, as I had to copy a great amount of matter with lead pencil, and all that was unused was worthless, not being in shape for further use.

Again, there are a number of chapters prepared that have not been copied. It would be a great help to get these done.

I wish I could give you an estimate of the amount of time that will be required for the work prepared. For the matter for use,--the selections, it seems to me a week or two would be amply sufficient. Perhaps less time, as we have so much already done. I think May Israel copied on that work only two or three days, and she was just beginning to use the typewriter but she copied a large amount of matter.

One thing I would prepare to do to save copying would be to buy two sets of Testimonies and cut them up.

. . .

While it will take some time and expense to carry out the plan proposed, I fully believe that it will, in the end, be a saving of both. The time I now spend in hunting over articles,--and with meager results,--is simply astonishing.

When I begin to talk of these perplexities, the frequent response is, "You need a rest." I think you understand the situation sufficiently to know that there is no rest that can be compared to that found in having your work arranged so as to produce the best results; and there is nothing so harassing as toil put forth in vain.

One thing more--as to why so much more is needed for life of Christ than for previous books, the material is much more abundant, the range of subjects, much greater; the work demands more in every way.¹

¹Marian Davis to W. C. White, Mar. 29, 1893.

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Marian had written to Ellen White a few days earlier requesting some help in the copying.

Would it be all right for me to have Sr. Tenney copy some of the chapters in Life of Christ? It is hard to work in advance when all my MS is in shape so difficult to refer to. Can't tell what has been introduced and what has not. Thought it might be a help to get the MS copied.¹

If our reconstruction is correct the earlier materials were either cut out of early publications or fragments were copied out and pasted into scrapbooks without being indexed or located according to subject. Apparently Marian went through the scrapbooks and selected the materials according to topic and then had one of her assistants type up these items. Once she had the typed material on a given subject she would work these fragments into a connected narrative and send the rough draft of the chapter to Ellen White. This procedure required a close working arrangement with Ellen White even while her work took her to various parts of Australia, New Zealand, and Tasmania.

Many thanks for your kind letters. We appreciate them highly, and yet for the sake of giving to you time to write on the life of Christ, we will not ask for long letters, just a line to tell us how you are. . . .

We now have all the chapters copied that are prepared on Life of Christ. I sent you two packages by this mail. Have a few more that I will send later. Now we are finishing up the Sermon on the Mount, copying what we did not have time to do when May I. was at Preston. Soon she will have the fragments also copied,

¹Marian Davis to Ellen White, Mar. 16, 1893.

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and then I shall be ready to begin work again on the chapters.¹

The rough chapter outlines required sections to be filled in, links to be supplied, and Ellen White would add comment by way of extending her earlier remarks or introducing new material on related topics suggested by the scriptural content.

Perhaps several selections from Marian Davis' letters to Ellen White presented in chronological sequence over a period of several months will allow us to grasp a better idea of how the flow of text between these two women gradually moved the DA toward completion.

As I read over the new chapters in LC, they seem very precious to me,--the lessons of hope and faith, the love and tenderness of the Saviour, and I feel anxious that the book should go to the people. I pray that God will give you strength, and will give grace and wisdom to me. I am so glad that he is willing for me to rest in him, to abide in his love.²

I suppose that the next--MSS I sent--made the matter plain, that the articles I first sent were chapters we had copied in the Life of Christ.³

I do feel an interest in these [--?--] hard working mothers, and I believe if Jesus were here, he would be found among them, even as of old. I have some passages, among my selections for the life of Christ, about his interest and sympathy for the mother, that I'm going to give Fannie for the Messenger, so that they will reach these mothers. . . .

Now about the MS you wrote about. I did not

¹Marian Davis to Ellen White, May, 1893.

²Marian Davis to Ellen White, May 22, 1893.

³Marian Davis to Ellen White, June 7, 1893.

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understand what you meant at all, until your last letter. I think the selection you have on the lost sheep, lost piece of silver, etc. were copied from the Testimonies before we left America, so that you could see what was already written on these points. Don't think anything has been copied since.

