1993

William Clarence (W. C.) White: His Relationship to Ellen G. White and Her Work

Jerry Moon
Andrews University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations

Part of the Christian Denominations and Sects Commons, History Commons, and the Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations/97

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Research at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.
Thank you for your interest in the Andrews University Digital Library of Dissertations and Theses.

Please honor the copyright of this document by not duplicating or distributing additional copies in any form without the author’s express written permission. Thanks for your cooperation.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.
William Clarence (W. C.) White: His relationship to Ellen G. White and her work

Moon, Jerry Allen, Ph.D.

Andrews University, 1993
Frontispiece: The W. C. White family, autumn 1896. Ethel May Lacey White (23) and W. C. White (42) are holding the twins, Herbert and Henry. Standing are Mabel (10) and Ella May (14).
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

WILLIAM CLARENCE (W. C.) WHITE: HIS RELATIONSHIP TO ELLEN G. WHITE AND HER WORK

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Jerry Allen Moon
August 1993
WILLIAM CLARENCE (W. C.) WHITE:
HIS RELATIONSHIP TO ELLEN G. WHITE AND HER WORK

A dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Jerry Allen Moon

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Faculty Advisor: George R. Knight
Professor of Church History

C. Mervyn Maxwell, Professor of
Church History, Emeritus

Daniel Augsburger, Professor of
Historical Theology, Emeritus

Norman Miles, Professor of Urban
Ministry

Donald Dayton, Professor of Theology
and Ethics, Northern Baptist
Theological Seminary

Werner K. Vynheister, Dean
SDA Theological Seminary

Date Approved: July 28, 1993

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ......................................................... x

PREFACE .................................................................................... xii

- Background of the Problem ................................................ xiii
- Statement of the Problem .................................................... xiv
- Purpose and Delimitations of the Study .............................. xvi
- Review of Literature and Prior Research ......................... xvii
  - Published Documents ................................................... xvii
  - Unpublished Documents .............................................. xviii
- Methodology and Primary Sources .................................... xix
- Design of the Study ........................................................... xx
- Acknowledgements ............................................................ xxii

Chapter

1. BACKGROUNDS AND BEGINNINGS, 1854-1881 .............. 1

  - Chronological Overview, 1854-1881 ................................ 1
  - Infancy, 1854-1855 ...................................................... 1
  - Childhood, 1855-1867 ................................................... 4
  - Youth, 1867-1875 ........................................................ 10
    - The Greenville Farm, 1867-1868 .................................. 10
    - Camp Meetings East and West, 1870 .............................. 11
    - Nursery Manager, 1871 .............................................. 12
    - Introduction to Colorado, 1872 .................................... 13
    - Medical School, 1872-1873 ......................................... 16
    - Colorado Again, 1873 ................................................ 17
    - Battle Creek College, 1873-1874 ................................. 20
    - His Mother's Escort, 1874 .......................................... 21
  - Early Adulthood, 1875-1881 ......................................... 22
    - Marriage, 1876 .......................................................... 22
    - Leadership Positions in California, 1875-1876 ............... 24
    - Leadership Positions in Battle Creek, 1877-1879 ............ 25
    - Back to Oakland, 1880-1881 ...................................... 27
    - James White's Final Crisis, 1881 ................................. 28
    - W. C. White's Position after James White's Death .......... 32
  - W. C. White's Relationship to Ellen G. White and Her Work, 1854-1881 .................................................. 33
  - Ellen White as a Mother .................................................. 34
  - Ellen White's Early Training of W. C. White .......................... 36
Leadership Issues: The "Counsel Continuum" ........................ 131
Information ........................................................................... 131
Opinion ................................................................................ 132
Recommendation .................................................................. 133
Attempted persuasion ......................................................... 135
Effective persuasion .......................................................... 137
Counsel Concerning Timing and Delivery of Letters ..... 140
Asking Counsel for Others ..................................................... 144
Ellen White's Calls for W. C. White to
Be Her Full-Time Assistant ................................................. 146
Conclusions, 1881-1891 ......................................................... 149

3. CAREERS IN CONFLICT, 1891-1900 ................................. 153

Chronological Overview, 1891-1900 ....................................... 154
District Superintendent, 1891-1893 ......................................... 155
  Financing Church Growth Amidst
    Economic Depression .................................................... 157
  Agitating for a New Organizational Structure ................. 161
Union Conference President, 1894-1897 ............................... 164
  Organization of the Australasian
    Union Conference, 1894 .................................................. 165
Married Again, 1895 ............................................................ 167
Breakdown and Resignation, 1896-1897 ............................... 168
The 1897 General Conference Session ................................. 174
The Difficult Transition, 1898-1900 ...................................... 178
W. C. White's Relationship to Ellen G. White
and Her Work, 1891-1900 ................................................. 180
W. C. White as Organizer ..................................................... 181
  Creating the Union Level of
    Conference Organization ............................................... 181
  Developing the Echo Publishing House ............................. 188
  Founding Avondale College .............................................. 193
  Starting a Hospital on Faith: The Avondale
    Health Retreat ................................................................ 207
The Whites' Financial Philosophy ......................................... 211
W. C. White's Application of Ellen
White's Counsels to Him ..................................................... 213
W. C. White as His Mother's Assistant ................................... 221
W. C. White as Exponent of the
  Editorial Process ............................................................. 221
W. C. White as His Mother's Counselor ................................. 225
  Information withheld ....................................................... 226
  Supplying good news ...................................................... 229
  Attempted persuasion ..................................................... 231
W. C. White as Conduit for Counsel ...................................... 232
  Sharing the mail ............................................................. 233
  Interviews ........................................................................ 236
W. C. White as conduit between
  E. G. White and A. G. Daniells ......................................... 239
W. C. White's Transition from Conference Work to Employment by Ellen G. White ........................................ 241
Careers in Conflict ....................................................... 242
A Higher Vision of Leadership ........................................ 244
Years of Dilemma .......................................................... 248
Her Call Accepted .......................................................... 250
First Ultimatum .............................................................. 252
Second Ultimatum ........................................................... 255
Conclusions, 1891-1900 .................................................. 258

4. TRUSTEE IN TRAINING, 1900-1915 ............................. 262
Chronological Overview, 1900-1915 ............................... 264
Return and Reorganization, 1900-1901 ............................ 264
Resettling in California, 1900 ........................................... 265
Reorganization of the General Conference, 1901 ............. 268
The Indianapolis Incident, 1901 ....................................... 271
The Battle Creek Crisis, 1902-1907 ................................. 274
The Sanitarium Fire and Its Aftermath, 1902 ..................... 275
Autumn Council, 1902 ................................................... 283
The 1903 General Conference Session ............................ 291
Relocating Denominational Headquarters, 1903 ............... 296
Autumn Council, 1903 .................................................... 298
Travels and Trials, 1904 ................................................... 302
The Berrien Springs Meeting, 1904 ................................. 304
The 1905 General Conference Session ............................ 309
Speeches about Ellen White and Her Work, 1905 .......... 313
The Climax of the Crisis, 1906-1907 ............................... 314
Years of Conflict and Achievement, 1906-1915 ............... 321
Burden for Expansion, 1906-1907 ................................... 322
Elmshaven Councils, 1908 .............................................. 323
The 1909 General Conference Session ............................ 326
The 1910 Pacific Union Conference Session .................... 329
Improving Great Controversy, 1910-1911 ....................... 332
More Land for Loma Linda, 1912 ..................................... 334
Book Production, 1912 ................................................... 337
The 1913 General Conference Session ............................ 338
The 1913 Fall Council .................................................... 340
Time Running Out, 1914-1915 ....................................... 342

W. C. White's Relationship to Ellen G. White and Her Work, 1900-1915 ................................................................. 347
W. C. White as Chief of Staff ........................................... 347
W. C. White as Editor ..................................................... 349
Letters ............................................................................. 350
Articles and Pamphlets ................................................... 353
Books ................................................................................ 354
W. C. White as Counselor .................................................. 361
Information ........................................................................ 362
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor examples</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The anti-meat pledge</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasion</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undelivered letter to Prescott, 1904</td>
<td>371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undelivered letter to Daniells, 1905</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charges of Manipulation</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Elmshaven council, 1902</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparent manipulation</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. C. White as Interpreter of Ellen White's Prophetic Inspiration</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No &quot;Spurious&quot; Testimonies: The</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913 Autumn Council</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fitzgerald letter</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Watson letter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. C. White on Ellen White's Inspiration</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. C. White as Interpreter of Ellen White's Theological and Historical Authority</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Conflict Over the &quot;Daily&quot;</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. C. White on Ellen White's Historical Authority</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1911 Great Controversy</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further questions on history</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions, 1900-1915</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen White's Influence on Her Son</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. C. White as Counselor to His Mother</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. C. White as His Mother's Editor</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. C. White as Spokesman and Interpreter</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPILOGUE, 1915-1937</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>457</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AHC</td>
<td>Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bk</td>
<td>Book, an archival category designating letter books in the General Conference Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bx</td>
<td>Box, an archival category in the Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coll</td>
<td>Collection, an archival category in the Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DF</td>
<td>Document File, an archival category in the Ellen G. White Research Centers, including the Loma Linda University Heritage Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGWRC-GC</td>
<td>Ellen G. White Estate Research Center, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGWRC-AU</td>
<td>Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office and Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fld</td>
<td>Folder, an archival category in the General Conference Archives and in the Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCAr</td>
<td>General Conference Archives, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCB</td>
<td>General Conference Bulletin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCC Min</td>
<td>General Conference [Executive] Committee Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Health Reformer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LB</td>
<td>Letter book, the form in which duplicate copies of W. C. White's letters were preserved in his files. One series was designated alphabetically, A-J, with inserted additions of A1 and A2. The other series was designated numerically, 1-22, with the addition of 2A, 4A, 5A, 10A, 11A, and 15A. This explains the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
existence of separate letter books designated A2 and 2A. The original letter books are at the General Conference office of the Ellen G. White Estate. Microfilm copies are available there and at the Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University.

LLU  Loma Linda University Library, Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office / Department of Archives and Special Collections, Loma Linda, California

MMM  Ellen G. White Estate, Manuscripts and Memories of Minneapolis: Selections from non-Ellen White letters, articles, notes, reports, and pamphlets which deal with the Minneapolis General Conference Session [1888]. Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1988

MSU  Michigan State University, Archives and Historical Collections, John Harvey Kellogg Papers, copies in the Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University, Collection 6

PUR  Pacific Union Recorder

RH  Review and Herald; Adventist Review

RG  Record Group, an archival category in the General Conference Archives

SD  Shelf Document, designates documents produced by the Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland (formerly Washington, D.C.) for distribution through the Ellen G. White Research Centers.

SDA  Seventh-day Adventist

ST  Signs of the Times

TMs  Typewritten Manuscript

UCR  [Australasian] Union Conference Record

WCWCF  W. C. White Correspondence File, an archival category at the Ellen G. White Estate Research Center, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland. The W. C. White Correspondence File contains incoming correspondence to both Ellen White and W. C. White, outgoing correspondence from W. C. White, and is in addition to the W. C. White letter books.

YI  Youth's Instructor
PREFACE

William Clarence White (1854-1937), third son of Seventh-day Adventist founders James and Ellen White, was a person of major influence in the development of the denomination. From managing the Pacific Press at age twenty-one, he was rapidly advanced to other positions of responsibility. At twenty-nine he was elected to the executive committee of the General Conference and at thirty-four became acting president of the denomination. Six years later he initiated the union conference level of denominational structure, becoming president of the Australasian Union Conference at age forty. Thus before the mid-point of his eighty-three-year lifetime, he established himself as one of the more innovative and successful Seventh-day Adventist leaders of the nineteenth century.

He is far better known, however, for the work to which he devoted the second half of his life. From the time of his father’s death, his mother depended on him as her escort, advisor, business manager, liaison to publishers, supervisor of her editorial staff, communication link to top denominational administrators, and personal delegate to decision-making councils. In her later years, her physical decline contrasted rather sharply with his high-profile leadership and created a perceptual atmosphere in which the charges of critics that she was manipulated by her son seemed plausible. Such charges were serious because, if true, they would compromise Ellen White’s claim to divine inspiration. The issue of W. C. White’s relationship to his mother has particular significance for Seventh-day Adventists because of the position that Ellen White holds in their thought.

xii
Background of the Problem

Seventh-day Adventists regard Ellen G. White as having received the spiritual gift of prophecy, so that "her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth." They do not believe, however, that she was either verbally inspired or infallible. They recognize that she used literary sources and literary assistants, but do not believe that either of these "negates the inspiration of her writings."

After her marriage in 1846, Ellen White found in her husband James a chief source of encouragement and assistance in preparing her "testimonies" for publication. In addition, she employed, by the time of her death in 1915, some twenty others as office workers and secretaries. For thirty-four years (from the time of his father's death in 1881 until her death in 1915), W. C. White was her closest confidant and co-laborer. After her death he served an additional twenty-two years as the leading trustee of the Ellen G. White Estate, which had custodial

---

6 Thus W. C. White's tenure as his mother's assistant was only one year shorter than the 35 years she had been married to James.
and publication responsibilities for her writings.¹ Thus for fifty-six years he occupied positions of trust in relation to Ellen White and her writings.

During Ellen White’s old age, charges of manipulation were leveled at W. C. White that closely paralleled allegations previously made about others. As early as 1889, Dudley M. Canright had alleged that Ellen White “originates nothing,” but that James White and “other leading men” (such as General Conference officers George I. Butler and Stephen N. Haskell) exercised controlling influence over her visions and writings.² James White, because of his intimate association with her, was particularly the target of such charges. When W. C. White became his mother’s special assistant, he was accused, as his father had been, of influencing, controlling, or “manipulating” Ellen White and her writings.

Statement of the Problem

While Ellen White openly acknowledged W. C. White’s role as a “counselor” to her and occasionally made explanatory statements regarding his role in her work,³ there is no evidence that she took any particular precautions to limit or curb his involvement in her affairs. Instead, she repeatedly urged him to devote more of his time to assisting in her work.⁴ Although she did not always agree with


³ For example, see, E. G. White to G. I. Butler, Oct. 30, 1906, EGWRC-AU; E. G. White to F. M. Wilcox, Oct. 23, 1907, EGWRC-AU.

⁴ W. C. White to E. G. White, Sept. 29, 1894, WCWCF; E. G. White, “The Work of W. C. White,” from Diary, Aug. 18, 1899, DF 107, EGWRC-GC; W. C. White to J. E. White, Feb. 15, 1921, DF 780, EGWRC-AU.
his opinions or suggestions, she completely trusted his integrity. Her trust was based on her long experience with him, and also on what she held to be direct revelation from God. In a night vision about one year after James White's death she "was shown" that W. C. White should be her "helper and counselor, and that the Lord would place on him the spirit of wisdom and of a sound mind."\(^1\)

After the 1882 vision endorsing W. C. White as her helper, Ellen White entrusted him with increasingly sensitive responsibilities. His involvement in her work became more extensive during the Australian years of the 1890s and culminated in his role as her spokesman between 1900 and 1915. Her implicit trust in him as "counselor," coupled with his unlimited access to her and her writings, made his position a very significant one.

The closeness of his relationship to her lent plausibility to allegations that "Sister White was under the influence of Willie White."\(^2\) For her part, she denied "that I am subject to the influence of my son Willie, or of [any] others."\(^3\) Twenty years later the term used was "manipulation" and again she repudiated the charge.\(^4\) The only way that the recurring question about the nature and extent of W. C. White's influence on his mother could be satisfactorily answered was through an extensive study of their entire recorded relationship. Therefore, although the question of W. C. White's relation to his mother had been briefly addressed in the

---


\(^2\)E. G. White to "Children of the Household," May 12, 1889, EGWRC-AU.

\(^3\)"[If] my judgment is of no more value than that of any other, or . . . [if] I am subject to the influence of my son Willie, or of some others, why do you send for Sister White to attend your camp-meetings or special meetings? I cannot come." E. G. White to R. A. Underwood, Jan. 25, 1889, EGWRC-AU.

\(^4\)E. G. White to J. E. White, [late 1905] (Letter 391, 1906), EGWRC-AU.
past, there was a need for a comprehensive study that would not merely investigate specific incidents about which allegations had been made, but thoroughly document the broader context of the entire relationship between W. C. White and Ellen G. White.

Purpose and Delimitations of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to describe, analyze, and evaluate W. C. White’s relationship to his mother and her work during her lifetime. This purpose has required the examination of their entire relationship, to the extent that it could be reconstructed. Beyond their own writings, the opinions, accusations, and defenses of both their friends and their detractors have been examined for the light they shed on the relationship.

A partial biographical sketch of W. C. White has been developed as background, but has been delimited to the years of his mother’s life and to the aspects of his life that are essential to an understanding of his relationship to his mother and her work.

A further delimitation of the study concerns the theology of spiritual gifts and the manifestation of the gift of prophecy in the experience of Ellen G. White. It is beyond the scope of this paper to seek to prove or disprove the validity of her prophetic gift or her claims regarding what she saw and heard in prophetic visions. The question of this paper concerns how she and her son related to each other in light of their beliefs regarding her religious vocation. Those beliefs are so intertwined with the history of their relationship that it would be impossible to ignore them, yet to investigate them would require a separate study. Therefore, for the purposes of the present investigation, the claims of Ellen G. White to prophetic inspiration have been assumed as the necessary context for understanding the
historical relationship between her and her son, which is the primary subject of the study.

**Review of Literature and Prior Research**

**Published Documents**

Despite W. C. White's considerable achievements and stature within the denomination, little has been written about him except in more or less incidental references. The approximately 1700-word article on "William Clarence White" in the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*\(^1\) presents a fairly detailed sketch of White's career, including his major denominational responsibilities and a brief statement about his working relationship with Ellen G. White. Arthur L. White's six-volume biography of Ellen G. White contains numerous references to W. C. White,\(^2\) many of which have a bearing on his relationship to his mother.

Richard W. Schwarz has published extensively on the issues surrounding J. H. Kellogg, providing both contextual material and glimpses of the relationship between Kellogg and W. C. White. Kellogg accused White of attempting to manipulate Ellen White and denied there could be any extraordinary authority in testimonies "filtered through W.C.W."\(^3\)

---

\(^1\)*SDA Encyclopedia*, 1976 ed., s.v. "William Clarence White." This unsigned article is the work of Arthur L. White, as evidenced by a seven-page, thoroughly documented manuscript which corresponds almost exactly to the published version in the *SDA Encyclopedia*, viz., Arthur L. White, "William Clarence White," DF 780, EGWRC-AU.


Recent topical and biographical studies by Milton Hook, Barry Oliver, and Gilbert Valentine include extensive references to W. C. White. Additionally, most works on Seventh-day Adventist history contain references to W. C. White, though usually without any detailed development of his relationship to his mother.

Unpublished Documents

Virgil Robinson, W. C. White’s grandson, prepared a biographical manuscript about W. C. White that comprises some 165 typewritten pages. Though Robinson’s death left the work unfinished, the manuscript nevertheless represents the most extensive previous biographical study on W. C. White.


3 Virgil E. Robinson, "Biography of Willie White," [first draft, ca. 1984]; idem, "Son of the Prophet," [second draft, ca. 1985], DF 780c, EGWRC-AU.

dissertations give information regarding individuals with whom White interacted, incidents in which White played a leading role, and occasionally, detailed references to his actions in relationship to his mother. Finally, the files of the Ellen G. White Research Centers contain many shorter documents that illumine aspects of the relationship of Ellen and W. C. White.

While many of these sources treat parts of the subject of the present study, none of them do so in depth. The works of Robinson and Graybill come closest to the interest of this dissertation, but neither is sufficiently extensive. Because no comprehensive treatment of W. C. White's relationship to his mother and her work is currently in existence, the present research fills a need in the understanding of an important issue in Adventist history.

**Methodology and Primary Sources**

This dissertation is a documentary account based on research of both published and unpublished primary sources. Secondary sources have also been used

---

Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1983), 73-83.


where appropriate to provide background, historical context, and insightful perspective.

The most heavily used primary sources have been correspondence collections. Because of the particular focus on the interaction between W. C. White and Ellen G. White, the voluminous collections of their own outgoing and incoming correspondence, preserved at the Ellen G. White Estate offices in Silver Spring, Maryland, and at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, have been uniquely valuable. Another large collection of letters that bear upon W. C. White and his relation to his mother is found in the Archives of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland. Of particular value for this study have been the outgoing and incoming Presidential record groups. Other helpful archival repositories were the Adventist Heritage Center at Andrews University; the Heritage Room of the Loma Linda University Library, Loma Linda, California; and the Heritage Room of the Pacific Union College Library, Angwin, California.

In addition to some 30,000 pages of correspondence, W. C. White wrote several major speeches on his mother's work and many periodical articles. The Review and Herald and the General Conference Bulletin were particularly helpful periodical sources, with several others being used incidentally. A more complete description of sources is provided in the bibliography.

Design of the Study

The study is presented chronologically with topically organized subdivisions. Each chapter begins with a chronological overview in order to establish a context for topical considerations of W. C. White's relationship to his mother and her work. Chapter 1 covers White's first twenty-seven years, to the death of his father in 1881. It particularly focuses on his mother's training of him
as a child and adolescent, and his early successes as an institutional administrator.

Chapter 2 presents the decade from 1881 to 1891, during which White began to be publicly recognized as filling a supporting role in relation to his mother. He was closely connected with her in Europe for two years, was her ally in the controversies of the Minneapolis General Conference in 1888, and drew on her counsel when he served as acting president of the General Conference for about six months during 1888 and 1889.

Chapter 3 deals with the Australian years, from 1891 to 1900. During this period White became the denomination's first union conference president and struggled with the dilemma of how to carry his administrative responsibilities and yet respond to his mother's pleas for him to increase the time and energy he devoted to her work.

Chapter 4 examines the turbulent period of his mother's last years, from 1900 to 1915. As counselor to his mother, advisor to General Conference president A. G. Daniells, and communication link between his mother and Daniells, W. C. White now stood at the peak of his personal influence in the denomination. His mother's declining vigor and visibility, however, invited questions and criticisms regarding the extent to which she was dependent on her son. These challenges, though painful to W. C. White, served to prepare him for his later responsibilities as custodian and interpreter of his mother's writings after her death.

Chapter 5 evaluates the development of the sixty-one-year relationship between W. C. White and his mother and its implications for an understanding of both of them. The study concludes with a short epilogue summarizing the remaining twenty-two years of W. C. White's life, from 1915 to 1937.
Acknowledgments

The writing of a dissertation is a task that draws on the contributions of many people. Many forms of support have been given, from insightful suggestions and helpful criticisms to prayers and words of encouragement. All of these are gratefully acknowledged. Some persons have provided such notable assistance that their help deserves specific expressions of appreciation.

One of the major benefits that made the research and writing process generally a pleasure rather than a nightmare was the privilege of working with such a competent dissertation committee at Andrews University. Since the nature of the process places the largest burden on the chairman, special gratitude is due to George Knight for his unstinting gifts of time, research expertise, and detailed criticism. Mervyn Maxwell and Daniel Augsburger have also been generous with their time, evaluative insights, and personal interest. In addition to an excellent committee, Andrews University also contributed a much appreciated financial scholarship.

Archival research would be virtually impossible without the cooperation of skilled archivists. For all the helps, including their personal interest and encouragement, by which archivists so materially aid researchers, a special debt of gratitude is due to William Fagal, Lucile Haagenrud, Pauline Maxwell, and the rest of the staff at the Ellen G. White branch office at Andrews University; to Louise Dederen, Jim Ford, Sharon Crews, and others at the Adventist Heritage Center at Andrews University; to Robert Olson, Paul Gordon, Tim Poirier, and others at the Ellen G. White Estate main office in Silver Spring, Maryland; to Don Yost, Bert Haloviak, and John Wycliffe of the General Conference Archives; to Beverly Koester and others at the Loma Linda University Heritage Room; and to Gary Shearer of the Pacific Union College Heritage Room.

Also much appreciated are those who provided other kinds of support.

xxii
Aaron and Evelyn Moon helped their researcher son in ways too many to mention here. Robert and Rowena Olson, Erwin and Winsome Gane, and Manuel and Nancy Vasquez were generous in hospitality. Robert Olson and Tim Poirier climaxed their numerous other contributions by reading and critiquing the first three chapters. Alta Robinson kindly supplied copies of manuscripts on W. C. White written by her late husband, Virgil Robinson. Joseph Karanja and Alberto Timm, colleagues in the Adventist Studies doctoral program, contributed helpful suggestions. Twenty individuals listed in the bibliography took the time to share their memories of W. C. White’s later years. To all of these, sincere gratitude is given.

One person without whose encouragement and support the project would never have been undertaken is Sue Moon. For nine of our twenty-two years of marriage, she has cheerfully earned the larger share of the family income so that her husband could continue his education. This dissertation is her achievement as well as mine.

Finally, "thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ."
ABSTRACT

WILLIAM CLARENCE (W. C.) WHITE: HIS RELATIONSHIP
TO ELLEN G. WHITE AND HER WORK

by

Jerry Allen Moon

Adviser: George R. Knight
Title: WILLIAM CLARENCE (W. C.) WHITE: HIS RELATIONSHIP TO ELLEN G. WHITE AND HER WORK

Name of researcher: Jerry Allen Moon

Name and degree of faculty adviser: George R. Knight, Ed.D.

Date completed: August 1993

The Topic

William Clarence White (1854-1937), third son of Seventh-day Adventist founders James and Ellen G. White, was for thirty-four years his mother's counselor, editor, and spokesman. He was alleged by some to stand in a manipulative relationship to his mother and her work, a charge she denied.

The Purpose

The purpose of the study was to describe, analyze, and evaluate W. C. White's relationship to his mother and her work during her lifetime. This purpose required the development of a partial biographical sketch of W. C. White as a context for understanding his relationship to his mother.
The Sources

This was a documentary study based on published and unpublished primary sources. Secondary sources were used for background, context, and perspective. The most heavily used primary sources were the correspondence collections of the Ellen G. White Estate and other Seventh-day Adventist archives.

Conclusions

The relationship between Ellen G. White and W. C. White was a partnership in which her influence on him was prior and predominant. Throughout his life she was his chief mentor. His willingness to be taught by her was why she trusted him so completely during her last years. The limit of her influence over him was her insistence that his ultimate accountability was not to her, but to God. She expected him to voice his convictions, even if they disagreed with hers. Though he sometimes persuaded her to a change of course, investigation of instances in which he was alleged to have manipulated her reveals no conclusive evidence that he did so. He appears to have consistently acted within the parameters of her expectations of him.
CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUNDS AND BEGINNINGS, 1854-1881

The beginnings of W. C. White's life are closely linked to the beginnings of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. Much of the historical interest in his life is due to the fact that for more than three-quarters of a century his life was inseparably intertwined with that movement. Indeed he was closer to the centers of influence of the denomination for more years than any other individual except his mother. Present as a nine-year-old at the organization of the General Conference, he would be one of its officers by age twenty-seven, the end of the period covered in this chapter.

Chronological Overview, 1854-1881

W. C. White's first twenty-seven years witnessed the organization and early expansion of the denomination. Those years may be divided rather naturally into four parts: infancy, childhood, youth, and early adulthood.

Infancy: 1854-1855

William Clarence White was born at 2:00 A.M., August 29, 1854, in Rochester, New York.¹ He was the third son of James² and Ellen G. White, the

¹J. White to U. Smith, Aug. 29, 1854, EGWRC-GC; SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 ed., s.v., "White, William Clarence."

²On the life and work of James White (1821-1881), a co-founder of the SDA church, see SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 ed., s.v., "White, James Springer"; Virgil Robinson, James
most influential leaders among the Sabbath-keeping Adventists, who, nine years later, would organize themselves as the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. In 1854, however, almost the only visible element of cohesion was the Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, for which the Whites' home at 124 Mt. Hope Road was at once the editorial office, printshop, bindery, and staff boarding house. The Review workers could hardly be called employees; their material compensation was limited to "room and board, a small allowance for clothing, and such other expenses as were deemed absolutely necessary." Not till the move to Battle Creek in 1855 did they begin drawing some five dollars per week in wages.¹

In addition to W. C. White and his parents, the "family" included two older brothers (Henry, seven, and Edson, five), household helpers Clarissa Bonfoey and Jenny Fraser, and ten or twelve others who together published the Review and Herald. All together the "family numbered from fifteen to twenty." The home was also the meeting place for the Sabbath-keeping Adventists in the vicinity. "We had no quiet Sabbaths," wrote Ellen, "for some of the sisters usually tarried all day with their children." Such was the environment into which W. C. White was born.²

It was an environment characterized by frequent illness. At the time of W. C. White's birth, his father's sister, Anna, who lived with the family, was in the

---


terminal stages of tuberculosis. When Anna died three months later at age twenty-six, Ellen feared that James would follow her and their brother, Nathaniel, who had also died of "consumption" the year before. "After Anna's death, my husband's health became very poor," she wrote. "He seemed to be fast following Nathaniel and Anna to a consumptive's grave. . . . It seemed at times that God had forsaken us." At thirty-three years of age, James' health was already breaking under the strain of unceasing labor. But despite the surrounding illness, Ellen reported in December 1854 that

baby seems to be in perfect health. He is a great fat boy. Is three months and a half old and he weighs 17 pounds. He is good natured; seldom cries [sic], is very playful and active. He has but one fault, that is, he is afraid of singing.1

A further characteristic of the White home was that James and Ellen were frequently away on extended journeys, nurturing the incipient Seventh-day Adventist movement. For instance, the day after W. C. White's first birthday, the parents "reached home" after "having been absent from the Office eleven weeks."2 While they were gone, their sons were in the care of one or more young women who lived with the Whites as part of the family. Willie later recalled,

Jennie Frazier was my foster mother until I was five years old, then came Lucinda Hall and then after her, Adelia Patton. Well, I had lots of mothers and they were all good ones, but there was none of them that I loved as much as Lucinda.3


2J. W[hite], "At Home," RH, Sept. 4, 1855, 36.

3W. C. White to Rosetta Perry, Apr. 30, 1928, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC. Jennie Fraser first joined the White family as a cook, during the Rochester years, about 1852. She soon added child care to her responsibilities, and served as Willie's "foster mother" from 1854 to about 1859 (W. C. White, "Sketches and Memories, XIV," RH, June 13, 1935, 9; A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 1:230, 333, 394). Lucinda Hall, 33, was "Ellen's closest friend" outside her immediate family (A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 2:341).
Childhood: 1855-1867

In November 1855, shortly after W. C. White's first birthday, the White family and the Review staff moved from Rochester, New York, to Battle Creek, Michigan. At this point the Review staff found separate homes and the White family (including Jenny Fraser and Clarissa Bonfoey) had, for the first time in several years, a home to themselves. They rented a house "on the south side of Van Buren Street," for which they paid $1.50 per week. It was short on conveniences. For example, they had "to go a great distance for water" and, lacking a proper woodshed, "put a few boards up at own expense" to cover their firewood. They had little indoor room for their many visitors or outdoor space for growing boys and the rent was a constant expense.¹

Consequently, by January 1856 "the brethren" were talking about helping the Whites to "have a little house put up." By summer the Whites had purchased land and built the one-and-a-half-story cottage on Wood Street which was the first of several homes they would own in Battle Creek. A "twelve-foot lean-to" added to the south side of the house became "the boys' room." Eventually a "similar lean-to was built on the north side," which first housed W. C. White's maternal grandparents, Robert and Eunice Harmon. After the Harmons obtained a home of their own, the same room was occupied for a time by the paternal grandparents, John and Betsy White. To the end of his life W. C. White remembered the cottage on Wood Street as "our first home."²


²E. G. White to Sister Below, Jan. 1, 1856; J. White to Sister [Below], Nov. 4, 1856, DF 718-a, EGWRC-AU; A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 1:334; W. C. White, "Sketches and Memories, XXX," RH, Feb. 13, 1936, 6-7. On later White residences in Battle Creek, see V. Robinson, James White, 133, 210n, 232, 286, 304; W. C. White,
The daily schedule, as W. C. White later remembered it, began about 6:00, with breakfast at 6:30, followed by morning worship at 7:00. Worship included "scripture, with comments," song, and prayer. Willie remembered that his father "did not [merely] 'offer a prayer'; he prayed with earnestness and solemn reverence."¹

After worship, James would leave for the office, "except when detained by mother" to listen to what she had written before breakfast. After James's departure, Ellen liked to work briefly in her flower garden before returning to her writing for the rest of the morning. Afternoons were occupied with sewing, mending, knitting, occasional shopping trips, and visits to the sick. Willie often witnessed his mother helping the poorer members of the congregation with gifts of clothing, food, or money. Once a week she went up to the publishing office to help fold copies of the Review for mailing.²

Unless there was an evening meeting, the family would assemble again for worship when the day's work was finished. Prayer held a dominant place in the daily routine of the White family. When volunteers came to clear the plot where the Wood Street house would be built, James directed them to leave standing the "little grove of second growth oak in the northeast corner" as a special place for prayer.³

Both accident and illness were part of Willie's life. Virgil Robinson

---


²E. G. White, Diary, Jan. 5, 7, Mar. 2, 1859, MS 5, 1859; idem, Diary, Mar. 10, 17, 1859, MS 5a, 1859; idem, Diary, May 20, 1859, MS 6, 1859, EGWRC-AU; W. C. White, "Sketches and Memories, XXX," RH, Feb. 13, 1936, 7.

reports two accidents that happened in 1856 as the Wood Street home was under construction. Workers had stretched wallpaper over an unfinished doorway, evidently intending to cut the paper from the opening after the paste had dried. Meanwhile little Willie came exploring, leaned against the unsupported wallpaper, broke through, and fell to a pile of rocks below. When workmen were digging a cistern for the new house, Willie brought his little shovel to "help." Returning to the job site while the adults were on lunch break, he fell into the "eight-foot pit." Fortunately, his father heard his cries and rescued him.1

Earlier the same year he had nearly drowned. The incident occurred just before a general conference of Sabbatarian believers that was to begin in Battle Creek, Friday, May 23, 1856. While his mother and the household help were feverishly preparing for the influx of visitors the conference would bring, "little Willie," who was "playing around the house," fell headfirst into a tub of water. By the time Jennie Fraser found him and pulled him out, "his little arms and face were purple, and he was entirely breathless." Ellen "cut off his wet clothes, and rolled him on the grass" in a primitive approximation of artificial respiration. When there were no immediate signs of life, a neighbor urged James White to "take that dead baby out of that woman's hands." "No," he replied, "it is her child, and no one shall take it away from her." After working over the boy for twenty minutes, Ellen detected movement in his lips and eyelids. "Ordering Jennie to heat thick cloths, she took Willie into the house. Soon he was in his wicker crib, wrapped in warm cloths frequently changed to impart maximum heat to the body of the recovering child."2

---

1V. Robinson, "Son of the Prophet," 4-5, DF 780c, EGWRC-AU.

Ellen would work as hard in subsequent times to save Willie from disease as she had worked to revive him after his near-drowning. For example, in early 1864 she nursed him through a nearly fatal case of pneumonia; in 1870 he nearly died of another illness, and again in 1874 he was so sick that Ellen would not trust him to physicians, even at the denomination's Western Health Retreat in Battle Creek, but nursed him herself.¹

The love the Whites had for their children was not a sentiment which precluded firm discipline. Both James and Ellen administered spankings to Willie in his youngest years.²

Being a son of James and Ellen White presented unique opportunities for involvement in the evolving Seventh-day Adventist denomination. When Willie was six, his older brothers (Henry, thirteen, and Edson, eleven) had part-time jobs at the Review and Herald printing office, and Willie was not happy at being left home alone. His mother admonished him that "when the boys go to the office, you must try not to be lonesome. Make yourself contented and happy. Don't fret, but learn to be patient, my dear boy." But within a few months, six-year-old Willie was going with his brothers to the publishing house where he helped them "carry books."³

Another early experience was camp meeting. In the summer of 1861, as Willie approached seven, he was deemed old enough to join his parents on the eastern camp meeting circuit. As Ellen wrote to Henry and Edson, she could see

¹E. G. White, Spiritual Gifts, 4a:151-53; E. G. White to W. C. White, Sept. 6, 1870; E. G. White to J. White, Sept. 11, 1874, E. G. White to Lizzie Bangs, Nov. 19, 1874, EGWRC-AU.

²V. Robinson, "Son of the Prophet," 4, DF 780c, EGWRC-AU.

