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A Heritage Paralleled by None

by Arthur L. White

What has Ellen G. White actually done for the Seventh-day Adventist church?

David declared in Psalm 16:6, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." We, too, may say with David, "We have a goodly heritage." Remembering this heritage will give us courage for the future and direction in how to meet its challenges.

Our roots as Seventh-day Adventists are found in the great Advent awakening of the 1840s. October 22 each year marks a very important anniversary for all Seventh-day Adventists. On this day in 1844 Jesus Christ, as our divine High Priest, entered into the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary in heaven to commence a special ministry there on our behalf.

The fulfilling time prophecies and the promise that Jesus would soon return to this world stirred people deeply. The Spirit of God attended the proclamation of the solemn yet glad tidings. At that time, however, our spiritual ancestors failed to see that the hour of God's judgment in the message of the first angel of Revelation chapter 14 pointed to a special work of judgment immediately preceding the second coming of Christ. In spite of many evidences of heaven's special blessing as they proclaimed the glorious message of Christ's soon return, their dearest hope was rudely shattered when Jesus did not appear on the day they expected Him. Some 100,000 earnest believers who had waited in confident expectation were plunged into bitter disappointment and/or somedissillusionment.

"Why didn't Jesus come?" they cried. "Will He still come in a day or two? Or is it all just a delusion?" They wept and wondered what lay before them.

Then, at this time of anguish among the Adventists of 1844, a voice was heard in their midst the voice of a maiden only 17 years old "As God has shown me, in holy vision . . . ." The gift of prophecy had been restored to God's people!

The effects of this gift linger to our very day. We will consider three ways in which the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White has guided our church: in our doctrinal formation, in our organizational development, and in helping us avoid disastrous snares of Satan. Reviewing these things will help to keep us in the right path now and give us courage for the future.
I. Laying Doctrinal Foundations

**Return of Jesus.**

That first vision given to Ellen Harmon (soon to become Mrs. James White) portrayed the Advent believers as traveling to the city of God. Christ was leading them safely on their journey to the New Jerusalem, which was said to be "a great way off." But their pathway was illuminated by a bright light behind them—the message of Christ's soon coming.

To those who could believe, it was most reassuring. Light and comfort came to their hearts as young Ellen related this and subsequent visions from the Lord. And in establishing confidence in their Advent experience, this people laid down the first plank in a firm foundation—the conviction that **Christ would yet come and that the Millerite movement of which they had been a part was indeed of divine origin and direction.**

Of course, they couldn't yet see the full structure that would be erected. But it was enough that the God who had led them was continuing to lead them as long as they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus.

**Gift of Prophecy.**

These ex-Millerites were not gullible, and they were keen Bible students. Some wondered aloud, "Did not visions cease with the close of the Scripture canon?" Study of both Old and New Testaments, however, led them to see that they should expect the gift of prophecy in earth's last days. Ellen's godly life, the absence of fanaticism, and the very practical and timely nature of the messages convinced many that they were actually witnessing a manifestation of the genuine gift of prophecy.

The number of Adventists so convinced increased as this young woman traveled from place to place at God's bidding and met with various companies of believers. Carefully and prayerfully they examined every shred of evidence critically. None of these canny New Englanders was about to be taken in as credulous. And as Ellen's work met every scriptural test, the believers cautiously accepted a second plank in their sure foundation: that the gift of prophecy might genuinely be expected in post-New Testament times.

**Sanctuary.**

One of the most prominent Scriptures proclaimed by our forefathers was the time prophecy of Daniel 8:14: "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."

In the mid-19th century, Bible scholars and studentseven some who opposed the Advent teachingwere in general agreement that the Millerite movement's mechanical reckoning that the 2300 days would end in 1844 was itself accurate. Nearly all agreed that some momentous event would take place then. But what event would it be? Opinions differed. And what was this "sanctuary" that was to be "cleansed"?

On October 23, the very first day after the disappointment, farmer and Bible student Hiram Edson and editor-preacher O. R. L. Crosier, searching their Bibles in upstate New York, became the first to conclude that the "sanctuary" was not this earth (as Miller and they had supposed) but rather was in heaven above. And an important work was to transpire there before Jesus could return. But was their conclusion sound? With care they checked and
rechecked the Bible evidences of their position and concluded that they were right.

Interestingly, hundreds of miles away in Maine, with no knowledge of this investigation being made in upstate New York, Ellen Harmon was given a majestic vision in mid-February, 1845, graphically portraying Christ's entry into the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary, where He had begun a special, final phase of His High Priestly ministry.

When the two were put together—the Bible study and the vision—believers recognized that God had miraculously confirmed the conclusions reached from diligent Bible study by giving special divine revelations to the youthful Ellen.

Still later the Lord showed His prophetess that "Brother Crosier had the true light, on the cleansing of the Sanctuary" (A Word to the Little Flock, p. 12).

Thus the third basic timber correct understanding of the doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary helped unlock the mystery of the Great Disappointment.

**Sabbath.**

The laying of a fourth timber of doctrinal truth involved several different people.

Rachel Oakes Preston, a Seventh-day Baptist, visited her daughter who taught school in Washington, New Hampshire, in 1844. While there she called the attention of the Millerite Adventists residing there to the importance of observing the seventh-day Sabbath. Shortly thereafter, down in Fairhaven, Massachusetts, Joseph Bates, a "born-again" sea captain, began keeping the Sabbath as a result of careful Bible study. And he began pressing the binding claims of the fourth commandment upon others, including schoolteacher-turned-preacher James White and James's fiancée, Ellen Harmon.

At about the time of their marriage (August, 1846), and based solely upon the convincing scriptural evidence Bates had gathered, the Whites accepted the seventh day Sabbath and began themselves to teach it. Not until seven months later did Ellen receive her first vision upon that subject, confirming the significance and obligation of this Bible truth. On Sabbath, April 3, 1847, in vision she was taken into the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. Jesus opened the Ten Commandments, which lay folded like a book inside the ark of the covenant. Ellen immediately noted a halo of light around the fourth commandment, indicating its significance.

Jesus showed her that God had never changed the Sabbath, for He never changes. Rather, the Sabbath is the great issue which unites the hearts of God's waiting people. It was revealed to her that the Sabbath will be the great test in the final conflict before Jesus returnsthe question upon which all mankind must take its stand. The final issue will be one of loyalty: either for the unchanging truth of God, or for the tenets of an apostate power.

Thus, four basic doctrines the second coming of Christ, the gift of prophecy in the last days, Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, and the Sabbath became the nucleus around which an emerging body of believers was beginning to form. These doctrines did not come from visions. They grew out of diligent, painstaking Bible study, and the Holy Spirit confirmed them through the visions of Ellen White. But at first only a few held these truths—perhaps just a hundred or more, largely in New England and in the state of New York.

**Confirmation.**
The doctrinal framework of the Seventh-day Adventist church developed further in a series of weekend convocations held from 1848 to 1850 and called Sabbath Conferences, or Sabbath and Sanctuary Conferences. And here again we see the function of the Holy Spirit, through His special messenger, not in initiating doctrinal teaching, but rather in confirming and corroborating when the believers were on the right track and correcting them when they were headed in the wrong direction. But the Holy Spirit always waited until these students of Scripture had gone as far as they could go before stepping in, in a dramatic, forthright, most impressive manner.

The gathering at David Arnold's barn at Volney, New York, in August, 1848 the second of six conferences held that year was fairly typical. Some thirty-five people gathered on Friday, hardly any two of them agreeing upon any doctrinal position. Each was anxious to advance his own peculiar sentiments. Each insisted that his views alone accorded with Scripture. The strange and conflicting positions contending for acceptance rolled a heavy weight upon Ellen White. She lost consciousness and was taken off in vision. Writing about it afterward, she said:

"The light of Heaven rested upon me. I was soon lost to earthly things. My accompanying angel presented before me some of the errors of those present, and also the truth in contrast with their errors. That these discordant views, which they claimed to be according to the Bible, were only according to their opinion of the Bible, and that their errors must be yielded, and they unite upon the third angel's message" (Spiritual Gifts, 2: 98, 99).

The result? "Our meeting ended victoriously. Truth gained the victory" (ibid., p. 99).

Still later, Ellen White looked back with deep satisfaction upon those seasons of intensive Bible study and prayer, sessions that would run late into the night, and sometimes all night long. The men and women in attendance had been determined to understand the meaning of Bible truth, so that they might teach and preach it with power. Mrs. White recalled:

"When they came to the point in their study where they said, 'We can do nothing more,' the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to how we were to labor and teach effectively. Thus light was given that helped us to understand the scriptures in regard to Christ, His mission, and His priesthood. A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God, was made plain to me, and I gave to others the instruction that the Lord had given me" (Selected Messages, 1:206, 207).

Greatest Sorrow.

Interestingly, Mrs. White described this period, in which the doctrinal framework of Seventh-day Adventists was hammered out on the anvil of intense prayer and Bible study, as "one of the greatest sorrows of my life"! Why? Well, when she was not in vision, Ellen White's mind was too use her term "locked." And "I could not comprehend the meaning of the scriptures we were studying." During this entire period, she said, "I could not understand the reasoning of the brethren." She remained in "this condition of mind until all the principal points of our faith were made clear to our minds, in harmony with the Word of God."

It was precisely because of her inability to enter into the discussions, other than to tell what the Lord had just shown her in vision, that those present "accepted as light direct from
heaven" the revelations which were given her (ibid., p. 207).

Neither Mrs. White nor those present with her in these unforgettable meetings had any doubt regarding either the source or the authority of those visions. Writing at another time about this same experience, she said movingly,

"The power of God would come upon me, and I was enabled clearly to define what is truth and what is error. As the points of our faith were thus established, our feet were placed upon a solid foundation. We accepted the truth point by point, under the demonstration of the Holy Spirit. I would be taken off in vision, and explanations would be given me" (Gospel Workers, p. 302).

And so it was that Ellen White could declare unequivocally, "The leadings of the Lord were marked, and most wonderful were His revelations of what is truth. Point after point was established by the Lord God of heaven. That which was truth then, is truth today" (Selected Messages, 2:104).