. . . I thank you a thousand times for what you wrote,--concerning the reality of our union with Christ. It is a precious thought. I trust that I may never lose sight of it.¹

Now about the book. I am so glad you are writing on the two journeys to Galilee. I was so afraid you would not bring that out. Shall hope to receive something from you before long. There's a good deal of work to be done behind me, but I don't like to turn back if I can help it; rather wait, till I get nearly or quite through, and have all the matter together, and then I can go back once for all, and finish up. That will save going over the ground more than twice. . . .

Am so glad you are writing just where you are. There is such a rich field in the teachings of Christ after he left Jerusalem after the feast of Tabernacles.²

I have a number of chapters prepared on Life of Christ, but cannot get them copied just now. Perhaps I can on vacation. If so, I will send them to you.

Am glad you are working on Life of Christ, and am looking eagerly for MSS. There are chapters, or parts, that are to be prepared, in what I have gone over,--some things that were left incomplete,--and I can be working on these till I get more MSS. Of course I have a considerable MS ahead of where I am working, but it is not in regular connection, and it will be better to prepare it after I get the intervening links.³

These selections from Marian Davis' letters to Ellen White clearly reveal what the latter meant when in a letter to Elder G. A. Irwin, president of the General Conference, she referred to Marian as her "bookmaker."⁴ It would appear

¹Marian Davis to Ellen White, July, 1893.

²Marian Davis to Ellen White, Aug. 2, 1893.

³Marian Davis to Ellen White, Aug. 22, 1893.

⁴Ltr 61a, 1900.

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from this evidence that Marian Davis' work began with the text Ellen White wrote. Once the basic text was written she was given substantial freedom as editor.

Perhaps at this juncture of our introduction where we are considering the work of Ellen White's literary assistants in the early stages of text production we should introduce a question often raised in connection with the activities of Ellen White's helpers. Gregg claims that Marian Davis did not limit her search for earlier writings on the life of Christ to the work of Ellen White.

Further, Marian herself was clearly searching, studying, and selecting pertinent material not from Ellen's scrapbooks alone but from the works of other religious writers (Alfred Edersheim, William Hanna, John Harris, Daniel March, Henry Melvill, to name some) and from various Adventist ministers. . . .¹

Indeed, a statement attributed to Robert Olson, secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate, by the editor of Ministry could be interpreted to support the contention of Alice Gregg who does not document her position.² In commenting on the introductory statement to The Great Controversy, where Ellen White admits to using the writings of others, Olson is quoted as adding:

¹Alice Elizabeth Gregg, "Marian the 'Bookmaker,'" Adventist Currents, Feb. 1984, p. 23.

²Robert Olson has since indicated to me that he did not intend to convey this general impression. He had in mind the historical material which used in writing The Great Controversy.

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In fact, she even allowed her secretaries to help choose some of the historical material at times. She trusted her secretary and W. C. White to get the right materials for her. Of course, she read everything in the end to approve it.¹

It is very possible Marian Davis, W. C. White, and others of her workers gathered selections from these other writers as Alice Gregg argues. I do not wish to deny it here. I can only say that the evidence I reviewed nowhere indicated their work involved such activities. It is, of course, very possible that I missed something along the way because the research project was concentrated on locating the source parallels not the copyists' use of sources.

There is no question that Ellen White was charged with being under the influence of others in the production of her writings or in her other activities. When Elder Haskell made what Ellen White took as an accusation that William White, her son, was influencing her she replied, "The Lord has not led you to take the position that W. C. White influenced his mother in any way to sway her judgment from the righteous principles He was setting before her. You cannot be vindicated in taking this ground."²

When the story was being spread in Battle Creek that Ellen White's secretaries did the major writing for some of the testimonies, Marian Davis offered this rebuttal:

¹J. R. Spangler, "Ellen White and Literary Dependency," Ministry, June, 1980, p. 4.

²Ltr H-142-1898 (Feb. 2).

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For more than twenty years I have been connected with Sister White's work. During this time I have never been asked either to write out a testimony from oral instruction, or to fill out the points in matter already written. . . .