³E. G. White to Willie, Mar. 3, 1860; E. G. White to J. White, Nov. 7, 1860, EGWRC-AU.
Willie "running back and forth from the tent" where the ministers were in counsel "to the house" where she was writing.1

On a "hot day" in May, 1863, Willie (and probably his brothers) "carried water" for the delegates who were formulating the initial constitution for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.2

Despite its being the center of Seventh-day Adventist work, in 1863 Battle Creek did not yet have a regular Seventh-day Adventist school, so Willie began his formal education at age eight in a public elementary school in Battle Creek.3

Willie lost two of his brothers by death before he was ten years old. His youngest brother, fourth son of his parents, was born September 20, 1860. Their mother noted in October that "the boys make a great deal of the baby." The baby took sick with erysipelas in November, grew worse for three weeks, and died December 14. He was called "Nameless" for most of his three-month life, but was buried as John Herbert.4

Willie's oldest brother, Henry, caught a cold in late November 1863, which turned into "lung fever" (pneumonia). A physician was called and medicine administered, but on December 8, 1863, Henry died. Scarcely two months later, Willie contracted the same disease. This time no physician was called. Instead, his mother determined to nurse him herself with natural methods of treatment

---

1E. G. White to Friends at Home, July 26, 1861, EGWRC-AU.
2J. N. Loughborough, GCB, May 22, 1913, 100.
3W. C. White, "Biographical Information Blank," Apr. 4, 1934, DF 780, EGWRC-AU.
(hydrotherapy) and constant prayer until the crisis was past.\(^1\)

On August 16, 1865, almost exactly a decade after the move to Battle Creek, James White suffered the first of a series of strokes, the effects of which would plague him the rest of his life. By September 14 he was bound for "Our Home on the Hillside," a health-reform institution in Dansville, New York. Edson and Willie remained in Battle Creek with Adelia Patton until December 6, when they moved to the home of friends near Rochester, New York, in order to be nearer their parents. On Christmas, 1865, at that home near Rochester, Ellen received a vision instructing her how to bring about James’s recovery, a pursuit that would be her dominant priority for the coming year.\(^2\)

She seemed, however, to have made little progress in the battle for James’s health by December 1866, a year later. Furthermore, his attitude had turned passive and Ellen feared that if he were not stimulated soon to use both mind and muscles, he would lose the potential for recovery. After much prayer, she determined to take him on a preaching tour, even though it was winter, hoping that the activity would halt his mental decline. In a driving snowstorm, against the advice of almost all, Ellen, James, and Willie left for northern Michigan. James’s health responded so well to the change of surroundings that before winter was over they decided to build a home in Greenville, Michigan. Thus began one of the more significant periods of W. C. White’s growing-up years.\(^3\)

---


\(^3\) E. G. White, "Reminiscent Account of the Experience of James White’s Sickness and Recovery (written early in the 1880s, but for convenience file[d] with the documents for 1867)," MS 1, 1867, EGWRC-AU; cf. V. Robinson, *James White*, 177; A. L. White, *Ellen
Youth: 1867-1875

The Greenville Farm, 1867-1868

The Whites moved to Greenville, Michigan, in April 1867. As construction was being finished on a house, James, Ellen, and Willie, now almost thirteen, began spring farming. Willie took an active part in encouraging his father in the physical exercise essential to his recuperation. Together they plowed, hoed, and put up hay. Willie also cared for a large strawberry patch, a flock of laying hens, a cow, some calves that were "growing larg [sic] and fat," and a small field of wheat from which he would thresh eighteen bushels.\(^1\)

Two months before his thirteenth birthday Willie was baptized by his father in Mud Lake, not far from Greenville. James reported in the Review that on Sunday morning, June 30, 1867, "we all assembled at 7 a.m. in the grove upon the bank of the lake, where I immersed four precious souls," one of whom was "our own dear son, Willie C. White."\(^2\)

When his parents returned to their itinerant life after the renewal of James's health, Willie remained behind, living with a nearby Adventist family (Brother and Sister Maynard), looking after the White farm, and attending the local public school. Not until January 17, 1868, were James and Ellen back in Greenville after an absence of twenty weeks.\(^3\)

\(^1\)E. G. White, "Reminiscent Account of the Experience of James White's Sickness and Recovery," MS 1, 1867; E. G. White to W. C. White, Sept. 19, 1867, Feb. 17, 1868, EGWRC-AU; W. C. White to Edson White, Oct. 27, 1867, EGWRC-GC (the earliest extant W. C. White letter).


\(^3\)E. G. White to W. C. White, Sept. 19, Nov. 7, 1867; E. G. White to Brother and Sister Maynard, Nov. 1867; W. C. White, Biographical Information Blank, Apr. 4, 1934.
Willie lived on or near the Greenville farm most of the time from April 1867 to August 1868, when he returned to Battle Creek to enroll for the fall term in Professor G. H. Bell's "select school," the first successful Seventh-day Adventist attempt at education in Battle Creek. He also spent the summer of 1869 in Greenville. The quiet of the Greenville farm contrasted rather sharply with the frequent and extended travels of Willie's next few years.

Camp Meetings East and West, 1870

Willie spent the first week of June 1870 with his parents at a home in Washington, eastern Iowa, which they had purchased "at the turn of the year" for "a hideout" where they could "relax and pursue their writing." By June 8 they were attending the Iowa camp meeting, followed by camp meetings in Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin in successive weeks. Willie's particular responsibility was to assist Elder W. H. Littlejohn, who was blind, leading him and reading for him.

Between the Illinois and Minnesota meetings, the party--consisting of James, Ellen, Willie, Littlejohn, and Lucinda Hall--took the steamboat Minnesota up the Mississippi River. In its upstream course the steamboat encountered many rafts floating downstream, whose occupants would beg the passengers of the steamer for their used newspapers. This gave Willie a creative idea. Using string, and chunks of coal obtained from the ship's boiler room, he tied together two tracts with a piece of string. 

---


of coal between, and tossed the gospel missiles to appreciative recipients on the rafts.\textsuperscript{1}

An interlude in the camp-meeting itinerary was the marriage of Edson White and Emma McDearmon on Edson's twenty-first birthday, July 28, 1870. James conducted the wedding in Battle Creek; then he, Ellen, Willie, and Lucinda were off for camp meetings in New York (August 4-9) and Massachusetts (August 11-16).\textsuperscript{2}

During the Massachusetts camp meeting, while staying in the home of S. N. Haskell in South Lancaster, Willie became so severely ill his mother feared he would die. "We were obliged to leave our Willie in the care of Sister [Lucinda] Hall, at Brookfield, N. Y., in the family of Bro. and Sister Abbey, Sister Hall's parents," wrote James in the \textit{Review}. While Willie recovered, James and Ellen went on to camp meetings in Maine, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Kansas, and Missouri. Not till late November did Willie return to Battle Creek. Even then he had "not recovered," but was, according to Ellen, "now gaining."\textsuperscript{3}

\textbf{Nursery Manager, 1871}

By spring, 1871, Willie had gained sufficient strength to become the manager of the Hygienic Institute Nursery connected with the Health Institute in Battle Creek. At sixteen he was doing a brisk business in strawberry, raspberry, and cabbage plants, acquiring at the same time a practical knowledge of horticulture.

\textsuperscript{1}J. White, \textit{RH}, July 5, 1870, 21.


James and Ellen spent much of the year traveling. In their absence, the Abbey family moved into the Whites' home and Willie boarded with them.\(^1\)

A letter of Ellen's to Willie in the fall indicates that Willie was doing well in school and growing spiritually.

Addie Marriam wrote me a few lines stating that you had an excellent meeting at Battle Creek, and that you bore a good testimony. Oh, Willie, my dear son, how glad this made me. I am pleased to have you progress in your studies. Glad to have you in good health but above all, it rejoices my heart to have you make progress in the divine life. This progress is above all the most profitable in the end.\(^2\)

Willie was also beginning to show some young-adult assertiveness. For example, in a conflict with a school teacher over a grammar textbook requirement, he appealed to the principal, obtained permission to take an exemption exam, passed the exam, and proceeded to the next grade level in grammar.\(^3\)

**Introduction to Colorado, 1872**

The end of the spring school term found Willie briefly undecided whether to enroll for the summer session in G. H. Bell's school in Battle Creek or to travel with his parents to California. But by June 23 Willie, his parents, and Lucinda Hall were en route to California with a Colorado vacation scheduled on the way. They spent several days with Willie's aunt (Ellen's sister Caroline Clough) and family in Ottawa, Kansas, and then proceeded to Denver, Colorado, where they visited Willie's cousin (Louisa Clough Walling).\(^4\)

\(^1\) W. C. White to Edson, Apr. 14, 28, June 23, Dec. 10, 1871, EGWRC-GC; E. G. White to W. C. White, June 29, 1871, EGWRC-AU.

\(^2\) E. G. White to W. C. White, Nov. 18, 1871, EGWRC-AU.

\(^3\) W. C. White to Edson, Dec. 10, 1871, EGWRC-GC.

James was so feeble on arrival in Denver that he fainted and lay on the floor of the railroad depot while Willie went for W. B. Walling, Louisa's husband, who promptly brought his "covered carriage" and took the travelers home. So began two unique months in the high Rocky Mountains, still largely untouched by the amenities of modern civilization.1

The first month was spent at Walling's Mills (a settlement named for two sawmills owned by W. B. Walling), near Black Hawk, Colorado. Willie and Lucinda especially enjoyed horseback riding and mountain climbing together. Willie spent some of his time writing a serialized narrative, "Trip to California," for the Youth's Instructor. On a typical Sabbath afternoon, Mary Clough, Willie, and Ellen "walked out and sat beneath poplar trees" and read "about sixty pages of Great Controversy, or Spiritual Gifts" [volume 1], after which they "closed the Sabbath of the Lord with prayer."2

The family spent the second month in what was then a truly undeveloped region, Middle Park, which could not be reached by road. "On Monday, 11:00 a.m., September 2, 1872," James reported, "we mounted our horses and ponies for the trip over the Snowy Range, into Middle Park." Willie's description of the view from Boulder Pass shows that he had inherited his parents' facility with words.

The wind was blowing bleak and cold, chilling us in spite of overcoats, shawls, and mittens. So, taking a hurried glance at the lofty mountains . . . [.] not set out in rows as pictured in the geography, but piled together in all manner of

White, Diary, MS 4, 1872, EGWRC-AU.

1E. G. White to [her] Brother John [Harmon], Jan. 21, 1873; E. G. White, Diary, MS 4, 1872; E. G. White to Edson and Emma, [ca. July 23, 1872], Letter 30, 1872; W. C. White, "Trip to California.—No. 5," YI, Mar. 1873, 18.

2A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 2:345; W. C. White, "Trip to California.—No. 2," YI, Dec. 1872, 89; idem, "Trip to California.—No. 3," YI, Jan. 1873, 1-2; E. G. White, Diary, MS 4, 1872; E. G. White to Edson and Emma, Aug. 22, July 31, 1872, EGWRC-AU.
irregular shapes, their dark gray mingled with the blue of the sky, then at the valley stretching away to the east, an unbroken plain as far as the eye can see, we spurred our horses forward and soon began our descent.\(^1\)

In Middle Park the living conditions were even more primitive than at Walling's Mills. Willie reported that some hunters had killed a grizzly bear, then "ate so much of its coarse meat" along with hot biscuits, butter, pork, and other items, that one of the group, a dyspeptic, "within two days died of mortification of the stomach."\(^2\)

"The greatest achievements attained by any of our party," Willie continued with reference to hunting, "were the shooting at a puma [Willie's emphasis] and the killing of a monstrous hedgehog [porcupine]." He also noted that the Colorado lakes and streams were already famous for trout fishing. Ellen considered the trout a valuable resource "to live upon" in that isolated area. Another pastime that paid immediate culinary dividends was berry picking. "While others were hunting and fishing," wrote Willie,

we would saddle the ponies, and . . . gallop over the hills about four miles to a wild raspberry patch. . . . The bushes were small, but the berries were large, and in an hour or two we would fill our pails and start for camp, sometimes losing the Indian trail and going a mile or two out of the way. We also found wild gooseberries in abundance.\(^3\)

The variety of vacation experiences—camping out, hunting and fishing, horseback riding, mountain climbing, picking raspberries and gooseberries—made the summer pass quickly. On Friday, the thirteenth of September, they broke camp and started back for Denver. There they caught a train which, via Cheyenne, Wyoming,


\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)W. C. White, "Trip to California.—No. 4," \textit{YL}, Feb. 1873, 10; E. G. White to Edson and Emma, July 31, 1872, EGWRC-AU.
brought them to San Francisco September 26.¹

After attending a week-long camp meeting at Windsor, California, James and Ellen plunged into tent evangelism, while Willie stayed with hospitable Adventist farmers who taught him how to gather grapes and figs and dry them. He and his host, George Grayson, "took 7480 lbs of grapes [raisins?] to Sacramento," where they sold them for fifteen dollars a ton.²

**Medical School. 1872-1873**

Greatly improved in health from the long, eventful summer, Willie, now eighteen, boarded the train on November 8, 1872 for Battle Creek. With him was Dr. M. G. Kellogg. On their arrival in Battle Creek, November 15, they would be joined by several other Adventist medical students wishing to attend Dr. R. T. Trall’s Hygeo-Therapeutic College in Florence Heights, New York. (M. G. Kellogg was evidently returning for some "post-graduate" work, since he had obtained his M.D. four years earlier after a few-months’ course at the same school.) At Trall’s, Willie studied Osteology and Phrenology and Chemistry and complained in eloquent detail about the food. His Adventist faith weathered a storm of alien ideas.

There are a large number of infidels here, but few Spiritualists. Spiritualists and free love controlled here last winter. There is a dance here once a week, and occasionally a sermon. We [Seventh-day Adventists] have a

¹W. C. White, "Trip to California.—No. 4," YI, Feb. 1873, 10; idem, "Trip to California.—No. 5," YI, Mar. 1873, 18; E. G. White to Edson and Emma, Sept. 27, 1872, EGWRC-AU.

²A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 2:357; W. C. White to Edson, Oct. 17, [1872], EGWRC-GC. The original bears no year, but "[1875?]" has been inserted by a later hand. The correct date must be 1872, according to the content of E. G. White, Diary, Oct. 21-22, 1872, MS 5, 1872, EGWRC-AU. Also, Willie’s handwriting is identical to that of other W. C. White 1872 correspondence (e.g., W. C. White to Parents, Dec. 15, 1872), but quite different from his handwriting of 1875 (e.g., W. C. White to J. White, Apr. 6, 1875, EGWRC-GC).
prayer meeting every Sabbath. Sometimes patients attend. Today we have been studying the Sabbath question.

... We hope and pray that we may get a clear understanding of these great truths so that we may be a blessing to others.¹

Not till April 11 did the group of Battle Creek Adventists return from Trail's medical college. James and Ellen, back in Battle Creek for the 1873 General Conference session, welcomed them home "from their long [four-and-a-half-month] course of study." Ellen was relieved to see them in good health. "They all--Brother [Merritt G.] Kellogg, Johnny K[ellogg], Jenny Trembly, and Willie--look remarkably well; complexion clear," she observed. "All look hardy." Edson and Willie displayed their diplomas, inscribed on real sheepskin, "conferring the 'Degree of Doctor of Medicine,' with the 'rights, privileges, and immunities pertaining to the legalized practice of medicine.'" Their level-headed father had earlier advised them, "Boys, study hard. Bring home your diplomas. But never attach M.D. to your names until you enter your professional duties." They followed that advice.²

Colorado Again, 1873

Eleven days after the homecoming, James suffered his fourth stroke of paralysis, with another on May 13. The pair of strokes was the signal to escape from the pressures of headquarters to the now familiar getaway spots in Iowa and Colorado. Willie went along, using his newly acquired medical training to help make his father more comfortable. Repeatedly, in the Iowa home, Willie "gave his father movements," apparently some form of physical therapy. In addition, "Will


²V. Robinson, James White, 240-41, 143; E. G. White, Diary, Mar. 5, 10, Apr. 11, 1873, MS 5, 1873, EGWRC-AU; W. C. White Historical Papers, DF 790, EGWRC-GC, cited in A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 2:380; James White to Edson and Willie, Dec. 30, 1872, DF 718a, EGWRC-AU.
wrote for him" when his father had correspondence to dictate, and "waited upon him" when he had sleepless nights.\(^1\)

In Colorado, Willie had another opportunity to try out what he had learned at Trall's. At Walling's they found "a young man very sick," whom Willie "took charge of," "giving him water treatment," and when the others returned home "Willie remained to take care of the sick man." On the third day, "Mr. Walling went to Black Hawk for a physician." When Dr. Tolle "called upon the sick man and dealt out his medicine," he "found no fault with the treatment he had had" from Willie. Upon receiving the medication, the patient seemed to improve, but apparently did not fully recover. Almost two weeks later Willie found it necessary to travel to Central, Colorado, "to take the sick young man to the cars."\(^2\)

The summer of 1873 was in many respects similar to the previous one. Willie enjoyed boating, fishing, and hunting. Ellen reported one evening excursion that turned into an all-night adventure. "Brother Glover and Willie went out one night to fish but the wind was so strong they . . . were obliged to camp out across the lake all night." They built a campfire and kept it going through the night. "We felt very anxious about them," Ellen wrote to Edson and Emma, "until they came home to camp the next morning. As yet, all the fish we have caught have been with a silver bait. Brother Glover has now gone, evening after the Sabbath, to try his luck again."\(^3\)

The following Wednesday, James was working on a pamphlet he had promised to send to the Review and Herald publishing house. He had just learned

\(^1\)V. Robinson, *James White*, 241; A. L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 2:381-84; E. G. White, Diary, June 12, 16, 14, 18, 1873, MS 8, 1873, EGWRC-AU.

\(^2\)E. G. White, Diary, July 9-13, 25, 1873, MS 9, 1873, EGWRC-AU.

\(^3\)E. G. White to Edson and Emma, Sept. 28, 1873, EGWRC-AU.
that the fishermen who had agreed to take his letter to the Black Hawk post office would leave at 6:00 the next morning. As the day wore on, James realized that he could not finish before dark. Their supply of candles had been burned up several days earlier. Remembering that a large wolf had been killed not far from camp, James sent Willie with a double-barreled shotgun for security, a pan, and a hunting knife to scrape the available fat from the wolf's carcass. Willie later reported that he had never seen such a skinny wolf in all his life. Nevertheless, he managed to salvage about a cup and a half of fat from the carcass. Melting the fat, James poured it into a dish, added some bits of rag for wick, and obtained enough light to finish the pamphlet.1

Willie's hunting skills were put to successful use the next Sunday. Ellen reported in her diary:

Our provisions have been very low for some days. Many of our supplies have gone—no butter, no sauce of any kind, no corn meal or graham flour. We have a little fine flour and that is all. We expected supplies three days ago certainly, but none has come. Willie went to the lake for water. We heard his gun and found that he had shot two ducks. This is really a blessing, for we need something to live upon.2

As they were thinking what they "could do if no help came that day, Mr. Walling rode up" with some limited provisions. "He brought us butter, and fine flour."

Willie added to the supplies that night by catching what Ellen described as "fourteen of the largest trout I had seen."3

---


2E. G. White, Diary, Oct. 5, 1873, MS 12, 1873, EGWRC-AU.

3Ibid.
Battle Creek College, 1873-1874

On October 12, a week after the supplies crisis, Willie left for Michigan "to attend school." His intention seems to have been to continue his medical training at the University of Michigan. His mother advised him by letter, "If you wish to attend the medical college, do so. It may be the best thing you can do." For whatever reasons, he decided not to go there for the time being.¹

Instead, during the winter of 1873-74 he roomed and boarded with Professor Sidney Brownsberger, the principal of the embryonic Battle Creek College. Willie took arithmetic, grammar, and punctuation from G. H. Bell, philosophy and rhetoric from Brownsberger, and attended Uriah Smith’s biblical lectures. When Brownsberger left town for a few weeks, Willie roomed with the family of E. B. Gaskill, who had been General Conference treasurer and was at this time renting a house which belonged to James and Ellen White.²

During the winter Ellen began encouraging Willie to consider switching from medicine to ministry as his career path. She did not force the issue, and as late as April 9 he was planning to go to the University of Michigan Medical School at Ann Arbor for the winter of 1874-75.³

¹E. G. White, Diary, Oct. 12, 1873, MS 12, 1873; E. G. White to W. C. White, Oct. 22, 1873, EGWRC-AU.

²E. G. White to W. C. White, Jan. 23, 1874, EGWRC-AU; W. C. White to Parents, Jan. 1, 1873 [1874], EGWRC-GC. The given date, 1873, is the common January slip, as shown by Willie’s fourth sentence: "Today the writings were drawn up by which the committee buy the Huzzey [sic, Hussey] place for sixteen thousand dollars... Everybody thinks that it is splendid." G. I. Butler, in an article dated Jan. 1 [2?], 1874, said the papers were signed "yesterday," G. I. Butler, "Our New School Grounds," RH, Jan. 6, 1874, 29 (cf. Emmett K. Vande Vere, The Wisdom Seekers [Nashville, TN: Southern Pub., 1972], 21-22); W. C. White to Parents, Mar. 10, 1874, EGWRC-GC; A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 2:403, 448.

³E. G. White to W. C. White, Feb. 24, May 15, 1874, EGWRC-AU; W. C. White to Parents, Apr. 9, 1874, EGWRC-GC.
His Mother's Escort, 1874

Meanwhile, in California, James and Ellen were torn between divergent convictions of duty. James, not strong enough for the wearing stress of camp-meeting labor, had committed himself to the launching of a new periodical, Signs of the Times. Ellen, for her part, strongly sensed a "duty" to be active on the summer camp-meeting circuit. Consequently, on June 4, the very day James published volume 1, number 1, of the Signs, Ellen took the train to attend camp meetings in Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin. By the time she reached the Wisconsin meeting, Willie had come from Battle Creek to join her. Together they attended the Minnesota camp meeting and spent a few days at the home in Washington, Iowa, before returning to Battle Creek July 3, where they stayed in their own home with the Gaskills, who were renting it.¹

When Ellen was asked to address a mass temperance meeting in Battle Creek the evening of July 14, Willie was her escort on the platform. Ellen reported to James, "Willie waited upon me up in the desk and took a seat there with me, and placed my fur around my shoulders after I ceased speaking. He seems to understand his part."²

Other activities included accompanying her on personal calls and providing secretarial or even editorial assistance. To James she wrote, "We have just finished 'Sufferings of Christ.' Willie has helped me, and now we take it to the office for Uriah [Smith] to criticize it. It will, I think, make a thirty-two page tract." She does not precisely describe Willie's role, but it is evident that at not quite twenty, he

¹ST, June 4, 1874, 1; E. G. White, Diary, MS 4, 1874, EGWRC-AU; A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 2:419-20; E. G. White to J. White, June 21, 26, July 2, 8, 1874; EGWRC-AU; cf. W. C. White to Parents, Mar. 10, 1874, EGWRC-GC.

²E. G. White to J. White, July 15, 1874, EGWRC-AU.
was being introduced to significant responsibilities in connection with her work.¹

Early Adulthood: 1875-1881

In early spring 1875, W. C. White was appointed acting business manager of the fledgling Pacific Press.² Though not yet twenty-one, he was carrying adult responsibilities with poise and competence. Furthermore, he was contemplating marriage. Thus he was passing from adolescence to adulthood.

Marriage, 1876

Mary E. Kelsey had first been mentioned by name in White correspondence the previous November, though the Whites had known the Kelseys for years.³ Mary’s father had died when she was very young, but her mother was well known to Ellen White.⁴ The circuitous way in which Ellen first mentioned Mary belied the interest Willie must have taken in this new member of the household. Here is the introduction:

Annie Drischol, the secretary in the office, boards with us, and a very smart girl, her companion and roommate, attends school and is studying French and setting type. We have a French teacher of French in our school. If we go to California, Annie Drischol and Mary Kelsey, her roommate,

¹E. G. White to J. White, July 11, July 17, 1874, EGWRC-AU.
²W. C. White to J. White, Mar. 26, 1875, EGWRC-GC.
³E. G. White to Lizzie [Harmon] Bangs, Nov. 19, 1874, EGWRC-AU. W. C. White, “Sketches and Memories, XXX,” RH, Feb. 13, 1936, 6-7, remembers the Kelsey family visiting the Whites at the Wood Street home, i.e., between 1856 and 1863.
⁴Mary Kelsey was born Apr. 20, 1857. Her father died when she was very young and her mother subsequently lived in or near Battle Creek according to “Mary Kelsey White: Remarks by Eld. U. Smith, at the Funeral, June 25, 1890” (Battle Creek, Mi: [SDA Pub. Assn.], 1890), 3, DF 726a, EGWRC-AU. If Ellen’s mention of “widow Kelsey” (E. G. White, Diary, Mar. 2, 1859, MS 5, 1859, EGWRC-AU) is a reference to Mary’s mother, as is probable, then Mary lost her father before she was two years old. Later references to “Sister Kelsey” and Mary’s “mother” omit mention of her father (E. G. White to Household, May 10, 1875, E. G. White to W. C. White and M. K. White, July 11, 1876, EGWRC-AU).
will accompany us as helpers in the new office on the Pacific Coast. Willie will also go and take hold of the work in the office.¹

The reference says Annie "boards" with the Whites, and that Mary is her "roommate." It does not say where Annie and Mary are rooming. But another letter confirmed that Mary had the responsibility of caring for Addie and May Walling, Ellen's grandnieces, dressing them in the morning and putting them to bed at night. Mary was not merely boarding but actually residing in the White home.²

When James, Ellen, and Mary took the railroad cars for California in January 1875, Ellen wrote back to Willie, "There are some things we will think of and talk in regard to on the cars and write our decision. Mary is cheerful and feeling all right."³

A few weeks later, Willie, Lucinda, and Anna Drischol joined the others in California. By March, he was the acting business manager of Pacific Press, where Mary Kelsey was also working. If they had not had a serious relationship before, it developed rapidly in Oakland. Ellen's greeting of "Dear children, Willie and Mary" in June amounted to the first notice of their engagement. By September, Ellen, then in Maine, was "wishing that Willie and Edson and their good wives were present"—even though Willie and Mary's wedding was still five months future.⁴

After the February 9 wedding and a brief honeymoon in Petaluma,

¹E. G. White to Lizzie [Harmon] Bangs, Nov. 19, 1874, emphasis added.

²E. G. White to Lizzie [Harmon] Bangs, Nov. 19, 1874; E. G. White to Lucinda Hall, Dec. 2, 1874, EGWRC-AU.

³E. G. White to W. C. White, Jan. 28, 1875, EGWRC-AU.

⁴E. G. White to W. C. White, Jan. 28, Feb. 10, 1875, EGWRC-AU; W. C. White to J. White, Mar. 26, 1875, EGWRC-GC; E. G. White to Dear Children, Willie and Mary, June 27, 1875; E. G. White to W. C. White, Sept. 3, 1875, EGWRC-AU.
California, the newlyweds continued living with Willie's parents. Ellen was enthusiastic about her new daughter-in-law. "Mary and Willie are doing well," she wrote. "They are cheerful. Mary is a perfect general in the house. I have no care of household matters. They are very economical in expending means."  

Leadership Positions in California, 1875-1876

At the time Willie became "acting business manager" at Pacific Press, land had been purchased for the new publishing house, but printing was still being contracted out. One of Willie's responsibilities was to take the "forms and bundles of paper several blocks to and from another office on a wheelbarrow." His first Signs byline appeared in July. He could sound very much like his father: "If the prospects of our cause on this coast were encouraging one year ago, they are ten times as cheering now," he opined, citing increases in membership and in Signs circulation.  

In September 1875 he was elected California conference treasurer. On April 3, 1876, he was elected president and business manager of the Pacific SDA Publishing Association, with Mary Kelsey White as treasurer.  

---


2E. G. White to J. White, Apr. 1876 (Letter 2, 1876), Apr. 4, 1876, EGWRC-AU.

3J. White, "What We Have Done," ST, Apr. 29, 1875, 196; idem, "Devotion to the Cause," ST, Apr. 5, 1877, 120; W. C. White, "The Camp-Meetings," ST, July 8, 1875, 276; idem, "One Year Ago and Now," ST, July 15, 1875, 286.

Mary became the "local editor" of the Signs, while the editorial masthead continued to carry the names of James White, Uriah Smith, and J. N. Andrews.¹ For the next year, the initials W.C.W. and M.K.W. occurred with increasing frequency in the Signs.²

In response to the General Conference decision in early 1876 to establish a "complete office of publication" in Europe, James White recommended that W. C. White and Mary White be "on the ground before next New Year's to take charge" of it.³ The young couple accepted the goal, unaware that nine years would elapse before they would cross the Atlantic. Indeed, almost one year passed before they were free to leave Oakland.

Leadership Positions in Battle Creek, 1877-1879

With their goal "to join Elder [J. N.] Andrews in Europe," W. C. and Mary White returned to Michigan in the summer of 1877 to "give the French and German languages some attention" at Battle Creek College. When school began August 29, both had been pressed into service as staff members. Within "a few months," W. C. White was elected to the college board of trustees, one of several responsibilities that soon crowded out his academic aspirations. He was also made a

---


²Based on a reading of ST 1875-76. See, e.g., M.K.W., "Sunday Desecration," ST, June 15, 1876, 213; in refuting four arguments given in support of Sunday "sanctity," Mary comes across as a cogent polemicist. W.C.W., "The Liberals in Philadelphia," ST, June 22, 1876, 224, commends the "liberals" for blocking the "conservatives" who were promoting Sunday legislation.

³J. White, "Conference Address," ST, May 4, 1876, 164.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
director of the Western Health Reform Institute, vice-president (under his father) of
the Review and Herald Publishing Association, and one of the three-man executive
committee of the Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath School Association. The other
Sabbath School committee members were D. M. Canright, president, and S. N.
Haskell, who, with James White, composed the three-man General Conference
Committee. At twenty-three, Willie was working closely with the highest officers of
the denomination.¹

It is therefore not surprising that when plans were laid in 1878 for a new
church building in Battle Creek, W. C. White played a significant part in them as
well. The project was voted by the General Conference Committee (J. White,
Canright, and Haskell), meeting "at the residence of Eld. James White," where
W. C. White may also have been living. Evidently Willie participated in the
meeting, for, according to E. K. Vande Vere, it was he who made the historic
suggestion that every Seventh-day Adventist be asked to give at least a dime a month
toward construction costs, hence the "odd name," the Dime Tabernacle. Further
evidence of Willie's responsibility in the matter is that James White and Canright
left town a week before the key promotional articles would come out in the Review,
leaving Willie behind to care for such important details.²

¹ J. White, "Devotion to the Cause," ST, Apr. 5, 1877, 120; E. G. White to W. C.
White and M. K. White, May 17, 1877, EGWRC-AU; W. C. White to M. K. White, July
9, 1877; W. C. White to E. G. White, Aug. 29, 1877, EGWRC-GC; D. E. Robinson,
"Elder W. C. White [obituary]," RH, Oct. 21, 1937, 21; SDA Encyclopedia, s.v., "White,
William Clarence"; James White and M. J. Chapman, "Nineteenth Annual Session of the
Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association," RH, Oct. 17, 1878, 122; S. N. Haskell and

² J. White, "The Dime Tabernacle," RH, July 11, 1878, 20, gives the residence
address, "corner of Washington and Champion Streets" (Willie and Mary had lived with
Willie's parents in Oakland, and may well have had a similar arrangement in Battle Creek);
E. K. Vande Vere, Wisdom Seekers, 37; J. White, "A Month at Battle Creek," RH, July
In April 1879, W. C. White was elected as acting foreign missions secretary for the General Conference. This responsibility extended his already close association with the "leading brethren, Canright, Haskell, and father." As he took up his duties, he apologized to J. G. Matteson in Denmark for "some delays and blunders . . . due to the fact that the Committee has had no head since father's sickness, and the business was partly done by one member, and partly by another." ¹

Back to Oakland, 1880-1881

Meanwhile, a developing financial crisis at Pacific Press was averted by calling W. C. White to take over the management from his brother Edson. In July 1879, W. C. White was doing correspondence as vice president of Pacific Press, though he and Mary did not actually move back to Oakland until February 1880.²

Ellen had hoped that Edson would be willing to employ his considerable technical skills in a subordinate position at Pacific Press, while yielding the leadership to Willie's greater talent for financial management. To Edson she wrote:

> God designed that you brothers, Willie and Edson, should work together. . . . Willie's slow caution and good judgment gave him the qualities for a safe business manager, while you [Edson] were quick to see, quick to execute and do your work with dispatch.

But although Edson consented for Willie to come to Pacific Press, he was inwardly unreconciled to taking second place to his younger brother. As this became


obvious, Ellen advised Edson to resign and find work elsewhere.¹

Besides his work at Pacific Press, W. C. White continued as secretary of the foreign mission board and a leader in the General Sabbath School Association. The latter involved correspondence and traveling. In April 1880 he spoke at a California camp meeting "in regard to the Sabbath school—how it should be conducted," and in June he was represented "in the Sabbath-school work" by Mary, who had accompanied Ellen White to the Milton, Oregon, camp meeting.²

James White’s Final Crisis, 1881

At the same time that W. C. White was taking on additional responsibilities, his father continued to decline. His periods of rest and recovery were succeeded by recurring overwork and consequent further breakdown of physical and mental health. In the early months of 1881, Ellen’s perplexities about James deepened seriously.

Father has been in such a state of mind I feared he would lose his reason. But he is concluding to lay off the burdens of office matters and go to writing. I hope he will do so. . . .

I am at times in such perplexity and distress of mind I covet retirement or death, but then I gather courage again.³

By mid-May 1881, Ellen was being so bitterly criticized in Battle Creek that even her closest friends were affected. She lamented that even Lucinda Hall "does not come near me any more than if we had been merely casual acquaintances. . . . A great gulf is between us." In her isolation Ellen longed for Mary White’s support and companionship. "Will you come? But my Willie needs you and I have

¹E. G. White to Edson, Feb. 3, 1880, EGWRC-AU.

²A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 3:117; E. G. White to J. White, Apr. 23, 1880; E. G. White to Samuel and Mary Foss, June 1, 1880, EGWRC-AU.

³E. G. White to W. C. White and M. K. White, Jan. 6, 1881, EGWRC-AU.
not the heart to ask." Willie later admitted that even he did not want to be too closely associated with his mother during this time because of the universality of the criticism of her.¹

The focus of the criticism concerned allegations that her word could not be trusted because she was "influenced" (i.e., "manipulated") by various persons close to her. From the Iowa campground in June, a nearly exhausted Ellen confided to Willie and Mary the situation as she saw it. Her husband James was using her writings to undercut G. I. Butler and S. N. Haskell (president and secretary, respectively, of the General Conference, since James' stroke-induced retirement). Also, J. H. Kellogg was attacking James White, and White was retaliating against the doctor, with both of them using her words as verbal ammunition. In short, leading individuals were using Ellen White's testimonies to justify themselves, while they doubted the validity of her words as quoted by others.

Ellen White said that Kellogg, in particular, had consciously attempted to manipulate her. "Dr. Kellogg would come to me in the most ingenious and apparently disinterested manner" to "obtain expressions from me in regard to matters of the cause" in which "I could not sustain Father." Kellogg would then quote her against James to destroy James's influence. James, in turn, "would take things expressed in testimony" to "sustain his position, and make it to bear against Brethren Haskell and Butler. This lack of harmony is killing me. I have to keep my own counsel and have confidence in no one" in Battle Creek, she decided.

Now, Willie, I have written freely and confidentially. I hope the Lord will preserve you well balanced. I hope you will not go to extremes in anything. I hope you will be firm as a rock to duty and be molded by no one's influence except it be the Spirit of God. . . . It becomes us to labor for harmony. Let there be no divisions among us. We must present a united front to our enemies

¹E. G. White to W. C. White and M. K. White, May 15, 1881; W. C. White to J. E. White, Feb. 15, 1921, DF 780, EGWRC-AU.
and to our people. This pulling apart is all the work of Satan. We must close
doors to Satan's devices. We must cherish affection and love. We are
growing hard, unsympathizing... God is not pleased with this hard, critical,
cast-iron measure among us as a people. It is time this matter came to an end,
and another spirit more like Christ was cherished. We need Jesus in us every
moment to warm our hearts and make us kind, pitiful, and courteous.¹

While Willie and Mary continued their work at the Pacific Press, Ellen
wrestled with her dilemma in Battle Creek. Her eventual breakthrough to freedom
of spirit came only after prolonged internal and external struggle. She had earlier
dreamed that she saw Dr. Kellogg gathering stones—"the mistakes of Elder White"--
to stone James White "to death," and that she saw James gathering a similar pile of
stones to pelt the doctor.² On Sabbath afternoon or evening, July 16, 1881, she
read privately to "Dr. Kellogg and Father" a "large number of pages." Tuesday
night she called together "all the responsible men of church and institutions" and
again read the document concerning Kellogg and James White. A. L. White
believed that the content of these pages was the dream in which she saw each man
gathering rocks to stone the other.³

The result of these sessions with James and Dr. Kellogg, and of other
meetings held over a week's time, was a dramatic breakthrough in the Battle Creek
church. Ellen's next letter to Willie and Mary was upbeat. Because of its
significance, it will be quoted at some length. First, she deplored Kellogg's slanted
reporting:

I am sorry to see that Elders Butler and Haskell are as much influenced by Dr.
Kellogg's words and statements as they are. But he is a great talker and colors
matters by his own strong imagination.