Just five years before her death in 1915, Mrs. White urged that her writings, with their God-given light, should continue to "come before the people," because they contained information "given to correct specious errors and to specify what is truth" (Selected Messages, 3:32).

**Pioneer Understanding.**

Our pioneers clearly understood the importance of the prophetic ministry in developing and guarding the doctrines we hold. J. N. Andrews, the scholar in whose honor and memory our first university was named, declared that the visions given to Ellen White "constituted the means whereby God preserved His people from confusion by pointing out errors, by correcting false interpretation of the Scriptures, and causing light to shine out upon that which is in danger of being wrongly understood, and therefore of being the cause of evil and division to the people of God. In short, their work is to unite the people of God in the same mind and in the same judgment upon the meaning of the Scriptures.

"Mere human judgment, with no direct instruction from Heaven, can never search out hidden iniquity, nor adjust dark and complicated church difficulties, nor prevent different and conflicting interpretations of the Scriptures. It would be sad indeed if God could not still converse with His people" (Review and Herald, Feb. 15, 1870).

In these experiences in laying our church's doctrinal foundation, we see the unique manner in which God led His latter-day children with direct and timely communication, providing them with a heritage without parallel. It is a treasure we should indeed accept, appreciate, and cherish.

**Fatima?**

Each year thousands make pilgrimages to the mountain village of Fatima in Portugal, seeking healing and other spiritual blessings. Why? It is reported that many years ago, three children playing under an oak suddenly saw an angel in the branches of the tree. The angel is said to have spoken a few words to them.

Today, because of the witness of three children who said they saw an angel who spoke with them, millions of earnest Christians have been drawn to that mountain village.
By contrast, during the first 70 years of the experience of the Seventh-day Adventist church, God sent His angel with definite, clear-cut messages to His church, to its leaders, its members, and its youth, not just once, but *some 2,000 times!* These messages have been published and we may read them today. Ironically, one cannot help but wonder if we Seventh-day Adventists really appreciate what God has done for us!

Visitors to Elmshaven, Ellen White's last home, nestled among the vineyards of northern California's Napa Valley, are shown the upstairs bedroom in which the prophet of the Lord was awakened from sleep by an angel many nights during the last 15 years of her life. And they stand right on the very spot where the angel often stood as he gave messages of instruction, encouragement, and warning. Do we fully sense the significance of all of this today?

II. Guiding in Organizational Development

The hand of the Lord has led and preserved Seventh-day Adventists just as much as Israel of old. Concerning this, Hosea wrote: "And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved" (Hos 12:13). This experience of guidance and protection by means of a prophet was not just for ancient Israel alone.

**Publishing.**

With the earliest of the Sabbath and Sanctuary Conferences concluded and the principal beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists well on their way toward united acceptance, Ellen White received a vision in November, 1848. In it she was "given a view of . . . the duty of the brethren to publish the light that was shining upon our pathway" (*Life Sketches*, p. 125). Afterward, turning to her husband James, she said:

"You must begin to print a little paper and send it out to the people. Let it be small at first; but as the people read, they will send you means with which to print, and it will be a success from the first. From this small beginning it was shown to me to be like streams of light that went clear round the world" (ibid).

That was in 1848, the year James White mowed a hundred acres of hay with a hand scythe for eighty-seven and a half cents an acre to earn funds for traveling to some of the Sabbath and Sanctuary Conferences. But the next year they made a start, publishing a little eight-page sheet on a charge account. After three issues had gone out, James White received enough to pay the printer not only for the first three but for a fourth as well. The total bill came to $64.50, and the original receipt for the transaction (dated September 3, 1849) is in the vault of the White Estate in the General Conference headquarters today!

And today we have a network of more than fifty publishing houses around the globe, printing more than 100 million dollars' worth of literature each year in some 270 different languages!

**Health.**

The middle decades of the nineteenth century were a time of great ignorance in the areas of physiology and hygiene. Ill-informed and poorly-trained physicians performed surgery with unwashed hands. They prescribed blood-letting to relieve congestion and tobacco for throat difficulties! Incredibly (to us today), the Jan. 13, 1863, *Review and Herald* even suggested to
its readers during a diphtheria epidemic that the application of pulverized Spanish flies mixed
with Venice turpentine would be a helpful remedy to combat this contagious disease (p. 51).
Other poisons were also administered freely in those days.

Joseph Bates, a co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist church (with James and Ellen
White), was early impressed with the need for reform in abandoning harmful practices. As a
result of his own careful observation, and reasoning from cause to effect, Bates progressively
eliminated tea and coffee (1836), alcohol (1842), flesh meats and rich foods (1843), and
tobacco (1844) from his own life. But his experience was unique, and it had little influence
upon his fellow Adventists.

Then, on June 6, 1863 a scant sixteen days after the organization of the General
Conference Ellen White was visiting in the home of an Adventist layman, Aaron Hilliard, at
Otsego, Michigan. That Friday evening, as she would later recount, "The great subject of
health reform was opened before me in vision" (Review and Herald, Oct. 8, 1867).

The counsels from that vision and a host of others on healthful living which followed it
appear today in such books as Counsels on Diet and Foods, Counsels on Health, Temperance,
and The Ministry of Healing. They brought about nothing short of a revolution
in the lives of those who accepted them. Today, with continuing research funded by the
United States government among others, scientists studying Seventh-day Adventist men and
women in the United States, the Netherlands, and Norway have demonstrated that they live
six to eight years longer than the average citizen in those countries. Documentary evidence
shows that Adventists have substantially less cancer, heart disease, hypertension, stroke, and
diabetes than do non-Adventists. Today it is obvious that the counsels given this people more
than a century ago have paid handsome dividends for those who believed and practiced
them!

Health Institutions.

In a vision on Christmas Day in 1865, God opened to Ellen White His interest not only in
healing the sick but also making known preventive principles. She later reported, "I was
shown that we should provide a home for the afflicted and those who wish to learn how to
take care of their bodies that they may prevent sickness" (Testimonies for the Church,
1:489).

And, again, "Our people should have an institution of their own, under their own control, for
the benefit of the diseased and suffering among us who wish to have health and strength that
they may glorify God in their bodies and spirits, which are His" (ibid., p. 492).

What was the response? With this appeal ringing in their ears, the very next year our spiritual
ancestors set about to establish the Western Health Reform Institute. In 1877 it was renamed
the Battle Creek Sanitarium, Dr. John Harvey Kellogg himself coining the word "sanitarium"
to indicate a "place where people learn to stay well" (Richard W. Schwarz, John Harvey
Kellogg, M.D., p. 62).

This sanitarium became the forerunner of scores of health-care facilities which would make
Seventh-day Adventists internationally famous for superior institutions providing dedicated
service. Today the church operates a world-spanning network of 166 hospitals and
sanitariums; some 224 treatment rooms, clinics, and dispensaries; and 45 medical launches
and airplanes.
It didn't just happen!

**Education.**

After launching a far-reaching health-care program, God next directed the attention of His special messenger to the training of the youth of the church. In 1872 Ellen White penned her first message on this subjecta comprehensive, 30-page testimony article which she entitled "Proper Education." (Later, she would modify the expression, changing it to her much-used favorite term, "True Education.")

We have this article in the third volume of *Testimonies for the Church*, pages 131-160. Its opening words, "It is the nicest [i.e., most exacting, most delicate] work ever assumed by men and women to deal with youthful minds," struck a note of revolutionary fervor. In it she declared boldly, "We are reformers" (p. 159). And what she was calling her fellow church members to develop was nothing less than a school whose undergirding philosophy was totally radical and revolutionarya complete departure from the contemporary educational thinking then in vogue. The perceived lateness of the hour added urgency to her plea:

"Time is too short now to accomplish that which might have been done in past generations; but we can do much, even in these last days, to correct existing evils in the education of youth. And because time is short, we should be in earnest and work zealously to give the young that education which is consistent with our faith" (pp. 158, 159).

Again the church rallied to inspired leadership, and on August 24, 1874, Battle Creek Collegeour first schoolopened its doors to one hundred students. We do not have space here to tell the fascinating story of how that school prospered when following its founder's unusual educational precepts, and how it went down to dismal defeat when it ignored them in favor of uninspired contemporary principles. But Battle Creek College, later relocated and renamed Emmanuel Missionary College (today Andrews University), was the first of a whole series of educational establishments which would one day circle the earth.

Seven years after Battle Creek College's start, Ellen White and her son, Elder William C. White, were on the Pacific Coast, attending a camp meeting in Sacramento, California. At their urging, on October 20, 1881, the members there formally endorsed the founding of a second college at Healdsburg.

With the benefit of hindsight (as well as prophetic foresight), its founders determined to avoid pitfalls and defects which had marred the earlier years of Battle Creek College. At Healdsburg, there would be a dormitory for student housing, regular (and required) courses of study in the Word of God, and an industrial program that would combine scholastic activity with practical experience.

The school prospered, but slowly the town crowded in. As Ellen White wryly remarked, "While men slept, the enemy sowed houses." Later the school was renamed Pacific Union College and relocated atop 1600-foot Howell Mountain above the Napa Valley near Elmshaven.

Healdsburg College opened on April 11, 1882, with twenty-six students. Eight days later, on the opposite side of the continent, nineteen students attended their first day of classes at what would later come to be known as Atlantic Union College in South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

Other colleges in North America, Avondale College in Australia ("the model school"), and
still others would follow. Today Seventh-day Adventists operate the second largest Protestant school system in the United States, and worldwide we maintain almost 5,600 schools with nearly a million students! "What hath God wrought!"

### III. Protecting Against Satan's Wiles

Reviewing the past history of the church, General Conference president George I. Butler summed it up well in 1883:

"These ... visions ... have always been held in high esteem by the most zealous and humble among our people. They have exerted a leading influence among us from the start. They have first called attention to every important move we have made in advance. Our publishing work, the health and temperance movement, the College, and the cause of advanced education, the missionary enterprise, and many other important points, have owed their efficiency largely to this influence. We have found in a long, varied, and in some instances, sad experience, the value of their counsel. When we have heeded them, we have prospered; when we have slighted them, we have suffered a great loss" (*Review and Herald Supplement*, Aug. 14, 1883, pp. 11, 12).