A word more. Letters are sometimes sent to Sister White making inquiries to which, for want of time, she cannot write out a reply. These letters have been read to her, and she has given directions as to how they should be answered. The answers have been written out by W. C. White or myself. But Sister White's name was not appended to these letters. The name of the writer was signed, with the words, For Mrs. E. G. White.¹

If Ellen White's secretaries made selections from the non-Allen White source materials it is unclear as to the form in which these excerpts reached Ellen White. According to the letters of Ms. Davis, she did more than just hand Ellen White a packet of excerpts from the earlier writings. Ellen White was given an integrated rough draft of the chapter composed from the fragments. Since the majority of the source parallels were paraphrased expressions interwoven into Ellen White's comments, a first draft of the chapter would have included the source parallels in so subtle a fashion Ellen White would have not recognized which comments were hers and which came from the sources. The only other option would require Marian to have inserted blocks of source material into the integrated composition of Ellen White's words. From this matrix of text Ellen White would have then produced her copy of the full chapter.

¹Marian Davis to G. A. Irwin, Apr. 23, 1900 (General Conference E. G. White Letter Book 1898-1900, pp. 39, 40).

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We need not spend more time on the question of how the sources were used in producing the DA text. We know that in one way or another the responsibility for their use lay in the hands of Ellen White.

A major figure among Ellen White's editorial helpers was her son, William C. White. Though our study did not include a major review of his correspondence, it does not appear that he played a dominant role in the actual work of editing and arranging the chapters of the DA text.¹ Ellen White more than once urged him to help her, but his other responsibilities absorbed the major segments of his time. She found it difficult to get him even to read the text and in this way offer his evaluation of her writing. Note her anxious concern in one letter.

Now in regard to that chapter Marian put in your hands, will you please to read it at once and send to Marian that after reading it she may send it to Echo office. I am sorry for this delay, but will you attend to it at once? Marian watches with intense interest every mail to see if the manuscript has come.²

Writing to Edson and Emma about a year later, Ellen White again faces the difficulty of getting assistance from William.

I had written you a letter for you to seek the Lord most earnestly to know your duty in regard to connecting

¹Ellen White depended on William White after her husband died. Once Marian Davis could provide the editorial assistance, William was utilized in various public and administrative capacities.

²Ltr W-143-1895 (Feb. 28).

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with me in my work in bookmaking. I cannot have help from Willie. That is not to be expected, now nor any future time. You could help me and we could counsel together. But I have little courage to attempt to do anything while I have only Marian to help me.¹

We should not conclude from this that Ellen White did not consult William White over her writings. She valued his suggestions and wanted his input.

The matter of several chapters came from Battle Creek for me to read. . . . I have an idea not to accept Reaser as my artist. I do not accept his pictures you brought, and I do not and have not felt confidence in his taste. . . .

In regard to the manuscript for life of Christ, it is done, waiting for you to look it over. There are several chapters on temperance waiting for you to look over.²

In no way, however, should one conclude that Ellen White gave her son the last word. She was not above dealing directly with the printing house even though she left many of the details to Marian Davis or W. C. White. In the following letter to the manager of the Pacific Press she voices strong objections to the art work for the DA text.

I wish to say to you that I am sadly disappointed in the cuts prepared for such a book as the Life of Christ. I consider that if Brother Reaser accepts such figures that his eye and taste has lost its cunning. You cannot expect me to be pleased with such productions. Look at these figures critically, and you must see that they are either made from Catholic designs or Catholic artists. The picture of Mary has a man's face, the representations of Christ with the two fingers prominent, while the others are closed, is wholly a Catholic sign and I object to this. I see but very little beauty in any of the faces, or persons. There is

¹Ltr W-139-1896 (Jan. 16).

²Ltr W-206-1897 (Dec. 7).

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the scenery of nature, landscape scenery, that is not as objectionable, but I could never rest my eyes upon the face pictures ["portraits"] without pain. I would much prefer to have no pictures than representations that are not representations, but disfigurements of the true. This is my opinion. . . . Better pay double price, or treble, and have pictures, if pictures must be had that will not pervert facts.¹

Another image of William White emerges when we focus on the editorial work connected with publishing. Both Marian Davis and William White were very actively involved in preparing the first volume on the life of Christ, Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, and in working out the details for the soon-anticipated publication of the DA. It is true that W. C. White would carry other responsibilities as well even as Marian Davis would be busy writing on the text. Of course Marian Davis no doubt would have expected W. C. White to handle financial questions as we note from her comment to the manager of the publishing house.