She was indignant at the ferocity of Kellogg's attack on James.

¹E. G. White to W. C. White and M. K. White, June 14, 1881, EGWRC-AU.
²E. G. White, "A Dream," n.d., MS 2, 1880, EGWRC-AU.
Why do men always carry things to extremes. They cannot stop when they have gone far enough, but they will, if the course of one is questioned, not feel content till they crush him. . . . The very men who would condemn him [James White] for sharpness in words and for dictating and being overbearing are tenfold more so when they dare to be, than he has ever been.

Then she described her personal victory.

I have felt crushed and heartbroken for months, but I have laid my burden on my Saviour and I shall no longer be like a bruised reed. In the strength of Jesus I assert my freedom.1

The freedom she asserted was freedom from the "influence" dilemma—people distrusting her because they suspected her of being "influenced" by others in her statements.

I had been in continual fear that my husband's mistakes and errors would be classed with the testimonies of the Spirit of God and my influence greatly injured. If I bore a plain testimony against existing wrongs they would say, 'She is moulded by her husband's views and feelings.' If I reproved my husband he would feel I was severe and others had prejudiced me against him. As a result of these accusations,

I was crippled [in spirit], but I should be so no longer. I should act perfectly free. They might think of me as they pleased. I would give them reproof, warning, or encouragement as the Lord should give me. The burden of their questioning and doubts should no longer grieve me and close my lips. I should do my duty in the fear of God and if they would be tempted [by doubts about "influence"] I should not be responsible for this. I would cut my way through in the fear of God.2

This letter was written in Charlotte, Michigan, where James and Ellen had gone to assist with a "tent-meeting," Sabbath and Sunday, July 23 and 24. After they returned to Battle Creek, James "opened the services" on Sabbath, July 30, "with singing and prayer," and Ellen preached the sermon. On Monday, August 1, James suffered a severe chill, thought to be malarial fever. On Wednesday he was


2E. G. White to W. C. White and M. K. White, July 27, 1881, EGWRC-AU.
taken to the Battle Creek Sanitarium, where, on Sabbath, August 6, about 5:00 P.M., he died.¹

Willie and Mary, in Oakland, were almost a week's journey away, so the funeral was set for Sabbath, August 13. The week after the funeral, Ellen spoke once more at the Tabernacle. Then she and her daughters-in-law left for Colorado, leaving Willie and Edson to close out James White's financial affairs.²

W. C. White’s Position after James White’s Death

The importance of James White’s death for the present study is the impact it had on W. C. White. James White’s long decline had forced him to delegate much of his work, affording Willie an opportunity to grow into the responsibilities that would be thrust upon him when his father died. During his father’s decline, he had often served as his mother’s escort and had also helped her prepare manuscripts for publication. When James’s emotional health became too fragile to bear the weight of the perplexities she wrestled with, Willie was a listener in whom she could confide. In these ways he became a major helper to his mother even before his father’s death.

W. C. White’s position after James’ death, as perceived by those closest to him, was succinctly stated by Mary K. White. She paraphrased approvingly the words of a Brother Olmstead, who had been asked to arrange clergy fare for W. C. White with a railroad ticket agent: "Brother Olmstead is well acquainted with the


agent, and told him the circumstances about father’s death, and mother being a public speaker, and that you were to take his place as much as any one man could.\footnote{M. K. White to W. C. White, Aug. 27, 1881, EGWRC-GC.}

"As much as any one man could" would set the standard for much of Willie’s subsequent life. The words recall Ellen’s statement when certain "friends" wanted to erect a "broken shaft as a monument" on James’s grave in token of the fact that he died at a mere sixty years of age. "Never!" she retorted, "never! He has done, singlehanded, the work of three men. Never shall a broken monument be placed over his grave!" Trying to fill James’s shoes would be like trying to replace three men. But Willie would "take his place as much as any one man could."\footnote{E. G. White, "Sermon, Mrs. E. G. White, delivered 11:30 a.m., Sabbath, January 23, 1904, in the Sanitarium Chapel, St. Helena, Cal.," MS 8, 1904, EGWRC-AU; published in idem, Selected Messages, Book 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 105; M. K. White to W. C. White, Aug. 27, 1881, EGWRC-GC.}

W. C. White’s Relationship to Ellen G. White and Her Work, 1854-1881

As noted in the preface, the structural design which is followed for each chapter includes first a chronological overview of the period under consideration, and then a topical investigation of selected issues concerning W. C. White’s relationship to his mother during that period. Chapters 2 through 4 cover relatively briefer periods of White’s life, and periods in which his role does not change so drastically within a period.

In this first chapter, however, the reader should be forewarned that the transition from the chronological to the topical section involves a rather drastic shift of viewpoint, from W. C. White as a General Conference officer attempting to fill his father’s shoes, back to his earliest childhood. This section considers Ellen
White's role as a mother, describes her relationship to Willie in the child-training process, assesses the place of James Edson White, and delineates Willie's early attitude toward and involvement in his mother's work.

Ellen White as a Mother

Ellen White considered the training of her sons to be a responsibility of high priority.1 When she was home she frequently prayed with and for them.2 At least twice she received visions to correct mistakes she and James were making in dealing with their children. When she was aware of shortcomings in her dealings with her children, she took them very seriously. In her diary she reflected on one unsatisfactory incident: "Had an interview with Edson. Felt distressed beyond measure, feeling that it was not conducted wisely." Despite specific visionary guidance regarding her parenting, there were still times when she was perplexed about what course to pursue and an apparent failure made her feel "distressed beyond measure."3

Her high ideals and hopes for her sons were nevertheless tempered with realism. She wrote to James when Willie was six, "The children are doing well; are quite steady; are not perfect; this we do not expect of children." She told Henry and Edson,

The Lord knows you are young, and He will help you to do right, and give you

---

1See, e.g., E. G. White to Brother and Sister Loveland, Jan. 24, 1856; E. G. White to Harriet [Stevens Smith], Jan. 30, 1857; E. G. White to Henry and Edson, Mar. 2, 1858; E. G. White, Diary, May 20, 1859, MS 6, 1859, EGWRC-AU.

2E.g., E. G. White, Diary, Feb. 9, 1859, MS 5, 1859; idem, Diary, May 20, 1859, MS 6, 1859; E. G. White to My Dear Willie, [July 26, 1861], (Letter 24, 1861), EGWRC-AU.

3E. G. White, "Testimony for James and Ellen White's Family," MS 8, 1862; idem, "Testimony Regarding James and Ellen White," (June 6, 1863), MS 1, 1863; idem, Diary, Jan. 13, 1868, MS 12, 1868, EGWRC-AU.
grace to overcome every wrong, every evil. You may not obtain the entire victory at once; but persevere, keep trying. Say, I will do right, I will resist evil, and the Lord will help me.¹

A few months later, after pleading with all three sons to be truly converted, she added, "I am not writing to reprove you, children. You have been very kind, obedient children to us. Sometimes wayward, but not stubborn."²

One of the great trials of Ellen White's life was that she and James were frequently away from home for six, eight, or ten weeks at a time, during which time the boys were left in the care of others. In December 1850 she wrote to friends,

I had the privilege of being with my oldest boy two weeks [Henry was three years old]. He is a lovely dispositioned boy. He became so attached to his mother, it was hard to be separated from him; but as our time is all employed in writing and folding and wrapping papers, I am denied the privilege of having his company. My other little one [Edson, then seventeen months old] is many hundred miles from me. Sometimes Satan tempts me to complain and think my lot is a hard one, but I will not harbor this temptation... I have this consolation that God is pleased with my sacrifice, that of offering up my children to him. Do pray for me. I need much grace to perform my duty faithfully and deliver the straight messages that God lays upon me to deliver.³

Ellen longed for a time when it would not be necessary for her to be separated from her children. "The greatest sacrifice I was called to make in connection with the work," she said, "was to leave my children to the care of others." She resolved, in a letter to Edson, "not to plunge into business as we have done and leave you poor boys to take care of yourselves." She wistfully promised, "We are going to spend more time with you, seeking to make you and Willie happy.

¹E. G. White to J. White, Oct. 22, 1860; E. G. White to Henry and Edson, Oct. 30, 1859, EGWRC-AU.
²E. G. White to Henry, Edson, and Willie, Mar. 25, 1861, EGWRC-AU.
We will have more recreation and less work." Her hope, however, never fully materialized.¹

Because of the extended separations, a significant portion of Ellen White's training and nurture of her children was carried on by correspondence, affording an intimate glimpse into her relationship with her sons, one of whom is the subject of this dissertation.

Ellen White's Early Training of W. C. White

Ellen was naturally drawn to her third son from the start because he was "perfectly good natured, seldom cries," "the best little fellow you ever saw."²

In December 1856, Willie and his brothers were at home in Battle Creek under Jennie Fraser's care while James and Ellen made the famous wintertime journey to Waukon, Iowa, to recall several Adventist ministers who had become discouraged and retired to farming (there was then no system of financial support for ministers). On returning in January, Ellen wrote, "O, how thankful was I to get home once more. . . . We found our children very well. Willie is a fat, healthy, little fellow, and clings closer than ever to his mother." The last seven words provide an early clue to Ellen's relationship to W. C. White. While Ellen dearly loved all her sons, the attachment between her and Willie would prove to be closer in some ways than that between her and any of her other boys.³

A letter to Henry closed with "here is a peppermint for Willie." Three


²E. G. White to Brethren and Sisters, Dec. 16, 1854 [and Jan. 9, 1855] (Letter 5, 1854); E. G. White to Bro. and Sister Howland, July 15, 1856, EGWRC-AU.

³E. G. White to Friends at Home, Dec. 24, 1856; on the "dash to Waukon," see Maxwell, Tell It to the World, 140-41; and Schwarz, Light Bearers, 86-88; E. G. White to Harriet (Stevens Smith), Jan. 30, 1857, EGWRC-AU.
weeks later she wrote to Willie, "We are at Brother Folsom's. You remember, Willie, it is where they make candy." "Here is a peppermint, Willie," she added in a postscript. Her next letter expressed regret that "it is eight weeks yet before we shall return home" but consoled Willie with mention of a gift. "In the last box we sent to Battle Creek were some little trinkets for you and a little box of candy." This time she added some instructions on moderation: "You must eat it only when Jenny thinks it is best. Eat a very little at a time."1

The significance of the gifts of candy should not be overstated. The older boys, Henry and Edson, were eight and ten by now, helping out at the Review, and perhaps able to buy their own candy. Nevertheless, these gifts show Ellen's special love for her four-year-old, then her youngest son. "Willie, dear boy, you have been our sunshine," she wrote, "and Oh how I prayed that you might always be the same pure sweet Willie." James also praised Willie. For instance, in a letter to Edson, James admonished,

My dear Edson, love to indulge Willie. Never plague him. Should he die, O how your heart would ache. He is the best boy you ever saw, and I hope you will always think a great deal of him, and of Henry.2

Ellen's earliest extant letter addressed specifically to Willie was written just after his fifth birthday. After telling an incident she thought the little fellow would find interesting, she turned to behavioral matters.

1E. G. White to My Dear Son Henry, Sept. 6, 1859; E. G. White to Dear Little Willie, Sept. 26, 1859; E. G. White to Dear Little Willie, [ca. Sept. 27,] 1859 (Letter 10, 1859), EGWRC-AU. The approximate date is based on an internal time reference ("it is eight weeks yet before we shall return home"), subtracted from the date of their return to Battle Creek, Nov. 21, 1859 (A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 1:409), plus the further evidence that the content of this letter logically follows that of E. G. White to W. C. White, Sept. 26, 1859, EGWRC-AU.

2E. G. White to W. C. White, Mar. 3, 1860; J. White to Edson, Mar. 20, 1860, DF 718a, EGWRC-AU.
We hope little Willie is well and happy. We believe you are trying to be a good sweet little boy. You must try hard to be good. Don't please Satan by giving way to wrong temper, but remember he that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city.

How glad we should be to see our dear little Willie again and hear his . . . voice. We love you very much Willie, and want you to be good and pleasant and lovely.

. . . You must try Willie to make Grandpa and Grandma [White] happy. Don't grieve them by being noisy and rude, but be quiet and mild, gentle, then they will love you. Mind Jenny and try to please her. Be a sweet little boy.

From your mother.¹

Later she complimented his behavior, particularly with reference to his grandparents. "They love you, Willie, very much, because you are not mischievous, and do not make them trouble by disarranging Grandpa's tools."²

It may be generalized that the recurring themes in Ellen White's early letters to Willie are patience, obedience to Jenny, love to his brothers, courtesy to grandparents, and overall good behavior. She repeatedly stressed the need for patience, quoting Prov 16:32.

You must overcome an impatient spirit. To be impatient is not to be willing to wait, to want everything you desire in a moment. You must say to yourself, I'll wait. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." Willie, if you would be happy, you must rule your own spirit.³

Adelia Patton, who looked after him when he was nine, reported that by then, Willie had "overcome the impatient spirit which he sometimes manifested when quite young."⁴

In another letter, Ellen White further developed the cause and effect

---

¹E. G. White to Dear Little Willie, Sept. 15, 1859, EGWRC-AU.

²E. G. White to W. C. White, Mar. 3, Mar. 14, 1860, [July 26, 1861] (Letter 24, 1861), EGWRC-AU.

³E. G. White to Dear Little Willie, [ca. Sept. 27], 1859 (Letter 10, 1859), Mar. 3, 1860, EGWRC-AU.

⁴A[delia] P[atten], editorial footnote, Appeal to the Youth, 62.
relationship between good behavior and social acceptance. She told of "a little boy about your age" on the cars who "looked handsome" but "did not behave well."

Now, Willie, that badly behaved boy with pretty clothes did not make people love him. His behaviour made those who had the care of him ashamed of him, and all seemed pleased to get rid of the troublesome boy.

If Willie acts well, if he is gentle, kind, and obedient, father and mother will love him and all good people will love him.\(^1\)

In another letter she predicted that if Willie will "be good and pleasant and lovely," then "everyone will love you."\(^2\)

The ultimate motivation offered Willie for good behavior was the approval of God. "Be obedient to Jenny," his mother admonished him, "love your brothers and be good all day, and the Lord will love you. Everyone will love you." Earlier she had urged him, "You must not get angry, but remember the Lord could not love you if you should be naughty. [But] Jenny says you are a good boy and this made us feel very glad."\(^3\) In another letter, she contrasted the warnings against being "wicked" or "naughty" with the rewards reserved for those who "try . . . to be good and do right."

Learn, my dear Willie, to be patient. . . . The Lord loves those little children who try to do right and He has promised that they shall be in His kingdom; but wicked, naughty children, God does not love. He will not take them to the beautiful city, for He only admits the good, obedient and patient children there. One fretful, disobedient child would spoil all the harmony of heaven.

When you feel tempted to speak impatient and fretful, remember the Lord sees you and will not love you if you do wrong. When you do right, and overcome wrong feelings, the Lord smiles upon you. . . .

Now dear Willie, try to do right always, and then no black mark will be set down against you and when Jesus comes, He will call for that good boy, Willie White, and will put upon your head a wreath of gold, and put in your hand a little harp that you can play upon and it will send forth beautiful music

\(^1\)E. G. White to "Dear Little Willie," Sept. 26, 1859, EGWRC-AU.

\(^2\)E. G. White to "Dear Little Willie," Sept. 9, 1859, EGWRC-AU.

\(^3\)E. G. White to W. C. White, Mar. 3, 1860, [ca. Sept. 27.] 1859 (Letter 10, 1859), EGWRC-AU.
and you will never be sick, never be tempted there to do wrong, but will be happy always and will eat of rich fruit and will pluck beautiful flowers. Try, try, dear boy, to be good and do right.¹

No doubt these incentives motivated the conscientious Willie to excellent behavior while the potentially negative impact of the concept that "naughty children, God does not love" was minimized in his case by the frequent positive affirmations that he was, indeed, a good boy. The same statements may have sounded quite different in the ears of his brother Edson who was more frequently rebuked by his parents.

By the expression, "wicked, naughty children God does not love," Ellen White meant that those who persist in being "wicked," God does not approve and cannot save. When editing the letter for publication in Appeal to the Youth, she deleted the milder word "naughty," but retained the stronger word, "wicked," indicating that by the phrase, "wicked, naughty children," she meant the ultimately reprobate.²

Later she would warn parents not to speak to their children as she had to hers. "Do not teach your children that God does not love them when they do wrong," she admonished. "Teach them that he loves them so [much] that it grieves his tender Spirit to see them in transgression, because he knows that they are doing injury to their souls."³ She assured them that Christ's "heart is drawn out, not only to the best-behaved children, but to those who have by inheritance objectionable traits of character. Many parents do not understand how much they are responsible for these traits in their children," she said. "But Jesus looks upon

¹E. G. White to W. C. White, Mar. 14, 1860, EGWRC-AU, published with some editing in Appeal to the Youth (1864), 62.

²E. G. White, Appeal to the Youth, 62.

³E. G. White, "Ye Are Complete in Him," ST, Feb. 15, 1892, 231.
these children with pity. He traces from cause to effect."¹

Willie and His Older Brothers

Part of the background for Willie's relationship to his mother is the part played by his older brothers. It is noteworthy that both Henry and Edson seem to have been more boisterous in temperament than was Willie. In the same letter in which she reported the birth of Willie, Ellen commented on her two older sons. "I have about as much as I can do to take care of my three children. You have seen Henry, well Edson has more life and roughery than Henry so you must know my hands are full." Willie, however, she later commended for being "not mischievous" and for "disslik[ing] to play with rough, noisy boys." When the older sons were nine and seven years old, Ellen confided to a friend that she had "no evidence if Henry or Edson should now die that they would come up in the first resurrection." In contrast, she told Willie when he was seven, "You have been a great comfort to us, because you have always been so anxious to do as we wished you to do. This is right. You will be happy as long as you possess this spirit and are so obedient."²

Henry and Edson, seven and five years older than Willie, were early taught to take responsibility for their influence on their younger brother. When Willie was three, Ellen wrote to Henry and Edson,

Be good to Willie. Love him. Teach him right things. If you do wrong, you not only sin yourselves, but you teach him to sin. When you do wrong, you teach him to do wrong; so double sin rests upon you. Always act as you would like to see Willie act. Always speak pleasantly to him, and try to make


him happy. Your affectionate Mother.¹

After Henry's death, she became even more vigilant for the spiritual well-being of her two remaining sons, Edson and Willie. Her efforts for their development were complicated by the fact that they were quite different in temperament and in their relationship to her. The present study about W. C. White and his mother cannot be fully understood without some understanding of the part Edson White played in both their lives.

James Edson White

The story of James Edson White, called throughout life by his middle name, has been told several times.² Edson eventually played a leading role in the establishment of Seventh-day Adventist work in the post-Civil War American South, but due to his years of spiritual and vocational wandering, his accomplishments never equaled those of his brother Willie. Even Edson's great contributions (as the moving force behind the Southern Missionary Society, the Southern Publishing Association, and Oakwood College) were never appreciated by his contemporaries in proportion to their significance. His relative lack of status in denominational circles (and the belief that it was undeserved) became a recurring source of frustration to Edson. Some aspects of Edson's story are recounted here because they shed light on the persistent criticisms of Willie which Edson expressed at various times.

Edson White was born July 28, 1849, five years and a month before Willie. As a youngster he followed his father to work at the Review and Herald

¹E. G. White to Henry and Edson, Mar. 2, 1858, EGWRC-AU.

Publishing Association in Battle Creek. By fifteen he was a regular employee there. Ronald Graybill has noted that Edson "learned his trade thoroughly and became a master printer. His publications, even when printed on a small press aboard the [steamboat] *Morning Star*, always had a snappy, clean look to match his clear, simple writing."¹

Edson eventually became an effective preacher, educator, and publisher, but his youth and early adult years were troubled. Not until he was forty-four years of age did he make the spiritual commitment that impelled him to become a pioneer educator and evangelist in the post-Civil War American South.²

Alta Robinson's characterization of Edson as a youth is well supported by the documentary evidence: "In dress he was flamboyant, in behavior unpredictable, in diet careless, and in money management extravagant. He was alternately elated or depressed."³

By the time he was twenty and was considering marriage, his mother had concluded that while he was brilliant in intellect, "capable of filling a position as a physician or business man," he was happy-go-lucky in character, living for the moment, "a spendthrift" who lacked self-discipline and self-control. In the same anguished letter to Edson in which she mentioned these concerns, she also wrote,

> Your father and myself . . . could not consent to your plodding along merely as a farmer. . . . Father weeps over your case. But we are both at loss to know what to say or do in your case. We view it just alike. You are at present not fitted to have a family for in judgment you are a child,—in self-control a child. You have no strength to resist temptation although by yielding you would disgrace us and yourself and dishonor God. You would not bear the yoke in


³A. Robinson, in *Early Adventist Educators*, 137-38.
Several factors help to account for the marked differences between the two sons—heredity, birth circumstances, Edson’s conflicts with his parents, and his own personal choices.

A. W. Spalding, who knew Edson during his leadership years in the South, attributed some of the differences between the two sons to differences in heredity. Spalding observed that Willie was "like his mother, constant, enterprising but cautious, a solid and careful builder." Edson, on the other hand, "had much of his father’s enterprise and drive," but had "an overamount of his eccentricity."

Spalding thought that Edson’s father "was saved from serious ill consequences of his enthusiasms both by his own balance of qualities and by his wife’s counsel," but that Edson "had not the same good fortune." Edson was "resourceful, energetic, inventive, and he had a good deal of executive ability; but he was sometimes flighty and erratic." Though he "built considerable businesses at different times," they were "liable to explode."

Ellen White believed that there was more than heredity involved. She mentioned Edson’s troubled infancy and acknowledged some parenting mistakes, but she also insisted on Edson’s personal responsibility in persistently choosing to live for the present moment rather than to deny self for a future benefit.

Regarding Edson’s babyhood, Ellen wrote to Willie, "The circumstances of his [Edson’s] birth were altogether different than yours. His mother knows, but every one does not." Twenty years later in another letter to Willie, she elaborated a bit regarding her own situation during her pregnancy with Edson. "I . . . am more

---

1E. G. White to Edson White, June 10, 1869, EGWRC-AU.

sympathetic for Edson than for you," she confided, because before his birth circumstances were particularly unfavorable in regard to his stamp of character. My association while carrying him, the peculiar experience I was forced to have, was most objectionable and severely trying. After his birth it was no less so for years. It was altogether different in your case.¹

Besides the prenatal turmoil, Edson's infancy was marked by lack of a settled home, lengthy separations from both of his parents, and frequent illness. When Edson was born, July 28, 1849, James and Ellen had no residence of their own. Living in the home of Albert Belden in Rocky Hill, Connecticut, they had just published issue number 1 of the Present Truth. For six weeks following Edson's birth they stayed in Rocky Hill, publishing numbers 2 to 4 of the fledgling periodical. Then James, Ellen, and baby Edson left for a mid-September conference in Paris, Maine. Another "eight or ten weeks were spent visiting believers in Maine and New York State." Not until December 1849, five months after the birth of their second son and three years after their marriage, did they rent their first house, in Oswego, New York. Now they had an address, but their travels continued, while Edson was left in Oswego in the care of Clarissa Bonfoey. During all this period, their oldest son, Henry, remained with the Stockbridge Howland family in Topsham, Maine.²

The foregoing brief excerpt from the White family's early experience is sufficient to illustrate the difficulties under which Edson passed his earliest years. By the time Willie was born the Whites at least had a settled house, even if the


parents were often absent. All the children were under one roof, to which James and Ellen returned between journeys.\(^1\)

An additional contrast between the early life of Edson and that of Willie was the extreme degree of ill health which Edson experienced as a baby. Ellen wrote to Edson and Emma after their marriage that "Edson suffered indeed in his babyhood and childhood for the truth's sake." She said she was shown in vision that Edson had been a special target of Satan's wrath, because Satan knew that nothing could so effectively discourage her and James than the suffering of their baby son. She said that Satan had attacked Edson physically in his early life and spiritually in his later life for the same purpose—to harass the parents through their affection for the son.\(^2\)

Parental inexperience also contributed to Edson's troubles. In 1862 and 1863 Ellen received two visions pointing out specific errors she and James were making in their dealings with their children and explaining the results that would follow.\(^3\) Most of the mistakes reproved were common parenting behaviors that would hardly deserve mention except that they seem to shed light on the difficulties that James and Ellen later experienced with Edson.

The 1862 testimony begins with an assessment of the Whites' early parenting experience. "I was shown in regard to our family," Ellen wrote with her customary candor,


\(^2\)E. G. White to Edson and Emma, Sept. 10, 1875, EGWRC-AU; see also Graybill, *Mission to Black America*, 10-12.

\(^3\)E. G. White, "Testimony for James and Ellen White's Family," no date, MS 8, 1862; idem, "Testimony Regarding James and Ellen White," June 6, 1863, MS 1, 1863, EGWRC-AU.
that we had failed in our duty; we had not restrained them. We had indulged
them too much, suffered them to follow their own inclinations and desires, and
suffered them to indulge in folly. . . . I saw that we should instruct them with
sobriety and yet with kindness and patience; take an even course.1

She noted that Satan's strategy in "tempt[ing] our children" was
particularly aimed at provoking the parents "that we may be disheartened and
grieved" and then "censure and find fault with them in a spirit which will only
injure and discourage them instead of helping them." Thus the two errors--too little
restraint and sometimes excessive severity--had combined to "injure and discourage"
their sons.

I saw that there had been a wrong in laughing at their sayings and doings
and then when they err, bearing down upon them with much severity, even
before others, which destroys their fine and sensitive feelings and makes it a
common thing to be censured for trifles and mistakes, and places accidents and
mistakes upon the same level with sins and actual wrongs.2

She was shown that the result of indulgence alternated with excessive severity and
public rebuke would be bitterness and alienation. "Their dispositions will become
soured and we shall sever the cord which unites them to us and gives us influence
with them," she said. Especially were the Whites cautioned against reproving their
children in the presence of others.

When they offend, we can have a far greater influence upon their minds to
reprove them alone than before others. When reproved in company a spirit
rises within them to brave it out and not show that they are affected. This
spirit grows upon them, and submissive, broken feelings will be rare. But take
them alone and speak to them in kindness, yet with decision, and it will have a
reforming influence.3

The behavioral results predicted correspond closely to their experience
with Edson. For significant periods of time he was almost completely alienated

1E. G. White, "Testimony for James and Ellen White's Family," MS 8, 1862,
EGWRC-AU.

2Ibid.

3Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
from his father. Ellen, as well, said that she was grieved by the "barrier" she felt between herself and Edson. The expression, "sever the cord which unites them to us and gives us influence with them," seems to be descriptive of this alienation. The further result, that "submissive, broken feelings will be rare," was also a characteristic that Ellen later observed in Edson.¹

A fourth caution was recorded the following year. James and Ellen's frequent absences could not be avoided. But when home, they needed to set limits on the intrusion of visitors into their family life. "The time which belongs to our children, company has claimed. We should not rob our children of our society," Ellen wrote.²

While this testimony was addressed to both parents, and Ellen frequently used the plural pronouns "we" and "us," it may be that some of the behaviors addressed pertained more to one parent than to the other. James was the one who criticized Edson most harshly. James wrote to Willie when Edson was twenty-seven that "if mother would not always blame me when Edson abuses me, I think I would consent to live in the same state" with Edson. "But until I see a radical change in both Edson and mother," he concluded, "I do not expect to go to California." Alta Robinson confirms that Ellen "was often placed in a difficult position as intermediary" between Edson and his father. Graybill observes that Ellen White "sometimes defended Edson so stoutly that James was offended, feeling she was taking Edson's side against him." In a retrospective letter fifteen years later, to be

¹E. G. White to Edson, Sept. 22, 1866, June 17, 1868; E. G. White to J. White, Mar. 31, 1876, EGWRC-AU; cf. V. Robinson, James White, 141-42, 261-62, 272-73.

²E. G. White, "Testimony Regarding James and Ellen White," June 6, 1863, MS 1, 1863, EGWRC-AU.
discussed below, Ellen dropped the "we" terminology and specified James as the one who was "too severe" toward Edson.¹

When the special instructions on parenting were received, Edson was already thirteen years old and Willie was eight. The conspicuous difference between the parents' attitude toward Edson and their attitude toward Willie became more obvious in the summer of 1864, when Edson turned fifteen and Willie was not quite ten years of age. Ellen later specified that as the time when she had become "convinced" that Edson "could not be trusted." In a letter to Edson marked "Read this alone, Private: My dear Son Edson," she rebuked him for disobedience and deception, and especially for leading Willie into the same.

When we went to Monterey last summer, for instance, you went into the river four times and not only disobeyed us yourself but led Willie to disobedience. A thorn has been planted in my heart from that time, when I became convinced that you could not be trusted. . . . A gloom which I cannot express shrouds our minds in regard to your influence upon Willie. You lead him into habits of disobedience and concealment and prevarication. This influence, we have seen, has affected our noble-hearted, truthful Willie. . . . You reason and talk and make things appear all smooth to him, when he cannot see through the matter. He adopts your view of it and he is in danger of losing his candor, his frankness. . . . You had so little sense of the true value of character. You seemed as much pleased in the society of Marcus Ashley as with your own innocent brother Willie. You never prized him as he deserved to be prized. He is a treasure, beloved of God, but I fear your influence will ruin him.²

Willie evidently idolized his older brother, but to Edson, now sixteen, the eleven-year-old was a tag-along nuisance. Perhaps Edson saw his brother's naive innocence as an obstacle to his own pleasure-seeking—an obstacle to be evaded when possible, or, if Willie had to be along, Edson would try to mold his naivety into cooperation. But his preference was for Marcus. Ellen perceived the preference for


²E. G. White to Edson, June 20, 1865, EGWRC-AU.
Marcus as evidence that Edson was still unconverted, that immediate pleasure was his priority, and that he remained unappreciative of the moral excellence that she desired for her sons.

In the months and years that followed, Edson continued to either flaunt or evade his parents' value system. He loved to dress in expensive clothing, wore a gold watch on a heavy chain, visited a local shooting gallery (which his mother had specifically forbidden), and indulged a "passion for reading storybooks."¹ Contrary to his parents' wishes, he borrowed and used firearms. (The deed became known when Edson acquired an injury Ellen feared might cost him the use of his hand.) None of these behaviors were criminal, but they contrasted sharply with the ways of the younger brother, who was frugal, conservative, hard working, dependable, and seemed generally to comply with his parents' wishes.²

Edson's biographers have noted the "unfavorable comparisons" his parents made between him and Willie.³ Ellen had trained herself not to mince words regarding character traits, good or bad, and she was as forthright with her sons as with anyone. While she assured Edson of her love, she made no effort to conceal her disappointment with his behavior, and her approval of Willie's.

Ellen White's motivations for this manner of dealing with her sons must be measured against the background of her own beliefs about the discipline of children. There is sufficient evidence to show that Ellen dearly loved both her sons, but that she also had a keen awareness of the eternal issues at stake in their choices.

¹E. G. White to Edson and Willie, Autumn 1865 (Letter 6a, 1865).
²E. G. White to Edson, June 17, 1865, June 20, Oct. 19, 1865; E. G. White to Edson and Willie, Autumn 1865 (Letter 6-a, 1865), EGWRC-AU.
Repeatedly in early testimonies she had spoken in no uncertain terms of the curse that came upon Eli for indulging his sons in their sins, and she was not about to be guilty of that mistake herself. In narrating the deathbed utterances of Jacob, which included cursing some of the sons in the presence of the others, she explained that "Jacob was an affectionate father" whose "paternal feelings would have led him to only utter in his dying testimony expressions of love and tenderness." However, "God by the spirit of prophecy elevated the mind of Jacob above his natural feelings," enabling him "under the influence of inspiration" to speak the "truth, although painful," regarding his sons.

She unquestionably saw her own relations to Edson and Willie in a similar light. Thus, in her efforts to penetrate Edson's consciousness, she could reprove him and praise Willie in the same letter. For example, after rebuking Edson for not being a consistent health reformer ("appetite is stronger with you than principle"), she held up his brother as a model: "Willie has principle. He has self-control as you should have." In another letter she pleaded,

Edson, you know your Master's will. Only do it, and you will have a conscience void of offense. . . . God help you to work the works of righteousness. . . .

Willie, my dear boy, love is a part of your nature. Cherish it, for it is the most precious gift of heaven. Don't neglect prayer. May the Lord bless you, my dear boy.

Without denying that Edson's behavior often merited reproof, it is possible that his mother did not fully anticipate the effect on him of such direct and unfavorable comparisons to Willie. The fact that she had a high degree of certainty

---

1See, e.g., E. G. White, _Spiritual Gifts_, 4a:103-106; idem, _Testimonies_, 1:119, 190, 217, 235; 2:620, 624.

2E. G. White, _Spiritual Gifts_, 1:172.

regarding her duty to discipline her sons did not preclude trial and error in communicating those convictions. For example, about a year before the above letter she referred to an "interview with Edson," which she felt "was not conducted wisely." Evidently the visionary instruction she received was not so definitive as to remove the need for wrestling with issues of implementation.\textsuperscript{1}

She later recognized that lack of encouragement at crucial points in his life had hindered Edson from becoming the man he might have been, although she specifically mentions James and Willie, not herself, in this connection. Because the retrospective letter to Willie is so significant, it will be quoted at some length. The context is evidently James White's removal of Edson from the management of Pacific Press and giving the job to Willie. "Because Edson failed" in business, she explained,

I think both you and Father were too severe toward him. I think, too, you both were too severe toward Frank [Belden]. Both of these are unfortunate. They have needed help and encouragement many times when they have not received it. I do not say that you [Willie] have said or done anything in particular, but you might have stood in a position to lead Father to say things which have not been what the case demanded.

Edson has acted foolishly in many things, and he has not had that encouragement at all times that he should have had. . . . Willie, I have been shown many things in the management of Edson that were all wrong. His present position and influence should have been far different than it is now had he been managed differently.\textsuperscript{2}

Since "management" is a word she uses elsewhere to denote parenting,\textsuperscript{3} it

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1}E. G. White, Diary, Jan. 13, 1868, MS 12, 1868, EGWRC-AU, quoted above under subhead, "Ellen White as a Mother;" cf. her seeking counsel from trusted associates regarding timing and delivery of written testimonies (E. G. White, \textit{Selected Messages}, 1:51-52).
  \item \textsuperscript{2}E. G. White to W. C. White, Feb. 25, 1878, EGWRC-AU, emphasis added.
  \item \textsuperscript{3}Among the many examples of E. G. White's use of the term "management" with reference to parenting, the following are from the same year as the cited letter: E. G. White, "Our Children—Importance of Early Training," \textit{HR}, Feb. 1878, 44-45; idem, "A Lesson for the Times, Number Five" \textit{HR}, Nov. 1878, 331.
\end{itemize}
is probable that she is referring to parental dealings (James's and possibly her own) with Edson, although she could also have been thinking of James's "management of Edson" at the Pacific Press. In either case, she placed the primary responsibility on her husband. "Now do not think I am blaming you," she continued in the letter to Willie.

Poor boy, you have been between two fires [James' health problems and Edson's behavioral problems], and God has brought you through unscathed; but I want you to feel the tenderest and most brotherly feeling toward Edson. I want you to come close to him, and him to come close to you. It can be done and should be done. You are better balanced than Edson. But Edson can be of use, and if he had had encouragement at the very times when he needed it he would have been a man of influence today. I speak the things I know. I love you, Willie, and believe God is using you to His glory. I love Edson, and believe God will accept him, and I do desire that you may harmonize as brothers, that neither shall be too exacting.