#### Guidance.

The writings of Mrs. White, inspired by the Holy Spirit, opened up to God's people many lines of information, instruction, and guidance. Probably the greatest single contribution to our understanding of Scripture was her "Great Controversy between Christ and Satan" motif which set forth the origin, development, and final end of all evil. It has helped us to understand the significance of contemporary events as well as of past history.

#### Corrective.

Those writings provided a helpful corrective in preserving us from errors in our midst. In Australia in 1896, John Bell taught that the Third Angel's Message was yet future. John Harvey Kellogg advocated pantheism in 1900. A. F. Ballenger tried to do away with our doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary in the first decade of the twentieth century. And in 1909 unwise zealots tried to make a theological mountain out of a doctrinal molehill in their controversy concerning the "daily" of Daniel 8. All the while, however, Ellen White helped steer a sane, sensible, and theologically sound course, avoiding extremes, countering heresy, and pointing always to "a more excellent way."

#### Spiritual Uplift.

But we see the full uniqueness and value of Ellen White's contribution to the Seventh-day Adventist church not just in how she helped to lay the doctrinal foundations of this people, not merely in her guiding of our organizational development, nor in even her having guarded us in difficult situations and protecting us against Satan's wiles. The "heritage paralleled by none" that she left us extends beyond these things.

Ellen White touched the life experiences of thousands of individual church members always for the better. Men and women were favorably impressed that these messages brought about a high quality of Christian life. They were convinced and convicted that God was using these messages to prepare a people with characters that would stand the severe testing of the last days. The messages did an effective work for God. They still do.
Even non-Adventists recognized the value of Ellen G. White's life and ministry. Less than six weeks after her death on July 16, 1915, the editor of the New York *Independent* observed concerning the church and its prophet:

"Of course, these teachings were based on the strictest doctrine of inspiration of the Scriptures. Seventh Day Adventism could be got in no other way. And the gift of prophecy was to be expected as promised to the 'remnant church,' who had held fast to the truth. This faith gave great purity of life and incessant zeal. No body of Christians excels them in moral character and religious earnestness" (August 23, 1915, pp. 249, 250).

**Conclusion**

This, then, is our heritage"a goodly heritage," a heritage we must not lose. This inheritance is not alone something we can look back upon with satisfaction and a certain justifiable pride, but an inheritance of vital significance in our possession today, which we might compare to a set of useful tools bequeathed to each of us:

1. A level by which we plumb our lives to keep thoughts, words, and deeds true to the pattern.
2. A scale by which we weigh our motives, our ambitions, and our relation to our families and our fellowmen.
3. A square by which we build characters strong and true to stand in the crucial last days of earth's history and provide the one possession we will take with us into the heavenly kingdom: character.
4. A telescope to bring the future, so misty and uncertain to many, into clear and accurate focus.
5. A microscope through which we may isolate and identify cherished sins sure to blight our hope of salvation.
6. A knife by which we may prune away the needless weights of besetting sins.
7. A lens through which our eyes may be enabled to observe closely as a loving Savior is preparing an eternal home for us, and who says to each one of us, "When it is in your heart to obey Me, when efforts are put forth to this end, I accept the disposition and effort as your best service, and make up for the deficiencies with My own merit" (see Selected Messages, 1:382).

Are we making the best use of these "tools" provided in our incomparable heritage paralleled by none? Are we familiar with the information, the counsels, the reproofs, and the encouragements right at hand which have come to us through the pen of God's messenger?

Some years before she died, Ellen White wrote, "We have nothing to fear for the future except as we shall forget"and then she mentions two separate and distinct things: (1) "the way the Lord has led us," and (2) "His teaching in our past history," through the gift of prophecy to the remnant church (*Life Sketches*, p. 196).

May we truly fathom God's leadings and earnestly probe "His teachings" so graciously provided for our welfare. We must indeed "remember." And, in remembering, let us, like Paul, not be "disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19).
By William Fagal

Did Mrs. White copy her writings from other people?

About twenty years ago, many Adventists were shaken by claims from a Seventh-day Adventist pastor that Mrs. White had plagiarized her writings from others. In a book he later published, the pastor arranged passages from her writings in parallel columns with the earlier works of others, claiming that she had "copied" their writings and that therefore her claims to having received her instruction from God were a lie.

The results were devastating to the faith of some. People disposed of their Ellen White books in yard sales and trash cans. Some left the Seventh-day Adventist church, while others stayed but took pride in rejecting some of its teachings and practices which Ellen White had strongly endorsed. Even those who did not give up their faith in her writings were, in some cases, uneasy and uncertain about the charges. The effects of this controversy linger to our day.

Not First.

Though such claims were new to many twenty years ago, the pastor who popularized them was not the first to have made them. Just a few years before, in the 1970s, an Adventist historian had written a book examining Mrs. White's involvement in health concerns. He concluded, among other things, that her health counsels were not new or unique. She had drawn them from others, he said, despite her claims to having received them in vision. (The Ellen G. White Estate prepared a detailed, almost point-by-point response to his book.)

Over the years various people inside and outside the church have set forth similar claims. The most influential of Ellen White's critics was probably Dudley M. Canright, a prominent minister and evangelist in our early years. After withdrawing from the ministry four times in doubt and discouragement and coming back each time, Canright finally left the ministry and the church in 1887. In 1889 he published a book against Seventh-day Adventist teaching, and in 1919, the year of his own death and four years after hers, his book against Mrs. White was published. Prominent among his accusations was that Mrs. White had copied the works of others.

But interest in this issue even predates Canright's claims. In the Review and Herald of October 8, 1867, Mrs. White responded to the question, "Did you receive your views upon
health reform before visiting the [non-Adventist-operated] Health Institute at Dansville, N.Y., or before you had read works on the subject?" Mrs. White replied that she had indeed received her visions first, but the question implied the other possibility that the source of her instruction may have been human rather than divine.

How does a prophet convey God's messages? Was Mrs. White honest in describing how she conveyed them, particularly regarding her use of sources? Did she get her messages from other people and claim they were from God? These questions deserve a careful look.

**How does a Prophet Convey God's Messages?**

Many people seem to believe that a prophet who receives instruction from God delivers it exactly as God gave it, without reference to other materials of any kind. Some in the evangelical world believe that God even gave the prophet the very words in which to speak and write the messages. They view the prophet as a passive secretary who merely transcribed the Holy Spirit's words. While Seventh-day Adventists have never adopted that view, having in fact gone on record in General Conference session against it as early as 1883, some church members may hold such a view, perhaps without ever having actually thought it through.

Clearly, while the Bible writers received their messages from God, they did not typically receive the wording from Him, or one would expect them all to sound pretty much the same. We can easily tell John's letters from Paul's epistles, just by the style and vocabulary. Their own minds are at work, framing and shaping their God-inspired messages into words of their own choosing.

Furthermore, Bible writers borrowed language from one another and even from non-biblical authors to make the points they wished to put across. And we note that the first three gospel writers have much material in common, some of it but by no means allusing exactly the same words. These things suggest that the wording did not come from God, and that the Bible writers were free to draw on the words not only of other inspired writers, but even of common authors, to convey the messages they were inspired to tell.

**Gathering and Selecting.**

What is more, in the introduction to his gospel, Luke tells us that he gathered his facts from those who "from the beginning were eyewitnesses" and who "delivered them to us" (1:1-4). In his case, inspiration helped him to select from others and accurately record the information about Jesus that God wanted conveyed.

In light of these examples from Scripture of how inspiration works, on what basis can we insist, as the pastor-critic of Ellen G. White seems to do, that if the material is not original to the prophet, if it shows any relationship to previous writings, the prophet's use of it is therefore not inspired? On the basis of what we find in Scripture, we must conclude that originality is not a test of inspiration.

Interestingly enough, this very point appears in a book which Ellen White owned and valued, one which was written during her childhood. The introduction to the book, *The Great Teacher*, by John Harris, contains this statement:

**Originality Impossible.**
"Suppose, for example, an inspired prophet were now to appear in the church, to add a supplement to the canonical books, what a Babel of opinions would he find existing on almost every theological subject! and how highly probable it is that his ministry would consist, or seem to consist, in the mere selection and ratification of such of these opinions as accorded with the mind of God. Absolute originality would seem to be almost impossible. The inventive mind of man has already bodied forth speculative opinions in almost every conceivable form; forestalling and robbing the future of its fair proportion of novelties; and leaving little more, even to a divine messenger, than the office of taking some of these opinions, and impressing them with the seal of heaven."

The 1883 General Conference session recorded the belief of our pioneers: "We believe the light given by God to His servants is by the enlightenment of the mind, thus imparting the thoughts, and not (except in rare cases) the very words in which the ideas should be expressed." The precise words, then, were not their focus. They looked carefully for the thought being expressed. If the words aptly conveyed the thought, it did not matter under these circumstances whether the prophet had thought them up herself or adapted them from some other author who had phrased matters well.

**Was Mrs. White Honest in Describing how she Conveyed her Messages, Especially About her Use of Sources?**

In answer to another question in the same *Review* article we referred to above, Mrs. White wrote, "Although I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, yet the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own, unless they be those spoken to me by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation." The pastor who accused Mrs. White of copying turned this statement against her, claiming that the words are not "her own" but were taken from the writings of others. He questioned her honesty in reporting how she worked.

**What She Claimed.**

But in the context, Mrs. White was not claiming originality but responsibility. The question she was answering had to do with supposed conflicts among her descriptions of the length of the Reform Dress she had seen in vision. In response, she observed that she had never been given the length of the dress in inches nor in any other terms she had used to describe it. She had been shown the dress but was left to describe its length in words of her own choosing. This is what she meant by "The words are my own."