Since we came to Australia, those who are most concerned in the book have been pressed with care that they have known little about the matter, that is, in a way to plan for it. The Editor of the manuscript ought not to take the responsibility of deciding on plans. She may propose plans, but those who own the book ought to decide upon them. But enough of this.²

Marian Davis here refers to herself as the "editor." I am aware of her use of this title with reference to herself in only one other letter.

¹Ltr J-81a-1897 (Dec. 20).

²Marian Davis in a postscript to C. H. Jones, Mar. 11, 1897.

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Ellen White had a number of additional helpers in the mid-nineties. Minnie Hawkins and Maggie Hare were copying, proofreading, and editing. May Israel was still serving as bookkeeper and also using her shorthand skills to report Ellen White's sermons. Eliza Burnham was developing the abilities and competence of Minnie Hawkins as well as carrying senior responsibilities along with Marian Davis as book editors.¹

Some idea of the way in which the final text of the DA was developed is provided by a one-volume work we have called a "working manuscript" book containing chapters 2-37 of the present text. The original pages of the work consist of manuscript pages from an earlier version. Sheets from a revised manuscript of the chapters have been pasted close to the spine, each to an "earlier" page. Between the lines there are interlinear emendations to the last version. One can trace here how paragraphs were shifted and/or reworked. Titles of chapters have been changed. At times the present DA text follows the earlier material and at other times the later. Notations at the top of some chapter introductions read "chapter copied," or "re-copied."

Marian Davis felt free to expand or abridge the text according to her best judgment. When the final proofs were

¹Ltr W-128-1896 (July 9) and Ltr W-154-1896 (Aug. 2).

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being prepared for Mount of Blessing, which had been held up over questions on how its material would relate to the DA text, she wrote to W. C. White:

If the type is to be changed, I am very anxious to do the planning myself, as I could restore a little where it had been taken out needlessly, or possibly condense and save a page, though I would shrink from doing any more cutting.

Please let us know, if possible, your decision about the type, as it will necessitate considerable work, and quite likely require the re-copying of the MSS.¹

Another insight into Marian Davis' range of editorial involvement may be garnered from her concern over the prepublication use of DA materials in other books and papers. In her letter to Edson White she registered her concern over DA matter appearing in his simplified version of the life of Christ which appeared as Christ Our Saviour in 1896.

For a number of weeks, or months, I have been trying to get one hour of Bro. White's time for the consideration of some points on the Life of Christ, but I am afraid it will be put off until after camp-meeting, and then indefinitely.

I shall be heartily glad to see some simple work gotten up for the colored people, and do not think there will be any objection to the plan you have proposed. At the same time don't you think care should [--?--] about using matter on the life of Christ until the book is published. Sr. White is almost wholly dependent on her books for means to carry on her work. What she received from the conference is hardly a drop in the bucket. Her expenses are very great. If the income from her books were cut off, her hands would be completely tied. Now the work on the Life of Christ has been done under many and great difficulties, and at great expense, and with

¹Marian Davis to W. C. White, April 24, 1895.

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many hindrances. Much of the matter has been run through the papers, then compiled and amplified, as the material is collected from Testimonies. Now if the little book proposed is kept within the limits mentioned, and in the style proposed,--something small and simple for the southern field,--all right, but I am sure you will feel that after all the labor and expense of getting out the life of Christ, nothing else should come in first that would use up enough of the best matter to destroy the freshness of the larger book. The interests of the work in all fields are one, and it will not be a real help to any one to cut off one source of income for the sake of securing another.

Sr. White is eager to help your work in every way possible, and will unite in this desire. If rightly managed, I believe it can be done without injuring the truth.

The thought that you are engaged in winning souls to Christ is a great joy to her, how great a joy I think you cannot realize. Her love for her children is the most vivid representation I know of Christ's love for his people.¹

Marian Davis takes her concern over Edson White's new proposals to his brother W. C. White. From her letter we glean further information on how she compiled the DA text.