I have read this, every word, to Father. He says, "That is good, that is good."1

From the time of this letter, relations between Edson and his parents improved somewhat, but for most of his life Edson resented Willie for taking his place at Pacific Press, a change that Ellen White said was carried out by James in his illness despite the fact that W. C. White "begged" him not to do so.2

It may be summarized that Willie and Edson differed markedly in their inherited temperaments and vocational talents, in the circumstances of their births and early home environment, in their relations to their parents, and in their religious commitments. Both were eventually successful, but Edson never received from denominational leaders the degree of respect that Willie did. The significance of Edson's story for the present study is that Edson's long-term resentment against his

---

1E. G. White to W. C. White, Feb. 25, 1878, EGWRC-AU, emphasis added.

2E. G. White to J. E. White, [late 1905] (Letter 391, 1906), EGWRC-AU.
Ellen White's Later Training of W. C. White

Willie entered his teen years soon after the Whites' move to Greenville, Michigan, in 1867. The one recorded instance of real mischief on Willie's part comes from this period. The details are sketchy and derived from oral sources, but their general authenticity has not been challenged.  

In Greenville, Willie attended the local one-room public school. Late one afternoon, probably in the presence of some associates, he climbed through a classroom window and wrote on the blackboard a bit of doggerel that was highly uncomplimentary to the teacher.

\begin{verbatim}
  The devil flew east, west, north, and south  
  And picked Miss Jones up in his mouth  
  But when he saw he had a fool  
  He dropped her here to teach this school.
\end{verbatim}

When Miss Jones read it the next morning, she called for the guilty student to confess the misdeed. No one moved. Recognizing, however, the handwriting of the perpetrator, she called him by name. "Willie, did you write that on the blackboard?"

"Yes," said Willie, "I did."

"I demand that you retract that statement," snapped Miss Jones.

"I can't," replied Willie. "It's the truth. My parents always told me to tell the truth." For this impertinence, Willie was expelled from school and not till  

\begin{verbatim}
1Ibid.
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
2Elder Fishell (father of E. M. Fishell), as told to Arthur White, "A Story about W. C. White," DF 780-a, EGWRC-GC; V. Robinson, "Son of the Prophet," 9, DF 780c, EGWRC-AU.
\end{verbatim}
his parents took him to apologize to the chairman of the school board was he reinstated.\(^1\)

Perhaps it was in response to this incident that Ellen’s next letters began to place great emphasis on challenging Willie to develop spiritual maturity in discipleship to Christ. She called him to personal prayer and Bible reading; resistance to temptation; endurance of trials, especially loneliness; a personal knowledge of Christ; vigilance regarding the influence of associates; and self-examination. A phrase frequently repeated was "the school of Christ."

Love the dear Saviour with all your heart and be daily learning in the school of Christ . . . You can know for yourself that your ways please God. You can consecrate yourself to your Saviour and can be daily exerting an influence which will be saving on those with whom you associate.\(^2\)

Ellen had earlier noted how easily Willie was led into mischief by Edson, and she had held Edson largely responsible.\(^3\) But at Greenville Willie was thirteen and though he boarded with Adventist neighbors while his parents traveled, he was responsible for the care of the White farm. Ellen now called on him to take a corresponding degree of responsibility for his behavior and spiritual life. Perhaps she knew or suspected that in the blackboard "poem" incident Willie had been playing to an audience of his peers, for now she charged him to overcome his weakness for peer influence.

It is your business to keep aloof from everyone and everything which will have a tendency to lead you away from duty and divert your mind from God. Your will must be in submission to the will of God. If there are boys or girls whom you know are evil you should remain away from them—not place

\(^1\)Elder Fishell, as told to Arthur White, "A Story about W. C. White," DF 780-a, EGWRC-GC.


\(^3\)E. G. White to Edson, June 20, 1865; E. G. White to Children, Autumn 1865 (Letter 6a, 1865), EGWRC-AU.
yourself in their society. If compelled to be in the society of those who are evil, you are not compelled to enter into or engage in their evil. You can, by prayer and watching, remain unsullied by the evil manifested about you.

Second, she specifically challenged him to exert a positive influence on others, while guarding himself against being wrongly influenced by them.

Be not led astray by any one. While you associate with Johnny [Cranson1], try to lead him to God. Talk to him in regard to his duty to love God. But in no case let Johnny have an influence over you, to divert your mind from right or from duty. I hope Johnny will be led to give his heart to God and to devote his life to His service.2

Evidently Willie carried out this instruction. When James and Ellen White returned home a month later, they conducted meetings in Greenville at which "twelve children started to serve the Lord." Ellen noted specifically that "Johnny Cranson came forward without much urging." Willie's witnessing had evidently paid off.3

Ellen was persistent in her efforts to give Willie's developing character the right spiritual mold. She insisted on feedback regarding his intellectual and spiritual progress.

Willie, please write me how you employ your mind. What progress do you make in the school of Christ? Are you seeking for humility? and [sic] are you trying to speak and act in that way which will increase your confidence in God? Do you pray? Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation. Temptations may be all around you, yet you are safe as long as you do not enter into them.4

Thus she appointed herself his personal spiritual tutor.

1Johnny Cranson was the "orphan son" of SDA minister S. T. Cranson. Johnny's oldest sister was the first wife of D. M. Canright (James White, "Report of Meetings," RH Apr. 28, 1868, 312-13).

2E. G. White to W. C. White, Dec. 10, 1867, EGWRC-AU.


4E. G. White to W. C. White, Dec. 10, 1867, EGWRC-AU.
It is clear so far that Ellen White had a close and tender relationship with her third son. Beyond appreciating his responsible behavior, she seems to have found in him a kindred spirit. Her companionship with him would eventually be second only to her love for James.¹

From the summer of 1870, when the almost-sixteen-year-old Willie joined his parents on the camp-meeting circuit as personal assistant to the blind W. H. Littlejohn, Ellen treated Willie more and more as an adult. She believed he was spiritually ready for adult responsibilities and treated him accordingly.²

As a student in Battle Creek at the age of nineteen, he was evidently conspicuous among the students for his spiritual commitment, and ridiculed for it by some. His mother charged him:

Be true to duty. Do not neglect to bear your testimony in meeting and to exercise your gift in prayer. You need not be a novice or dwarf in religious exercises. You may grow. . . . Let other youth call you deacon or old man or anything they choose; let it not have the least effect upon you. Do you press to the mark for the prize.³

Her letters still contained basic spiritual exhortation, as they always would, but there was now an additional element—training for leadership. She asked counsel of Willie in regard to her care for his father and concerning various other decisions. She showed more concern for Willie's appearance. "Wear your best coat and pants. We will have you a good warm suit made by Salisbury soon. Don't dress cheap and careless. There is no need of it."⁴

¹E. G. White to Sister Lucinda [Hall], my More Than Sister, Oct. 20, 1874, EGWRC-AU.

²W. C. White, "Trip to California," XI, Oct. 1872, 73; E. G. White to W. C. White, Nov. 18, 1871, EGWRC-AU.

³E. G. White to W. C. White, Jan. 27, 1874, EGWRC-AU.

⁴E. G. White to W. C. White, Nov. 10, 18, ca. Nov. 25, 1871 (Letter 26, 1871), EGWRC-AU.
An excellent example of Ellen's leadership training as differentiated from discipleship training is a letter from 1874 when Willie was nineteen. The first part is what could be called discipleship training:

Willie, my dear boy, let us live for God. It will pay in the end. Let us give to God all that there is of us, serve Him with our undivided affections. If we cling to God, He will cling to us. We are poor and blind and miserable and naked without His grace, and His power to help us.¹

As the paragraph continued, the subject shifted to a more temporal application of the idea that "it will pay in the end." The counsel she gave next was of the kind which Edson could not or would not appreciate:

There is much importance attached to our deportment and influence in the church at Battle Creek. Small things on the wrong side will go a great ways, while all that we may and can do on the right side will not be seen by us to extend far or produce any great results. But God marks every act and discerns all our motives. It pays, Willie, to be just right.²

The emphasis on being "just right" would have sounded to Edson as perfectionistic nagging, but not so to Willie. Ellen was training him for the highest possible responsibilities, in which any mistake would be a serious mistake, hence to be avoided if humanly possible. She was preparing W. C. White to join her in her life work. She had hoped that Edson would do the same, but he often seemed impervious to her attempts to inculcate the qualities needed for respected leadership. In fact, the letter just quoted had as its backdrop a major blunder by Edson which was still fresh in Ellen's mind. "Your course since we left Battle Creek," his mother penned with indignation,

has been unexplainable to us. Your father had received a severe shock of paralysis and we fled from Battle Creek for our lives. . . .

You were fretting and complaining of your father and did more to injure his influence than his worst enemies could have done, because you were his son.

¹E. G. White to W. C. White, Jan. 12, 1874, EGWRC-AU.
²Ibid.
... It is such a mortification that we have a son, a professed Christian, who is so void of a sense of propriety as to work, talk, and insinuate against his father, who is so feeble that the greatest care and precaution is necessary constantly to save a final shock that will end his life. I feel heartily ashamed and disgusted with your course.¹

It is clear that at this time Edson either could not perceive or did not want to perceive the importance of being "just right" in his deportment around Battle Creek. Perhaps he was not deliberately seeking to overwhelm his parents with grief, but he does seem to have had little sense of the value (even to himself) of protecting his parents' reputation. He had no comprehension of the damage done by his thoughtless words. His apparent unteachability in essential areas led Ellen to discouragement about his potential for leadership. "Edson," she had written when he was twenty, "it is very hard for me to bury all my hopes in regard to your future prospects. It is very painful to give up and fully decide your life must be useless."²

In Willie, however, she found a kindred spirit—one who accepted her values completely. He emulated her frugality and her work ethic (so much so that she repeatedly had to warn him not to overwork like his father) as well as her theological beliefs. The epitome of his acceptance of her values was his acceptance of her conception of her life work.³

¹E. G. White to Edson, Oct. 28, 1873, EGWRC-AU.

²E. G. White to Edson, June 10, 1869; cf. E. G. White to W. C. White, Feb. 25, 1878, EGWRC-AU.

³E. G. White to J. White, Apr. 4, 7, 24, 1876; E. G. White to W. C. White, Jan. 24, 25, 1878; [Jan.?] 1878 (Letter 7a, 1878), EGWRC-AU.
W. C. White's Early Relationship
to His Mother's Work

Attitude toward Her Work

The clearest statement from this period of how Ellen viewed the importance of her work and how she hoped her sons would view it occurred in a letter to Edson and Emma in which Ellen was encouraging them to consider moving to Oakland to join in the beginnings of Pacific Press and the Signs of the Times. After introducing her subject ("I wish you were here, and that Willie was here to help your Father in the publishing work"), she urged Edson and Emma to place the needs of 'the cause' above their personal preferences.

Hold yourselves in readiness for any work. You want to be wholly consecrated to God. Do not shun responsibilities. Do not be seeking for an easy time. If the Lord lays before you a burden, lift it, and in lifting it, it will lift you. You will increase in spiritual power and muscle. Look constantly to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. He hath loved us, He hath died for us, and He will be to us a tower of strength if we will lay hold upon Him.

There must be an utter renunciation of self.

Then she came to the statement of her life's conviction.

We want you children to co-operate with us. This is the highest honor heaven can grant you. When the work is once established on this coast, then we will go east and labor. Pray earnestly that you may know your duty for yourself.¹

That sharing Ellen White's work was the "highest honor heaven can grant" was exactly as Willie would eventually see it, but not for some years. In the 1870s, however, to associate closely with his mother's work was a cross to bear, even for him, because she was severely criticized.² In August 1875 she reported from Battle Creek, "Thursday I was called in and did answer to the charges of

¹E. G. White to Edson and Emma, May 6, 1874, EGWRC-AU, emphasis added.

²See W. C. White to E. G. White, Sept. 29, 1894, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC; W. C. White to Edson White, Feb. 15, 1921, DF 780, EGWRC-AU.
contradiction in Testimonies."¹ In 1881, during the months just before James's
death, she underwent what may have been the fiercest criticism Ellen White ever
received prior to the 1888 General Conference session.²

Willie well knew that the criticism leveled at her would be his as well if he
united himself with her work. He later admitted that during the late 1870s and early
1880s,

my desire to shield myself from the criticism which I knew would come to any
person who assisted mother in her literary work, led me to draw away from her
and to accept work at the Pacific Press, and the secretaryship of our Foreign
Mission Board.

Yet while he shrank from the criticism, W. C. White did share his mother's
conviction that her ministry was the most significant endeavor he would ever have
opportunity to be a part of. Eventually this conviction would motivate him to divest
himself of conflicting obligations in order to devote himself largely to her work.³

Observation of Her Work

Long before Willie was old enough to actively participate in his mother's
work, he had been an interested observer. Years later he recalled the early editorial
process that took place between his parents. Ellen White would often read aloud to
James what she had just written. "If her husband discovered weaknesses in the
composition, such as faulty tenses of verbs, or disagreement between subject, noun,

¹E. G. White to W. C. White, Aug. 8, 1875, EGWRC-AU. She gives no indication
of the content of the alleged contradictions.

²E. G. White to W. C. White and M. K. White, May 15, June 15, July 27, 1881,
EGWRC-AU. Regarding the 1888 session, she wrote, "My testimony was ignored, and
never in my life experience was I treated as at that conference" (E. G. White to W. M.
Healey, Dec. 9, 1888, EGWRC-AU).

³W. C. White to Edson, Feb. 15, 1921, DF 780, EGWRC-AU; W. C. White to
E. G. White, Sept. 29, 1894, EGWRC-GC.
and verb, he would suggest grammatical corrections. These she would write into her manuscript and then read on."¹

Willie's first glimpses of the decisions involved in publishing also came in the home. "Sometimes after Mother had read to her husband an important personal testimony, the question would arise, 'What shall we do with it?'" Besides the person for whom it was first written, "the instruction it contains will be of service to many others," he recalled his mother saying. "How shall we get it before them?"²

Not only James, but others as well, were asked for their counsel regarding the most effective way to use the material written. W. C. White reported his mother as "often" saying to James, "I have done my part in writing out what God has revealed to me. You and your associates who are bearing the burden of labor for our people at large, must decide what use shall be made of it." At other times she and James would "consult with" some of the "leading brethren" regarding "the best manner" of publicizing the instruction given.

In the early days of this cause, if some of the leading brethren were present when messages from the Lord were given, we would consult with them as to the best manner of bringing the instruction before the people. Sometimes it was decided that certain portions would better not be read before a congregation. Sometimes those whose course was reproved would request that the matters pointing out their wrongs and dangers should be read before others, that they, too, might be benefited.³

Thus there are very early precedents for Ellen White's inviting suggestions from respected associates regarding the editing and publication of her writings. So it was natural for her to entrust similar responsibilities to Willie as he grew up.

¹W. C. White, "How Ellen White's Books Were Written: Addresses to Faculty and Students at the 1935 Advanced Bible School, Angwin, California, Part I–June 18, 1935," p. 3, SD, EGWRC-AU.

²Ibid., 5.

³E. G. White, Selected Messages, 1:51.
Participation in Her Work

W. C. White's adult involvement in his mother's work began conspicuously in 1874, when, in James's place, he accompanied her to the Wisconsin and Minnesota camp meetings and to speaking engagements and other appointments in the Battle Creek area.

As we have seen, that same year she began enlisting him in secretarial and perhaps editorial aspects of her work. They worked together on a thirty-two-page tract entitled The Sufferings of Christ. She explained to James: "Willie has helped me, and now we take it to the office for Uriah [Smith] to criticize it." ¹

Willie's involvement in the publishing aspects of her work continued in connection with his managerial responsibilities at the Pacific Press. She sent him articles to publish in the Signs of the Times, saying that Uriah Smith wanted them for the Review and Herald but that she preferred for the Signs to have them first. Six days later she wrote again.

If you do not want them, I will let Uriah publish them. He wants them. Let me know at once if you feel any reluctance and had rather they would appear in [the] Review first, all right just express yourself freely.²

It appears that it was immaterial to her which periodical published the material first. She may well have wanted to give her editor son the opportunity to "scoop" the other magazine, but if for any reason he did not want to publish her articles immediately she would let Uriah Smith have them for the Review. She allowed both White and Smith to publish immediately or postpone publication at their own discretion. She did not seem concerned about minor details, such as

¹E. G. White to J. White, July 17, 1874, EGWRC-AU; The Sufferings of Christ was derived from E. G. White articles of the same title in ST, Nov. 25, 1875, 18-19; and ST, Dec. 9, 1875, 26-27.

²E. G. White to W. C. White, July 20, 26, 1875, EGWRC-AU.
which issue a given article would be published in, or whether it would be published entirely in one issue or divided over two or more issues.

This same attitude of freedom and flexibility is seen in 1878 concerning Willie’s preparation of certain writings for publication in pamphlet form. She indicated that there was “no very vital interest at stake in regard to the matter of pamphlets.”

A year later she gave him considerably broader authority in the preparation of Testimonies 28 and 29. She asked him not to shorten the material merely for space considerations, but did authorize him to “abridge” if “the composition would be helped by so doing.” The final product would be safeguarded by her practice of receiving advance proofs for her approval before publication.

She further authorized him to select what material to publish in No. 28, and what material to hold over for No. 29. As he prepared her personal letters for a wider audience, she specifically directed him to make minor changes as necessary to protect the identity of the individuals originally addressed: “All very personal [references] such as names must be left out.”

---

1E. G. White to W. C. White and M. K. White, Jan. 22, 1878, EGWRC-AU: “[I]n reference to the pamphlets . . . you need not refer to us in such matters. The subject and material are all before you and we leave it for your judgment in these things. If Father were well, it would be different. As it is, do the very best you can for there is no very vital interest at stake in regard to the matter of pamphlets.”

2Testimonies 28 and 29 are currently published in E. G. White, Testimonies, 4:271-383, 384-522.

3E. G. White to W. C. White and M. K. White, Jan. 2, 1879, EGWRC-AU: “We would say to you, Make what corrections you deem necessary, but Father and I thought you should not abridge unless the composition would be helped by so doing. That [which] we have received and read is all right we think. We shall have more matter soon for the second testimony, No. 29, to follow immediately No. 28”; cf. ibid., Jan. 22, 1878, EGWRC-AU.

She also asked him and Mary to gather materials for her to use in her writing. While the extent of W. C. White's editorial involvement in his mother's work during this period was small, he had already begun most of the editorial functions that he would perform later.

**Conclusions, 1854-1881**

The foregoing study of W. C. White's first twenty-seven years yields five main conclusions regarding his childhood, his early relation to Ellen White, his relation to Edson White, and his sharing of his parents' work.

First, the disadvantages to W. C. White of being often left with surrogate parents, seem in his case to have been more than offset by the advantages of being the son of James and Ellen White and growing up in Battle Creek, Michigan, which was then the center of the work of Seventh-day Adventists. This circumstance had both a motivational and an educational impact on W. C. White. Among his earliest memories were those of his mother reading pages of just-written "testimony" and his father praying for the work of the church before going off to work at church headquarters. From these pictures one can easily imagine the powerful influence that James and Ellen White's commitment to the church had on their family--especially on the son who most fully responded to and embraced his parents' values.

Another advantage of Willie's home situation was that his education included more travel than was common for the average young person in that era. He also had many opportunities for intimate contact with denominational leaders, several of whom stayed in the Whites' home at different times. Though his formal education was limited, Willie's practical education was superior to that of most of his

---

1E. G. White to W. C. White and M. K. White, Oct. 30, Nov. 7, 1880, EGWRC-AU.
contemporaries. It should also be noted that he could ride and drive horses, hunt and fish for necessary food, or scrape the fat from a wolf's carcass to fuel a makeshift lamp.

A second conclusion concerns W. C. White's early relationship to his mother. As she also did with her other sons, she endeavored to teach him courtesy, obedience, and basic social graces, with an emphasis on patience, which he seems to have especially needed as a young boy. Also in common with her other sons, she challenged him to develop the character of a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Willie, however, was the only one of the surviving sons who also accepted and practiced other values she perceived as essential to leadership—values such as consistent economy, careful use of time, and sensitivity to one's influence. She came to trust him implicitly, not only because she believed him to be trustworthy in character, but also because they were so much alike that they were indeed kindred spirits.

A third conclusion concerns the marked differences between Willie and his brother Edson. Willie had a calm, cautious temperament and natural talents for administration. Edson became a master of the technical and artistic aspects of writing and publishing but never learned the art of managing money. These factors alone would have been predictive of quite different career paths for the two brothers. But there were additional differences. In relation to their parents and their parents' religion, Edson was the strong-willed child who did not fully yield to his mother's spiritual appeals until he was in middle age, whereas Willie was the more compliant child who from infancy tried to please his parents. Even though Edson hardly deserved the mistrust he later received from denominational leaders, many of his troubles were the result of his own choices. He, however, seemed to minimize his personal responsibility, focusing instead on his father's harshness and Willie's apparent advantages. This line of thinking led to feelings of jealousy and
resentment which contributed to his later criticisms of Willie.

A fourth conclusion is that while Willie shrank from exposing himself to the "slings and arrows" of his mother's critics, he nevertheless agreed with her that her work was the most important work with which he could ever be connected. Consequently, as his father became unavailable because of ill health and conflicting commitments, Willie gradually adapted himself to the role of his mother's assistant. In his twentieth year he began escorting his mother to speaking engagements. When he became manager of the Pacific Press and his wife Mary K. White became local editor of the Signs, Ellen regularly furnished them material to publish. After Willie's return to Battle Creek College and his subsequently being named vice-president of the Review and Herald publishing house, she gave him editorial authority to prepare pamphlets for publication without her final examination of the copy. In the preparation of Testimonies 28 and 29, she delegated to him the specific editorial functions of abridging, arranging the chapters within the volumes, and deleting personal references in order to protect the identity of individuals mentioned. In this case, as usual, his work was subject to her final reading and approval of the galley proofs.

Thus it is evident that by age twenty-five, W. C. White had already been authorized to do most of the editorial functions that would be his after the turn of the century. Further, it appears from her instructions regarding periodical articles, pamphlets, and Testimonies 28 and 29, that she did not attempt to oversee every detail of publication. Not only family members like James and W. C. White, but others such as Uriah Smith, were extensively trusted to make a faithful use of the materials she submitted for publication. The provision of editorial assistance to Ellen White was another role which had been filled originally by James White, but which was taken over later by Willie.
A fifth main conclusion concerns Willie's involvement in his father's work. The present paper focuses primarily on W. C. White's involvement with his mother's work, but it is not too far-fetched to suggest that from age six, when W. C. White began to help "carry books" at the Review and Herald, he was joining in his father's work. Certainly W. C. White was extending his father's work when, in 1876, he became president and manager of Pacific Press (two years after his father founded it) and when in 1878 he became vice-president of the Review and Herald under his father. W. C. White's other General Conference positions—foreign missions secretary and member of the Sabbath School Association Committee—placed him in close connection with the General Conference Executive Committee where his father was president. Furthermore, the editorial and publishing work he did for his mother was also a major role which James had previously filled. The recognition of White's heavy involvement with his father's work places a fuller perspective on the claim, made just after James White's death, that W. C. White was to "take his [father's] place as much as any one man could." This did not refer merely to his filling James White's place in the work of Ellen White, but also denoted the expectation that he would assume many of his father's responsibilities in the denomination. W. C. White's lifework was not only to assist his mother, but also to extend the immense accomplishments of his father. This dual expectation was obviously beyond the abilities of any one person to fill, giving additional meaning to the qualifying clause, "as much as any one man could."
CHAPTER 2

INTO THE SPOTLIGHT, 1881-1891

Not only W. C. White's relatives but also his colleagues foresaw an expanded role for him in the aftermath of his father's death. General Conference officers, urging the importance of the 1881 General Conference session, called for "all the officers of the General Conference and of the different institutions" to be present, but mentioned only two persons by name. "Especially important will be the presence and counsel of sister [sic] White," they affirmed. "The presence of Bro. W. C. White, who is now east of the mountains, should also be secured. His connection with the publishing work in both our offices will make his experience specially important."¹

The confidence which both family and colleagues placed in W. C. White would be amply justified by the course of his career during the next decade. Willie's life would be marked by administrative successes like those of his father, and increasing responsibilities as counselor and publishing assistant to his mother.

Chronological Overview, 1881-1891

Three weeks after his father's death in 1881, W. C. White turned twenty-seven. By thirty-four he would be chosen as acting president of the General Conference. His responsibilities during the years 1881 to 1891 developed in three

stages: four years of more localized leadership in California, two years as a General Conference officer in Europe, and the last four years divided between California and denominational headquarters in Michigan.

Leader in California, 1881-1885

At the time of James White's death, Willie and Mary White were residing in Oakland, California, where Willie was vice-president and general manager of the Pacific Press. In addition, he was acting foreign mission secretary for the General Conference, a member of the executive committee of the Sabbath School Association, and an active participant in California Conference affairs. October 1881 would find him involved in founding a college—one that he would remain connected with for most of his life.

Founding Healdsburg College, 1881-1882

The tenth annual constituency session of the California Conference, meeting in Sacramento on October 13-25, 1881, voted "to establish a school by Seventh-day Adventists in California" and elected W. C. White president of the board. In securing the services of Sidney Brownsberger, who had been elected principal of the new college, Willie showed an administrative drive like that of his father. Trekking to the Brownsbergers' remote rural residence near Cheyboygan, Michigan, the day before Christmas, and marooned there by a railway strike, Willie did his best to sell Professor and Mrs. Brownsberger on becoming teachers for the nascent California college. Reticent at first, the Brownsbergers finally agreed, on the unlikely condition that teachers could be secured to finish out the school year for them in the Cheyboygan high school. That was enough of an agreement for Willie.

^ See pp. 26-28, above.
Proceeding to Battle Creek College, he convinced the faculty to grant degrees "immediately" to two seniors, George W. Caviness and Alma Wolcott, so that they could relieve the Brownsbergers.¹

Classes at Healdsburg began on April 11, 1882, and by summer there were six teachers and 152 students. W. C. White would himself enroll as a student for a few months in 1885. Despite the eventual acquisition of additional acres, the city location proved too restrictive, so the campus was moved in 1909 to a rural location and renamed Pacific Union College. W. C. White served continuously on the board of Healdsburg College and its successor for a total of fifty-five years, until his death in 1937.²

Confirmation of His Calling, 1882

Despite W. C. White’s relationship to James and Ellen White and his initial success in the roles that circumstances had thrust upon him, visionary confirmation of his special calling to these responsibilities was given in October 1882.

During the year following James White’s death in August 1881, the twin


blows of grief and physical illness brought his widow so low that she expected her life to end soon. In this state of ill health she decided to attend the camp meeting held from October 5 through 17, 1882, in Healdsburg. According to several corroborating accounts, she experienced sudden healing, visible to all, as she stood before the congregation.¹

Shortly afterward, Ellen had a night vision in which she was told of God's provision for someone to assist her with her work in the absence of her husband.

The Mighty Healer said, "Live. I have put my spirit upon your son, W. C. White, that he may be your counselor. I have given him the spirit of wisdom, and a discerning, perceptive mind. He will have wisdom in counsel, and if he walks in My way, and works out My will, he will be kept, and will be enabled to help you bring before My people the light I will give you for them. . . . I will be with your son, and will be his counselor. He will respect the truth that comes through you to the people. He will have wisdom to defend the truth; for I will take charge of his mind, and will give him sound judgment in the councils that he attends in connection with the work. . . . Your son will be perplexed over many matters that are to come before my people, but he is to wait and watch and pray, and let the words of God come to the people, even though he cannot immediately discern the purpose of God."²

In another description of the same experience, she wrote that she had been "shown" in 1882 that "my son, W. C. White, should be my helper and counselor, and that the Lord would place on him the spirit of wisdom and of a sound mind."

The terms "helper" and "counselor" would encompass a growing list of responsibilities as the years went by.³


²E. G. White to G. I. Butler, Oct. 30, 1906, EGWRC-AU.

³E. G. White to F. M. Wilcox, Oct. 23, 1907, EGWRC-AU; see section below, "W. C. White as Counselor."
Ordination and Election to the General Conference Committee. 1883

For another year after the Healdsburg camp meeting, Willie stayed by his work in Oakland. In September 1883 he accompanied his mother to camp meetings in Nebraska, Michigan, and Indiana on their way to Battle Creek, where the 1883 General Conference session would open November 8.¹

Several developments made this session an important one for W. C. White, now twenty-nine years of age. First, he was appointed to committees on resolutions, auditing, and arrangements, and was named chairman of a committee to consider a proposed "Church Manual." The committee report, which was accepted three days later, sharply illuminates the Adventist self-perception at that time.

It is the unanimous judgment of the committee, that it would not be advisable to have a Church Manual. We consider it unnecessary because we have already surmounted the greatest difficulties connected with church organization without one; and perfect harmony exists among us on this subject. It would seem to many like a step toward the formation of a creed, or a discipline, other than the Bible, something we have always been opposed to as a denomination. If we had one, we fear many, especially those commencing to preach, would study it to obtain guidance in religious matters, rather than to seek for it in the Bible, and from the leadings of the Spirit of God, which would tend to their hindrance in genuine religious experience and in knowledge of the mind of the Spirit. It was in taking similar steps that other bodies of Christians first began to lose their simplicity and become formal and spiritually lifeless. Why should we imitate them? The committee feel, in short, that our tendency should be in the direction of simplicity and close conformity to the Bible, rather than in elaborately defining every point in church management and church ordinances.²

By the time the session closed, W. C. White had been appointed to at least four additional committees of entities related to the General Conference. *They are...*


pressing me pretty hard with Com[mittee] work," he reported to Mary. "I am on five different committees of Resolutions."¹ Evidently at twenty-nine he had already acquired a reputation for astute counsel and clear articulation.

A second significant development for W. C. White at the 1883 session was reaffirmation that the body wanted him and Mary to plan on service in Europe. A resolution was presented on Tuesday, November 13, that said,

Whereas, It is evident that it will soon be necessary to take advance steps in the way of establishing publishing interests in Europe; and—

Whereas, Bro. W. C. White has had experience in this branch of the work; therefore—

Resolved, That we recommend that the said W. C. White so arrange his business, the coming year, as to be at liberty to render the requisite assistance another season.²

The resolution was referred to the executive committee, where it died; but it would resurface a year later at the 1884 General Conference session.

A third development was W. C. White's presentation of one of the most significant resolutions of the session, a motion of support for the editorial improvement and republication of Ellen White's early Testimonies for the Church.³ A detailed account of the process and W. C. White's involvement in it is found below in the section, "W. C. White as Editor."

Fourth, on November 19, W. C. White was elected to the five-member General Conference executive committee and recommended for ordination. On November 20, the final evening of the conference, "W. C. White and A. B. Oyen

---

¹W. C. White to M. K. White, Nov. 15, 1883, EGWRC-GC.


³G. I. Butler and O. B. Oyen, "General Conference Proceedings (Concluded)," RH, Nov. 27, 1883, 741-42.
were ordained to the ministry by the laying on of hands and solemn prayer.\textsuperscript{1}

White's ordination, his other responsibilities, and especially his election to the executive committee, indicate that at twenty-nine he had come into his own and was widely recognized as a developing leader in the Seventh-day Adventist church.

**Appointed to Go to Europe, 1884**

The 1884 General Conference session was another momentous one for W. C. White. At thirty years of age he was elected to a second term on the denomination's highest governing board, the five-man executive committee. Except for a brief resignation between 1897 and 1901, he would serve a virtual life tenure—fifty years—on that committee.\textsuperscript{2}

Finally, after nine years of anticipation and preparation, the decision was voted to send W. C. and Mary White to Europe "at as early a date as possible, to take charge of the finishing and furnishing" of the Basel publishing house, including the purchase of "presses and machinery." Included in the request of the Central European Mission was the wish that Ellen White also give the European field "the benefits of her labors."\textsuperscript{3}

**Administrator in Europe, 1885-1887**

**To Basel and Back, 1885**

Nine months after the 1884 General Conference, on August 7, 1885, Ellen White, Sara McInteer, W. C. and Mary White and their daughter (Ella May, born January 17, 1882) boarded the **S. S. Cephalonia** in Boston for the voyage to

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid.; G. I. Butler, "The Late General Conference," RH, Nov. 27, 1883, 746.

\textsuperscript{2}SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 ed., s.v. "White, William Clarence."

Liverpool, England. After two weeks of activity in the British churches, the Whites' party crossed the English Channel and caught a night train to Basel, Switzerland, arriving September 3.¹

Basel was at that time the center of Seventh-day Adventist work in Europe. In Basel, just two years earlier (1883), pioneer missionary J. N. Andrews had died of tuberculosis after devoting the last nine years of his life to the "European mission." A large stone building had been erected as headquarters for the mission and publishing house, and the Whites were given apartments on the third floor.

The Whites' work for the next two years would alternate between relatively brief periods at "home" in Basel and extended periods of travel all over western Europe. W. C. White did editorial work, served as a consultant to denominational publishers, led out in conference meetings, looked after the needs of his mother as she preached in the churches, and kept up an extensive correspondence.

A typical round of important meetings began just a week after the Whites' arrival in Basel. The second annual meeting of the Swiss Conference extended from September 10 through 14, to be followed by the third session of the European Council of Seventh-day Adventist Missions from September 15 through 29. W. C. White saw the latter as a "miniature General Conference" and showed his concern for a balanced program by proposing that the business and planning sessions be supplemented with a "Bible Institute," to continue for the duration of the council. The daily schedule began with an early morning "prayer and testimony" service at 5:30 and continued to as late as 9:00 in the evening.²

¹E. G. White, Diary, July 7 to Sept. 3, 1885, MS 16a, 1885, EGWRC-AU; "Robinson, Ella White [obituary]," RH, Sept. 22, 1977, 999.

²D. A. Delafield, Ellen G. White in Europe (Washington, DC: Review and Herald,
It appears that W. C. White was the author of a resolution to publish a report of the council and of the progress of the work in Europe. The result was a 296-page book, *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists*, which was printed in Basel the following year.¹

On October 6, just a week after the conference closed, Ellen and W. C. White left Basel on a six-week itinerary to Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. Mary White stayed behind to "hold the fort" in Basel. She would not see her husband for four months, because in Norway, on November 13, the Whites reached a decision that W. C. White should attend the upcoming General Conference session which would convene in Battle Creek from November 18 to December 6. The exchange of opinions by which they reached the decision for him to go is discussed below as an example of W. C. White's relation to his mother in counsel.²

**Publishing and Traveling, 1886**

White returned to Basel in mid-February 1886, bringing with him Marian Davis and L. R. Conradi and his wife. W. C. White's major publishing project during 1886 was the preparation of *Historical Sketches*. Sections were contributed by leading ministers, with W. C. White acting as compiler and editor. Ellen White

---


²E. G. White, "First Visit to Denmark," Diary, Oct. 6-14, 1885, MS 25, 1885; idem, "First Visit to Sweden," Diary, Oct. 15-30, 1885, MS 26, 1885; idem, "First Visit to Norway," Diary, Oct. 31 to Nov. 19, 1885, MS 27, 1885; EGWRC-AU; see section below, "W. C. White as Counselor."
was assisted by Mary White in preparing her sections, with Marian Davis also helping after her arrival.¹

The work on Historical Sketches kept the Whites close to Basel during the latter part of the winter, but with the onset of spring they renewed their travels. In March and April, Mary accompanied her husband and mother-in-law on brief trips to Bienne, Switzerland, and to the Waldensian valleys of Italy. Ellen and W. C. White spent most of June and July on a second trip through the Scandinavian countries, and in the fall they attended the fourth European Missionary Council, which was held in England from September 27 to October 12, 1886. Willie arrived back in Basel a couple of weeks before the birth of his second daughter, Mabel, on November 1.²

Return to the United States, 1887

Ellen White spent the winter of 1886-87 on the project she had brought Marian Davis to Europe to help her with—the enlargement of Spirit of Prophecy, volume 1, for republication as Patriarchs and Prophets. By the spring of 1887 her work on Patriarchs and Prophets had been interrupted and she was thinking of returning to the United States. On April 18 she wrote that "we are straining every power to close up our work here in Basle [sic]." She left Basel for the last time on


²A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 3:339, 353; E. G. White to Addie [Walling], Mar. 23, 1886; E. G. White to Children, Apr. 29, 1886; E. G. White, "Second Visit to Italy," Diary, Apr. 15-29, 1886, MS 62, 1886; idem, "Second Visit to Sweden," Diary, June 15 to July 1, 1886, MS 65, 1886; idem, "Second Visit to Norway," Diary, July 2-15, 1886, MS 66, 1886; idem, Diary, July 16-27, 1886, MS 67, 1886; E. G. White to Children, July 28, 1886; E. G. White, Diary, Sept. 14 to Oct. 13, 1886, MS 69, 1886; idem, Diary, Oct. 14 to Nov. 2, MS 70, 1886, EGWRC-AU; W. C. White to J. E. White, Nov. 10, 1886, EGWRC-GC.
May 23, 1887, taking an extensive speaking tour through Germany, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden on her way to England. She would sail from Liverpool on August 3 and arrive in New York August 11.¹

Except for trips to Norway in February and in June, W. C. White stayed by the publishing house in Basel, laboring feverishly to finish his work and if possible accompany his family on the August 3 sailing date. He reported to his mother in July some ominous news about Mary.