So then, in fulfilling her responsibility to convey the concepts God had given her, did Mrs. White at times draw from the words and expressions of others, even without giving credit? Yes, she did. And she made no secret of it. In fact, she stated it plainly in the introduction to one of her most widely-circulated books, *The Great Controversy*, and gave her reasons for doing it:

"The great events which have marked the progress of reform in past ages are matters of history, well known and universally acknowledged by the Protestant world; they are facts which none can gainsay. This history I have presented briefly, in accordance with the scope of the book, and the brevity which must necessarily be observed, the facts having been condensed into as little space as seemed consistent with a proper understanding of their
application. In some cases where a historian has so grouped together events as to afford, in brief, a comprehensive view of the subject, or has summarized details in a convenient manner, his words have been quoted; but in some instances no specific credit has been given, since the quotations are not given for the purpose of citing that writer as authority, but because his statement affords a ready and forcible presentation of the subject. In narrating the experience and views of those carrying forward the work of reform in our own time, similar use has been made of their published works" (pp. xi-xii, emphasis mine).

**Wesley's Practice.**

John Wesley, the 18th-century founder of Methodism (in which Ellen White grew up), described his own practice regarding documenting his sources. "It was a doubt with me for some time," Wesley wrote, "whether I should not subjoin to every note I received from them the name of the author from whom it was taken; especially considering I had transcribed some, and abridged many more, almost in the words of the author. But upon further consideration, I resolved to name none, that nothing might divert the mind of the reader from keeping close to the point of view, and receiving what was spoke[n] only according to its own intrinsic value."

Ellen G. White's outlook seems similar to Wesley's. Her primary interest was that people understand her message. She felt no need to cite other writers "as authority." What they had written might serve simply as "a ready and forcible presentation of the subject." To put it in Wesley's words, she wanted nothing to "divert the mind of the reader from keeping close to the point of view."

**Standards of the Day.**

Was such practice acceptable in Mrs. White's day? Yes. One of our Bible commentary editors found it to be common among 19th-century religious authors. "While editing the SDA Bible Commentary," he wrote, "I had occasion to compare thirty nineteenth-century Bible commentaries on the Book of 1 Corinthians. The first thing I noticed was the extent to which these nineteenth-century writers, many of them well known and respected, copied significant amounts of material from one another without once giving credit. I concluded that nineteenth-century literary ethics, even among the best writers, approved of, or at least did not seriously question, generous literary borrowing without giving credit. Ellen White frankly acknowledged borrowing from various historical writers in the process of writing The Great Controversy, sometimes with and sometimes without credit. It is not fair to a nineteenth-century writer to judge him (or her) by our standards today. We must judge them by their standards and accepted practice of their own days."

Ellen White's son and principal helper in the latter part of her life, William C. White, reported that God revealed to her that in the writings of others she would find truth expressed in an acceptable manner which would help her convey the messages she had been given. "In her early experience when she was sorely distressed over the difficulty of putting into human language the revelations of truths that had been imparted to her, she was reminded of the fact that all wisdom and knowledge comes from God and she was assured that God would bestow grace and guidance. She was told that in the reading of religious books and journals, she would find precious gems of truth expressed in acceptable language, and that she would be given help from heaven to recognize these and to separate them from the rubbish of error with which she would sometimes find them associated."
This ability to distinguish truth from error brings us to our next point and the testimony of a non-Adventist scientist.

The key question comes down to this:

**Did Mrs. White get her Message from Other People and Claim it came from God?**

Dr. Clive McCay, a noted nutrition authority half a century after Mrs. White's day, said that you could not account so easily as this for what she wrote. Dr. McCay, a Unitarian who taught the history of nutrition at Cornell University, received a copy of *Counsels on Diet and Foods* from an Adventist graduate student. He was astonished at what he read there, each statement identified by the year of its publication. For any given year, Dr. McCay knew who had been writing on nutrition and what they had written. "Who was this Ellen G. White," he asked, "and why haven't I heard of her before?"

**Impressed.**

Dr. McCay was so impressed by Ellen White's writings on nutrition that he authored a three-part series of articles for the *Review and Herald*. Note a portion of his summation at the end:

"To sum up the discussion: Every modern specialist in nutrition whose life is dedicated to human welfare must be impressed . . . by the writings and leadership of Ellen G. White.

"In the first place, her basic concepts about the relation between diet and health have been verified to an unusual degree by scientific advances of the past decades. Someone may attempt to explain this remarkable fact by saying: 'Mrs. White simply borrowed her ideas from others.' But how would she know which ideas to borrow and which to reject out of the bewildering array of theories and health teachings current in the nineteenth century? She would have had to be a most amazing person, with knowledge beyond her times, in order to do this successfully! . . .

"In spite of the fact that the works of Mrs. White were written long before the advent of modern scientific nutrition, no better over-all guide is available today."8

In the years since Dr. McCay made his observations, scientific advances have confirmed his conclusions and Ellen White's concepts about the relation of diet and health all the more strongly.

**Salt.**

Dr. McCay referred to the difficulty of successfully selecting the right counsel from the mass of incorrect teachings afloat in Mrs. White's day. One example is the use of salt. Some physicians were literally killing their patients with large doses of salt. Others, such as Dr. Trall, a health reformer popular with Seventh-day Adventists, recognized the cause of these deaths and reacted by forbidding any salt at all, saying that it was a poison.

What was Mrs. White's stance? "I use some salt, and always have, because from the light given me by God, this article, in the place of being deleterious, is actually essential for the
blood. The whys and wherefores of this I know not, but I give you the instruction as it is given me" (*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 344). She was not always given the reason, the "whys and wherefores," but the counsel was sound and safe to follow.

And her counsel has stood the scientific test of time. Confirmation, however, is not always immediate. It took about 120 years for science to establish the truth of her warnings about tobacco. And some things she taught have not yet been confirmed by science. But her "track record" is strong enough that we need not reject those counsels just because science hasn't proven them yet. And this track record also makes it untenable to say that she just got her ideas from others and called them her own. As Dr. McCay observed, she could not have done this so successfully.

**Not New.**

Some Seventh-day Adventists have believed mistakenly that Mrs. White's health counsels were new ideas, unheard-of prior to her receiving them. We have seen already that this was not usually the case. Our pioneers, in fact, specifically denied that in health matters Mrs. White was first to set forth the principles she taught. In 1866, Elder J. H. Waggoner wrote in the *Review and Herald*, "We do not profess to be pioneers in the general principles of the health reform. The facts on which this movement is based have been elaborated, in a great measure, by reformers, physicians, and writers on physiology and hygiene, and so may be found scattered through the land. But we do claim that by the method of God's choice [the visions given to Ellen White] it has been more clearly and powerfully unfolded, and is thereby producing an effect which we could not have looked for from any other means."

Elder Waggoner went on to make an important point about her health principles: "As mere physiological and hygienic truths, they might be studied by some at their leisure, and by others laid aside as of little consequence; but when placed on a level with the great truths of the third angel's message by the sanction and authority of God's Spirit, and so declared to be the means whereby a weak people may be made strong to overcome, and our diseased bodies cleansed and fitted for translation, then it comes to us as an essential part of present truth, to be received with the blessing of God, or rejected at our peril."  

**Motivation.**

This connection between health and holiness provided a strong motivating factor which helped people to make the needed changes in diet and living. Other health reformers of Mrs. White's day, and since, did not offer such motivation, and their work showed far less effect. Dr. McCay commented on the difference, apparently without recognizing its origin. One of his other summary points was, "Everyone who attempts to teach nutrition can hardly conceive of a leadership such as that of Mrs. White that was able to induce a substantial number of people to improve their diets."

As a result of the instruction she received in vision, Mrs. White had a God-given message to convey. Others might have made some of the same points before. She could even use or adapt their language for making those points. But she put the material into a structure that was her own, and thus it had new import and new power.

**Lawyer's Testimony.**

Vincent L. Ramik, a prominent and respected copyright attorney in Washington, D.C., noticed this power. In 1981, in the midst of the newly-reborn plagiarism charges, the General
Conference legal office (the Office of General Counsel) used privately-donated money to hire Ramik to research the case law and the literary evidence to see whether Mrs. White was guilty of plagiarism, literary piracy, or copyright infringement. Ramik, a Roman Catholic, spent some 300 hours reviewing cases and reading the literary evidence. In addition to examining the critics' case, he sampled what he called "a great cross section of her books," even reading The Great Controversy all the way through. On the legal matters, he concluded, "If I had to be involved in such a legal case [regarding charges of plagiarism, piracy, and copyright infringement against Ellen White], I would much rather appear as defense counsel [for Ellen White] than for the prosecution. There simply is no case!"

An important part of his legal opinion was his observation regarding how Mrs. White had used the writings of others. "Ellen White used the writings of others," he said, "but in the way she used them, she made them uniquely her own, ethically, as well as legally. And, interestingly, she invariably improved that which she `selected!' . . . She stayed well within the legal boundaries of `fair use,' and all the time created something that was substantially greater (and even more beautiful) than the mere sum of the component parts. And I think the ultimate tragedy is that the critics fail to see this. . . .

"The bottom line is: What really counts is the message of Mrs. White, not merely the mechanical writings words, clauses, sentences of Mrs. White. Theologians, I am told, distinguish here between verbal inspiration and plenary inspiration. Too many of the critics have missed the boat altogether. And it's too bad, too!

"I, personally, have been moved, deeply moved, by those writings. I have been changed by them. I think I am a better man today because of them. And I wish that the critics could discover that!"  

Conclusion

We have seen that a prophet proclaims God's messages not in words given by God but in those of the prophet's own choosing, which may include drawing on the language of others. Mrs. White openly declared that she had sometimes used the writings of others to help her convey effectively the messages she had been given. Her manner of doing so accorded well with the accepted practice in her day. And she was the master of her materials, not their slave, adapting them to her purposes rather than parroting theirs.

The writings of Ellen G. White speak powerfully even today, far more powerfully than the writings from which she drew various words and expressions. As we honor the content of her writings, we also have nothing to be ashamed of in her mode of writing them.