The enclosed letter from your brother probably contains nothing new to you, but I wish to call your attention to the fact that in his proposition concerning new books, he is planning to do the very thing I had anticipated,--the thing that is done, will make the "Life of Christ" really a second-hand affair altogether. He does not seem to realize that already he is publishing as the body of his book the very matter that must go into the life of Christ, and, as I judge, with very little change, except that he has the advantage of being able to condense and throw out extraneous matter as we are not free to do. He speaks of the matter on the child-life of Jesus as most valuable because it is new, and by the very circulation of it in that book it will be old in the larger one. Now it seems to me either we should give up the plan of publishing the life

¹Marian Davis to J. E. White, Sept. 29, 1895.

of Christ, or not to continue to draw from it so as to destroy the last vestige of freshness. All I have to make the book from,--so far as the narrative is concerned--is the old book and the matter that runs through the papers. If this is nearly all used in the publication of small books, and they are widely circulated as they will be, what heart will canvassers have to follow them with the large book? This is God's work, and not mine, and I have no wish to dictate, but it seems to me these things ought to be thought of.¹

In view of the fact that the compositional arrangement and style of the text was the editor's responsibility and not Ellen White's, Marian evidently felt the burden of having to make so many of these decisions alone. On one occasion she asked Ellen White for some assistance in this area.

I should be very thankful if it could be arranged for Eliza to read with me the chapters on the Life of Christ. I didn't mean to send them to her. That would amount to little. But to use them together. It is an important work, and while I have tried to do the work in such a way as to please God, and meet the needs of the people, it would be a benefit to the book, no doubt, and would be a great satisfaction to me, to have the aid of another's judgment. To me its chapters seem beautiful, full of divine light.²

An example of Marian Davis' influence on the style of the DA text may be seen in her decision to change the introductory sentences to several chapters. A comparison of the earlier and later stages of the text as they are retraceable in the working manuscript book referred to earlier bears this out. She comments on this modification of the text in a letter to C. H. Jones.

¹Marian Davis to W. C. White, Dec. 10, 1895.
²Marian Davis to Ellen White, Nov. 25, 1895.

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Now that the book is to be in one volume it must be planned more carefully than if the two parts were issued separately. Since your letter of Feb. 2 arrived, I have for the first time been sure that the type-setting is not in progress. I have taken up the MS to see how the matter seemed after laying aside for a while. I see a very serious defect,--one that, if not corrected, I am sure will almost ruin the book. I know that others must have seen it. I wonder that they have not pointed it out to me. I wonder that I was so blind as not to see it myself. Many of the chapters begin as if the book were the diary of an itinerant minister. The chapters begin with dry little details that might be omitted or placed elsewhere. There is great sameness. This error can and must be corrected. The change will no doubt involve expense. It is too much to hope that the initials are not yet engraved. But the change must be made. The book will not be acceptable as it is. I will begin the chapters with the same letter wherever possible, but can do it in only a few cases. I know that all parties will be far better satisfied with the book when these changes are made. I know that it will sell enough better to warrant the delay and expense, even if the latter is considerable.¹

It should be obvious by now that Ellen White's book editors played significant roles in the production of her books, at least such seems to have clearly been the case with the DA. With so many workers moving in and out of her employment many in the church would have heard of the work of her copyists and editors. Ellen White apparently had no problem over W. W. Prescott being listed as a compiler of one of her books.²

¹Marian Davis to C. H. Jones, Mar. 11, 1897.

²I have in mind here the comment of Ellen White in a letter to Brother and Sister Tenney: "There was at this time an advertisement in one of the papers regarding one of my books. When Fannie noticed this advertisement, which spoke of Prof. Prescott compiling the book, she vehemently declared

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At the same time it must be admitted that the letters of Ellen White referring to books needed or to copying and preserving material were usually addressed to family members or to someone in the role of Marian Davis. It is also probable that someone reading Ellen White's "corner" in the Reformer and noting the use of documented quotations would infer that where Ellen White did not so refer to other writers in her writings she was not quoting them.

In the foregoing discussion of the activities of Ellen White's literary assistants, particularly of her editors, we have provided the evidence from letters of Ellen White and Marian Davis. As we draw this introduction of the research project to a close, we could provide no better summary of the content of this chapter than Marian Davis herself provides in several letters, or major portions thereof. The drama, the detail, and the dedication are all there.