Her cough is about as obstinate as ever. It seems to be less in her throat and more on her lungs now. I am glad she is going to Battle Creek soon. She has been losing in flesh and with her hair cut short looks quite changed.²

Mary and the children planned to leave Basel on Wednesday, July 27. White had hoped to personally see Mary and the children aboard the City of Rome, but as the day of departure approached, he explained to his mother that if he went to England now he would have to make a return trip to Basel, which "would cost considerable, and take time." "I am very sorry," Willie wrote, "not to be able to go with Mary, and not to see you off, but it has been 'business before pleasure' with us so long that I think you will forgive me." He arranged for a Brother Kunz to accompany Mary, the children, and Sara McInterfer for the entire journey to the United States.³

In one of a stream of letters that followed Mary's departure from Basel,

¹Delafieid, Ellen G. White in Europe, 15, 257, 274, 300-303; E. G. White to Edson and Emma, Apr. 18, 1887, EGWRC-AU; [editorial note], RH, Aug. 16, 1887, 528.


³W. C. White to E. G. White, July 21, 1887, LB A2, 310; idem, July 26, 1887, LB A2, 320, EGWRC-AU; W. C. White to M. K. White, July 1, 1887, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
Willie emphasized his concern for her health.

I want you to go to the Sanitarium, and have a thorough examination by Dr. Kellogg, and then I want you to follow his instructions carefully. Hire someone to take care of the children, so you can make the most of the time there in taking treatment, and rest, and do all in your power to root out this lung trouble. I will send you an order on [the] R[evie\v] & H[erald] for any money that you may need.

Please do not for a moment think of going on to California till I am with you. . . . Wherever you are, spend enough to be comfortable, and to supply the very best opportunities to regain your health. . . .

If I should say that I do not feel lonesome, awfully lonesome, sometimes, it would be a big lie.1

In another letter he again expressed his anxiety for her health and urged her not to practice their usual economy regarding her treatment.

It is Friday afternoon, and as yet we have heard nothing from you. I try to hope that you are safe on land. . . . Every time the bell rings, I jump to see if it is not a telegram. I hope this letter will find you comfortably located at the San[itarium].

. . . Do not have the treatment interfered with, or its force broken by any plan to save a few dollars. . . . Go right to the San. and stay there till I come.2

He finally caught up with his wife in September. While she was being treated at the sanitarium, Ellen and W. C. White attended the Michigan camp meeting in Grand Rapids. Then on October 4 they all left Battle Creek for St. Helena, California.3

Headquarters Executive, 1887-1891

The 1887 General Conference Session

The 1887 General Conference session began on November 13 in Oakland, California. W. C. White was listed as a delegate from Central Europe and took an

---

1W. C. White to M. K. White, Aug. 1, 1887, LB A2, 338, EGWRC-AU.
2W. C. White to M. K. White, Aug. 11, 1887, LB A2, 368, EGWRC-AU.
active part in the deliberations of the conference. He was chairman of a committee
to prepare a denominational yearbook and a member of several other committees: on
resolutions, on the week of prayer, on the training of canvassers and Bible workers,
and on Sabbath School lessons.¹

W. C. White showed his willingness to spearhead organizational change
when he moved to amend the General Conference constitution to add a foreign
mission secretary, a home mission secretary, and an educational secretary to lighten
the burdens of the General Conference president. His mother made a seconding
speech and after some discussion the motion was carried. White himself was elected
to the post of foreign mission secretary (which he had held on an acting basis since
1879).² The session also placed him on the newly created book committee and re­
elected him to the executive committee and to the vice-presidency of the
International Sabbath School Association.³

W. C. White spent the early months of 1888 in California, keeping up his
correspondence, helping his mother and Marian Davis with editing, and whenever
possible stealing away to spend some hours with his declining companion. "We find
Mary looking badly," his mother wrote,

and my heart is pained as I consider how the dear child labored in Switzerland,
not saving herself. It is a great comfort to her to have Willie with her,
although it is seldom she has the pleasure of his society. Stern duty calls him

¹"The First Day’s Proceedings," GCB, Nov. 14, 1887, 1-2; "Third Day’s
Proceedings," GCB, Nov. 16, 1887, 3.

²"Seventh Day’s Proceedings," GCB, Nov 21, 1887, 1-3. The need for a foreign
mission secretary had been pointed out by J. N. Andrews in 1879 and W. C. White had
been asked to take the responsibility on a temporary basis, subject to ratification at the next
year’s General Conference session. Not till 1887 was the constitution amended to provide
officially for this position; D. M. Canright and U. Smith, "The Conference," RH, Apr. 24,
1879, 132-33; cf. SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 ed., s.v., "Mission Board"; see section below,
"W. C. White as Administrator."

here and there, and although he bears a very sad heart as he sees Mary—who has been so unselfish, so forgetful of self—weak and an invalid, yet he tries to be cheerful and never speaks one word of repining. He talks with me, and weeps over these things sometimes.¹

In May, Willie took Mary to Burrough Valley in central California, hoping the drier climate might promote her recovery. Ellen White joined them there until the first week of October, when she and Willie left for the General Conference session in Minneapolis, Minnesota.²

The 1888 General Conference Session

The twenty-seventh regular session of the General Conference convened in Minneapolis, Minnesota, from October 17 to November 4, 1888. It was preceded by a ministerial institute held October 10 through 16.³

The session was remembered as the occasion of a denominational crisis of the first magnitude which had an impact on the body for years afterward. The controversy began as a multi-faceted theological debate in which two young editors from Oakland, California, E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, took positions diametrically opposed to cherished views of leaders in Battle Creek, particularly G. I. Butler, president of the General Conference, and Uriah Smith, Review and Herald editor and the denomination’s leading writer on prophetic interpretation.

When Ellen White first insisted on a hearing for the Californian upstarts, and then came out strongly in favor of Jones and Waggoner’s theology on justification, some

¹E. G. White to Sister Scott, May 4, 1888, EGWRC-AU.
²E. G. White to S. N. Haskell, May 29, 1888; E. G. White to J. H. Kellogg, June 22, 1888, EGWRC-AU.
who sympathized with Butler and Smith believed that she was taking positions that contradicted her earlier writings, a phenomenon they could account for only by conjecturing that she was being influenced by her son W. C. White. Thus both Ellen and W. C. White became objects of suspicion. In general, the spirit of the conference was characterized more by theological wrangling than by loving fellowship, although those who accepted Jones and Waggoner’s teaching on justification found that it revitalized their spiritual life.¹

To give a comprehensive account of the session and its issues is beyond the scope of this dissertation. An extensive body of literature has been produced on the historical and theological issues of that session.²

The most important contributions of W. C. White to the Minneapolis meetings (and the subsequent understanding of them) were his advocacy for the holding of the ministerial institute, so that the conference would not be wholly given to business matters; the notes he took on the happenings during the meetings; his attempt to mediate between the contending factions, thereby bringing heavy criticism from the opponents of E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones; and his alliance with his mother in blocking certain resolutions which they recognized as having creedal tendencies.³

¹The conflicts in which Ellen and W. C. White were allies are discussed in detail below, under “W. C. White as Administrator.” On the experience of those who accepted Jones and Waggoner’s message on justification, see E. G. White, “The Excellence of Christ,” MS 10, 1889, EGWRC-AU.

²An extensive survey of the literature through 1988 is found in Wahlen, “Waggoner’s Eschatology,” xiii-xxxv, 220-227. A significant work issued subsequently, hence not included in Wahlen’s bibliography is Knight, Angry Saints. Some of the extant primary source documents have been published in The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), and in Manuscripts and Memories of Minneapolis (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1988).

W. C. White's attempts to ensure a fair hearing for Jones and Waggoner and his partnership with his mother in opposing the tactics of their opponents were widely criticized and resulted in alienating him from some of his colleagues. Halfway through the conference he confided to Mary that he was so "decidedly unpopular" that he expected to "have no offices forced upon" him. But despite being openly blamed for supporting Waggoner and Jones and suspected of manipulating his mother, he was nevertheless re-elected to the executive committee. He was also made the foreign mission secretary, the chairman of the book committee, and the vice-president of the International Tract Society. Then, after the return of the General Conference leaders to Battle Creek, he was elected to serve as acting president of the General Conference. Notwithstanding these honors, W. C. White was still regarded with suspicion for his part in the controversy at the 1888 session, the conflicts and tensions of which would continue for several years.

The Minneapolis portion of the session adjourned on Sunday, November 4, "to meet in Battle Creek at such time during the present week as may be designated by the Chair," S. N. Haskell. The final meeting was held "in the Tabernacle" at Battle Creek on Thursday, November 8.

W. C. White to M. K. White, Nov. 3, 1888, in MMM, 123; E. G. White, "Counsel to Ministers," Oct. 21, 1888, MS 8a, 1888, EGWRC-AU.


Acting General Conference President, 1888-1889

About November 19, 1888, W. C. White, as mentioned above, was chosen by the executive committee "to act as president till Eld. Olsen shall return." White would carry those responsibilities almost six months, till Olsen arrived in Battle Creek on May 7, 1889.¹

During January and February of 1889 White combined his presidential responsibilities with accompanying his mother in travel. After eleven days in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, he took a side trip to "do business in Philadelphia," reconnecting with her in Washington, D.C. There she noted his fatigue: "W. C. White is pressed, it seems to me, beyond measure. I feel deeply anxious for him at times." They returned through Pennsylvania and New York to Battle Creek. After a weekend trip to Indianapolis, Ellen wrote to Mary, "I fear W. C. White is so pressed with much writing and committee meetings that you will, my dear child, be crowded out." Near the end of March she remarked that he had had "a hard pull for weeks. Yes, all the time, and I hope when he crosses the plains to California that he will rest all he can. . . . We have had a long pull here at Battle Creek but we think much good has been done."²

The "hard pull" was a consequence, not merely of White's administrative load as acting president, but also of the continuation of the tensions and conflicts that had surfaced at Minneapolis. Some respite came in the spring of 1889. Mary


²E. G. White, Diary, Jan. 1889, MS 17, 1889; E. G. White to Sister Ings, Jan. 26, 1889; E. G. White, Diary, Feb. 1889, MS 18, 1889; E. G. White to M. K. White, Feb. [25-26], 1889 (Letter 63, 1889); E. G. White to Sister Ings, M. K. White, and Sister McOmber, Mar. 28, 1889, EGWRC-AU.
came to Boulder, Colorado, for the summer, and W. C. White was able to spend a few weeks with her there during April and early May. On the way back to Battle Creek, he attended a camp meeting at Ottawa, Kansas, where O. A. Olsen was making one of his first stateside appearances as General Conference president. Ellen White and A. T. Jones were the other leading speakers. After Mrs. White's "decided testimony was the means of opening the eyes" of several leading ministers, W. C. White said he sensed for the first time a "melting away" of the "ice barrier" that had separated him from his colleagues at Minneapolis. At Ottawa they again "enjoyed precious seasons in planning about the work." After staying most of a week at the Ottawa meeting, White and Olsen returned to Battle Creek to complete the transfer of their presidential responsibilities.1

The 1889 General Conference Session and the Death of Mary White

At the General Conference session held in Battle Creek from October 18 through November 22, 1889, W. C. White was re-elected foreign mission secretary, member of the executive committee, and member of several other committees.2

Ellen White was "much pleased" with the tone of this conference. "The spirit that was in the meeting in Minneapolis is not here," she said. "The universal testimony from those who have spoken has been that this message of light and truth which has come to our people is just the truth for this time." "We have a feast of fat things," she exulted. Furthermore, the ministers who accepted "the light that came to them at Minneapolis" and afterward, reported that "success has attended


their labors during the past year as never before and they [have] enjoyed the
presence and the love of God in large measure.\textsuperscript{1}

Immediately following the conference, a Bible school for ministers opened
in Battle Creek on November 6, 1889, and continued through March 24, 1890.
Olsen reported that

one important feature of the Bible School was the labors of Sister White. For
over a month she attended quite regularly our morning devotion, which, during
this time, occupied one hour and a half or more. These were seasons of special
interest, and will long be remembered by those who were present.\textsuperscript{2}

Jean Vuilleumier of Switzerland, who was in Battle Creek at the time,
recorded in his diary several excerpts from Ellen White’s preaching. According to
his notes, on December 18 she climaxxed her sermon with an impassioned appeal:

"You are as cold as ice and as hard as an iron wedge. You have not enough
strength to say Amen. . . Enough sermonizing! Empty the front pews. Let
us pass to the practice." She calls: "Come, sinners!" Hundreds repent,
confess, cry, and pray. Mrs. White concludes with a powerful "Praise the
Lord!" and a not less impressive "Amen!"\textsuperscript{3}

When someone would confess his wrong condition in Minneapolis the year before,
she would go and shake his hand, "a touching scene."\textsuperscript{4}

After months of this kind of preaching, she could finally report on March
10, 1890, that "the current is changing." "The backbone of the rebellion is broken
in those who have come in from other places." Two days later she "called a
meeting" of the local leaders. At this meeting the allegation of what George Knight

\textsuperscript{1}E. G. White to Daughter Mary, Oct. 29, 1889; E. G. White, "The Excellence of
Christ," MS 10, 1889, EGWRC-AU.

\textsuperscript{2}O. A. Olsen, "The Ministers’ School," RH, Apr. 1, 1890, 200-201.

\textsuperscript{3}Jean Vuilleumier, Diary, Dec. 18, Nov. 3, 1889, quoted by Pietro Emilio Copiz,
"Ellen G. White in the Diary of Jean Vuilleumier (1885-1891)," in Ellen G. White and
Europe: Centennial Symposium, 1885/1887-1987 (Bracknell, Berks., England: Ellen G.
White Research Centre, Europe, 1987), 446.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid.
has termed the "California conspiracy" finally came out into the open. Ellen White convincingly refuted the idea that the California group of delegates had had any pre-planned strategy to dominate the 1888 conference session.¹

The problem went deeper, however, than a simple misunderstanding. She identified the root of the difficulty as "the ever-ready evading of the testimonies. 'It is Sister White's mind, her opinions; and her opinions are no better than our opinions, unless it is something she has seen in vision.'" Again and again she zeroed in on this issue. "Why," she asked the ministers, "is your interpretation of the law in Galatians more dear to you, and [why are] you more zealous to maintain your ideas on this point, than [you are] to acknowledge the workings of the Spirit of God?" She spoke of the "precious ideas" they "had idolized on the law of Galatians," and challenged them:

> If you are such very cautious men and so very critical lest you shall receive something not in accordance with the Scriptures, I want your minds to look on these things in the true light. Let your caution be exercised in the line of fear lest you are committing the sin against the Holy Ghost."²

At a final meeting (about March 19), Ellen White said she "talked as they had never heard me talk before," again reviewing "the transactions at Minneapolis and since that time." Finally they believed her. "Suffice it to say," she reported to Willie and Mary, "the whole atmosphere is changed." Brother Dan Jones "is a changed man." While the crisis was not over, the worst of the misconceptions about the California conspiracy seemed to have been laid to rest.³

---


³E. G. White to W. C. White and M. K. White, Mar. 19, 1890, in E. G. White,
Meanwhile, W. C. White was in Boulder, Colorado, spending some farewell time with Mary. She died June 18, 1890, of the tuberculosis she had contracted in Europe. She was thirty-three. Her funeral was held June 25 in the Battle Creek Tabernacle.¹

About three weeks after the funeral, Ellen White left Battle Creek for the cooler climate of Petoskey, a resort town on the shore of Lake Michigan near the northern tip of Michigan's lower peninsula. She sought relief from the heat, rest from the conflicts and pressures of headquarters, and an opportunity to write with fewer interruptions her book on the life of Christ.²

W. C. White, for his part, continued a hectic pace. Perhaps it was a way of coping with his grief. Repeatedly his mother urged him, O. A. Olsen, and D. T. Jones to come to Petoskey for rest,³ while she herself confessed to guilt feelings for not being on the camp-meeting circuit. "I want to see you here and counsel with you," she wrote to Willie.

I feel sometimes as though it is a terrible neglect of duty to be here while camp meetings are being held, but again I consider it is the first rest I have had in my life. I speak, however, twice each week, write from twelve to twenty-five pages nearly every day, then when my head gets tired I go out in the berry patch. . . .

I wish you were here this moment. I cannot consent to give this up. You must come and see us and the place. I am glad you feel as you do about my attending camp meetings. I feel guilty sometimes.⁴

¹1888 Materials, 2:642-44.

²E. G. White to Willie and the Household, July 17, 1890, EGWRC-AU.

³E. G. White to Son Willie, July 24, 1890; E. G. White to O. A. Olsen and D. T. Jones, July 27, 1890; E. G. White to O. A. Olsen and W. C. White, July 29, 1890; E. G. White to Son Willie, July 31, 1890, EGWRC-AU.

⁴E. G. White to W. C. White, Aug. 11, 1890, EGWRC-AU.
It appears that W. C. White did make it to Petoskey briefly in early September, just before he left with his mother for the eastern camp meetings. They spent most of October and November on the road, attending camp meetings and other appointments in New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., and Virginia.¹

Further Conflict and Exile, 1891

During January of 1891 the post-Minneapolis conflict continued in Battle Creek. Ellen White alternately pleaded with and chastised the leadership for their opposition to the message of Jones and Waggoner. The 1891 General Conference session was held in Battle Creek from March 5 through 25. One proposal not voted on was that Ellen White go to Australia to build up the denominational work there. Official action was taken to establish an Australian college but without specifically calling for her or her son's involvement. She strongly hoped that no such call would come.²

Before the conference was over she sent a strong letter to O. A. Olsen warning him of the "design" of certain members of the General Conference committee "to disconnect their work from me" and "to separate all who have connection with me and my work, from the great whole," in order to have "Sister White" "out of the way." This letter appears in retrospect to have been directly related to the question of sending Ellen and W. C. White to Australia.³


³E. G. White to O. A. Olsen, Mar. 20, 1891, EGWRC-AU. The letter is quoted more fully in the topical section under "W. C. White as Administrator."
On May 4 Ellen White again headed north to her summer cottage in Petoskey, Michigan. Willie would follow in a few days and spend the first half of May with her there.¹

Partly because of the beautiful climate and location, and partly because it was near Ellen White's residence, W. W. Prescott selected Harbor Springs, Michigan, just north of Petoskey, for a six-week teachers' convention. The convention became the occasion for W. C. White to spend several more weeks with his mother from July 17 to August 10, 1891. By then the General Conference committee had firmly decided to send the two of them to Australia.²

When W. C. White returned from Petoskey, the impending departure to Australia was heavy on his mind. Meanwhile, his daughters' guardian, Mary Mortenson, had taken Ella May and Mabel on a brief trip to Minnesota. "I felt rather lonesome," White wrote to Mortenson, "to come home yesterday and find the house empty." "I miss the children. It makes me feel rather serious about going away for so long a time, but as it seems to be duty, I will go with thinking of this as little as possible." Four years would pass before he saw his daughters again. On September 9, W. C. White and his mother left Battle Creek to attend camp meetings in the west. They sailed for Australia November 12, 1891.³

¹E. G. White to Sister Sarah, May 4, 1891; E. G. White to Son Willie, May 19, 1891, EGWRC-AU.


As noted previously, by the time of his father's death in 1881, W. C. White was escorting his mother in travel, assisting her editorially, and carrying various leadership responsibilities in the denomination. During the decade from 1881 to 1891, W. C. White's relationship to his mother took on new dimensions because of his heavy responsibilities as a denominational administrator and her needs for his editorial help and counsel.

W. C. White as Administrator

W. C. White's first experience in General Conference administration came in the late 1870s under the more-or-less direct tutelage of his father. As his responsibilities grew in the 1880s, his mother became his chief mentor.

Ranking Officer in Europe, 1885-1887

During the European years (1885 to 1887) the Whites spent a great deal of time working and traveling together. During that period, W. C. White was the ranking General Conference officer in Europe. This, coupled with Mrs. White's unique position as prophetic leader of the church, gave them almost unrestricted administrative authority in denominational affairs in Europe. Because she was his superior by age and experience as well as by the source of her authority, she became his mentor. They collaborated on a wide variety of decisions, but because they were together so much of the time the written records of their relationship are sporadic and fragmentary.

Often their association was in the context of matters that particularly depended on her unique gifts. For example, W. C. White was a witness as his

\footnote{See pp. 28-29, above.}
mother counseled a minister, Daniel T. Bourdeau, who had become severely alienated from other workers and from her.\textsuperscript{1}

In another case they worked together in a situation that was more specifically under W. C. White's administrative purview. John G. Matteson, after disfellowshipping three church members in a stormy meeting that split the church in Christiania, Norway, had "resigned his position as president of the publishing association and elder of the church." On the next day, according to Ellen White's diary, "W. C. White and I had a long talk with Elder Matteson. I think we were able to help his mind some on several points, and to have him see he could not now lay down his responsibilities."\textsuperscript{2}

Their combined authority and relative isolation from other counselors made it possible and sometimes necessary to make rather unilateral decisions. One instance occurred in Basel. "W. C. White conversed with me," wrote Mrs. White in her diary, "and we thought it would be pleasing to the Lord to appropriate" funds to the Scandinavian Mission for purchasing a tent and a library.\textsuperscript{3} They recognized a need and acted on it, and their action was justified by the pioneering nature of the work. This kind of independent action often repeated, however, probably contributed to an administrative style that later on in Australia would get W. C. White into trouble.

In noting the patterns of their working together, it is clear that the dominant role in counsel was definitely hers. An instructive incident that occurred


\textsuperscript{2}E. G. White, "Second Visit to Norway," Diary, July 12-13, 1886, MS 66, 1886, EGWRC-AU.

\textsuperscript{3}E. G. White, Diary, Feb. 25, 1887, MS 29, 1887, EGWRC-AU.
in 1885 shows W. C. White's submissive attitude when his mother, in her
Testimony 32, critiqued an aspect of his administrative program. "At first it seemed
to me," he wrote to O. A. Olsen, "that some parts of the instruction would break up
our plans which appeared to be successful, but like all other instruction of this
character we know it will work for the good of the cause in the end although we
may not be wise enough to understand just now." With a characteristic twist of
irony he concluded, "I do not understand that it condemn[n]s our present plan as
worse than nothing, but that it points out a better way."¹

While W. C. White was sometimes reproved by his mother, it appears that
he often sought her counsel before setting plans in motion, so that many mistakes
could be avoided. The result was a relatively successful administrative experience.
W. C. White returned from Europe in 1887 ready to act a larger part in the
deliberations of the church.

Amending the Constitution. 1887

The broader perspective and increased confidence W. C. White had gained
from his European experience are implied in an incident at the 1887 General
Conference session. The occurrence also provides a glimpse of how the Whites
cooperated in administrative matters. The nomination of the executive officers of
the General Conference occasioned an extended speech in which White urged the
necessity of improving the efficiency of the General Conference. Supporting the
nomination of Mrs. M. J. Chapman as corresponding secretary, he noted that he had
himself "introduced the matter of having a corresponding secretary" in order to
lighten the burdens of the General Conference president. He opined that "the
amount of work for the President is doubling every year" due to the accounts and

¹W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, June 28, 1885, LB A, 328, EGWRC-AU.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
reports coming to him from all parts of the field. Other persons should also be employed to aid the president, "not as managers, but as secretaries" over various aspects of the work. Specifically he recommended creating the positions of foreign missions secretary, home missionary secretary, and educational secretary.¹

Ellen White spoke next, elaborating the need for "persons who could do much of the detail routine work, so that Elder Butler can trust it entirely to them, and thus be relieved." She declared that she "would not lift her hand [i.e., vote] to elect Elder Butler President of this Conference if he could not have this help."

After further discussion by others, W. C. White moved to amend the constitution to add the three new positions and the motion was carried.²

No records of their private conversations reveal which of the Whites originated this plan. It may have evolved from extended discussions between them. In making similar proposals in 1888, W. C. White described his administrative initiatives as being consistent with what his mother had seen in vision. Likewise during the 1890s, his administrative innovations in the South Pacific were simultaneous with her continuing counsels toward decentralization and delegation of authority.³

Mediating at Minneapolis, 1888

Prelude to conflict

W. C. White's personal involvement in the issues of the 1888 General Conference session began with a premonition of the conflict to which they might

¹"Seventh Day's Proceedings," GCB, Nov. 21, 1887, 1-3.

²Ibid.

³W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, Nov. 27, 1888, in MMM, 132; Oliver, SDA Organizational Structure, 184-201, 298-99, 337.
lead. "In the spring of 1885," while White and E. J. Waggoner were "walking in the woods" together, Waggoner "introduced two points over which he was perplexed." The first concerned the "apparent necessity of taking positions while pursuing his editorial work that would be in conflict with Eld. Canright's writings" and the second concerned the controversy of many years earlier over the identity of the "added law" mentioned in Gal 3:19—a conflict, interestingly enough, in which W. C. White's father and E. J. Waggoner's father had been on opposite sides.¹

White's response to Waggoner's questions was that the editors of the Signs "should teach what they believed to be truth, [even] if it did conflict with some things written by Eld. Canright and others." But regarding the other issue, White advised him to "avoid it if possible." It may be that White took no particular interest in the issue, for he admitted that during the years he was in Europe he had not read the articles on Galatians which E. J. Waggoner had written in the Signs. Only in the summer of 1888, when open conflict had become imminent, did White take the time to study those articles.²

The circumstance that prompted White to examine the issues more carefully was his association with Waggoner and Jones in Oakland, California, in the summer of 1888. "It was proposed" that on Monday and Tuesday (June 25-26) "the editors of the Signs [Waggoner and A. T. Jones], C. H. Jones [manager of the Pacific Press], and myself [W. C. White], and as many of the California ministers as we could get to join us should go out into the mountains and spend a few days in Bible study." Somewhere in the mountains east of Oakland they found a suitable meeting place that White dubbed "Camp Necessity." Here they studied the "history

¹W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 164-173.
²Ibid., 166.
of the different kingdoms that acted a part in the dismemberment of Rome." After
an "examination" of Butler's The Law in Galatians and related topics, Waggoner
read to the group the manuscript of his reply to Butler (later published as The
Gospel in Galatians). "At the close of our study," White recalled,

Eld. Waggoner asked us if it would be right for him to publish his MSS and at
the next Gen[eral Conf[erence] place them in the hands of the delegates, as Eld.
Butler had [done with] his [pamphlet]. We thought this would be right, and
couraged him to have five hundred copies printed. We made no secret of
this, nor did we take any pains to make it public.¹

If the participants in the study retreat at Camp Necessity took no "pains to
make it public," another California minister did. Certain that Butler needed to know
about the "rebellion" being fomented, William Healey whipped off an incendiary
letter (or letters) to Butler, warning him of the conspiracy. Butler read the
correspondence and burned it, but the stage had been set for a monumental clash.²

Meanwhile, W. C. White had been "corresponding with Eld. Butler about
the Institute to precede the Minneapolis Conf[erence]." As he had done earlier in
Europe, White urged the importance of holding a Biblical Institute for ten or
fourteen days preceding the General Conference session in Minneapolis. "I cannot
feel but [that] the business of our corporations has taken up too much of the time of
our conferences in the last few years, and such an institute as this would help to
balance up the matter." White suggested some possible topics for study, including

¹Ibid., 167-8; "Notes Made by W. C. White at 'Camp Necessity,' June 25 and 26,
Law, or Does It Refer to that System of Laws Peculiarly Jewish? (Battle Creek, MI: Review
and Herald, 1886); E. J. Waggoner, The Gospel in the Book of Galatians: A Review

²E. G. White to W. M. Healey, Dec. 9, 1888 and Aug. 21, 1901, in E. G. White,
"various Bible doctrines," but did not specify any particular doctrines he had in mind.¹

In reply, Butler "gave a list of the subjects which he said he supposed would come up for consideration. Among these he named prominently the Ten Kingdoms and the Law in Galatians" as potential subjects for discussion. In retrospect, White guessed Butler's purpose had been to "draw me out more fully" (i.e., find out what W. C. White believed about those subjects), but at the time he did not recognize the president's intent. Thinking that Butler was genuinely open to having the issues fully discussed, White "notified Jones and Waggoner of this letter, and so of course they took . . . their reference books" with them to Minneapolis.²

The studies at Camp Necessity, the printing of Waggoner's tract, W. C. White's promotion of the ministerial institute, Jones' and Waggoner's bringing their reference books to Minneapolis, and Healey's inflammatory allegations to Butler would later lend credibility to the idea that the leading members of the California delegation had formed a confederation to force their views on the General Conference.

After the Camp Necessity meeting, White had returned to Burrough Valley, California, where Mary was still trying vainly to survive her tuberculosis. "Our study of the ten kingdoms" had "aroused my interest," he later recalled, so that he took with him to Burrough Valley

a set of Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, and using the references which I had noted down during our hurried study in the mountains, I carefully went over the ground again, numbering the paragraphs in my book,

¹W. C. White to G. I. Butler, July 11, 1888, in MMM, 74.

²W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 169-70, 166; the letter from Butler has been lost, but White's recollections of it are supported by W. C. White to G. I. Butler, Aug. 16, 1888, in MMM, 75, which may in fact be White's reply to the lost Butler correspondence.
and marking those which related to the rise and progress of the ten kingdoms. In this study I became satisfied that as far as the testimony of Gibbon was concerned, Eld. Jones had more historical evidence for his position than Eld. Smith.¹

In addition, after receiving Butler's letter raising the issue of the law in Galatians as a possible topic for study, White obtained back issues of the Signs and read Waggoner's articles on Galatians. As the time came to leave for Minneapolis, White packed his well-marked "set of Gibbon" in expectation of a pleasant reunion with colleagues and a mutually enjoyable experience in study.²

On the train, the California delegation traveled together. Ellen White wrote to Mary White (who was too weak to travel) that "Willie and the ministers have had their Bible readings and searchings on the law. I did not even listen, for I wanted rest of mind and body." On their arrival in Minneapolis, the Whites were shown to "two good hired rooms, richly furnished with plush chairs and sofas," but did not feel comfortable with such luxury. Instead they moved to rooms in a plain house which had been rented for delegates to board in. The room Ellen shared with Sara McInteer had a fireplace--a valued source of heat in the near-winter of Minnesota. "Will has a chamber above with stove in his room," Ellen reported. "Two brethren sleep in a bed in the same room. Then they have a small room to do their writing in, and Willie is just as pleased with this as he can be."³

From goose to goat

By his own account, W. C. White "went to Minneapolis as innocent as a goose" regarding the impending imbroglio. "I mistrusted nothing," he averred. But

¹W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 168-171.
²Ibid.
³E. G. White to M. K. White, Oct. 8, Oct. 9, 1888, EGWRC-AU.
he was not long in finding out that influential people considered him the cause of the problem. President Butler had written a thirty-nine-page letter to Ellen White that was probably waiting for her when she stepped off the train in Minneapolis. It is not known how soon her son may have learned of its contents.  

Butler did not leave his views in doubt. After a lengthy peroration on the denominational crisis he saw being precipitated by the new view of the law in Galatians, he came to the point. This heresy "had every appearance of being sanctioned by some one in leading positions. I knew," he declared to Ellen White, that Eld. E. J. Waggoner was not a fool, and would not go on in this bold and unprecedented [sic] manner on his own responsibility. Neither have I ever believed that you could really sanction such a movement. But I have believed and still do to the present time that your son W. C. White is more responsible for it than any other man.  

Had not W. C. White "sustained it" by his influence, the heresy "never would have assumed such proportions, or dared to cut such a figure," reasoned Butler. "I have been forced to believe," he concluded, "that your influence has been in some way lugged in, though I do not believe that you intended it to be." After supporting his contentions about W. C. White for another half page, he summarized.  

He [White] has always apologised for [sic, i.e., defended] their [Jones' and Waggoner's] course, and has never seemed to think there was anything particularly wrong in it, though he has known full well how I have regarded it. I can therefore only conclude that he has sustained it with the full strength of his influence.  

Butler's view seemed to W. C. White to be echoed by most of the Battle Creek delegation. Willie later recalled that while my old friends at B[attle] C[reek] and even my own relatives were saying that...
the bitterest things about me, I mistrusted nothing, supposed that our brethren were really anxious to get the historical evidence with reference to the ten kingdoms, and in trying to save time by making it easy for them to find the passages in Gibbon, I secured the reputation of being an offensive partisan.¹

In actual fact, W. C. White "protested before the committee, and in private with Elder Waggoner, against having the time [of the Biblical Institute] taken up by his [Waggoner's] six or seven long speeches." He felt that giving Waggoner more time than his opponents received lent credibility to the charges of bias in favor of Waggoner. White said he had "argued most earnestly" for "a fair division of the time, so that each of the subjects should have its share." However, in public he had supported Waggoner and A. T. Jones, because he saw they were already the underdogs, and he did not want to diminish their chances for a fair hearing. As White later recalled,

If Elds. Waggoner and Jones had been on the side of the majority I might have said before the committee or in public what I have said to them in private, and criticised [sic] their methods and work, but because they were in a hopeless minority, and I have not criticised them openly, I have been set down as more responsible than they, in all they have done that was subject to criticism.²

D. T. Jones expressed the views of many when he admitted to W. C. White: "I have laid more blame on you, in my own mind, than upon all the others . . . as I thought you was [sic] the one that was responsible for it all."³

Thus W. C. White became the scapegoat. Eighteen months later he could be philosophical about the results of his attempt to mediate: "I suppose I ought not to be surprised because it is frequently the reward the peace-maker gets to be suspected and condemned by both parties." But at the time it was a bitter pill. On

¹See D. T. Jones to W. C. White, Mar. 18, 1890, in MMM, 160; W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 171.

²W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 171.

³D. T. Jones to W. C. White, Mar. 18, 1890, in MMM, 160.
Saturday night, October 27, 1888, ten days after the opening of the Conference session proper, W. C. White expressed his feelings pointedly to his wife, Mary. The letter has been torn, creating some gaps in the sentences, but the gist of it is clear.

Mother has done lots of hard work. She is some discouraged just now, for it is a dark time. Much that Dr. W[aggoner] teaches is in line with what she has seen in vision, and she has spoken repeatedly against the "Spirit of Pharaseeism" [sic] that would crush him down, and condemn all he says as erroneous. Some then take it that she endorses all his views an[d because] part of his teaching disagrees w[ith her] and with her Testimonies, they [say that] my endeavor to push Dr. W's views [mis]led her as to the real issue and [influenced her] to take a position contrary to her p[revious writ]ings.

"I could prove all this to be false," he confided. "[I] may sometime have an opportunity." But right now, I am seen "in the minds of many" as the "Jonah that has brought on the storm." "I am decided[ly unpopular], and I am not sorry," he told Mary, "for I shall have no offices forced upon me."1

Ellen White's credibility was faring little better. She later reflected on the experience,

When I plainly stated my faith, there were many who did not understand me and they reported that Sister White had changed; Sister White was influenced by her son W. C. White and by Elder A. T. Jones. . . . I became the subject of remarks and criticism, but no one of our brethren came to me and made inquiries or sought any explanation from me. We tried most earnestly to have all our ministering brethren rooming in the house meet in an unoccupied room and unite our prayers together, but did not succeed in this but two or three times. They chose to go to their own rooms and have their conversation and prayers by themselves. There did not seem to be any opportunity to break down the prejudice that was so firm and determined, no chance to remove the misunderstanding in regard to myself, my son, and E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones.2

---

1W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 171; W. C. White to M. K. White, Oct. 27, 1888, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC, emphasis added, bracketed words represent conjectural reconstruction.