Notes

1. In voting to reprint the existing volumes of Testimonies for the Church, the 1883 session action noted that many of the Testimonies had originally been prepared in haste and had certain grammatical imperfections. The delegates voted, "Whereas, We believe the light given by God to His servants is by the enlightenment of the mind, thus imparting the thoughts, and not (except in rare cases) the very words in which the ideas should be expressed [emphasis mine]; therefore,

"Resolved, That in the republication of these volumes, such verbal changes be made as to
remove the above-named imperfections, as far as possible, without in any measure changing the thought; and further,

"34. Resolved, That this body appoint a committee of five to take charge of the republication of these volumes according to the above preambles and resolutions" (Review and Herald, Nov. 27, 1883, p. 741. Reproduced in Witness of the Pioneers Concerning the Spirit of Prophecy [Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1961], p. 54).

2. The marginal references in many Bibles offer cross-references to other passages of Scripture which a writer may be quoting or alluding to. In Acts 17:28 Paul cites Epimenides the Cretan (6th century b.c.) and the poet Aratus (c. 270 b.c.), a friend of Zeno, founder of the Stoics; in Titus 1:12 he quotes Epimenides again.


4. See note 1.


9. J. H. Waggoner, "Present Truth," Review and Herald, Aug. 7, 1866, p. 77, emphasis his. Elder Waggoner was a prominent minister and editor. His son E. J. Waggoner is better known today for his part, with A. T. Jones, in presenting fresh views of righteousness by faith at the 1888 General Conference session.


Note: To contact the White Estate about materials or other matters, write to Ellen G. White Estate, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; email address, mail@WhiteEstate.org. You may visit their website at http://www.WhiteEstate.org.
Errors in Inspired Writings -- Part 1: How Ancient were the Waldenses?

by Jan Voerman

Was Ellen G. White wrong in her historical information in The Great Controversy?

Now and then we see claims that there are errors in inspired writings. While indeed God may not choose to prevent every expression of human fallibility in writings He has inspired (especially in minor matters of little consequence), we should be slow to pronounce as "error" that which does not agree with our views. In many cases additional evidence may prove the inspired writer correct. And making the judgment of "error" runs the risk of establishing us as the judges of inspired writings rather than letting those writings judge us.

An article in Ministry, February, 2000, the second of a two-part series on revelation and inspiration, mentioned several supposed historical errors in Ellen G. White's book, The Great Controversy. Such claims have been fashionable in some circles recently, but how well founded are they? In this two-part presentation, we will take a closer look at several examples from the Ministry article to see whether any good explanations (other than "error") seem possible. Part 1 will focus on a supposed error, where we have considerable significant and interesting information to examine.

How Long Did the Waldenses Exist?

The author of the Ministry article claimed, "Historical documents clearly show that the Waldenses did not exist for a thousand years as Ellen White asserted. They flourished from 1170 and ceased to exist in 1532, when they merged with another Christian group."

Was Ellen White mistaken? Is this indeed a historical error? The passage referred to in The Great Controversy, pp. 65, 66, says: "Behind the lofty bulwarks of the mountains—in all ages the refuge of the persecuted and oppressed—the Waldenses found a hiding place. Here the light of truth was kept burning amid the darkness of the Middle Ages. Here, for a thousand years, witnesses for the truth maintained the ancient faith."

The phrase "in all ages the refuge of the persecuted and oppressed" is a general statement, not applying to the Waldenses only. The thought is that where the persecuted and oppressed of all ages found shelter, the Waldenses also found a hiding place.
Ellen White then continued: "Here the light of truth was kept burning amid the darkness of the Middle Ages. Here, for a thousand years, witnesses for the truth maintained the ancient faith." The passage does not say that "Waldenses," but "witnesses" (a broader term), maintained the ancient faith there for a thousand years. Were these witnesses Waldenses only?

**Context.**

Amid the darkness of the Middle Ages many Waldenses indeed kept the light burning there. Since the context reveals aspects not to be limited to the Waldenses only, it will be hard to prove that "the witnesses" who maintained the ancient faith in that mountainous area for a thousand years refers specifically and exclusively to the Waldenses, as if they were the only witnesses who lived during those ages. In fact, "In every age there were witnesses for God" (p. 61). No doubt Ellen White referred here not only to the Waldenses but to all true witnesses in general.

The 1884 edition of *The Great Controversy* has a similar passage: "Here for a thousand years they maintained their ancient faith." The previous sentence mentions the Waldenses by name, so at first glance they appear to be the group in view here. However, the same previous sentence also names "the persecuted and oppressed" of "all ages," so possibly these are included as the ones that maintained their ancient faith there for a thousand years.

Yet even if we accept the premise that Ellen White indeed meant the Waldenses only, would she then be far from the truth? To answer fully, two other related questions are of vital importance: 1) Do we have sufficient reliable historical information at hand to paint a clear and indisputable picture about the history of the Waldenses? and 2) Can we always trust the more modern historical description to represent the truth of what really happened in ages past? We will then look at the historical information we do have, to see what it can tell us.

**Rewriting History.**

By the mid-1800s, the Roman Catholic Church realized more than ever that she could use the public press as a mighty weapon in favor of her interests, and she decided to influence the world by the political press. She formed her own Catholic political worldpress with *Civiltà Cattolica* as the most important periodical, published by the Jesuits and setting the direction and tone for other church-related papers. Pope Pius IX recommended the political press as a most excellent tool. And in 1879 Pope Leo XIII admonished all workers in the Catholic press throughout the world to speak out for the rights of the papal chair and the reinstatement of the papal worldly power.¹

In 1883, in another letter concerning the study of history, the pope complained about how the Catholic Church was portrayed in various written histories. He claimed that those who try to criticize the church and the papacy attack the history of the Christian times "with great power and slyness." More than ever, he asserted, historiography seems to have been made "a conspiracy of people against the truth," exerting a "destructive influence." He appealed for the faithful "to avert this imminent danger."²

During the second half of the 19th century in Germany a Catholic book was published about the alleged falsification of history. Similar books soon appeared in other countries as well. A Dutch version, for instance, refuted what the Church characterized as the most important historical falsifications often presented in text-books, cyclopaedias, brochures, magazines,
newspapers, etc.³

With regard to her bloody wars against the Albigenses, for example, we read in the Catholic sources that the Albigenses preached a morality that made possible the most abominable debauchery. They fought against the Catholic Church with slyness and violence, and they propagated by the most immoral means, especially in the south of France. There they played havoc as a wild gang of robbers; they plundered city and country, destroyed the churches, raped women, trampled upon the consecrated wafer, and killed all who would not follow them. Pope Innocent III, who organized a crusade against this sect that ruined church and state, wrote most rightfully to the king of France: "The Albigenses are worse than the Saracenes [Moslems]." All means had been tried to bring them to their senses gently, but to no avail. And when the city of Beziers was taken by storm, some claimed that the Pope's legate Arnoud of Citeaux cried out to the murdering troops: "Kill them all, the Lord knows how to select His own." But alas, said the book, this barbarous Protestant accusation is "contrary to the history."⁴

**Trustworthy?**

Now if we did not know anything else about the Waldenses and Albigenses, we might read this and perhaps sigh, "What a wonderful job the Catholic Church has done in eliminating such dangerous and hideous sects." But the question is, can we accept these historical refutations as truth, or is the picture that Protestant historians of old painted more trustworthy?

We did not witness the historical events that happened during the Middle Ages; moreover, it was a long time ago. However, we do still live rather close to two world wars, and some of the aged among us still have vivid memories of what happened. Can we evaluate the modern Catholic description of some recent historical facts, and if so, what can we learn from it?

It has been clearly demonstrated by able writers, for instance, that in the interest and for the benefit of Roman politics Pope Pius X encouraged World War I and took an active part in it. Yet forty years after his death, these edifying words were dedicated to him: "Pius X did all he could to prevent the start of the 1914 war and he died of anguish when he foresaw the sufferings it would unleash."⁵

Similarly, after World War II, everything was done to whitewash the Vatican's objectionable collaboration. The Jesuit fathers boldly testified after the Liberation that the church had never collaborated with the Nazis, and all kinds of damaging publications were forgotten, abolished, and evaporated. Some, knowing the facts, compare this historiography with novel writing and "many 'historians' are contributing to it, well-disposed ecclesiastics and laymen, and we can be certain that the result will be edifying: a Catholic novel, of course. The Jesuits' contribution is extensive. . . . Whitewash and whitewash again. . . . And this whitewashing is being carried out extensively."⁶

Now when all this happened before our eyes, how can we be certain that we have a correct description of what happened in the more remote past? Would the Church's account of those events be more trustworthy? According to one scholar, in the ages that followed after the eleventh century, the ignorance was so deep "that men, without the least regard to knowledge and learning, received with a blind obedience everything that the ecclesiastics ordered them, however stupid and superstitious, without any examination; and if any one dared in the least to contradict them, he was sure immediately to be punished; whereby the most absurd
opinions came to be established by the violence of the Popes.”

In the crusades against the heretics several papal bulls proclaimed as truth the wildest folly. Pope Gregory IX issued his bull "Vox in Rama" in 1233 with detailed information on how heretics worship the devil with frogs, black cats, and immoral vice. At Avignon Pope John XXII issued a similar bull, "Super Specula," to the Inquisitors, accusing the heretics of the most absurd devilish works of sorcery, while urging the necessity of their excommunication, the confiscation of their goods, and the administration of the appointed punishment. Pope Innocent VIII introduced as truth loathsome accusations of witchcraft, magic, vice, and even sexual intercourse with demons in his "Daemones incubi en succubi." As a result, a wave of superstition flooded many countries, and thousands of people were persecuted and murdered by instigation of the papal power. Regarding the barbarous persecutions, one author wrote that falsehood and deceit were worked out as a system designed and applied by ecclesiastical power and authority.

When older histories are revised to sanitize one party and demonize another, one must always be watchful.