By this mail some matters are sent that I feel sure will be welcomed by those interested in the Life of Christ. Some important changes have been made. First of these is the new introductory chapter, "The Word Made Flesh." I think that all will be pleased with it. It is fresh, containing a considerable new matter that will not be published elsewhere until after the book is issued. I hope this MS will be read by Eld. Wilcox and others. I have sent a copy to Bro. White. Whatever criticisms may be offered, will, I suppose, have to be considered by Sr. Burnham. They can be referred to Bro. White if necessary.

with wild gesticulations, that it was a lie." (Ltr T-114-1897, July 1).

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The chapter "As a Child," I have divided, by taking out of it the story of the passover visit. I have always thought the old chapter too long, especially as it contained so many lessons. But until now I have not seen how it could be divided. The present chapter heading and tail piece will, I think, still be appropriate for the chapter "As a Child." I send first and last page of the "Passover Visit" so that heading and tail piece can be planned for it.

The new first pages for chapters will make the book far more attractive. They will greatly help its sale, as well as make it more interesting to the reader. I hope that the expense of re-engraving initials, or even headings, will not prevent these changes from being made. The expense will be far more than made up by the better sale of the book. In a few cases, as "The Chosen People," "Days of Conflict," and "The Sabbath," I will gladly pay for the change of initial myself rather than not have it made. What appears like a slight change, makes a great difference in the effect. New matter written since the MS was first sent has helped to brighten some of the pages, and to make the change that was necessary. When the new pages are compared with the old ones, I am sure that no one will grudge the time they have cost, which has been but little.

The chapters as a whole have required more work. I think you will find them more compact, vigorous, and simple. . . .

Could not the copy I sent to Bro. White be returned to me? It would be a great favor if this can be done. If not, I will do the best I can with the tissue copy.

One item I omitted to mention in the proper place: The chapters "Give Ye Them to Eat" and "The Divine Shepherd," may require new initials. I have not given attention to these pages yet. Possibly a few other changes may be made past No. 40.

Our typewriters are so crowded with work that I must finish my letter with the pen. If the chapter headings are not already engraved, there are two changes I would like to make,--"Whom Also He Named Apostles" to "The Apostles Set Apart,"--not using marks of quotation in the heading, of course; and to change "Wherefore Didst Thou Doubt" for "A Night on the Lake." I have little hope, however, that these changes can be made.

If you have arranged for Sister Burnham to come to Pacific Press, for the book, there is plenty of work she can be doing for Sr. White. She is exceeding anxious to get out a pamphlet on giving the tithe, etc. This she

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intends to have made up from the articles sent to REVIEW about Christmas time, and of course such other matter as can be combined with them. She has been waiting for months to have this work done. So if Sr. Burnham is available, I know that Sister White would be more than glad for her to do this work.

I hope you will urge upon Bro. White the importance of reading this first chapter before it goes to press.

You can safely count on receiving the MS by next month's mail. No part of a book ought to be put in type until the book is completed. Especially is this true of Sr. White's books, since she does not write systematically, and at any stage we are likely to get fresh points on any part of the book, or matter that necessitates rearrangement. But that matter is beyond my control. I will content myself with trying to finish the book. . . .

P. S.--I did not send copy of first chapter for press, thinking it would be little advantage to have it, and it has been so recently prepared I would like to keep it until next month with the rest of the matter.¹

Some time since, I received notice from C. H. Jones that it was planned to publish "Desire of Ages," in the spring of '98, and in order to [do] this, all the copy must be in the hands of the printers as early as Sept. '97. From what I learn of the artist's work, I cannot believe that the printers will be ready for the MS by Sept. They have now 25 chapters, as finally revised. Twenty-five more were prepared to send, but a few changes will have to be made in them, as I finish the later chapters. For this I am holding them. I wish we could know how soon the MS will really be needed. We have already been so greatly delayed by trying to hurry things, we can't afford to lose more time that way. Sister White is constantly harassed with the thought that the MS should be sent to the printers at once. I wish it were possible to relieve her mind, for the anxiety makes it hard for her to write and for me to work. We are from day to day alternating between the two plans of adding or not adding to the book. The feeling is, that the book must be gotten out at once, even before New Year's. At the same time the work of writing is going forward, but for the most part a little behind the work of editing, so that a second or third

¹Marian Davis to C. H. Jones, Apr. 11, 1897.