2E. G. White, "Looking Back at Minneapolis," MS 24, 1888, EGWRC-AU.
Allies in parliamentary debate

As the debate continued over the most divisive issue, the law in Galatians, Ellen White insisted that both sides of the question should be presented. One partisan insinuated that Ellen wanted to close off any discussion opposed to the positions of Waggoner and Jones. Both she and Willie denied the allegation that they were trying to limit the debate. Both of them "spoke decidedly that we would not have the matter end here by any means." Rather, she insisted in retrospect, "we desired that they should bring out all the evidence on both sides of the question for all we wanted was the truth, Bible truth, to be brought before the people."¹

Despite these denials, it was rumored in a meeting the next morning that "Sister White was opposed to the other side of the question being discussed." According to her own account, she missed that meeting but was defended by her son. W. C. White insisted that she was indeed determined to hear both sides of the question and repeated what she had said "in the council of the ministers the night before." It is certain that she approved of Willie's representation of her position, for she affirmed in retrospect that "the matter was set before them in the correct light."²

In the "college meeting" (probably the second meeting of the Educational Association, October 28), W. C. White and his mother were again allied against strong opposition. A resolution had been proposed that "nothing be taught in our school at Battle Creek contrary to what has been taught in the past, or as approved

¹E. G. White, "Looking Back at Minneapolis," MS 24, 1888, EGWRC-AU. This probably took place the evening of Mon., Oct. 22; see Wahlen, "Waggoner's Eschatology," 74.

by the General Conference Committee.* The intent of the motion was to "muzzle" A. T. Jones, who had been hired to teach Bible at Battle Creek College. Ellen White spoke decidedly against it and, with her son's support, succeeded in blocking it, although a resolution of similar intent slipped through another committee before the session closed.2

Referring to the incident a few days later, W. C. White observed that "there is almost a craze for orthodoxy. A resolution was introduced into the college meeting, that no new doctrine be taught there till it had been adopted by the General Conference. Mother and I killed it dead, after a hard fight." The following day Ellen White used terms that show that she too thought it had been a "hard fight."

"This has been a most laborious meeting," she wrote, "for Willie and I have had to watch at every point lest there should be moves made, resolutions passed, that would prove detrimental to the future work." When the conference was over, she praised Willie's "sentinal duty" on "committees, committees, committees."3 His close cooperation with her had significantly enlarged her influence at the conference.

The events of Minneapolis illuminate the relationship of W. C. White to his mother. They had rooms near each other, evidently conferred often, and were allies both in theological discussion and in parliamentary debate. Willie knew his mother well enough that he could speak for her on short notice and have her later affirm that he had spoken accurately. This does not imply that they never had

---


2*How New Theories Shall Be Presented," Nov. 4, 1888, Seventh-day Adventist Year Book (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1889), 58.

3W. C. White to M. K. White, Nov. 3, 1888, in MMM, 123; E. G. White to M. K. White, Nov. 4, 1888, EGWRC-AU.
disagreements or that she would always affirm the accuracy of his representation of her positions, but it does indicate how well he knew her, the degree of confidence she had in him, and how harmoniously they could work together.

From Jonah to Acting Captain

Resolutions from the final days of the conference reflect the unsettled state of affairs on the executive committee in view of the fact that president-elect O. A. Olsen would need several months to close his work in Scandinavia and return to the United States to assume new responsibilities. The same day that Olsen was elected (Wednesday, October 31), White was elected foreign mission secretary and one of seven members of the executive committee. The following day D. T. Jones was appointed to "assist the acting president of the General Conference in his correspondence and in his labors in the interests of the cause at large," but there was still no mention of who would be the acting president. It was evidently assumed that S. N. Haskell, second-ranking member of the executive committee and chairman pro tem of the Minneapolis session, would be the one.1

By Monday, November 19, however, the committee had been decimated by illness and resignations. White reported to his wife that "Butler has withdrawn" from the committee, "Haskell has gone home sick," and "Smith has resigned, saying that he is not fitted for the work, either by nature or by grace." The result was that while W. C. White was "detained" for "half an hour," counseling with his mother "about the publication of Testimony No. 33," the committee voted to make him acting president. That night he informed his wife that "much against my will, they have made me chairman" of the executive committee "till Elder Olsen comes." The

new responsibility greatly increased White's work load. He told Mary five days later that his election to the acting presidency was "about the bitterest pill that I have had to take." "It seems," he continued, "as though some of us have been taking pills ever since we set foot on Minneapolis soil; but I saw no way to get out of it."¹

When, despite an "earnest effort," White could not induce the committee to "rescind the motion" that had made him acting president, he immediately began to delegate responsibilities. Agreeing to handle the foreign correspondence himself (since he was the foreign mission secretary), he assigned the American correspondence to D. T. Jones. He also proposed "the appointment of various members of the committee for different sections of the country as counselors,"² a decision that proved to be the first step toward decentralizing General Conference governance by the formation of union conferences.

White attributed this idea to Ellen White. "Mother has told me," he explained to Olsen,

that it has been shown her that it would be more pleasing to God and for the advancement of the cause, if men should be chosen to take charge of the work in various division[s] of the country, each one acting freely in his field, not refer[r]ing all questions to one man. . . . Then she says these men should meet together frequently for consultation and the formation of plans, all meet[ing] as equals, each expressing freely his views and lis[ten]ing with respect to the views of others.³

White's own assessment of this proposal was that "it really seems that we must adopt some such plan as this[,] for our work is certainly too broad for any one or


²W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, Nov. 27, 1888, in MMM, 128-132.

³Ibid.
two men to understand and manage, in all its detail." He then reassured Olsen that he was not intending to preempt the judgment of the president-elect. "Of course I do not want to move rashly and make a distribution of labor that would not meet your judgment, or your plans, so it is tacitly understood that the arrangements made during your absence are subject to change when you come."1

It is reasonable to believe that White was completely sincere in crediting his mother as the source of his administrative innovations. To contend the opposite, that her agreement with his policies was the result of his persuasive influence with her, fails on several counts. One evidence that White was truly reflecting his mother's views and not just making the claim in order to enhance his own influence is seen in his humble attitude toward Olsen's preferences. He gives no hint of "You'd better do it this way or you'll be rejecting the counsel of God," as one might expect if he were merely claiming her support in order to enhance his own influence.

A second evidence is the close resemblance between this policy and her later counsels favoring decentralization, particularly the statement about "no one man" serving as president, that became such a point of debate between 1897 and 1903.2

A third evidence is her expressed approval of his administration. She wrote to Mary in the spring of 1889,

Willie is in meeting early and late, devising, planning for the doing better and more efficient work in the cause of God. . . .

. . . Willie is doing a very excellent work in arranging and calculating the general work for the cause, and if the work does not move more smoothly and with better success it will not be because Willie has not done his best. . . . I

1Ibid., 132.

tell you, Mary, good solid work is being done that ought to have been done years ago. Everything has been left in a loose, haphazard condition and there needs to be a thorough remodeling of plans and ways of working. . . . I will trust in the Lord that He will give Willie a large measure of His grace. The working of business connected with the cause of God is in a very much better condition than when we first came to Battle Creek. We pray the Lord to continue the good work begun.1

To turn this argument on its head and contend that her public and private support for his administrative policies was the result of his persuasive influence would seriously overestimate his assertiveness and underestimate her stubborn independence. In early 1889, when this letter was written, he was thirty-four and she was sixty-one. The documentary evidence offers no support for a suggestion that she was taking a back seat to her younger son.

Mother's Representative on the General Conference Committee, 1889-1891

With the successful implementation of administrative improvements as acting president, and buttressed by the endorsement of Ellen White, it might be assumed that W. C. White's position in the Battle Creek administration was secure. The strains that had originated at Minneapolis, however, were still present. Powerful General Conference committee members still believed W. C. White was primarily to blame for the schism at Minneapolis, and they strongly resented his continuing support for the positions his mother had taken there. They also continued to distrust the part she had played at Minneapolis and to believe that she had been "used" by W. C. White "to give power and influence" to his positions. Despite confessions by some leading individuals, several top administrators in Battle Creek (including D. T. Jones, who worked closely with W. C. White) were still

---

1E. G. White to M. K. White, [Mar. 1889], Letter 64a, 1889, EGWRC-AU, emphasis added.
holding these views in the spring of 1890.\(^1\)

When the breakthrough over the Minneapolis problem came in Battle Creek, W. C. White was far to the west in Colorado with Mary, as noted earlier. As he pondered his isolation from headquarters and separation from his mother, he became convinced that this was ordered by "providence" in order to "free the work from the suspicion which attached" to him and give him a "chance to prepare for a different kind of labor." He evidently believed that his effectiveness as a General Conference administrator was at an end. But "the saddest thought" to him, he wrote, was that "it is necessary for me to separate from mother, that the suspicions which have gathered about me" may not "be attached to her work." He spoke of "the truth which has been forcing itself upon me during the past winter, that I must separate from her in order that her testimony may be believed."\(^2\)

He had been proceeding, therefore, with arrangements "to transfer the management of her business to other hands," and in this he had "succeeded to a considerable degree." "I pray most earnestly," he wrote to D. T. Jones, that the time may come that our brethren will appreciate the fact that my zeal for the work, and my fertility of plans, is because of my connection with mother, and because of what I have learned from her, as to the manner and spirit in which our work should be conducted. I have regarded the information that I have gained by this connection with mother as a sacred trust that must be used for the advancement of the work, and Oh, I regret so much that self has been allowed to appear, and cause a blight over all. But I accept the present situation, and pray that God will help me to learn well the lesson he is teaching, for I do not want to see his precious Cause, his glorious work, marred by my imperfection and lack of consecration.\(^3\)

The context and expressions of the passage support the evident sincerity of his concern that his mother's influence was more important than his own. While he

---

\(^1\) D. T. Jones to W. C. White, Mar. 18, 1890, in MMM, 158-163.

\(^2\) W. C. White to D. T. Jones, Apr. 8, 1890, in MMM, 171-72.

\(^3\) Ibid.
regretted that he himself had been so badly misunderstood, his primary concern was that his mother's influence and the progress of the "Cause" not be injured by the suspicions attached to him.

Following Mary's death on June 18, 1890, W. C. White resumed his work at headquarters. Ellen White had moved north to Petoskey, Michigan, from where she repeatedly begged Willie to spend a few days with her. Typical of his replies is the following:

I would like very much to come and see you, and perhaps I can after two or three weeks, but it would be torture for me to lose a day just now. My work is in sad shape. I have failed to get any word to the brethren at the Swiss camp-meeting, because of my going to Chautauqua [New York], and they are scoring me on every side for neglect of duty. I must work now, and catch up with my work, and then I shall have better health, and courage.

... I wish I could go berrying with you, but that is not among the possibles at present. Yours in great haste, W. C. White.1

By the spring of 1891 it had become evident to Ellen White that despite professions of change, things were not a great deal different at headquarters. A letter she wrote to O. A. Olsen constitutes an exposé of then-current conditions on the General Conference executive committee, and a further evidence that, whatever anyone else might think, Ellen White had complete confidence in the integrity of W. C. White. Whoever doubted his trustworthiness would be at odds with her.2

The main point of the letter is that Olsen should "break up this ring at the office" by sending D. T. Jones to Walla Walla, Washington. She also mentions that while she would like to have W. C. White as her full-time assistant, it is more important for him at present to retain his position in the inner circle of the General Conference because he brings to his work and correspondence "a heart full of sympathy," and because he is a faithful "voice" for the "instructions" that come

---

1W. C. White to E. G. White, Aug. 18, 1890, LB C, 58-60, EGWRC-AU.

2E. G. White to O. A. Olsen, Mar. 30, 1891, EGWRC-AU.
from her. The letter is of sufficient interest to warrant quoting at length. She assures Olsen that D. T. Jones, Captain Eldridge, and A. R. Henry, have, in their plans and councils, felt that WCW stood in their way from bringing about certain things, and they have talked the matter over to not open their matters to him because he is so closely connected with me.

Dan Jones, Eldridge, and A. R. Henry do not believe in the testimonies. I know whereof I speak. They have a power, but Dan Jones is THE great instigator. I have heard him talk in reference to WCW. They think he informs me of things going on among them. Very hard speeches have been made in reference to my work, for I have been made to hear them. Now, if you can set Dan Jones for his health in Walla Walla, Washington, to look after the interest of the school, you will make a decided change in [the] Battle Creek office.

In regard to my talk with you in reference to WCW's giving his whole time to me, I think it not best for him to leave Battle Creek. When my writing on [the] Life of Christ is pretty well advanced, as I mean it shall be, then he will be able to do a day's work or two days' work in examining the matter. Until my finances shall improve, I cannot pay anyone large wages, and WCW has an interest in the work. He has a heart full of sympathy, and he brings tenderness into the letters which he writes, and he calls out letters of like character. But there is a determined effort on the part of this confederacy at the office to manage so that WCW's voice shall not have influence. He voices his mother's instructions from Heaven too closely to suit their ideas.

I can manage the coming year as I have done the past years, and will not call for WCW, for I know you need him. I have been shown that the design is to disconnect their work from me, and they think they will then be untrammeled to work on according to their plans. God forbid! God forbid! is my prayer.

Secure WCW a good, efficient man to help him. He is devoted to the work. His heart and prayers and Christlike sympathies are interwoven with the work. And Satan is moving in a secret, underhanded manner to separate all who have connection with me and my work, from the great whole. They have no need of me. They think [that] if Sister White were only out of the way, they could do a wonderful thing. I write these things to you because you must know them and act in reference to them. The men in the office are not converted men.

If they do not carry their plans to completion this time, they do not give them up by any means. They will try again.

The last two paragraphs, particularly, are premonitory of the decision taken five months later to send both Ellen White and W. C. White to Australia. By August the committee had voted it, and Ellen White, after a great deal of prayer and questioning on the topic, eventually accepted the call. The years in Australia would

1Ibid., emphasis added.
be momentous ones during which W. C. White would greatly add to his administrative experience. Yet the evidence is convincing that he wrote the truth when he assured his colleague, Dan T. Jones, that "my zeal for the work, and my fertility of plans, is because of my connection with my mother, and because of what I have learned from her."¹

The interaction between W. C. White and Ellen G. White regarding organizational innovations had to do, of course, not with laying the basic foundations of Seventh-day Adventist denominational structure, but with making some timely adaptations to meet the needs of a growing church. Andrew Mustard has shown that Seventh-day Adventist "church order" as originated in 1863 followed closely "in several respects" the basic forms and terminology of Methodism in its American form.²

W. C. White as Editor

Like his father before him, W. C. White was early entrusted with editorial responsibilities. To make editorial suggestions concerning her manuscripts before publication, Ellen White also called on non-family members, such as Uriah Smith.³ Although the same pattern prevailed during the period 1881 to 1891, W. C. White's responsibilities were greatly expanded.

Ellen White’s Editorial Staff

W. C. White acted as the general supervisor of Ellen White's editorial


²Mustard, James White and SDA Organization, 252, 258-60.

³See above, chap. 1, "Observation of Her Work."
staff, beginning at least by 1881, with Mary K. White and Marian Davis working under him. Others who were extensively involved included J. H. Waggoner (both in Oakland and later in Basel), Sara McInterfer, and Jenny Ings. Individuals not connected with Ellen White’s personal staff, but who were requested to do editorial kinds of work on one or more occasions, included Uriah Smith, editor of the Review and Herald; C. H. Jones, manager of the Pacific Press; E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, co-editors of the Signs of the Times; and J. H. Kellogg, medical superintendent of the Battle Creek Sanitarium.¹

W. C. White’s responsibilities included assigning tasks to the different staff members (at least when Ellen White was away) and supervising the editorial process from general concepts to details of wording. Those retained as long-term members of his mother’s staff were persons whom Ellen White thoroughly trusted not to impose their own ideas on the developing manuscripts. Mary K. White and Marian Davis were both notable for the reverence with which they treated the materials they were handling. On occasion, Ellen White indicated that Marian was too reluctant to assume responsibility for even minute details without receiving specific authorization from herself or W. C. White on every individual word. Early in 1889, when the thirty-four-year-old White was experiencing all the pressures that went with being interim president of the General Conference, he was also supervising some of the editorial process for Ellen White. Note how Ellen White described the situation to Mary K. White (who was in California, fighting tuberculosis).

Willie is in meeting early and late, devising, planning for the doing better and more efficient work in the cause of God. We see him only at the table. Marian will go to him for some little matters that it seems she could settle for herself. She is nervous and hurried and he so worn he has to just shut his teeth

¹A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 3:435-47.
together and hold his nerves as best he can. I have had a talk with her and told
her she must settle many things herself that she has been bringing Willie. Her
mind is on every point and the connections, and his mind has been plowing
through a variety of difficult subjects until his brain reels and then his mind is
in no way prepared to take up these little minutia [sic]. She must just carry
some of these things that belong to her part of the work, and not bring them
before him nor worry his mind with them. Sometimes I think she will kill us
both, all unnecessarily, with her little things she can just as well settle herself
as to bring them before us. Every little change of a word she wants us to see.
I am about tired of this business.¹

When traveling, or engrossed in new writing, Ellen White did not want to
be continually consulted concerning minute details. She considered this unnecessary
because she would evaluate the finished product as a whole. At other times she felt
the questions were substantial enough to demand her attention, as is indicated in
another letter to Mary:

We think of you all and every pleasant day wish we were on the way to
St. Helena, but Marian holds onto us now, for her writings are of that character
that she must have the judgment of Will and myself, so that we are held here at
present, although we want to go.²

In both of these examples there is evident a hierarchy of responsibility.
Concerning minutiae, Marian was expected to decide for herself; larger questions
were to be submitted to "Will." Ellen White would give instructions when it was
convenient or when she felt the gravity of the questions merited it. Otherwise she
would defer her examination till Marian and W. C. White had completed their
portion of the work. The scope of that work becomes clearer as one considers the
range of literary productions in process more or less simultaneously in the White
household.

The Editorial Task

In order to grasp the scope of the editorial work of W. C. White, it is

¹E. G. White to M. K. White, [Mar. 1889], EGWRC-AU, emphasis added.
²E. G. White to M. K. White, Feb. 6, 1888, EGWRC-AU.
necessary to understand something of the process by which Ellen White's handwritten drafts became typewritten letters or published articles and books. Tim Poirier, archivist at the Ellen G. White Estate main office, has prepared a helpful exposition and collected examples of the "two kinds of editorial work performed by Ellen White's literary assistants." The first level of editorial work was the "transcribing of Ellen White's first-draft handwritten work into acceptable grammatical form—such as the form in which [documents] have been preserved in the letter/manuscript file." A second level of editing moved "beyond the transcription process to one of rearranging, assembling, and compiling Ellen White's (now typescript) material into a new literary work, perhaps treating the same theme, but disconnected from its original setting." W. C. White referred to this second level in a letter to General Conference president G. A. Irwin in 1900.

Mother's workers of experience, such as sisters Davis, Burnham, Bolton, Peck, and Hare, who are familiar with her writings, are authorized to take a sentence, paragraph, or section, from one manuscript where the thought was clearly and fully expressed, and incorporate it with another manuscript, where the same thought was expressed but not so clearly.

Poirier points out that while he has distinguished these two "levels" for purposes of discussion, "in actuality the editorial process was a blend of both kinds of activities."¹

This provides a background for understanding the work of Ellen White's editorial staff during the period 1881 to 1891. Four categories of literary works were commonly in simultaneous process of preparation during that period: letters, sermons, periodical articles, and books.

¹Tim Poirier, compiler, "Exhibits Regarding the Work of Ellen White's Literary Assistants," 1990, DF 701-b-6, EGWRC-AU; W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, May 7, 1900, LB 15, 589, EGWRC-AU. (In this reference from the Australian period, the composition of Ellen White's literary staff has changed somewhat from the 1880s.)
Letters

The perennial task of Ellen White’s staff was the preparation of letters, which could involve much more than merely typing the handwritten manuscript.

W. C. White mentioned to his mother how the staff handled the preparation of one long letter.

Yesterday we received your letter accompanied by a long one for Bro. A. C. B[ourdeau]. Mary [White] will try to fix it as she has strength. I had not the heart to give it to Marian [Davis]. She is worn out with this sort of work and it is a great burden to her to take these very long manuscripts, and decide how to fix them.¹

The trust Ellen White placed in her staff is shown in the instruction she gave about the preparation of another letter, written from England and sent to her staff at home in Basel, Switzerland. "I send you this letter and want you to have it copied and send me a copy at once to read to Mrs. Green. Do with it as your judgment shall dictate." The last sentence is an obvious reference to the editorial process. Separated from her by so many miles, they could not submit it to her for final reading before sending it. She indicated that they should edit it according to their own judgment and send it back to her as soon as possible.²

Sermons and periodical articles

One of the sources of periodical articles was the sermons which Ellen White was regularly called on to present. In a letter from Basel, she described the process by which her sermons were placed in writing. Sara McInterfer "writes out the discourses I have given which she has taken in shorthand." She explained that

¹W. C. White to E. G. White, Nov. 22, 1886, LB A1, 421, EGWRC-AU; the letter referred to (E. G. White to A. C. Bourdeau, Nov. 20, 1886, EGWRC-AU) was some 4000 words long, making 11 typewritten pages.

²E. G. White to Children, July 20, 1887, EGWRC-AU; the letter to Mrs. Green is evidently no longer extant.
Mary K. White was also engaged in "preparing" for publication "morning talks" that Ellen White had given "in Battle Creek and other places."¹

These sermons were frequently published in periodicals. Both the Review and Herald and the Signs of the Times depended on Ellen White as a regular contributor. During the European period, there were times when her limited staff could not keep up with this demand, as W. C. White explained to C. H. Jones, manager of the Pacific Press. In response to a request from Jones for articles for the Signs, W. C. White discussed the matter in some detail. White mentioned that until the recent birth of his second daughter, Mabel, his wife had been preparing "mother's articles for the Review. This of course is much easier work than preparing articles for the Signs," he observed (presumably because the two magazines had different readerships).²

"But now," he continued, "we believe it is our duty to concentrate our efforts" on Spirit of Prophecy, volume 1 (forerunner of Patriarchs and Prophets). Consequently, he proposed to Jones a different method of handling the preparation of periodical articles. Ellen White would depend on the editors of the respective papers to prepare the manuscripts for publication. "Mother has notified the editors of the Review that she will furnish them with manuscript," Willie said, if they will prepare it for the paper. The larger part of the sermons which mother has delivered over here have been reported and written out and we can furnish you with a good supply of them, if you have someone there who can prepare them for the paper. It is not reasonable for us to attempt the work here. Mother will gladly furnish this manuscript without charge if we are

¹E. G. White to Edson and Emma, Jan. 19, 1887, EGWRC-AU.

²W. C. White to C. H. Jones, Dec. 5, 1886, LB A1, 472, EGWRC-AU. The Review was directed primarily at a Seventh-day Adventist readership. The Signs often functioned during this period as a sort of West Coast edition of the Review, but it was targeted significantly toward the general public.
released from the task of preparing them for the papers.¹

This arrangement highlights the trust she placed in those editors to make careful use of her materials, since the articles would appear in print without the possibility of her final inspection. A letter Ellen White wrote six years later from Australia to Uriah Smith, editor of the Review, is even more explicit regarding her confidence that he would make a wise use of the materials she sent to him. "You have written to me," she began,

in regard to what shall be done with the article addressed to the Battle Creek Church. I answer, Do with it as you think best, using it as you judge it will best serve the cause of God. Please follow your own judgment as to the disposal of any thing I may write from henceforth, unless I give special directions concerning it. After it serves the special purpose for which it was written, you may drop out the personal matter and make it general, and put it to whatever use you may think best for the interests of the cause of God. As you say, we are far separated, and two or three months must pass before communications can be answered however important may be their character, therefore it is best not to wait my decisions on matters of this kind, especially when your judgment is evidently in harmony with what is best, and something to which I could have no objection.²

Here she gave Smith a wide latitude to adapt her testimonies by deleting "personal matter" and then to reuse them as he felt would "best serve the cause of God." The conservative approach that Smith and other denominational editors took regarding such editing may be a reason why the periodical articles are often rougher in style than the books in which these articles were later reused by Ellen White. The editors at the publishing houses did not feel free to do as much editing as did those working under the more direct supervision of Ellen White.

Books

Examination of the book-preparation process reveals that all of Ellen

¹Ibid.

²E. G. White to U. Smith, Sept. 19, 1892, EGWRC-AU.
White’s books published during this period were produced in whole or in part by compilation. Three that were in process simultaneously in 1890 were Gospel Workers, Steps to Christ, and Desire of Ages. Ellen White later referred to Marian Davis as "my bookmaker" and described her work in detail.

She gathers materials from my diaries, from my letters, and from the articles published in the papers. . . . She has been with me for twenty-five years, and has constantly been gaining increasing ability for the work of classifying and grouping my writings. She takes my articles which are published in the papers, and pastes them in blank books. She also has a copy of all the letters I write. In preparing a chapter for a book, Marian remembers that I have written something on that special point, which may make the matter more forcible. She begins to search for this, and if, when she finds it, she sees that it will make the chapter more clear, she adds it.

The books are not Marian’s productions, but my own, gathered from all my writings. Marian has a large field from which to draw, and her ability to arrange the matter is of great value to me. It saves my poring over a mass of matter, which I have no time to do.

When Marian had brought together the extant E. G. White writings on a topic, she would present the compiled materials to Ellen White. "Now," she would say, "there is something wanted [needed]. I cannot supply it." Ellen White would look it over and write additional material as required to unite the material compiled from her previous writings.

While Marian Davis "specialized" in book compilation, W. C. White, Mary White, J. H. Waggoner and others were also involved. According to Arthur White, J. H. Kellogg helped in the compilation of Christian Temperance and Bible

---

1W. C. White to M. A. Davis, May 16, 1890, RG 9, W. C. White Fld 1, GCAr; E. G. White, Gospel Workers, Instruction for the Minister and the Missionary (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1892); idem, Steps to Christ (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1892); idem, Desire of Ages (1898).

2E. G. White to Brother and Sister [J. A.] Burden, Jan. 6, 1903, EGWRC-AU.

3E. G. White to G. A. Irwin, April 23, 1900, EGWRC-AU.

4E. G. White, "A Tribute to Marian Davis," MS 95, 1904, EGWRC-AU.
Hygiene, which was published in 1890. Kellogg explained in the preface that the book was "a compilation, and in some sense an abstract, of the various writings of Mrs. White upon this subject," with the addition of several articles by James White. "The work of compilation has been done under the supervision of Mrs. White, by a committee appointed by her for the purpose, and the manuscript has been carefully examined by her."\(^1\)

Testimony 32 also was prepared by compilation. W. C. White described to Mary White the process.

I have been looking over the Reviews and Signs for the last two years, to see what there is that ought to go into the testimonies. We find some grand things. I think that some of the short general articles we are finding ought to be sprinkled in among the long articles. . . . We will try to get some of these down to you the first of next week.\(^2\)

Willie urged that Eliza Burnham, one of Ellen White's assistants, be ready, as soon as J. H. Waggoner should return to Oakland from the east, to "push the testimonies work in before his mind is fully taken up with other work." Four days later he reported to Mary that

this afternoon Eliza read to mother some of the articles we thought suitable for Testimony 32 and she pronounced them all good. . . . In the back of the book there should be notes about many of the articles, telling when and where they were written. I think we will make it 220 pages in all.\(^3\)

The scope of W. C. White's editorial activity also included decisions regarding the general format and chapter arrangement for his mother's books. This

---

\(^1\)W. C. White to M. K. White, Jan. 23, Jan. 27, 1885; W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, July 11, 1885, WCWCFT, EGWRC-GC; A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 3:446-47; J. H. Kellogg, preface to Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene, by E. G. White and James White (Battle Creek, MI: Good Health, 1890), iv.

\(^2\)E. G. White, Testimony for the Church, No. 32 (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press and Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1885); W. C. White to M. K. White, Jan. 23, 1885, WCWCFT, EGWRC-GC.

\(^3\)W. C. White to M. K. White, Jan. 23, Jan. 27, 1885, WCWCFT, EGWRC-GC.
level of editorial responsibility has already been noted in connection with the preparation of various numbers of the Testimonies, particularly numbers 28, 29, and 32.¹

This aspect of his editorial role was clearly seen in the planning of the volumes that would eventually be known as Patriarchs and Prophets and Prophets and Kings. In 1888, Patriarchs and Prophets, Ellen White’s volume on early Old Testament history, was nearly complete. Ellen White had mentioned the possibility that she might someday write a second volume on Old Testament history, but the suggestion was still tentative and the contents of the proposed volume had not been definitely planned.²

W. C. White, viewing the matter from a publishing standpoint, realized the need to plan both volumes at the same time in order to obtain uniformity in size and format. "If Mother really intends that this [first volume] shall be followed with the rest of the Old Testament history," he wrote to Marian Davis, then the best place to divide the narrative would be between the reigns of David and Solomon. He provided two reasons. First, he argued that to include the story of Solomon’s reign in the first volume (as it had been in the first volume of Spirit of Prophecy) would make Patriarchs and Prophets too large. Unless Ellen White should write a great deal of new material for it, the second volume would be disproportionately smaller. To end the first book with David and save the section on Solomon to start off the second would keep them about the same size. Second, White observed that

¹On Testimonies 28 and 29, see above, pp., 64, 67.

"as the sins of Solomon prepared the way for the subsequent apostasy and the division of the kingdom, it would seem that the building of the temple and Solomon's reign" would be an appropriate introduction for the volume dealing with Israel's captivity. That White's suggestion was accepted by his mother is shown by the present chapter arrangement of the two volumes.¹

Revision of the Testimonies

Perhaps the most extensive book project undertaken during the 1880s was the revision of Ellen White's early Testimonies for the Church. Between 1855 and 1879, the first twenty-eight Testimonies had been issued as pocket-size pamphlets containing from 16 to 240 pages each. With an 1878 General Conference resolution to publish them in a more permanent form, later numbers were printed in a larger page size and bound in cloth. By 1881 many of the earlier numbers were out of print. Since the type would need to be reset, it was an opportune time to place the earlier publications in permanent book format with continuous paging. But first Ellen White wanted her staff to carefully examine the material so that they could, where needed, revise wording, correct imperfect grammar, and improve clarity of expression. The project had been begun at least by 1881 and was formally endorsed by the General Conference session in 1883. Several accounts of the revision process are available.²

W. C. and Mary White, Marian Davis, Eliza Burnham, and J. H.

¹W. C. White to M. A. Davis, Aug. 12, 1888, LB B, 444, EGWRC-AU; E. G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets; idem, Prophets and Kings.

Waggoner were key figures who assisted Ellen White in this task.¹ The
conscientious care with which Mary White entered upon this work is obvious in a
letter she wrote to Willie while he remained in Battle Creek following the 1881
General Conference session.

Yours from Battle Creek containing instruction concerning the Testimonies
came to hand last evening. Your suggestion to insert the volume and number in
running title we all think good... With regard to changes, we will try to profit by your suggestions. The
fear that we may make too many changes or in some way change the sense
haunts me day and night.²

At this point the project must have been in progress for some time, for she reported
three weeks later that more than 300 pages of the first volume of the Testimonies
had already been electrotyped (made into solid printing plates, the last step before
printing). "There is," she said, "some more in [movable] type and much more
prepared [editorially]." Ten months later she wrote to Willie the staff consensus
that some explanatory footnotes were needed, and suggested following the style used
in one of J. Cunningham Geikie's books. Ellen White owned several books by
Geikie. One of these, The Life and Words of Christ, has numbered notes with the
references printed in the side margin.³ Willie replied: "Your idea about notes is
the right one. Put in superior figures wherever a note seems to be needed and the
notes can be written afterwards."⁴ However, Mary's proposal to include footnotes
did not survive to the final printing.

¹W. C. White to M. K. White, Jan. 23, Jan. 27, 1885; W. C. White to O. A. Olsen,
July 11, 1885, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

²M. K. White to W. C. White, Jan. 7, 1882, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

³M. K. White to W. C. White, Jan. 29, Nov. 29, 1882, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC;
Warren H. Johns, Tim Poirier, and Ron Graybill, "A Bibliography of Ellen G. White's

⁴W. C. White to M. K. White, Dec. 31, 1882, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
In Battle Creek, however, the project was being greeted with something less than full enthusiasm. Willie reported to Mary from the General Conference session in December 1882 that

Butler and Haskell do not find serious fault with Testimony proofs, but say they see no good in about one-third of the changes. They wish you could go with them into meetings and see such men as Mooney [an anti-Adventist polemicist] bring forward one edition and then another and show changes and try to make a point of it. I argue that there is no salvation in bad grammar etc. A thought grammatically expressed is just as good to reach the hard and sinful heart as if badly expressed.

They assent to this, but they think that some of your changes are simply a change of style, substituting your [M. K. White’s] more polished style for our mother's more abrupt and simple style, and they love the old simplicity. Altogether they criticize less than I expected. Please change the style as little as possible. . . .

Remember that the first book and the first of each book and Testimony will be criticised [sic] more than the rest.
You may go on electrotyping as fast as you please, after duly considering the above. . . . Consult James about the style. I give only the idea.¹

By the following May (1883) Mary was preparing an index for Testimonies, volume one, an addition which she thought would "be of great value if done right."²

The project of preparing the Testimonies for publication in an improved format had been underway for more than two years by the time W. C. White and his mother traveled to the General Conference session in Battle Creek in November 1883. According to Arthur White’s account, W. C. White "took with him" a report of the Testimony revision project and "called for a resolution of explanation and General Conference support."³ W. C. White’s position on the committee on resolutions tends to confirm the inference that he was the author of the resulting resolutions.

¹Ibid.

²M. K. White to W. C. White, May 13, 1883, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

32. Whereas, Some of the bound volumes of the "Testimonies to [sic] the Church" are out of print, so that full sets cannot be obtained at the Office; and—

Whereas, There is a constant and urgent call for the re-printing of these volumes; therefore—

Resolved, That we recommend their re-publication in such a form as to make four volumes of seven or eight hundred pages each.

33. Whereas, Many of these testimonies were written under the most unfavorable circumstances, the writer being too heavily pressed with anxiety and labor to devote critical thought to the grammatical perfection of the writings, and they were printed in such haste as to allow these imperfections to pass uncorrected; and—

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; therefore—

Resolved, That in the re-publication of these volumes such verbal changes be made as to remove the above-mentioned 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 re-publication of these volumes according to the above preambles and resolutions.1

"Having been empowered to select four persons besides himself" for the committee in charge of the re-publication project, President G. I. Butler appointed W. C. White (chairman), Uriah Smith, J. H. Waggoner, and S. N. Haskell.2

The main points in the 1883 resolutions were the official disavowal of belief in verbal inspiration and the consequent expression of support for Ellen White's making "verbal changes" to remove "imperfections." Despite this endorsement of the project, the opposition that Willie had reported to Mary a year earlier did not abate. The main objection then had chiefly concerned the use that critics had made and would make of such changes. One of the opponents of revision was Uriah Smith, editor of the Review. On February 19, 1884—less than

---

1G. I. Butler and O. B. Oyen, "General Conference Proceedings (Concluded)," RH, Nov. 27, 1883, 741-42; see also E. G. White, Selected Messages, 3:96-98.

2G. I. Butler and O. B. Oyen, "General Conference Proceedings (Concluded)," RH, Nov. 27, 1883, 741-42.
three months after the close of the conference session—Ellen White herself entered the conflict in defense of the plan to improve the Testimonies.¹

Since she had already written a long, informal, affirming letter to "Brother and Sister Smith" earlier the same day, she felt free to come directly to the point in the opening sentence of her letter to Uriah Smith: "Information has been received from Battle Creek that the work upon the Testimonies is not accepted." Then she explained why revisions had not been made earlier and why they were needed now.

I was shown years ago that we should not delay publishing the important light given me because I could not prepare the matter perfectly. My husband was at times very sick, unable to give me the help that I should have had and that he could have given me had he been in health. On this account I delayed putting before the people that which has been shown me in vision. But I was shown that I should present before the people in the best manner possible the light received; then as I received greater light, and as I used the talent God had given me, I should have increased ability to use in writing and in speaking. I was to improve everything, as far as possible bringing it to perfection, that it might be accepted by intelligent minds. As far as possible every defect should be removed from all our publications.²

She argued that because of the urgent need for the literature, the first editions were hurried into print regardless of imperfections. But as circumstances became more favorable for improving the materials, "every care should be exercised to perfect the works published." She cited the experience of J. N. Andrews, who had "delayed the work too long" in getting out the "first edition" of his History of the Sabbath. She had strongly urged him to hasten the first edition and make improvements later, because while he delayed, seeking to perfect his work, "erroneous works were taking the field." She contended that she had done with her own writings what she counseled Andrews to do. She had hastened the first

¹W. C. White to M. K. White, Dec. 31, 1882, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC; E. G. White to U. Smith, Feb. 19, 1884, EGWRC-AU.