**Antiquity of Waldenses.**

How does all this affect the question we began with, the length of time the Waldenses existed? Most of the older Protestant authorities ascribe ancient or even apostolic roots to the Waldenses. Some assert that Peter Waldo (or Waldus) transferred his biblical concepts to the inhabitants of the Alpine area, but others maintain that the centuries before Waldo frequently testify of similar opposition by these inhabitants against the unbiblical presumptions of the papal church. One nineteenth-century historian wrote, "It is plainly established nowadays that Peter Waldus or Valdus was not the founder of the Waldensian church, but owes his enlightened ideas to her." Some ancient manuscripts may also testify to the antiquity of the Waldensian church. The Waldenses had a translation of the Scriptures which must be of a more ancient date than their preserved writings, which make many references to this translation. Ellen White wrote that "the Waldenses were among the first of the peoples of Europe to obtain a translation of the Holy Scriptures" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 65). Raynonard, a notable linguist who examined certain Waldensian writings, was convinced of their antiquity. For instance, with regard to the "Noble Lesson," he wrote that "the date of the year 1100, which we read in the poem, deserves entire confidence." This is three-quarters of a century earlier than the *Ministry* article's date for the Waldenses.

It is fairly certain that the ancient writings of the Waldenses were copied many times and were adapted linguistically (and perhaps in other ways) to more recent standards because of manifold daily use. But how old are the underlying documents, and how far back does the origin of the Waldenses go? Scholars differ on those questions. Nineteenth-century German scholars began to turn away from a very ancient, even apostolic, origin for the Waldenses, but a prominent scholar among them, Dieckhoff, noted that because of lack of further historical information, we are greatly dependent on suspicious Catholic sources. He wrote in his foreword that in no way were his investigations brought to a satisfying conclusion on all points.
In his 1880 work *Storia dei Valdesi avanti la Reforma*, Emilio Comba, a Waldensian professor of historical theology and homiletics, was the first authority from within that group to reflect the new German investigations and conclusions regarding a non-ancient origin for the Waldenses. It appears, however, that he was not entirely convinced, since six years later, in 1886, his booklet *Who are the Waldenses?* compared the influence of the Waldenses with the river Nile that owes its origin to a source still clouded in darkness. He noted that some writers trace the origin of the Waldensian church to the first persecutions of the Christians by the Romans, others to the time of Vigilantius or of Claudius, bishop of Turin, while still others see the Waldensian church first appearing in the twelfth century. And then he stated plainly that the only thing that can be clearly proved is that the origin of the Waldenses is very closely related to the study of the Scriptures.

In 1922 the Waldensian school was transferred from Florence to Rome with Emilio's son Ernesto Comba as professor of the theological faculty. Ernesto also wrote a book about the history of the Waldenses: *Storia dei Valdesi*, published in the Waldensian town of Torre Pellice in 1923. A Dutch copy was published in 1927. In the first chapter we are assured that at least as early as the fourth century there were flourishing churches in the Piedmont valleys. The chapter also indicated that we can accept Monastier's conviction that the Waldensian church is the connecting link between the ancient Christian churches and the later evangelical churches.

Comba presented arguments to demonstrate that the name Waldenses derives from valley ("vallis densa" valdensis) or from "vaudès," indicating also sorcery and heresy, and that they already existed before the time of Waldo. Comba cited Atto, bishop of Vercelli, who in his letters complained of apostates in that mountainous area. And in the chronicle of the monastery of St. Trudon in Belgium, the abbot Rodolf on his way to Rome indicated the Alps as a district with deep-rooted heresy. This was about 50 years before Waldo. Eberhard de Béthune mentioned the name Waldenses more than a decade before Waldo, while the abbot Bernard de Foncald wrote about heretics named "Valdensis" who were condemned during the pontificate of pope Lucius II (1144), nearly three decades before Waldo. Both Eberhard and Bernard said that their name is derived from "vallis densa," a dreary, deep valley.

Further, a letter written by the bishop of Liège to pope Lucius II mentions heretics as "old enemies" who scattered themselves all over France with their own church polity and discipline. This proves clearly that a church organization, apart from Rome, was in existence before the year 1144. Well before the time of Waldo, in the early twelfth century, a report was written in the chronicle of the abbey of Corbie, telling about the activities of a "peculiar and ancient kind of people" inhabiting the Alps, who learned the Bible by heart and often wandered about as merchants. They despised the ceremonies and customs of the church and showed no regard for images and relics.

Abbot Conrad of Lichtenau wrote in 1212 that the Poor Men or Leonists or Waldenses, "when viewed as a sect and when considered in reference to their ultimate theological origin, had already sprung up and had long existed in Italy, previous to their becoming celebrated in France under the auspices and tutelage of the piedmontese merchant Peter." Alix also held "that Waldo was not the founder of the churches of the valleys, which were in being long before him." He pointed out clearly and decidedly, "Wherefore, that I may once for all clear this matter, I say, first, that it is absolutely false, that these churches were ever founded by..."
Peter Waldo." Some recent publications still uphold similar views. Mia S. H. van Oostveen wrote, "The opinion that the name 'Waldens' would have its origin since [Waldo] and would mean 'follower of Peter Waldo' is incorrect."27

Interestingly, in the canons of the councils and in other official documents we do not find the followers of Waldo named as Waldenses but as "poor men of Lyon."28 Another source remarks: "Peter Waldus, who was but a follower of the Waldenses, first became known after the persecution of Lyon in the year 1181," while "shortly afterwards the history of the Waldenses is confined mainly to the valleys of Piedmont."29 Waldo and his followers were at first also called "Leonists" (from "Lyon") and when persecuted they "fled into Piedmont, incorporating themselves with the Vaudois."30

Now if there is no question that Waldo and his followers were originally named "poor men of Lyon" or "Leonists," then it seems to be clear indeed that only after they were driven to the valleys and to other areas, where they incorporated themselves with the Waldenses, did they become identified as such and subsequently were also officially named after them.

Although it is widely accepted today that Waldo was the founder of the Waldenses, we should keep in mind that this remains an assumption, not a demonstrated fact. A "seemingly impenetrable veil" covers the religious movement identified with Peter Waldo, while very little is also known about him personally. Even his correct name is not clear. Names like Valdus, Valdes, Valdesius, Valdo, Waldensis, and more are handed down to us, while the name Peter first appears for him two centuries later.31 We are totally dependent upon Catholic information for the history of Waldo, and then only three sources provide us with some limited information.32 No wonder that the different sources do not paint a harmonious picture. It should be clear therefore that with so little information and so much uncertainty about Peter Waldo, no one can maintain with absolute certainty that the Waldenses owed their rise and name to him.

Churches Established Early.

There is clear evidence, however, that during the early centuries evangelical churches were established in southeast France.

According to the fourth-century church historian Eusebius, in the second century there were many Christian churches in and around the Alpine area.33 The Christians at Lyon requested Polycarp of Smyrna to send some men; in the year 160 or 161, Pothinus and Irenaeus with some others arrived at Lyon to help the church there. In 177, Pothinus and 47 other Christians lost their lives in persecution there. Between 286 and 290, the Christians there under Maximian again suffered under persecution. After the last severe persecution under Diocletian, a better time broke through for these Gallic Christians.34

We might well suppose that during these early times of oppression, many of these Christians sought and found shelter in the nearby mountains where in later ages the Waldenses also found their hiding place.35 It is not impossible, therefore, that in these mountain-valleys the Waldenses had their early roots, as Dr. Faber plainly asserted: "Hither their ancestors retired, during the persecutions of the second and third and fourth centuries: here, providentially secluded from the world, they retained the precise doctrines and practices of the Primitive Church endeared to them by suffering and exile."36 Followers of Jovinianus (330-390) who
protested against the papacy and awakened great interest "took refuge in the Alpine valleys and there kept alive the evangelical teaching that was to reappear with vigor in the twelfth century." One historian said that from Asia Minor the seeds of Christianity were blown over to Lyon and that it is "remarkable that after a thousand years the same spirit comes up again [in Waldo's time] in that same Lyon." These reports correspond remarkably well with the words of Ellen White that in this area for a thousand years witnesses for the truth maintained the ancient faith (The Great Controversy, p. 66).

It cannot be maintained therefore that the Waldenses "are simply the followers of Waldo of Lyons. It does not appear that he simply founded the community 'de novo' or that its evangelical and Protestant character is entirely due to his influence." Waldo had a solid backdrop of spiritual relatives who had lived and preached before him. The principles for a reform movement to bring the decaying church back to the true fountain of Christianity had already been present for centuries before him, among both clergy and people.

In fact, it is hardly imaginable that Waldo could have started such a new movement, previously unknown, and all at once had so many dedicated followers. Allix remarked that if we suppose Waldo to be the founder, it is "unquestionably plain, that it was impossible for a sect to spread itself so far and wide in so short a pace of time." And Wylie wrote, "If we grant that their religious beliefs were the heritage of former ages handed down from an evangelical ancestry, all is plain; but if we maintain that they were the discovery of the men of those days, we assert what approaches almost to a miracle."

We should not forget that it was the malice of their enemies and the desire to blot out the memory of their antiquity which made their adversaries impute the origin of the Waldenses to the time of Peter Waldo.

**Enemies Testify.**

Yet even some of their enemies openly admitted the antiquity of the Waldenses. Several authors cite Reynerius the Inquisitor and Claude Seyssel of Turin, who both stigmatized the Waldenses as most dangerous, because they were the most ancient sect. Marco Aurelio Renero, prior of St. Roch at Turin, is quoted as stating that "The Waldenses were so ancient, as to afford no absolute certainty in regard to the precise time of their origination; but, at all events, that, in the ninth and tenth centuries, they were even then not a new sect." In a report about some merchants of the valley of Cluson who were arrested in 1627 for selling religious books at a fair, the prior of Lucerne added that the Waldensian churches were said to exist already before the ninth century.

Several authors have noted that since the earliest years, the Roman Catholic Church's customary practice was not only to punish her disobedient sons but also to erase any memory of them. All the works of their hands were systematically destroyed so that we often know them only in a most deficient way, by the witness of their persecutors. All heretical literature, including Jewish literature, was to be destroyed. In 1248, for instance, well before the invention of modern printing, fourteen wagon-loads were burned at one time in Paris.