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revision of chapters is required.

Since the artist's work must be done before the printer's, I thought it might be best to prepare as many chapters as possible for him, even if they were not completed for the printer. They will have the main points for illustration. By the next mail after this, I shall, if possible, send twenty-five chapters to Reaser. This will make seventy-seven in his hand. There will be 86 in all. . . .

Your references to "descriptive" and "discursive" chapters seem to indicate that you wish the latter were wholly or in part removed from the book. Every bit of descriptive matter has been used so far as possible. As to the "discursive," probably not one-twentieth that was in the L. C. MS has been used in the book. The chapters have been accepted by yourself and Sister White. To throw them out now would involve greater responsibility than I dare to take. It would require time that I don't have to give. The only person with whom I am at liberty to consult is Elder Haskell. To him I have read a number of the "discursive" chapters. I cannot get his consent to the omission of even one. If it seems necessary to throw out some of these chapters, could you not select them, or find some one to do so. I hardly think, however, Sr. White would confide in the judgment of W. A. Reaser in this matter, however trustworthy his judgment as an artist may be.

"Thoughts from Mount of Blessing." Inclosed is an extract from a letter just received from W. D. Salisbury. No doubt he has written to you to the same effect. Sister White is not now at home, but from what she has said, I think she will probably decide to have the first edition issued at once without cuts. Certainly this would be preferable to using such stupid and commonplace productions. They degrade the book. We have already waited more than two years for cuts. I don't think she will consent to wait another year.

As to the plan of using small cuts in "Thoughts," do you think they would look well in a book made up as that is? I fear that you will not be satisfied with them.

We have great reason for gratitude that your visit to America should have been just in time to arrange for the illustration for the book. Now, as you truly say, what we need most is the blessing and help of God. Sister White seems inclined to write, and I have no doubt she will bring out many precious things. I hope it will be possible to get them into the book. There is

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one thing, however, that not even the most competent editor could do,--that is, prepare the MS before it is written. I am glad to know that you pray for us. God is above all the perplexities, and he promises to give wisdom and strength. He not only pities our weakness, but forgives our sins. We hope soon to hear of your return homeward. Wishing you a speedy and prosperous journey, Yours in the work, M. Davis.

P. S. The work of revising and condensing has, I hope, made most of the "discursive" chapters somewhat more compact and direct. Perhaps they will not be found to be quite so objectionable as before.¹

The days since you went away have been busy ones. Most of Thursday and Friday and all of Sunday Minnie was copying for the school. We have a few things to send you, and hope to send more soon. This morning we mail "The Man of Sorrows"--copied from the new matter you left; and the parable of the talents, for the parable book. The matter on the sower which was given to Minnie she has copied; but that which was given to Miss Peck has not been done. If Miss P. does not have time to do it soon, I think we will let Minnie take it as I am anxious to get it into your hands, and you will want it all together, so as to know what you have. We will not send any on the Sower, till we can send all.

I have been gathering out the precious things from these new MSS. on the early life of Jesus. Sent a number of new pages to California by the Vancouver mail, and shall send more for later chapters by the next mail. Two of these new articles on Christ's missionary work I let Bro. James have to read in Church. Last Sabbath he read the one which speaks of the Saviour's denying himself of food to give to the poor. These things are unspeakably precious. I hope it is not too late to get them into the book. It has been a feast to work on this matter.

I learn that our Sabbath Schools are soon to take up the study of the life of Christ. So the book will come out just in time to help them. I am so glad.

I will send a copy of a little I gathered out for the chapter "In Joseph's Tomb." It supplies a link that was missing, and I think will be a real help to the book.

¹Marian Davis to W. C. White, Aug. 9, 1897. The remainder of this letter appears on page 125 and elsewhere in the report.

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I learn that the work of setting the book is underway, so we want to finish up the last chapters as soon as possible. Hope you will be able to send us soon the rest of the matter on Christ's ministry of healing and, as soon as convenient, the rich man and Lazarus. I do hope the book on the parables can come out at the same time with the life of Christ.¹

¹Marian Davis to Ellen White, Mar. 1, 1898.