²E. G. White to Brother and Sister Smith, Feb. 19, 1884 (Letter 11a, 1884); E. G. White to U. Smith, Feb. 19, 1884 (Letter 11, 1884), EGWRC-AU.
editions, despite their imperfections, in order to meet the immediate need. By 1884 the time had come to perfect her own writings for the more permanent edition.

Now, Brother Smith, I have been making a careful, critical examination of the work that has been done on the Testimonies, and I see a few things that I think should be corrected in the matter [the revised edition] brought before you and others at the General Conference. But as I examine the matter more carefully I see less and less that is objectionable [in the revised edition]. Where the language used [in the first edition] is not the best, I want it made correct and grammatical, as I believe it should be in every case where it can be without destroying the sense.

This work is delayed, which does not please me.¹

She explained that in a recent "dream or vision, I know not which," she seemed to be "in council in Battle Creek," where "we were discussing the matter of the Testimonies and their revision." During the meeting, following some "sharp criticism" and some "very abrupt decisions," she recalled that "a stately person I had not noticed at all" rose and spoke to the group. On the basis of the words spoken by the "stately person," she warned Smith that "unless your ideas are more broad, unless there is greater foresight, you will work to the disadvantage of the cause, in the place of working to its advantage." "You need Jesus, more of Jesus, in your councils, and less of your own peculiar traits of character," she advised. "Caution is good, but this may be carried to extremes."²

Applying this counsel to the issue of republishing the Testimonies, she concluded with a clear directive regarding the work of revision:

My mind has been exercised upon the question of the Testimonies that have been revised. We have looked them over even more critically. I cannot see the matter as my brethren see it. I think the changes made will improve the book. If our enemies handle it, let them do so. In some little points changes can be made [in the revised edition], but I do not coincide with the criticism and sentiments expressed in regard to the work done on the book. . . . I think that anything that shall go forth will be criticized, twisted, turned, and boggled, but we are to go forward with a clear conscience, doing what we can and

¹E. G. White to U. Smith, Feb. 19, 1884 (Letter 11, 1884), EGWRC-AU.
²Ibid.
leaving the result with God. We must not be long in delaying the work. Now, my brethren, what do you propose to do? I do not want this work dragging along any longer. I want something done, and done now.¹

Evidently even this strong letter was not enough to overcome the fears of the Battle Creek leadership that changes in the Testimonies would undermine confidence in their inspiration. The last word on this episode was a reluctant order from Ellen White to re-revise the work, returning the Testimonies as nearly as possible to their original form, except for the correction of glaring defects of grammar. W. C. White explained this in a letter to O. A. Olsen, which, because of its significance, will be excerpted at length. "About the bound volumes of the Testimonies to [sic] the Church," Willie wrote,

We have been diligently at work since the last General Conference [1884], and in a few weeks we shall have the four volumes printed and bound[.]. We have been actively at work correcting the plates of that portion that was set, and making plates of the other volumes in accordance with the criticisms and suggestions of our brethren. It has been a long, tiresome, and expensive job, but we feel of good courage because the books are greatly needed, and we think the work is now coming out in such a way as to be satisfactory to our most critical brethren, as well as to the author. We have reset many pages of that which was criticised [sic] at Battle Creek, and have made hundreds of changes in the plates so as to bring the phraseology of the new edition as nearly as possible to that of the old without making the statements awkward and the grammar positively incorrect. You would be astonished if I should tell you the amount of time we have devoted to this work.

First, the first and second editions were carefully read and compared by Mary [White] and Sr. Burnham, and each change which had been made in the second edition was marked on the margin of the first, then the proofs of the new plates were read and compared with this, and every change was as carefully marked on the margin. Then this marked copy was placed in Eld. [J. H.] Waggoner’s hands and he read it carefully criticising every mark and correction, and accepting or condemning these corrections according to his good judgment and the instruction of the committee appointed by the [General] Conference. It has been a Herculian [sic] task, and has taken a large part of his valuable time since the last General Conference, but he does not seem to regret the labor, because the work is worthy of it.²

¹Ibid.

²W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, July 11, 1885, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC, emphasis added.
The first four volumes of Testimonies for the Church, in their partially revised form, came from the press in 1885\(^1\) and have been reprinted unchanged since then.

W. C. White as His Mother's Counselor

In his role as a General Conference administrator, W. C. White greatly profited as a recipient of his mother's counsel. In a second role, that of editor, he assisted in preparing her counsels for the benefit of others. A third dimension of W. C. White's relationship to his mother during the years 1881-1891 was that of counselor to her.

It was noted earlier in this chapter that an 1882 vision had described W. C. White's relationship to his mother as that of "counselor and helper." The word "helper" suggested a broad range of service to her needs, especially in view of her age (fifty-five in 1882) and recent widowhood, but what was indicated by the designation "counselor"? She had regularly expected James White to give her "counsel" in the form of information, opinions, perspectives, and discussion. She had also, at times, asked for suggestions and critiques from J. H. Waggoner, Uriah Smith, and others.\(^2\)

W. C. White's role as "counselor" to Ellen White during the period from 1881 to 1891 embraced a wide range of responsibilities. One of her urgent and continuing needs after the loss of her husband in 1881 was for someone with whom she could have spiritual and intellectual exchange, someone who understood and appreciated her viewpoints and with whom she could speak confidentially. At

---

\(^{1}\)E. G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4 (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press; Battle Creek, MI: Review & Herald, 1885).

\(^{2}\)E. G. White to G. I. Butler, Oct. 30, 1906, EGWRC-AU; E. G. White, Selected Messages, 1:50; see chap. 1 above, pp. 63-64.
various times during this decade her expressed need for "counsel" was linked with her condition of being "alone." To Edson she wrote: "As far as anyone to consult with is concerned, I am alone." To Willie and Mary she explained why things did not move more efficiently at one point. "I have, as you well know, not one soul to counsel with. I am obliged to go forward as best I can and lay my plans and do my business as well as I am able."¹

The "counsel" which W. C. White offered to his mother dealt with her personal and business affairs as well as with issues related to her leadership position in the church.

**Personal and Business Counsel**

In her widowhood, Ellen White depended on Willie for help and advice on the whole spectrum of her personal and business affairs. For example, in a single letter in 1891 she asked his help and/or advice concerning the sale of a house she owned, the potential sale of another house, the repair of surrey wheels after one broke causing an accident, the repair of an iron stove by having a new cover cast, and the securing of a deed to some property she had purchased. One will not read very many of her letters to Willie without finding examples of these personal matters for which she needed his help and counsel.²

Another example of a personal decision which she wanted to talk over with her son is seen in a letter to her daughter-in-law, Mary. "I am questioning in my own mind whether it would be the best thing to do to have Reba [sic, Rheba Kelsey]

¹E. G. White to J. E. White [ca. mid-May, 1889] (Letter 14a, 1889); E. G. White to W. C. White and M. K. White, Aug. 17, 1888, EGWRC-AU.

²W. C. White to E. G. White, June 7, 1891, LB 2A, 330; cf., e.g., E. G. White to W. C. White, May 26, 1891, EGWRC-AU; W. C. White to E. G. White, June 16, 1882, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
come to Battle Creek to the Sanitarium. I must have some talk with W. C. when I can get a few moments of his time."  

She also depended on him as her liaison with the publishing houses. Negotiating royalties was just one of a variety of questions that he cared for with the publishing houses. Everything from illustrations to page size and binding, and much more, was his responsibility to arrange in consultation with her and with the publishers. Correspondence with publishers comprises a significant proportion of the letters in the W. C. White correspondence.  

Leadership Issues: The "Counsel Continuum"

The more significant aspects of W. C. White's role as "counselor" to his mother have to do with his interaction with her in leadership matters. Here may be seen a continuum of counseling contributions--from information, to opinion, to recommendation, to persuasion.

Information

On one end of the continuum, W. C. White kept his mother informed about issues and developments within the church, without necessarily expressing any opinion about how she might respond to the information. Conversely, there were times when he deliberately gave her no information. In 1882, for example, the Seventh-day Adventist community in Battle Creek was split over the operating policies and personnel of Battle Creek College. By the time the conflict had run its course, G. H. Bell, one of the founding professors of the school, had been "hissed out of the college" to find employment elsewhere. In writing to Uriah Smith,

1E. G. White to Daughter Mary, Dec. 29, 1889, EGWRC-AU.

2See, e.g., W. C. White to E. G. White, Jan. 12, 1885; W. C. White to M. K. White, Jan. 17, 1885, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
chairman of the college board and on the opposite side of the conflict from Bell, Ellen White wanted Smith to know who had given her information and who had not. She assured him, "I have had no communications from Prof. Bell or any one who sustains him." Then she declared the non-involvement of her son in the matter.

"To spare my feelings, Willie has withheld from me disagreeable particulars concerning matters at Battle Creek. For the same reason, others have kept silent." How then did she learn the details? She told Smith that "Bro. Brownsberger has answered some plain, direct questions."¹ Her opinions were not formed in a vacuum. While she cited divine revelation as one source of information, she made clear that she also received much information in conventional ways. W. C. White was one of those who kept her informed on denominational news.

Opinion

One increment further on the "counsel continuum" could be termed opinion. W. C. White often served his mother as one with whom she could discuss issues and who would bring her fresh perspectives, insights, and options for her consideration.

For example, in 1885 Ellen and W. C. White were requested by the General Conference to spend some months in Europe building up the work of Seventh-day Adventists there. As Ellen, in Healdsburg, California, gave prayer and thoughtful consideration to this call, she felt that "to travel across the continent in the heat of summer and in my condition of health, seemed almost presumptuous." Furthermore, she had no direct communication from God regarding the proposed journey to Europe. Consequently,

¹Sidney Brownsberger, "Notes and Incidents," AMs, Collection 14, Box 1, Folder 13, p. 18, AHC; cf. Allan G. Lindsay, "Goodloe Harper Bell: Teacher," chap. in Early Adventist Educators, 50; E. G. White to Uriah Smith, Mar. 28, 1882, EGWRC-AU.
as the appointed time for starting drew near, my faith was severely tested. I so much desired some one of experience upon whom I could rely for counsel and encouragement. My courage was gone, and I longed for human help, one who had a firm hold from above, and whose faith would stimulate mine. By day and by night my prayers ascended to heaven that I might know the will of God and have perfect submission to it. Still my way was not made clear; I had no special evidence that I was in the path of duty, or that my prayers had been heard.

About this time, my son, W. C. W., visited Healdsburg, and his words were full of courage and faith. He bade me look to the past, when, under the most forbidding circumstances, I had moved out in faith according to the best light I had, and the Lord had strengthened and supported. I did so, and decided to act on the judgment of the General Conference, and start on the journey, trusting in God. . . . In thus trusting, my fears were removed, but not my weakness.1

She left her home in Healdsburg on July 7 for Oakland, where she would board the train on July 13 for the journey east. During the six days in Oakland she still had no clear indication of the will of God.

Although I had prayed for months that the Lord would make my path so plain that I would know that I was making no mistake, still I was obliged to say that God hangs a mist before my eyes. But when I had taken my seat on the cars, the assurance came that I was moving in accordance with the will of God. . . . The sweet peace that God alone can give was imparted to me, and like a wearied child, I found rest in Jesus.2

Her trust was in God, yet she felt the need of human counsel and encouragement by "one who had a firm hold from above, and whose faith would stimulate mine." This human support and encouragement she found in Willie.

Recommendation

Another level of counsel might be described as recommendation. W. C. White would at times recommend to his mother a specific course of action, based on his own fully formed viewpoint. One illustration of this category of counsel had to do with a physician at the St. Helena Sanitarium who had become discouraged

---

1E. G. White, "Notes of Travel," RH, Sept. 15, 1885, 577-78.
2E. G. White, "The Journey to Europe," Diary, July 7 to Sept. 24, 1885, MS 16a, 1885, EGWRC-AU; idem, "Notes of Travel," RH, Sept. 15, 1885, 577-78.
(because of some possibly well-deserved criticism) and was thinking of quitting his position. After explaining the situation to his mother, White offered a recommendation.

It seems as though he [Dr. W. P. Burke] needs a little talking to, if you feel like writing him a short letter sometime to encourage him in this matter of loyalty to the Institution I think it would be well. I know that you have lots of work on your hands and that you ought not to be asked to engage in much general correspondence but you know this case is a peculiar one. I have not much influence with Dr. and you have considerable, therefore I suggest that you write to him.¹

Note that W. C. White is consciously deferential about the matter: "if you feel like writing . . . I think . . . therefore I suggest." He would recommend, but she would decide. Writing to his wife regarding a different matter he was even more explicit about his deference to his mother's judgment: "Whatever she thinks best I will do."²

In the case of Burke, she evidently believed her son's suggestion was a valuable one. Four days later, little more than long enough for mail from Battle Creek to reach her at Harbor Springs, Michigan, she wrote an eleven-page letter to Burke, taking essentially the approach W. C. White had suggested. "The enemy is at work to lead you away from your post of duty," she wrote. "Just wait, faithful and true, until the Lord releases you."³

In another instance of recommendation, Ellen White specifically stated that she had disagreed with her son at first, but had then changed her mind and adopted his viewpoint. In November 1885 the Whites were in Christiania [Oslo], Norway. D. A. Delafield explains that while Ellen White spent her days writing and

¹W. C. White to E. G. White, May 26, 1891, LB 2A, 187-88, EGWRC-AU [emphasis added].

²W. C. White to M. K. White, Sept. 9, 1881, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

³E. G. White to W. P. Burke, May 30, 1891, EGWRC-AU.
preparing for evenings of preaching, W. C. White was engaged in consultation and planning with the leaders of the Christiania Publishing House. On November 10 "a letter came from the Review and Herald Publishing Company in Battle Creek refusing some requests" made by the publishing leaders in Christiania. For three weeks W. C. White had been considering attending the General Conference session that was about to begin in Battle Creek to press the case in behalf of the work in Europe. When the negative letter arrived from Battle Creek, he was certain he should go.¹

On Thursday evening, November 12, W. C. White mentioned to his mother that he had "almost decided to attend the General Conference." Her diary records her reaction.

At first I was surprised and said it could not be his duty to leave the work here to do this, but careful, calm consideration of the subject changed my mind. I thought he could serve the cause of God and especially His work in these mission fields better by going to America, so that from his own lips the Conference could hear of the necessities of the case for laborers and for money, rather than to read the same arguments in letter form. I now think that it is right that W. C. White should go, although I shall miss him very much and his counsel and advice seem to be almost a necessity at this time here.²

As a result of their mutual agreement, by 3:00 P.M. Friday he was crossing the North Sea for Liverpool where he would obtain passage for New York.³

Attempted persuasion

One issue over which W. C. White and his mother had some recurring disagreements concerned the amount which she as an author should receive for the publication of her books. The expenses of her staff and her generous donations to

¹Delafield, Ellen G. White in Europe, 125.

²E. G. White, "First Visit to Norway," Diary, Oct. 31 to Nov. 19, 1885, MS 27, 1885, EGWRC-AU.

³Ibid.
church causes led to recurring personal cash-flow problems. Because virtually all her expenditures were for the upbuilding of the church, she felt that church publishers should show more concern for her personal financial needs as they set retail prices and figured author's royalties on her books.

W. C. White understood her concerns, but he was also sympathetic with the financial stresses in the publishing houses. Consequently he was sometimes caught between her concerns and those of the publishers. In early 1885, in response to her concerns over too small income from her books, he expressed his view that "the income from your books is much larger than other authors get," and he supported his contention with actual figures of what other Seventh-day Adventist authors received for their works. He argued that her resources had been depleted not by a deficiency in her book income, but by "the means spent buying out Edson so he could go east, the expense of the farm, the schooling of Addie and May [Walling, her nieces], the building at St. Helena, and the loan to Mary Clough."¹

One later attempt to get her to see the publisher's point of view was alluded to in a letter White directed to C. H. Jones, manager of the Pacific Press.

With reference to the book business, as mentioned in yours of Aug. 24, I must confess that there is nothing which I can say or do that will help you. Mother has formed the opinion that I am so deeply interested in the general work, and so tender hearted and fearful of the criticism that I am working selfishly in her behalf, that she pays but little regard to my counsels, and, in this particular matter, has told me and others, that she should now take the matter in hand, without asking my council [sic], or paying any attention to my protests.

I have read carefully your long letter to her. . . . You will need to remember that mother does not easily carry in her mind facts and figures relative to business matters, and if you wish her to comprehend the relation of the [Pacific] Press to this business, you will need to write several times, presenting the matter in a clear and simple way. I do not think you will need to urge anything, if [you] can get her to understand the situation. Of course, if she should ask my opinion, I shall freely express it, but this I do not expect.

¹W. C. White to E. G. White, Jan. 12, 1885, WCWF, EGWRC-GC.
and I shall not urge my counsel with the prospect that it will annoy her and do you no good.

He felt that if she understood the publisher's need, she would change her mind, but until she did, there was nothing he could or would do.

It is obvious from the above letter that White had previously attempted to persuade his mother of the publisher's viewpoint but had been unsuccessful. He knew that there was "nothing" he could "say or do" to "help," because she was not "paying any attention" to his "protests." W. C. White's convictions were unchanged, but he had ceased to "urge" his views, because he saw that she was unreceptive to them.

This example is important because it shows that W. C. White was capable of holding opinions that differed from those of his mother. Perhaps even more important, it verifies what has been inferred from other incidents, that she did not yield her judgment to W. C. White. While she had an attitude of openness to additional information and was willing to consider the counsel of her son and others, she did not yield her independence to anyone. She did her own thinking and followed her own convictions.

Effective persuasion

Another level of counsel, "persuasion," here denotes communication that carried strong conviction and proved convincing to Ellen White. On fairly rare occasions, White expressed his opinions very strongly to his mother. To appreciate the significance of the letters cited, it should be noted that as an administrator W. C. White formed the habit of writing encouraging, conciliatory letters. He was conservative about expressing strong emotion. He liked to brighten his

communications with touches of humor and tended to express criticisms with tactful restraint. Some exceptions occurred in August 1890 when he was grieving the loss of Mary and was nearly exhausted from overwork. Two of his letters from this period are quoted at some length for two reasons. First, they show how strongly and colorfully he could urge an opinion when under stress. Second, they show how freely and frankly he could express himself to his mother. He did not fear to disagree with her as his mother, even while he maintained his complete deference to her judgment as the messenger of God.

The context of the letters is this: Ellen White had purchased a small house in Petoskey, Michigan, as a refuge from both the summer heat and the headquarters’ bustle of Battle Creek. There she found some peace and quiet to push forward her writing on the life of Christ. J. H. Kellogg had called on her at Petoskey and advised her to stay where she was and rest awhile. Nevertheless, she was besieged with invitations to speak at camp meetings and was torn between those calls and her need for rest and for progress in her writing. In the midst of this dilemma, W. C. White forcibly reminded her of her own priorities.

I see many reasons why you should not go to the Col[orado] and Cal[ifornia] camp-meetings. In my opinion, it would be the most unfortunate thing in the world, for you to go and take a large burden of their perplexities. It would do you ten times as much harm, as it would do them good. I am of one mind regarding all the meetings. Do not think of going to any of them, unless the Lord plainly tells you to go, and when He does this, I withdraw all objections. I believe that this is wholly consistent in view of the warnings that you have had [regarding your health]. For a long time you have longed for a rest from the turmoil of the battle, and now you can have it for a few weeks. Do not spoil it by hurrying back into the fray. Let others wrestle with the difficulties. If the Lord gives you a message for any one, let them have it, and let your burden rest there.

. . . If your mind is getting rested, and you are able to write a little on the Life of Christ, it is [of] tenfold more importance than attending the biggest camp-meetings there are in the world.¹

¹W. C. White to E. G. White, Aug. 18, 1890, LB C, 58-60, EGWRC-AU, emphasis added.
Four days later he wrote again. The background was his concern that the northern Michigan summer would soon be closing. He had apparently suggested that she go to California in the fall in order to pursue rest and writing away from the Michigan winter. Others, however, were urging her to attend the California camp meeting, and the two suggestions together were strongly drawing her to cut short her working vacation and re-enter the bustle of the camp-meeting circuit. In his effort to dissuade her, Willie reveals his own need for rest two months after Mary's death.

I am so sorry I said anything about California that I do not know what to do. I had really got it into my head that you were in earnest about keeping out of the heat of the battle, and letting others learn to bear the heavy burdens, and I thought that late in the autumn, after all the big meetings there were over, you could go to California and get away from Battle Creek and just be a private counselor in important matters, without taking the heavy public burden. But I see I was all off. You have fought in the front rank for so many years, that you will not march in [the rear.1] Well, if that is the plan,—at the head of the column or not at all—I say not at all. You must have some rest, if you wear yourself out trying to get it.

I am going to do my best to have you save your life and strength, and since learning how seriously you feel about California, I shall do all I can to keep you away from there. If you want to get away from B. C. this winter, let us go to So. Lancaster, [Massachusetts.] and if they bring their burdens and perplexities there, we will go to Florida, or Georgia. And if they follow us there, let us go to New Zealand, and engage a place on the missionary ship [the recently launched Pitcairn]. You may think I am not in earnest, but I am. You want to be free from this awful load of care and [yet] you seem to be drawn to it as a miller [moth] is to a light. If the Lord bids you go into the fiery furnace, I shall not say no, and if you say so, I will go too, but unless He bids you go, why not brace yourself, and pull in the other direction. I will pull with you, and with all my might.2

He concluded that if cold weather should set in early, or other burdens come to her in Petoskey, he is "lonesome" in Battle Creek.

---

1Probable reading; the line runs off the bottom of the LB page; cf. John White's comment after the death of James White, that the "rear ranks" would not suit his zeal, so God took him home "from the front ranks" (V. Robinson, James White, 303). This seems to have been a common expression at the time.

2W. C. White to E. G. White, Aug. 22, 1890, LB C, 81-82, EGWRC-GC, emphasis added.
But if it comes off warm, and you feel at home there, and can forget California and me . . . and every other thing but the berries and your books, then I say as I did before, stay as long as you can.

. . . It is very monotonous here now. There is no news to tell.

Goodby.¹

It must not be overlooked that, as strongly as he expresses his perceptions of her own "duty" and his, in both letters he states clearly that he will not only yield to her judgment, but follow it whatever the cost, if she is sure of the Lord's will.

"If the Lord bids you go into the fiery furnace, I shall not say no, and if you say so, I will go too." Moreover, the very strength of his convictions is based on an appeal to "the warnings that you have had," i.e., her own knowledge of what she should do. It is significant that in these strong examples of persuasion, W. C. White is persuading her, not to depart from her personal convictions, but to follow her own convictions of duty.

In this case she accepted his advice. She did not go west during the remaining months of 1890. A little later, however, at the request of W. C. White and the General Conference committee, she did accompany him to camp meetings in the east from October 10 to December 30.²

Counsel Concerning Timing and Delivery of Letters

One of the more sensitive issues regarding W. C. White's contributions as counselor concerns his opinions about the timing and delivery of his mother's letters. This, as is seen below, would become a point of criticism of him in 1904 and 1905. Therefore it is significant to observe his role in this matter as early as 1888.

¹Ibid., emphasis his.

It might come as a surprise to some that Ellen White did not always send the letters she had written. On the evening of December 30, 1890, for example, she felt such a "great burden" concerning Uriah Smith that she "could not sleep." She recorded in her diary that "my supplications went up to heaven in his behalf all night." The next day she "devoted much time to writing for Brother Smith, but did not feel quite free to send it to him. Held it," she penned in her diary, "to decide whether I had better talk with him."¹

On another occasion she had received a report from W. W. Prescott, president of Battle Creek College, through a letter he had written to Willie, regarding the behavioral problems of a certain student with whom Ellen White was acquainted. "Much disappointed," Ellen first wrote the student a letter, then questioned whether that was the best response to the problem. The fact that she felt it necessary to inform Prescott about her reasons for not writing, suggests that the letter may have been Prescott's idea. She soon described to Prescott her actions and thoughts regarding the situation.

I am much disappointed in her [the student] and very much perplexed to know what to do. I wrote to her stating what I had heard in a letter from you, and then I laid my letter aside to think over it and re-read it. After thinking of it a day or two, and prayerfully considering this matter I decided not to send it fearing it would not work favorably for your influence neither for mine. . . . Any hasty, abrupt movement might increase her danger . . . and she might as the result stumble and fall into some of the many gins and pits Satan has prepared for the feet of the unwary.²

Not only did Ellen White occasionally reconsider the timing or the sending of a letter she had written, but she sometimes specifically requested counsel on these points from persons acquainted with the intended recipient of the letter. In December 1882 she sent W. C. White an "article written for Dr. Kellogg," telling

¹E. G. White, Diary, Dec. 30-31, 1890, MS 54, 1890, EGWRC-AU.
²E. G. White to Brother and Sister W. W. Prescott, Sept. 10, 1888, EGWRC-AU.
Willie to "have Elders [J. H.] Waggoner and [G. I.] Butler and yourself read this. Then if you think it will not be best to give it to Dr. Kellogg you can withhold it for a time." It is not clear from this reference whether Waggoner and Butler were to participate in the decision regarding when to give the material to Kellogg, or whether W. C. White was to make that decision himself. In either case, Ellen White delegated the decision.¹

For comparison, it is important to notice how strongly she objected when an individual took it into his own hands to decide the timing and delivery of a testimony. In 1882 she sent Uriah Smith a "testimony" "with the request that it be read to the [Battle Creek] church." Because Smith was himself rebuked in the testimony, he "withheld" the testimony "for several weeks after it was received by him" and "questioned the propriety of bringing the testimony before the church at all." Ellen White's assessment of Smith's action was that he had taken "the responsibility of standing between God's word of reproof and the people." In his case she had not given him the option of deciding what to do with the testimony; he had assumed that responsibility himself.²

This furnishes the necessary background for an incident in which W. C. White chose not to deliver one of his mother's letters. He was in California, where some prominent church members had a long-standing and complex dispute. The relevant facts for the present study are that Ellen White had written a letter to M. J. Church, one of the parties in the dispute, and had sent the letter to W. C. White to deliver in connection with a personal visit. During the visit, Church talked "very freely, explaining his plans" to operate a health institution in direct competition with

¹E. G. White to W. C. White, Dec. 4, 1882, EGWRC-AU.
²E. G. White to Brethren and Sisters in Battle Creek, June 20, 1882, EGWRC-AU.
the church-owned St. Helena Rural Health Retreat and his "disappointment" that the Whites "should take so active a part in opposing" those plans. Willie did not think this a very opportune time to deliver the letter. He reported back to his mother:

I did not give him your letter, for I did not think it would be best, but [thought that it would be better to] wait a while. After talking with him for several hours, I thought that nothing would be lost by waiting until you should see him, and so I shall take the liberty to return to you your letter to him.¹

There were two reasons why White departed from his original plan to give Church the letter immediately. As Church explained recent developments in the dispute, W. C. White apparently felt that either the timing of the letter or its wording, or both, might be excessively provocative. "After he had explained this [plan] fully to me, I felt confident that it would not be best to give him the letter in which you spoke of it so pointedly." Furthermore, W. C. White felt that, in view of recent developments in the situation, Ellen White's letter could easily be misused.

There is also one other point in your letter which I think ought to be guarded. You say that after hearing what you have, that if he wishes to go on with his plans, you will not oppose him. I think that statement ought to be guarded, because if you find out afterward that the carrying out of his plans are [a] detriment to the cause, you will feel obliged to oppose [them] as you do every other influence which is working against the cause. . . . But in view of the repeated statements that have been circulated, that influential ones favor this plan, I think we should take special pains to prevent misunderstanding in the future.²

"A little delay" in the arrival of her letter might "not be injurious," Willie thought. Moreover, he cautioned, "you ought to have a copy of letters that you send to him." Also, Willie hoped that she might be able to speak with Church in person, for "what is spoken cannot be taken advantage of to such a degree as that which is written." In summary, W. C. White suggested that she carefully guard herself against possible misuse of her letter, and that she neither commend nor

¹W. C. White to E. G. White, May 31, 1888, LB A, 351, EGWRC-AU.

²Ibid.
directly oppose Church's business plans. Willie felt that the wisest course to follow with Church would be to "give him to understand that we acknowledge his right to do as he pleases in business matters and that we shall endeavor not to interfere unless the working out of his plans prove[s] to be injurious to the cause in some of its branches."  

It is not possible to establish with complete certainty her response to this counsel from W. C. White, but some probable conclusions may be drawn. Only two letters to Church occur in the E. G. White correspondence files for 1888. The first one, of twelve typewritten pages, is dated March 21, 1888, and appears to be the letter that W. C. White chose not to deliver in person. The second letter, of eight pages, was originally marked "undated letter," but was later filed with the March 21 letter when it was discovered that it was composed of substantial extracts from that previous letter. Since the second letter retains all the spiritual counsel directed to Church himself but deletes almost all the advice about his business plans and business partners, it corresponds to the general approach W. C. White suggested that his mother take in a second letter. It would seem likely that she may have conserved her time by using the first letter as a working draft for the second. If this conjecture is correct, she protected herself against possible misuse of the letter by deleting about four pages of specific references to Church's business plans but retained the personal spiritual appeals from the original letter.  

Asking Counsel for Others

Arthur White describes how, after the turn of the century, it became a

1Ibid.

2E. G. White to Brother [M. J.] Church, Mar. 21, 1888, Letter 33, 1888; E. G. White to Brother —— [M. J. Church], undated, Letter 33a, 1888, EGWRC-AU.
common practice for persons who were well-acquainted with Ellen White and her son to send inquiries to her through him, out of respect for her busy schedule.¹

Evidence from the present period shows that the function of W. C. White as interviewer of his mother in order to pass on her counsel to others had begun, in some form, at least as early as 1886. In that year W. C. White (writing from Copenhagen, Denmark) acknowledged two letters from G. I. Butler. White informed Butler that O. A. Olsen and himself had "spent considerable time in study and consultation on the questions you introduced, and on some points we have received valuable suggestions from mother."

Yesterday I asked mother if it was possible that the Lord designed that the message should go to the new countries, and the colonies where it was comparatively easy to obey [the Fourth Commandment], and that such places as England, Germany, Austria, and France were to be left till the eleventh hour. She said decidedly no. Then I asked if it was necessary for these countries to be honeycombed by having little companies of Sabbath-keepers here and there who would expose the false claims of the Sunday, and the condition of the churches, and thus prepare the way for the loud cry, and she answered yes. Then I asked, what is the matter in England. She said, I tried to tell them but they did not seem to understand. They must by some means get among the people, and by some different moves get their attention. They must some way get into the current, by mingling with them, and by writing for their papers, and such ways.²

It is not clear whether Butler's questions were specifically addressed to Ellen White or to Olsen and W. C. White, who were associated with Butler in administration. In any case, W. C. White took advantage of the opportunity to place the General Conference president's concerns before his mother. Both the form of the interview and W. C. White's report of it are similar to interviews he had with her after the turn of the century.

Another example suggests that some people perceived the Whites as so

¹A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 5:49-50.
²W. C. White to G. I. Butler, July 26, 1886, LB A1, 204-9, EGWRC-AU.
closely associated that each spoke for the other. After W. P. Burke, staff physician for the St. Helena Health Retreat in 1890, received a critical letter from W. C. White, he threatened to resign. When Ellen White appealed to him to stay on, he told her that "he had put confidence in" her and W. C. White as "the only ones" he considered to be "reliable counselors." He felt that "his motives" had been "decidedly misjudged" by Willie and apparently assumed that Ellen White must believe the same. He thought that "if those whose confidence he appreciated thus judged him, it was no use for him to try any longer." Ellen White listened to him and agreed to some changes at the Health Retreat, on which basis he was willing to stay.2

This example is cited because Burke's words show how closely some people associated W. C. White and his mother. Burke's position as reported by Ellen White, however, seems to have the tone of a defensive complaint. Burke may have been looking for an excuse to resign.3 In any case, his expression of "confidence" in Ellen and W. C. White as "reliable counselors" illustrates the way some people viewed the relationship between the Ellen White and her son.

Ellen White's Calls for W. C. White to Be Her Full-Time Assistant

Ellen White so much valued the help and counsel of W. C. White that within four months after the death of her husband in 1881, she began to express concern lest Willie (like Edson) involve himself in business enterprises that would limit his availability to her needs. In an attempt to alleviate her fears, he responded:

1 See above, "Recommendation."

2 E. G. White to W. C. White and M. K. White, May 2, 1890, EGWRC-AU.

"Please dismiss any thoughts of my buying an interest in Way of Life or Album Business. I will do what I can for the advancement of your interest cheerfully and for nothing." 1

From then on she repeatedly expressed her desire to have W. C. White unite himself with her work on a regular basis. "Edson cannot attend the camp-meetings with me for his business requires his presence," she wrote in August 1884. "I am glad he feels inclined to stick to his business," she continued,

but Willie it would give character [dignity] to my work if one of my sons could attend me as I journey. It must be so in the future. . . . I want you to be making arrangements to connect your interest with me and do my business and have a share equal, equal share with myself." 2

Three days later she described her need more pointedly, offering Willie a regular salary as an inducement to join her.

To say the very least, you must consider I am getting older every year. I need you. If you do not accept this offer [to connect on a basis of equally shared resources], I will pay you weekly a sum that will be as much as you receive now. This looks right to me. . . . You may occupy the house with us, have Anna and Mother Kelsey with us and your family, and let us be united in our efforts. . . . Think of these things candidly and prayerfully. . . . I think it will be essential for you to be at Battle Creek at General Conference, if not before[,] to accompany me, but I will see and test matters still further. 3

While he did not at that time fully accede to her request, he did try to accommodate her needs in addition to his own General Conference responsibilities. The following spring he filed a request with G. I. Butler for a month's leave from his headquarters responsibilities. "I want some more time on mother's work," he wrote. "She is not feeling well and the book making goes very slow. If we can

1W. C. White to E. G. White, Dec. 15, [1881], WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

2E. G. White to W. C. White and M. K. White, Aug. 10, 1884, EGWRC-AU.

3E. G. White to W. C. White and M. K. White, Aug. 13, 1884, EGWRC-AU.
have the month of May here I think we can fix up 'Life Sketches' so that it will do lots of good. What say you?"1

Ellen White greatly appreciated his assistance and counsel, but she was not satisfied with his part-time availability. From time to time she brought the subject up again, reminding him of how much she wanted his full-time help. From Oakland, in 1890, she wrote to him in Battle Creek. "Your presence, could it have been here while it has been in Battle Creek, oh, how highly it would have been appreciated." Yet she did not often go beyond gentle hints. Aware of the value of his administrative work, and sensitive to his own convictions of duty, she did not urge him, but very gently appealed to him to consider what the will of God might be. "I do not wish," she assured him, "to add one jot or tittle to your burdens." Nor did she feel that he would ever consciously "slight" his mother "or in any way neglect her." But his work with the General Conference was such a heavy load that she did not feel she could depend on him for fear of doing him actual "harm" by "adding to" his "perplexities."

You may think this is a queer strain [i.e., line of thought], but nevertheless, I have felt that I was looking matters squarely in the face, and what my future course may be the Lord knows. He hangs a mist before my eyes that I shall only see the present, and I am content it should be thus. I am resting in the love of God with a peaceful trust... Do not interpret what I have written as the slightest reflection on you for I do not feel thus. You have your work, it must not be neglected for it demands all that there is of you. I gave you to the Lord before you were born. I gave you to the Lord after you were born. You are the Lord's. Do His will and His work and you will receive a crown of glory that will never fade away.2

In the spring of 1891 she would write to O. A. Olsen that as much as she desired Willie's help with her bookmaking, she felt the General Conference

---

1W. C. White to G. I. Butler, Mar. 17, 1885, LB A, 117-18, EGWRC-AU.

2E. G. White to W. C. White, April 30, Dec. 18, 1890, EGWRC-AU.
committee needed him more than she did.\textsuperscript{1} A similar concern for the needs of the conference in Australia would repeatedly temper her pleas for his help during the 1890s. Nevertheless, his role as her counselor and helper would continue to expand until he would resign most of his conference responsibilities and devote himself largely to her work.