Most of the valuable ancient Waldensian manuscripts that were given for safe-keeping to the British and deposited in the University Library at Cambridge have since disappeared. There is reason to believe that during the reign of James II they were removed by some Catholics.
who were interested in destroying documents unfavorable to the papacy.\textsuperscript{50}

Some Catholic historians also admit that almost everything of the heretics has been destroyed so that our knowledge about them comes mostly from their adversaries.\textsuperscript{51} About this history Daniël Rops wondered, "Is it certain that we know it correctly?"\textsuperscript{52}

Ellen White's View. In \textit{The Great Controversy}, pp. 61, 62, Ellen White wrote: "They were branded as heretics, their motives impugned, their characters maligned, their writings suppressed, misrepresented, or mutilated. . . . The history of God's people during the ages of darkness that followed upon Rome's supremacy is written in heaven, but they have little place in human records. Few traces of their existence can be found, except in the accusations of their persecutors. It was the policy of Rome to obliterate every trace of dissent from her doctrines or decrees. Everything heretical, whether persons or writings, she sought to destroy. . . . Rome endeavored also to destroy every record of her cruelty toward dissenters. Papal councils decreed that books and writings containing such records should be committed to the flames. Before the invention of printing, books were few in number, and in a form not favorable for preservation; therefore there was little to prevent the Romanists from carrying out their purpose."

Many historians support the correctness of this passage and we can be certain that this is the truth. Now if the writings of the Waldenses were destroyed, suppressed, misrepresented, and mutilated, and if their history is written in heaven while little place is found for it in human records, who can say with certainty that their antiquity is but a fable and that they originated only with Peter Waldo in the year a.d. 1170?

Ellen White testified that she was shown the Waldenses (\textit{Testimonies for the Church}, 1:371). If she makes clear that there were Waldenses who kept the light burning through many ages of apostasy, we would not be wrong simply to believe what she wrote. As we have seen, there are still clear indications available which support precisely what Ellen White wrote.

\textbf{Notes}


2. N.n., \textit{Geschiedvervalsching} met een brief van Dr. H. J. A. M. Schaepman (Utrecht: Wed. J. R. van Rossum, 1887), voorbericht, pp. x-xv. Here and throughout, translations from Dutch and German sources are my own.

3. Ibid., pp. xii, xiii.

4. Ibid., pp. 298, 299.


6. Edmond Paris, \textit{The Secret History of the Jesuits} (Chino, Calif.: 1975), p. 160. Prior to World War I, Von Hoensbroech touched a similar note when he wrote about historical truth being surrounded by misrepresentations and lies: "Nowhere are so many lies told, and so systematically, as in the ultramontanic science, primarily in the church- and papal-history."


9. Ibid., pp. 3, 291


12. Ibid., p. 32.


15. Monastier, pp. 139, 140.


17. Ibid., Vorwort, p. v.


23. Monastier, p. 102, n. 2.

24. Ibid., pp. 181, 182.

25. Faber, pp. 363-367.


29. *Schetsen . . . ,* p. 43.


36. Faber, p. 293.


40. Nijhoff, p. 146.


42. Allix, p. 193.


44. E.g., Allix, pp. 191, 200; Perrin, pp. 23, 24; Jones, p. 3.

45. Faber, pp. 327, 328; Wylie, pp. 10, 11.


49. Faber, pp. 369, 370.


My Search for Bible Certainty

by O. J. Mills

How a young minister found the truth about the Bible and about Ellen G. White.

I grew up on a farm in the midst of a simple Bible-believing culture. Listening to Bible stories read to me by my mother, I was captured, even as a small child, with the idea that this book was the Word of God and from it we could come to the knowledge of truth.

While our family identified with a church which claimed to have the truth, we were not regular in attendance. From time to time I listened to adult Bible discussions. In these discussions I heard conflicting doctrines being advanced, both sides claiming to be teaching truth, both sides claiming Bible support. As I grew in spiritual knowledge, I prayed for greater wisdom to learn how to recognize genuine Bible truth.

In my search for biblical certainty, I attended a small Bible college and then became a Protestant minister.

In God's providence two other preachers and I enrolled in a radio lab class on the University of Michigan campus. Like three birds, we sat together on the back row. George Vandeman, one of our threesome, was the first Seventh-day Adventist I had ever met.

I had always wanted to meet a Seventh-day Adventist. Everything I had heard about them was positive. Through our cherished moments before and after class, George and I formed a warm fellowship. When he learned of my interest in studying the Bible in a scholarly atmosphere of faith and obedience, he invited me to spend a weekend with him at Emmanuel Missionary College where he was a teacher. (I didn't know it at the time, but he spent his last dime to assist me in coming to see the campus).

I liked what I saw. I was not deterred by the fact that Emmanuel Missionary College was an undergraduate school and unable to provide me with graduate credit. Three months later I was enrolled as a student at E. M. C.

I loved my classes, the professors, the spiritual administration, the warm fellowship with students, and the openness and freedom of discussion. But by and by, I began to discern some things about the Adventists I didn't like. I began to find critical challenges to my theology and doctrine, not the least of which was this "Mary Baker Eddy White woman," as I dubbed her.
did not believe the miraculous gift of prophecy existed beyond the apostolic age and was offended by the claim.

But since I believed the Bible, I could not escape the verses, "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess 5:19-21, my emphasis).

Grudgingly I began to study the writings of Ellen White. I quickly saw that the Lord spoke to me through these writings directly and forcibly. I could not deny the conviction that I was hearing the actual testimony of Jesus Himself. Before the end of the year I knew I must follow truth and become a Seventh-day Adventist. The many questions that had confused me since childhood were answered. With the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy I discovered at long last how to recognize with certainty genuine Bible truth.

Having long wandered in the fog of uncertainty, exposed to the conflicting gales of doctrine, I now felt sheltered and protected. I could hardly wait for each early morning when on my knees, with my Bible open and some volume of the Spirit of Prophecy before me, I could learn more of God's love for me and receive His gentle directions for my life.

The Spirit of Prophecy was such a blessing to me that I was always amazed and perplexed at how its insights could be taken for granted or be neglected and disregarded by some who had been Adventists for many years.

It was not until some years into the ministry, however, that I gained the greatest help from these inspired writings. While pastoring the Madison College church, I was challenged to read the Testimonies systematically from beginning to end.

Long before daybreak I would take one of the books and a candle and walk to a secluded spot in the woods. Lighting the candle I could pray aloud and read many pages. As I read the instruction to Brother M or Brother A, I was deeply stirred. So often I found myself being described. So often my areas of need were addressed.

My life was changed completely during these hours that sped by with God. There was such a wealth of truth that enriched my ministry. In the Testimonies I found subject matter for prayer, I found biblical material for family worships and church services. I found practical instruction for being a husband, a father, and a pastor. I was encouraged, I was cautioned, I was wounded, I was healed in these wonderful pages. I gained insights into people and institutions from the people and institutions of the past. I found wonderful case studies to share with parishioners in counseling.

Now I'm 83 years old. With Moses I am beginning the ascent of Mt. Pisgah. Unlike Moses, though, my memory is dimming and my muscles are weakening. Yet I find the same heart stirring as I read the inspired writings of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. I find even greater comfort and hope with the passing of time.

As I see the rapid events of today, the deepening of rebellion, I review the map and I see that we are almost home. Jesus is still a very present help. His testimony is as precious and as important to me today as yesterday.

I look back on my experiences and think of friends and parishioners who failed to carefully study and follow the Spirit of Prophecy. How much avoidable sorrow and problems they have experienced! I am thankful my children and grandchildren love these books.
I can testify from my own life, "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established. Believe His prophets, so shall you prosper" (2 Chron 20:20).
More Ellen G. White

Spring 2001 (vol. 15, no. 1)

The False and the True in Education

by Ellen G. White

Messenger of the Lord The mastermind in the confederacy of evil is ever working to keep out of sight the words of God, and to bring into view the opinions of men. He means that we shall not hear the voice of God, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Isaiah 30:21. Through perverted educational processes he is doing his utmost to obscure heaven's light.

Philosophical speculation and scientific research in which God is not acknowledged are making skeptics of thousands. In the schools of today the conclusions that learned men have reached as the result of their scientific investigations are carefully taught and fully explained; while the impression is distinctly given that if these learned men are correct, the Bible cannot be. Skepticism is attractive to the human mind. The youth see in it an independence that captivates the imagination, and they are deceived. Satan triumphs. He nourishes every seed of doubt that is sown in young hearts. He causes it to grow and bear fruit, and soon a plentiful harvest of infidelity is reaped.

It is because the human heart is inclined to evil that it is so dangerous to sow the seeds of skepticism in young minds. Whatever weakens faith in God robs the soul of power to resist temptation. It removes the only real safeguard against sin. We are in need of schools where the youth shall be taught that greatness consists in honoring God by revealing His character in daily life. Through His word and His works we need to learn of God, that our lives may fulfill His purpose.

Infidel Authors

In order to obtain an education, many think it essential to study the writings of infidel authors, because these works contain many bright gems of thought. But who was the originator of these gems of thought? It was God, and God only. He is the source of all light. Why then should we wade through the mass of error contained in the works of infidels for the sake of a few intellectual truths, when all truth is at our command.

How is it that men who are at war with the government of God come into possession of the wisdom which they sometimes display? Satan himself was educated in the heavenly courts, and he has a knowledge of good as well as of evil. He mingles the precious with the vile, and
this is what gives him power to deceive. But because Satan has robed himself in garments of heavenly brightness, shall we receive him as an angel of light? The tempter has his agents, educated according to his methods, inspired by his spirit, and adapted to his work. Shall we co-operate with them? Shall we receive the works of his agents as essential to the acquirement of an education?

If the time and effort spent in seeking to grasp the bright ideas of infidels were given to studying the precious things of the word of God, thousands who now sit in darkness and in the shadow of death would be rejoicing in the glory of the Light of life.

**Historical and Theological Lore**

As a preparation for Christian work, many think it essential to acquire an extensive knowledge of historical and theological writings. They suppose that this knowledge will be an aid to them in teaching the gospel. But their laborious study of the opinions of men tends to the enfeebling of their ministry, rather than to its strengthening. As I see libraries filled with ponderous volumes of historical and theological lore, I think, Why spend money for that which is not bread? The sixth chapter of John tells us more than can be found in such works. Christ says: "I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." "I am the living Bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever." "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life." "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." John 6:35, 51, 47, 63.

There is a study of history that is not to be condemned. Sacred history was one of the studies in the schools of the prophets. In the record of His dealings with the nations were traced the footsteps of Jehovah. So today we are to consider the dealings of God with the nations of the earth. We are to see in history the fulfillment of prophecy, to study the workings of Providence in the great reformatory movements, and to understand the progress of events in the marshaling of the nations for the final conflict of the great controversy.

Such study will give broad, comprehensive views of life. It will help us to understand something of its relations and dependencies, how wonderfully we are bound together in the great brotherhood of society and nations, and to how great an extent the oppression and degradation of one member means loss to all.

But history, as commonly studied, is concerned with man's achievements, his victories in battle, his success in attaining power and greatness. God's agency in the affairs of men is lost sight of. Few study the working out of His purpose in the rise and fall of nations.

And, to a great degree, theology, as studied and taught, is but a record of human speculation, serving only to "darken counsel by words without knowledge." Too often the motive in accumulating these many books is not so much a desire to obtain food for mind and soul, as it is an ambition to become acquainted with philosophers and theologians, a desire to present Christianity to the people in learned terms and propositions.

Not all the books written can serve the purpose of a holy life. "'Learn of Me,'" said the Great Teacher, "'take My yoke upon you,' learn My meekness and lowliness." Your intellectual pride will not aid you in communicating with souls that are perishing for want of the bread of life. In your study of these books you are allowing them to take the place of the practical lessons you should be learning from Christ. With the results of this study the people are not
fed. Very little of the research which is so wearying to the mind furnishes that which will help one to be a successful laborer for souls.

The Saviour came "to preach the gospel to the poor." Luke 4:18. In His teaching He used the simplest terms and the plainest symbols. And it is said that "the common people heard Him gladly." Mark 12:37. Those who are seeking to do His work for this time need a deeper insight into the lessons He has given.

The words of the living God are the highest of all education. Those who minister to the people need to eat of the bread of life. This will give them spiritual strength; then they will be prepared to minister to all classes of people.

**The Classics**

In the colleges and universities thousands of youth devote a large part of the best years of life to the study of Greek and Latin. And while they are engaged in these studies, mind and character are molded by the evil sentiments of pagan literature, the reading of which is generally regarded as an essential part of the study of these languages.

Those who are conversant with the classics declare that "the Greek tragedies are full of incest, murder, and human sacrifices to lustful and revengeful gods." Far better would it be for the world were the education gained from such sources to be dispensed with. "Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?" Proverbs 6:28. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Job 14:4. Can we then expect the youth to develop Christian character while their education is molded by the teaching of those who set at defiance the principles of the law of God? . . .

What do students carry with them when they leave school? Where are they going? What are they to do? Have they the knowledge that will enable them to teach others? Have they been educated to be true fathers and mothers? Can they stand at the head of a family as wise instructors? The only education worthy of the name is that which leads young men and young women to be Christlike, which fits them to bear life's responsibilities, fits them to stand at the head of their families. Such an education is not to be acquired by a study of heathen classics.

**Sensational Literature**

Many of the popular publications of the day are filled with sensational stories that are educating the youth in wickedness and leading them in the path to perdition. Mere children in years are old in a knowledge of crime. They are incited to evil by the tales they read. In imagination they act over the deeds portrayed, until their ambition is aroused to see what they can do in committing crime and evading punishment. . . .

Works of romance, frivolous, exciting tales, are, in hardly less degree, a curse to the reader. The author may profess to teach a moral lesson, throughout his work he may interweave religious sentiments; but often these serve only to veil the folly and worthlessness beneath.

The world is flooded with books that are filled with enticing error. The youth receive as truth that which the Bible denounces as falsehood, and they love and cling to deception that means ruin to the soul.
There are works of fiction that were written for the purpose of teaching truth or exposing some great evil. Some of these works have accomplished good. Yet they have also wrougt untold harm. They contain statements and highly wrought pen pictures that excite the imagination and give rise to a train of thought which is full of danger, especially to the youth. The scenes described are lived over and over again in their thoughts. Such reading unfits the mind for usefulness and disqualifies it for spiritual exercise. It destroys interest in the Bible. Heavenly things find little place in the thoughts. As the mind dwells upon the scenes of impurity portrayed, passion is aroused, and the end is sin.

Even fiction which contains no suggestion of impurity, and which may be intended to teach excellent principles, is harmful. It encourages the habit of hasty and superficial reading merely for the story. Thus it tends to destroy the power of connected and vigorous thought; it unfits the soul to contemplate the great problems of duty and destiny.

By fostering love for mere amusement, the reading of fiction creates a distaste for life's practical duties. Through its exciting, intoxicating power it is not infrequently a cause of both mental and physical disease. Many a miserable, neglected home, many a lifelong invalid, many an inmate of the insane asylum, has become such through the habit of novel reading.

It is often urged that in order to win the youth from sensational or worthless literature, we should supply them with a better class of fiction. This is like trying to cure the drunkard by giving him, in the place of whisky or brandy, the milder intoxicants, such as wine, beer, or cider. The use of these would continually foster the appetite for stronger stimulants. The only safety for the inebriate, and the only safeguard for the temperate man, is total abstinence. For the lover of fiction the same rule holds true. Total abstinence is his only safety.

**Myths and Fairy Tales**

In the education of children and youth, fairy tales, myths, and fictitious stories are now given a large place. Books of this character are used in the schools, and they are to be found in many homes. How can Christian parents permit their children to use books so filled with falsehood? When the children ask the meaning of stories so contrary to the teaching of their parents, the answer is that the stories are not true; but this does not do away with the evil results of their use. The ideas presented in these books mislead the children. They impart false views of life and beget and foster a desire for the unreal.

The widespread use of such books at this time is one of the cunning devices of Satan. He is seeking to divert the minds of old and young from the great work of character building. He means that our children and youth shall be swept away by the soul-destroying deceptions with which he is filling the world. Therefore he seeks to divert their minds from the word of God and thus prevent them from obtaining a knowledge of those truths that would be their safeguard.

Never should books containing a perversion of truth be placed in the hands of children or youth. Let not our children, in the very process of obtaining an education, receive ideas that will prove to be seeds of sin. If those with mature minds had nothing to do with such books, they would themselves be far safer, and their example and influence on the right side would make it far less difficult to guard the youth from temptation.

We have an abundance of that which is real, that which is divine. Those who thirst for
knowledge need not go to polluted fountains. . . .

**Christ's Teaching**

So also Christ presented the principles of truth in the gospel. In His teaching we may drink of the pure streams that flow from the throne of God. Christ could have imparted to men knowledge that would have surpassed any previous disclosures, and put in the background every other discovery. He could have unlocked mystery after mystery, and could have concentrated around these wonderful revelations the active, earnest thought of successive generations till the close of time. But He would not spare a moment from teaching the science of salvation. His time, His faculties, and His life were appreciated and used only as the means for working out the salvation of the souls of men. He had come to seek and to save that which was lost, and He would not be turned from His purpose. He allowed nothing to divert Him.

Christ imparted only that knowledge which could be utilized. His instruction of the people was confined to the needs of their own condition in practical life. The curiosity that led them to come to Him with prying questions, He did not gratify. All such questionings He made the occasion for solemn, earnest, vital appeals. To those who were so eager to pluck from the tree of knowledge, He offered the fruit of the tree of life. They found every avenue closed except the way that leads to God. Every fountain was sealed save the fountain of eternal life.

Our Saviour did not encourage any to attend the rabbinical schools of His day, for the reason that their minds would be corrupted with the continually repeated, "They say," or, "It has been said." Why, then, should we accept the unstable words of men as exalted wisdom, when a greater, a certain, wisdom is at our command?

That which I have seen of eternal things, and that which I have seen of the weakness of humanity, has deeply impressed my mind and influenced my lifework. I see nothing wherein man should be praised or glorified. I see no reason why the opinions of worldly-wise men and so-called great men should be trusted in and exalted. How can those who are destitute of divine enlightenment have correct ideas of God's plans and ways? They either deny Him altogether and ignore His existence, or they circumscribe His power by their own finite conceptions.

Let us choose to be taught by Him who created the heavens and the earth, by Him who set the stars in their order in the firmament and appointed the sun and the moon to do their work.

It is right for the youth to feel that they must reach the highest development of their mental powers. We would not restrict the education to which God has set no limit. But our attainments avail nothing if not put to use for the honor of God and the good of humanity.

It is not well to crowd the mind with studies that require intense application, but that are not brought into use in practical life. Such education will be a loss to the student. For these studies lessen his desire and inclination for the studies that would fit him for usefulness and enable him to fulfill his responsibilities. A practical training is worth far more than any amount of mere theorizing. It is not enough even to have knowledge. We must have ability to use the knowledge aright.

The time, means, and study that so many expend for a comparatively useless education should be devoted to gaining an education that would make them practical men and women,
fitted to bear life's responsibilities. Such an education would be of the highest value.

What we need is knowledge that will strengthen mind and soul, that will make us better men and women. Heart education is of far more importance than mere book learning.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's Understanding of Ellen White's Authority. Exhibit One. From The Adventist Review, December 23, 1982. Also appeared in Ministry, February 1983. Ellen White herself believed and taught that the Bible was the ultimate norm for the church. In her first book, published in 1851, she said, "I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that Word we are to be judged." As Ellen White noted, "The fact that God has revealed His will to men through His Word, has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit was promised by our Saviour, to open the Word to His servants, to illuminate and apply its teachings." [10].