**Conclusions, 1881-1891**

On the basis of the evidence presented in this chapter, several generalizations can be made about W. C. White's relationship to his mother.

First, W. C. White as an administrator was constantly in contact with actual problem situations. His views of the circumstances were shaped by his extensive knowledge of his mother's counsels, and against the backdrop of those counsels he worked out possible solutions in the form of policies, procedures, and administrative actions. It appears that he often shared his plans with his mother for her reaction and critique. On occasion she would publicly voice her support for specific positions she agreed with.

In this context, his second role as counselor to her gains clearer perspective. W. C. White served as a second set of eyes and ears to keep his mother informed, although he was often selective in the news he passed on to her. By dialogue and by suggesting alternate viewpoints and possibilities he provided opportunities for her to sharpen and articulate her thinking, but there is no evidence from this period that he ever stood in a dominant relation to her. It is obvious that his "counsel" to her was as that of a cabinet member to a president, the viewpoints of a subordinate. She was never seen following his suggestions simply because he

\textsuperscript{1}E. G. White to O. A. Olsen, Mar. 30, 1891, EGWRC-AU; see section above, "Mother's Representative on the General Conference Committee, 1889-1891."
made them (as directives), or because she had no viable alternatives of her own (as if she had been intellectually dependent on him). When she accepted his ideas it was because having weighed various options she was convinced of the value of his suggestions.

Consequently, his counsel was usually descriptive and optional rather than prescriptive and directive. The very few occasions on which he was seen giving strong persuasive recommendations were exceptional. The strongest persuasions he expressed during this period came when he was urging her to be true to her own convictions of duty, against the burdens others would seek to impose on her. Even in these expressions, he consistently affirmed that at whatever point his judgment might conflict with her own understanding of "duty," he was ready to yield his judgment.

In his third major role, it was his attitude of conscious submission to her judgment that made W. C. White trustworthy as an editor of his mother's writings. She was convinced from long experience, having observed his behavior and personality since his birth, that he had a profound respect, even reverence, for the visionary revelations given to her. As a child, and even as a teenager, Willie had usually submitted himself to her admonition and discipline. As an adult he did his own thinking and was willing to disagree with her as his mother; but to whatever extent her judgment was formed by revelation he was committed to acknowledging its source and was eager to embrace whatever God might reveal for his enlightenment. Because he had this attitude of humility and openness, she could trust him. She believed that in his editing he would not knowingly or intentionally impose his own ideas upon her text.

A further premise that informed the role she gave him as editorial assistant was Ellen White's concept of inspiration. She believed that divine revelation did not
(usually) dictate the prophet's words but rather informed the prophet's thoughts. Inspiration guided the prophet as communicator, not only in the initial formulation of thoughts into words, but also in the subsequent improvement of those expressions by herself or with the help of others. Working on this premise, Ellen White employed literary assistants who did various levels of editorial work under her supervision and, whenever possible, subject to her final approval.

During this period of his life (his twenty-seventh to his thirty-seventh years) W. C. White performed all the kinds of editorial functions he would do during his mother's lifetime. He was gaining the experience under her personal supervision that would enable him to carry on important aspects of her work when her supervision would no longer be available.

A fourth conclusion concerns the effects of W. C. White's relationship with his mother on his other relationships. Because of his close identification with his mother and her interests, conflicts in which she played a central part inevitably involved him in conflict as well. Those who opposed her tended to oppose him too. This was clearly evident during the period from the 1888 General Conference session until the Whites left for Australia in the autumn of 1891, but it foreshadowed similar conflicts in the years following their return to the United States in 1900.

Fifth, the conflict at Minneapolis in 1888 served to highlight W. C. White's personal fairness and integrity. He fought publicly and privately to secure a fair hearing for Jones and Waggoner and an equally fair hearing for their opponents. His persistent loyalty to principles he believed in, regardless of criticism and forfeited popularity, demonstrated a laudable degree of integrity. Even though White saw that his defense of Waggoner and Jones and his loyalty to Ellen White had made him "decidedly unpopular," he did not flinch from the stand he had taken.
His unwavering loyalty to principle is of great significance for the present study because behind the most challenging questions which have been raised about the relationship of W. C. White to his mother stand questions about his integrity. To what extent was he trustworthy in his relationship to his mother, and especially in his handling of his mother's writings? The evidence from the present period indicates that he was a man of principled integrity, and that he held his relationship to his mother as a sacred trust to which he was determined to be true even at great cost to himself.

Chapter 3 reveals that the move to Australia brought the two into closer connection, both geographically and in the overlapping concerns of their respective responsibilities. His decision, in 1897, to devote himself largely to her work shaped his vocation for the rest of his life.
CHAPTER 3

CAREERS IN CONFLICT, 1891-1900

The dual career that W. C. White had pursued during the 1880s had brought him by age thirty-four to the position of acting General Conference president. Administrative leadership was "his life-blood," "his inheritance from the Lord," said his mother. "For this work he was born." But, she added, God had also called him to help with "the preparation of my writings for publication."1

Ever since his father’s death, W. C. White had tried to follow both callings. "I know of no work in the world which is of greater importance than the getting of mother’s writings before the people," he explained to his brother Edson, but his own "preferences" were for his father’s line of work—institutional organization and administration. Furthermore, the "criticism brought to bear upon Mother’s helpers" was "severe and unmerciful." He had "felt this so keenly" after the return from Europe in 1887 that he was "glad to be fully occupied with other work."2

The move to Australia offered a respite from the opposition of Battle Creek, but the events of the 1890s only intensified Willie’s dilemma of how to dovetail his mother’s work, which he saw as most important, with his conference

1E. G. White, "The Work of Elder W. C. White," from Diary, Aug. 18, 1899, DF 107, EGWRC-GC.

2W. C. White to J. E. White, June 21, 1899, LB 13, 304; Oct. 24, 1905, LB 29, 331, EGWRC-AU.
responsibilities, which he particularly loved. The dilemma was his mother's as well. While she very much wanted his full-time help, she also believed that the conference needed the contribution that, because of his connection with her, he was especially qualified to make. During the 1880s W. C. White had attempted to juggle both careers. By 1896, however, it became evident that the limits of his physical and mental stamina demanded a choice. The breakdown of his health forced him to face the hard decision he had postponed for so long. His reluctance to resign from conference leadership is indicated in a later remark to Edson. "Gradually I have freed myself from other responsibilities," Willie wrote, "and have given my time more and more to helping Mother. In doing this, I have given up some opportunities to be a leader, to hold honorable positions, and have chosen to be a servant."1 The story of W. C. White in the 1890s is the story of the circumstances that led him to resign from official leadership in the footsteps of his father to devote himself to the work of his mother.

Chronological Overview, 1891-1900

When W. C. White and his mother disembarked in Sydney, Australia on December 8, 1891, he was thirty-seven years of age and she had marked her sixty-fourth birthday about two weeks earlier. "Australasia," as the term was then used by Seventh-day Adventists, designated the two British colonies of Australia and New Zealand, with mission responsibility for the islands of the South Pacific. Seventh-day Adventists had been working in the region since 1885, and by the middle of 1891 had some 836 members there.2

1W. C. White to J. E. White, Oct. 24, 1905, LB 29, 332, EGWRC-AU.

2E. G. White, "From America to Australia," BE, Jan. 1, 1892, 9; SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 ed., s.v., "Australasian Division" and "Australia, Commonwealth of";
The work of W. C. White in Australasia may be divided into three main periods: the first two years of his service as General Conference district superintendent, from 1891 through 1893; his tenure as president of the Australasian Union Conference, from 1894 to 1897; and the transition years from 1898 until his return to the United States in 1900.

District Superintendent, 1891-1893

The term "district superintendent" in 1891 designated a member of the General Conference committee with responsibility for supervision of a specific "district" or territory of denominational work. This was W. C. White's recognized title in Australasia from 1891 to 1897, although it was not constitutionally official until the General Conference of 1895. After the formation of the Australasian Union Conference in 1894, he was both district superintendent for Australasia and president of the Australasian Union Conference.

The Whites' first major meeting with the conference workers in Australia was the fourth annual session of the Australian Conference, which convened in Melbourne from December 27, 1891, through January 1, 1892. Significant actions included the election of A. G. Daniells as conference president and resolutions to establish a Seventh-day Adventist college for Australasia. While the plans for a "permanent" school were being matured, work on a temporary school would begin...
immediately. W. C. White was elected to the conference executive committee and was made chairman of a committee of seven on organization and plans for the Australasian Bible School.¹

White took a leading part in the development of the school. He and G. C. Tenney, editor of the Bible Echo, rented for school buildings, two three-story houses on St. Kilda Road, "the finest boulevard in Melbourne." At the official opening on August 24, 1892, W. C. White "spoke of the development of school work among Seventh-day Adventists, pointing out conditions of success to be sought, and elements of danger to be avoided."²

His headquarters during 1892 was at Melbourne, from which he carried on an extensive correspondence with denominational leaders in America. In March and April he traveled to New Zealand to get acquainted with that field and attend its annual conference session. His mother was seriously ill for eleven months with malarial fever and inflammatory rheumatism. Looking after her business was another of his commitments. An ongoing financial crisis at the office of the Echo Publishing Company in Melbourne also absorbed much of his time.³ But the financial crisis extended far beyond the publishing house.


Financing Church Growth Amidst Economic Depression

The background of the church’s financial crisis was a severe economic depression that was gripping all of Australia. Many of the church members were unemployed and in poverty.¹ As the decade wore on, the economic situation in the United States worsened, giving American Seventh-day Adventists their own financial problems. As early as September 1893, General Conference president O. A. Olsen remarked on the "stringency in the money market and the great depression of business in the U.S.," but hoped the resulting "difficulties" would not greatly hinder the work of the church. By 1895 he lamented that declining tithes and offerings had left the General Conference treasury "virtually empty." In 1896 he complained that "the general financial condition" of the United States was "just about as bad as it possibly can be," citing the recent failure of "three out of five banks" in Lansing, the capital of Michigan, not far from Battle Creek. Consequently the church in America found little money to send abroad.²

W. C. White reported to Olsen in 1892 that "the general financial depression" in Australia was "so universal that a large proportion of the printing houses in Melbourne are employing some of their hands but half time, while many others are laid off entirely." White warned the president, "I fear you will be shocked when you see our balance sheet for the last half-year of 1892. It will


probably show a loss of several hundred pounds." Olsen’s reply shows that he had not yet become seriously concerned about the deficit.1

Some drastic cutbacks in services reduced the rate of loss, but a year later the Echo’s books were still “in the red.” “We cannot count on as much work in the future, as we have had for the last six months,” White observed in mid-1893, because we are now well-stocked with tracts and pamphlets, and as business is fearfully depressed, we cannot look for much job work. Then, on account of the hard times, many of our canvassers are giving up the work, and some are sick, and several of the best are in the School. So we can look for but little [income] from the canvassers.2 Consequently he projected a loss of another one to two hundred pounds for the second half of 1893. The financial situation could scarcely have been less propitious for founding major new institutions.

Yet the leaders in Australia were looking for land on which to found a college. In another letter to Olsen about the same time, White admitted that the "prospects as regards the school here are difficult to determine." On the one hand, he noted that "the school is becoming more popular with our people." On the other hand, "the hard times make it appear to them that our plans are preposterous. In fact," he confessed, "we cannot see any prospects of raising twenty thousand dollars, or [even] ten thousand dollars, and yet we firmly believe that the way will open so that the work can go forward."3

The predicament of the few small churches scattered over vast areas of the

1W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, Dec. 21, 1892, LB 2, 275, EGWRC-AU; O. A. Olsen to W. C. White, Jan. 25, 1893, RG 11, Bk 8, 712-716, GCAr. White’s letter does not say "several hundred thousand pounds" as a typographical error has it in Valentine, "Daniells and Organization," 82.

2W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, July 18, 1893, LB 3, 153, EGWRC-AU.

3W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, June 8, 1893, LB 3, 18, EGWRC-AU.
Australian continent and the islands of New Zealand was poignantly described by W. C. White in a letter to W. A. Spicer, secretary of the Foreign Mission Board. The "long continued, and [still] continuing delays in sending laborers [from America] to the field," White lamented, "leave our people to sink down in hopeless acceptance of the taunts of our enemies, that our work will always drag on devoid of life, and without enough ministers to bury the churches as they die."¹

In spite of these great needs, Ellen White could not consent to retrenchment for mere financial reasons. White reported to the Foreign Mission Board his mother's response to one proposal for economizing. The conference committee had thought to "give no encouragement to young men who wished to work for the Conference as ministers," but rather "to insist that they canvass" (i.e., sell denominational publications). But his mother "condemned" the plan of keeping back the young men and "reproved" the committee for considering such a thing. "When I was arguing the case with mother," White continued,

I told her of our Conference indebtedness, and that we must curtail somewhere, and asked if she would consent to our sending away some of the older men to give the young men a chance. She said No. We cannot spare men of experience and ability. Again I pictured to her our financial condition, and the horrors of debt. Then she said, If this is your situation, why in the world does your committee not bestir itself, and place the facts, and an appeal before the General Conference[?] I told her it was not the custom of our people to use the funds of the General Conference in prosecuting the work in organized conferences. Mother then said, I do not know your rules, nor regulations, but I know from the light given me, that the cities of Australia ought to be worked, and that they ought to be worked now.²

In this context of economic depression, enormous needs, and prophetic commission, W. C. White led the Australasian church to found a college on 1500

¹W. C. White to W. A. Spicer, Oct. 31, 1893, LB 4, 8, EGWRC-AU.

²W. C. White to Foreign Mission Board, Feb. 20, 1895, LB 7, 191, EGWRC-AU.
acres, enlarge the publishing house, and start at least seven other institutions.  

To accomplish such a feat in a mere nine years involved continual financial risk. White himself would have preferred a more conservative course of action but was continually prodded forward by the great needs and opportunities, and especially by his mother’s visions. When others were inclined to financial retrenchment, she continually called for advance. “The messages of instruction which the Lord is sending us so constantly,” White explained to I. H. Evans in 1898, “forced us, in many cases against our fears, and in some cases against our judgment, to press forward work which was beyond our power to do without help from other lands.” “Many of these moves” which had been “entered into by us with trembling,” he observed, had been “wonderfully successful.”  

The financial accountability, however, for this ongoing situation of virtual bankruptcy, fell ultimately on the shoulders of the district superintendent, W. C. White. Despite repeated directions from his mother to delegate the financial matters to others, there were not many others to delegate to. There was such a shortage of financial personnel that in 1894 the Australian Conference elected an institution—the


2W. C. White to I. H. Evans, June 6, 1898, LB 12, 48, EGWRC-AU.
A topic which is mentioned almost constantly in the official correspondence is the shortage of qualified personnel for positions in Australasia and the repeated, seemingly endless delays in locating and sending them from America.²

The long delays in securing help from the United States made it easier for White to continue Shouldering responsibilities himself than to find others to take them. This became a major cause of the burnout that caught up with him by 1896, and the reason that his resignation was directly linked with a request for an experienced "financier" to serve as district superintendent.³ In 1892, these developments were still four years in the future, but the financial crisis that helped to bring them on was already very much present. A different kind of crisis had been building for years— an organizational bottleneck—and W. C. White had strong convictions about how to deal with it.

Agitating for a New Organizational Structure

At least by 1892, W. C. White had become acutely aware of the limitations of denominational structure as it impacted the Australasian field. At that time, the


²See, e.g., O. A. Olsen to W. A. Spicer, Sept. 18, 1893, RG 11, Bk 11, 172; O. A. Olsen to W. C. White, Apr. 27, 1894, RG 11, Bk 12, 76-81; Jan. 10, 1895, RG 11, Bk 13, 462-63, GCAR-AHC.

time the conferences of Australia and New Zealand were connected directly to the General Conference. This meant that the governing boards of which White was a member and to which he was accountable were located in Battle Creek, Michigan, U.S.A. This constituted a major communication problem because postal service from Australia to the United States took approximately a month in each direction. Telegrams were expensive and transoceanic telephone was yet future. Prescott described the problem apologetically in 1893. "I hope the brethren in Australia will have some charity for us in our apparent slowness," he pleaded to W. C. White, and will try to give us the credit of endeavoring to do the very best we can under the circumstances. . . . After one has done the very best he can, it is impossible to put the situation on paper in such a way as to be fully appreciated; and before mail can come from such a distance and be acted upon and a reply returned, the whole situation may be changed so as to render the counsel entirely worthless.\(^1\)

White's response to the communication problem was to propose to O. A. Olsen that the upcoming General Conference session (of 1893) consider "the organization of some ecclesiastical body to stand half-way between state and colonial conferences, and the General Conference," a body which could "appoint the trustees of our various institutions and take general control of the work here." Olsen took up the idea with some enthusiasm, reading White's letter to the General Conference committee at its next meeting. Upon Olsen's recommendation, the committee voted "that it would be advisable to divide up the field, wherever the work has assumed sufficient proportions, into districts; and that conferences, under the General Conference, be organized in these several districts, to take the oversight of the work in them."\(^2\)

---

\(^1\)W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, Oct. 5, 1893, Prescott Correspondence File, EGWRC-AU.

\(^2\)W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, Dec. 21, 1892, LB 2, 278, EGWRC-AU; O. A. Olsen
This recommendation of the General Conference committee in January was implemented by the 1893 General Conference session in February. Olsen reported to White in March that the session had made "provision" for "two more Districts," one in Australasia and one in Europe. Also, the General Conference committee had voted to increase the authority of the district superintendents. But the simple designation of the Australasian territory as a "district" did not meet the need as White saw it. "We note with interest your plan to increase the responsibility of the District Superintendent," he wrote to Olsen. "This is a move toward the ideal presented to mother, and although I see difficulties, I believe it is right." White was "disappointed," however, in his "search" through the early issues of the General Conference Bulletin "for the record of any action regarding the District Federation of Conferences, or any plans for a European, or Australasian Union."1

"You say you are disappointed," rejoined Olsen when White's letter arrived in Battle Creek a month later, "in not finding any record of district federation of conferences, or plans for the European or the Australasian union. You will have found a report of such action before this time, for they have been completed. Europe has been formed into a District, and so has Australasia.2

Having learned from Olsen's May correspondence that Olsen would soon be leaving for Europe, White inferred from Olsen's June letter that the president's itinerary would include the "organization of the European District Conference."

---


2 O. A. Olsen to W. C. White, June 13, 1893, RG 11, Bk 9, 673, GCAr.
Affirming the intention to form "district conferences," White urged that "we should have one organized here, and when we consider the importance of such an organization, we think that the President of the General Conference should be here to organize it." 1

To the Foreign Mission Board White argued that "there are intercolonial questions of the greatest importance, constantly coming up, that require consideration by some body of men." The Foreign Mission Board, looking at the situation from a Battle Creek viewpoint, could not see the need for any structural change. Olsen, however, who had himself experienced in Europe during the 1880s the inefficiency and frustration of having to send all plans to Battle Creek for approval, recognized the value of White's concept and after his immediate trip to Europe was on his way to Australia to study it further. Meanwhile, W. W. Prescott had also been doing some thinking about the need. "It seems to me that some different arrangement must be made in reference to managing the work at such a distance," he wrote to White in October. "I believe matters will have to be managed more by those on the ground, without referring so many details to the Foreign Mission Board. . . . I hope this matter will receive some consideration in your council." 2

Union Conference President, 1894-1897

White's campaign for change culminated in January, 1894, when the

1Ibid., O. A. Olsen to W. C. White, May 17, 1893, RG 11, Bk 10, 244; May 31, 1893, RG 11, Bk 9, 669, GCAr; W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, July 9, 1893, LB 3, 115, EGWRC-AU.

annual meeting of the Australian conference was followed by the organization of a union conference for Australasia.¹

Organization of the Australasian Union Conference, 1894

The session was held at Middle Brighton near Melbourne, Victoria, from January 15 through 25, 1894. "About 250 persons were present," including some nineteen delegates—six from New Zealand, ten from Australia, and three representing the General Conference (O. A. Olsen, Ellen White, and W. C. White). The district superintendent, W. C. White, presided over the seating of the delegates and then moved that Olsen chair the organizational session. After a constitution had been approved, officers were elected. W. C. White was named president with A. G. Daniells as vice-president.²

A committee on school location reported to the session that they had found several places "worthy of consideration" and recommended that the executive committee "be authorized to take immediate steps to raise funds and to purchase land" for the proposed college. Resolutions were voted authorizing the conference to "select a permanent site for our school," "construct suitable buildings," and "raise a building fund" of £4000 (then approximately $20,000 U.S.). At the request of the Australian Conference, the Australasian Union Conference accepted responsibility


for the ownership and operation of the Australasian Bible School, the forerunner of Avondale College.¹

The dominant concern for the rest of 1894 was to locate land for the new college. As early as the previous July, W. C. White had reported to O. A. Olsen that "we are now doing serious work in the matter of looking for land." By May 1894 the committee had decided to purchase a certain Brettville Estate of 1500 acres. W. C. White reported to the Foreign Mission Board in June that they had "signed a contract to buy the place" and had paid a deposit of $125.²

A critical shortage of funds, negative evaluations by various persons, and other problems delayed the completion of the purchase until August of 1895, although a "manual training department" had been opened in March 1895 to begin development of the campus.³

Meanwhile, W. C. White was contemplating some further developments in conference organization. The whole of the continent of Australia was then under one conference. White proposed to the Foreign Mission Board that New South Wales be organized as a separate conference and that Queensland and West Australia become mission territories supported financially by the General Conference until their membership would become large enough to warrant their organization into conferences. The remaining colonies of Victoria, Tasmania, and South Australia


³E. G. White to Edson White, Aug. 19, 1895, EGWRC-AU.
would comprise the Central Australian Conference. The New South Wales Conference was organized, not without some opposition, at the annual meeting of the Australian Conference in late 1895.¹

**Married Again, 1895**

The purchase of land for a college and the beginning of buildings there, the formation of new conferences, and the continual struggle with financial problems were not enough to take W. C. White's mind off the two daughters he had left behind in Battle Creek and his own loneliness since the death of Mary. When in December 1894 his mother had an opening for a household employee, Willie urged her to hire May Lacey, a student from Tasmania whom he had met at the Bible School in Melbourne. Ellen White "soon learned why Willie was anxious for May Lacey." May reminded him of Mary, he was very much attracted to her, and he wanted the opportunity for his mother to become better acquainted with her.²

As time went on, he proposed marriage and enthusiastically informed his brother of her acceptance. "I shall send you a Photo as soon as I can get some," he promised Edson.

Do not look for a little sallow pinched-up body, nor for a "stuck-up lady." She is a good big wholesome woman, as full of life and goodness as can be. May is as tall as I am, and weighs a few pounds more. I tip the scale at 148; and she, at 153. Her vitals have not been crushed by corsets, nor her spirits by idle ambitions. Wherever she is, there is sunshine and comfort, and peace.³

---

¹W. C. White to Conference Workers in New South Wales, Nov. 12, 1895, LB 8, 389-93; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Dec. 29, 1895, LB 9, 100, EGWRC-AU; W. W. Prescott to O. A. Olsen, Nov. 20, 1895, RG 11, Misc. Letters; O. A. Olsen to A. G. Daniells, Jan. 6, 1896, RG 11, Bk. 14A, 221, GCAr; for further details on the organization of the NSW conference, see below, "A Higher Vision of Leadership."

²E. G. White to Edson and Emma, Jan. 15, 1895, EGWRC-AU.

³W. C. White to J. E. White, Feb. 22, 1895, LB 7, 182, EGWRC-AU.
The wedding took place at her father's home in Tasmania on May 9, 1895.

Ellen White sent Edson and Emma a succinct summary of the occasion:

Last Thursday Willie and May Lacey were united in marriage. Everything passed off pleasantly. The children seemed very earnest that Mother should pray on the occasion, and I complied with their request. The blessing of the Lord was present. Every movement was conducted with the greatest solemnity. . . . All, every member of the family, dote on May and they feel highly honored to take in Willie to their family circle. They all highly esteem Willie. He is 40 years old and May is 21. There was no sentimentalism in their courtship and marriage. Immediately after their engagement, Willie was called to Auckland, New Zealand, camp meeting, and he spent three months visiting the churches.

Willie planned for two weeks vacation, but did not have any at all. They were married in the afternoon, and Willie had to attend a committee meeting in the evening.¹

A dinner reception at 5:00 P.M. followed the wedding, and when Willie's committee meeting let out, he and May and Ellen White boarded the 8:30 train for Launceston. They spent two weeks in Melbourne with union conference committee meetings and other business. Finally on May 29 they left for their home in Granville near Sydney, where Willie was reunited with his daughters Ella and Mabel, who had arrived from America on May 5. The next year the family of four became six with the birth of Herbert and Henry on April 6, 1896. A fifth child, Evelyn Grace, was born June 1, 1900.²

W. C. White's marriage and reunion with his daughters was a bright spot in an otherwise incessant round of travel and work.

Breakdown and Resignation, 1896-1897

The two years following the organization of the Australasian Union

¹E. G. White to Edson and Emma, May 15, 1895, EGWRCAU.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Conference were especially hectic ones. The cumulative effect of the demands of pioneering leadership, the extensive traveling (usually at the cheapest class of ticket), the incessant correspondence, and the unrelenting financial pressures eventually took their toll on W. C. White. A number of evidences of his physical and mental exhaustion occur in the correspondence. In June 1894, just five months after assuming the responsibilities of union conference president, White confided his situation to his brother Edson. "Ever since the . . . departure of Elder Olsen, I have been in much perplexity," Willie wrote. "I have been given work that is new to me, and I have no [secretarial] help in my writing, and mother's feebleness and perplexities have taken hold of me pretty strong, sometimes." A "spell of the influenza" had put him even farther behind in his work.¹

His mother wrote as early as August 1894 that he had "so great work to do" that he was "pressed to the very verge of breakdown." For "weeks and months" he had suffered a "slow fever" and a "congested brain." Willie's "brain is weary and congested with considering important matters that need his attention," she remarked to J. H. Kellogg in October.²

During a three-month itinerary to New Zealand back in March 1895, W. C. White had revealed his developing exhaustion to his then fiancee, May Lacey. "I am so weary," he typed.

How I wish I could lay aside my work and chat with you for an hour. It would be much nicer than having to sit here and pound this old machine. . . . I spent considerable time Friday, reading the American letters. I do not wonder that it made your head ache to read them all. When I can answer them it is hard to tell. I am falling farther, and farther behind with my writing. When I do get a little time to write, it is done so hastily, that some point is unguarded, or blunt,

¹W. C. White to J. E. White, June 17, 1894, LB 4, 458, EGWRC-AU.

²E. G. White to O. A. Olsen, [Aug.] 1894 (Letter 55, 1894); E. G. White to J. H. Kellogg, Oct. 25, [1894] (Letter 46a, 1894), EGWRC-AU.
and then somebody is offended, and more writing is required to show them that no harm was intended. Jesus said, "Be ye as wise as serpents, and as harmless as doves." I must study this more. Pray for me, that I may have wisdom, patience, and moderation.1

In May 1896 Ellen White reported to Edson and Emma that Willie had been for months "very much like a clock run down," with "so little sleep for so long" that she feared he would have a stroke of "apoplexy." The evidence is that White was approaching a nervous breakdown. W. W. Prescott, who was then in Australia, noted that White was "greatly depressed."2

At meetings of the union conference committee held at Cooranbong and Sydney in April 1896, the matter of White's leadership was linked to the long-recognized need for a business manager for the district.3 As early as the middle of 1893 the financial crisis in the Australasian district had led the Australian and New Zealand conferences to petition the General Conference for a "financier" to help wrestle with the gigantic challenges. The request had been repeated in June 1894 and at other times.4

Consequently, in late April 1896, the union conference committee requested that both White and Prescott "lay before the Foreign Mission Board the condition of the work in Australasia, and present a request for suitable help," i.e., another district superintendent qualified to take over both the spiritual leadership and

1W. C. White to My Dear May, Mar. 10, 1895, LB 7, 210, EGWRC-AU.


the financial management. Within a very few days both men had presented the situation to O. A. Olsen. Considering the contrasts in situation (Prescott was beginning his voyage homeward, hence presumably would have been able to evaluate the situation with some objectivity, and White was writing about intensely personal issues concerning himself), the remarkable agreement between their interpretations is evidence for the candor and veracity of both men.¹

Prescott broached the subject to Olsen with delicacy and tact. "I have not spoken of this before in my letters," he explained, "both because it was a matter which I have disliked to touch and because I wanted plenty of time to study the situation before writing about so important a matter." In addition to some "plain and kindly talks with Bro. White," Prescott had also conferred with Daniells, G. B. Starr, and a leading layman, Metcalfe Hare, about the crisis.²

Prescott's perception of White's situation had three constituent elements. First, he felt that White had been given some responsibilities for which he was not naturally very gifted, but which he could discharge successfully by putting forth exceptional effort. "If he had the faculty of managing easily, his cares would not have weighed him down so much."³

Prescott's second observation was that White had been loaded with a multiplicity of cares that had sapped his strength and prevented him from giving to each of his responsibilities the attention needed for success. "You know," Prescott wrote,


²Ibid.

³Ibid.
that Bro. White is not a financier and never was at home [i.e., in America, before coming to Australia], but I have always had considerable confidence in his ability to plan and direct other interests of the work. Here, however[,] the situation seems to be peculiar. His time is so divided in trying to manage the district [Australasian Union Conference] and the New South Wales Conference . . . and the school, and his time is so broken into by his mother's requirements, that he is almost hopelessly involved and seems to be unable to direct all these things successfully.¹

The third factor Prescott noted was the physical and mental exhaustion resulting from White's long-term overload. "I have feared," Prescott confided to Olsen,

that the strain upon him had been too much since coming to this field and that unless he should have some sort of change he would be in danger of serious brain trouble. . . . I find that Bm. [G. B.] Starr and Daniells share my apprehension about the condition of his mind. I have talked to his mother about it and she feels that he has carried too heavy a strain.²

White's retrospective self-analysis as he carried out the committee's directive parallels Prescott's rather closely. "You know," he wrote to Olsen,

that I am not a successful preacher, nor a financier. In my work in Californian years ago, I was surrounded with strong men who were of one heart and mind about the general plans of work, and who were able to work out the various parts of the work for which they were chosen, and to help me on with my part of the work. Here, I have met many new experiences, and have made many mistakes. The work in my hands has suffered many reverses, and has dragged along painfully slow. Much of the time I have not had suitable help, and have used much time in doing the work that belonged to our Secretaries. Thus the work of supervising the most important parts of the work has been often neglected. Worst of all, I have allowed detail work to take up my time, so that study of the Bible has occupied but little of my time, and so I am starving, and shriveling up spiritually and mentally.

The members of the Union Conference Committee who have been present at our recent meetings, and especially Br[ethre]n Prescott and Daniells, feel that there should be a change . . . and that someone be sent here as District Superintendent who can attend our Campmeetings as a leading speaker, and who is competent to take the management of our school enterprise, and push it forward to success.³


²Ibid.

³W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, May 10, 1896, LB 9, 437, EGWRC-AU.
Thus White offered his resignation. White's somewhat severe self-assessment that he was not a "financier" does not mean that he had no business abilities, but that he was not a specialist in finance. Ellen White agreed that business management was not W. C. White's major gift or calling. "He is appointed to a far greater work than that of a financier," she wrote to Prescott in 1898. "By the purity of his purposes, his self-denial and liberality he has become one who can co-operate with God. The management of financial matters [has] been placed upon him, and [this is] unjust. False witness has been borne of him, and been carried far and near; but God judgeth righteously."

Perhaps another reason why managing seemed to be such taxing work for W. C. White was that he was so sensitive to criticism. On the Avondale land purchase, for instance, White agonized and vacillated because of the division on the committee, despite his mother's clear backing of the contemplated land purchase. Willie "knows that there may be criticism of his movements," Ellen White wrote to Olsen. "He has had a taste of this in the past, and he dreads it. . . . Whatever purchase is made, some dissatisfaction will exist. On this account Willie carries a load which causes him to fear and tremble." One difference between White and Daniells as administrators was that Daniells seemed to be able to shrug off all but the most determined opposition, when he was sure he was right.

Finally, like his father, White was attempting to do the work of three men. He was simultaneously union president, founder and manager of institutions, and assistant to his mother, not to mention typing most of his own correspondence

---

1Ibid.; E. G. White to W. W. Prescott, June 19, 1898, EGWRC-AU.

2E. G. White to O. A. Olsen, June 24, 1894, EGWRC-AU.
(which in 1896 alone came to some 600 letters totalling more than 1000 pages). Evidently more gifted as an organizer than as a manager, W. C. White found that the day-to-day demands of administration, in combination with all his other responsibilities, eroded his energies until worn and depressed he found the challenges daunting instead of stimulating.

Toward the end of 1896 White noted that his health was "improving." "For some months," he explained to Olsen, "I was much depressed by the difficulties surrounding our work. As these are removed, my health is much better." Two developments especially contributed to the removal of "difficulties." One was the progress on the Avondale campus and the other was White's decision to resign the union conference presidency. White also informed Olsen that he had been appointed a delegate to the 1897 General Conference. They would continue their discussion of Australasian issues when they met in Battle Creek.

The 1897 General Conference Session

White sailed from Australia on December 21, 1896, on a ten-month journey that would include his attendance at the General Conference session to begin at College View, Nebraska, on February 19, 1897. Barry Oliver has argued that "it was the presence of W. C. White and the preaching of A. T. Jones, E. J. Waggoner, and W. W. Prescott that shaped the discussion of the principles of organization" at the 1897 General Conference session. Despite their common convictions about the need for the reorganization of the General Conference, they

---

1W. C. White, LB 9, 97-505; LB 10, 1-503; LB 11, 1-162, EGWRC-AU.

2W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, Nov. 20, 1896, LB 11, 66, EGWRC-AU; O. A. Olsen to W. C. White, Jan. 10, 1897, RG 11, Bk 17, 513-14, GCAr.
did not at this time succeed in achieving the reforms they desired.  

White reported to his mother near the end of the session that it had been a "strange meeting and in many respects the most perplexing and yet the best I have ever attended. The best features of the meeting cannot be reported in the Bulletin." The "best features" of the meeting were evidently the discussions about reorganization, which, however, did not produce such extensive changes as he had hoped. "When our people return to their homes," he continued, 

they will be perplexed to know how to report this meeting, and in many localities I expect the confusion will commence and dissatisfaction prevail because we did not follow the old lines. My deepest regret is that we did not break away from the old lines more fully.  

The Conference accepted White's resignation from the presidency of the Australasian Union Conference and from the General Conference Committee, electing Daniells to succeed him as union conference president. White was, however, continued in union office as vice-president.  

Following the close of the session on March 9, White spent the next two weeks in Battle Creek. Notwithstanding his resignation from the General Conference Committee, he was invited to attend the "joint meetings of the Foreign Mission Board and the General Conference Committee," which gave him the opportunity to present in some detail the personnel needs of the Australasian field.  

---


2W. C. White to E. G. White, Mar. 8, 1897, LB 11, 275, EGWRC-AU.  

3* Australasian Union Conference," GCB, Third Quarter, 1897, 169; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Mar. 8, 1897, LB 11, 276, EGWRC-AU.  

4W. C. White to May L. White, Mar. 8, 1897, LB 11, 273-74; W. C. White to Peter Gade, Mar. 9, 1897, LB 11A, 13; GCC Min, Mar. 14, 1897, 8:00 A.M.; Mar. 24, 1897, 4:00 P.M., RG 1, GCAr.
On March 25 he left for New York City where the Pacific Press had a branch office. That office would be his base for more than a month while he planned illustrations and other publication details for *The Desire of Ages* and *Christ's Object Lessons*.  

The weekend of April 9-12 he spent at South Lancaster Academy in Massachusetts. Saturday night he spoke for an hour to the students' "weekly missionary meeting" regarding "missionary and camp meeting work in Australia." Monday morning he spent another hour with the students, "talking about the mission fields and the qualifications" needed for mission work. White then "took the noon train for Worcester," where he spent Monday afternoon and Tuesday visiting various individuals before returning to New York City. Sunday morning, April 18, he traveled to Philadelphia to spend a couple of days meeting with the Foreign Mission Board. Having completed his business in New York, White returned to Battle Creek early in May.  

Several lines of work occupied him during the summer. He spent "considerable time with Dr. [E. R.] Caro, and with W. K. Kellogg, studying into various lines of sanitarium and health food business." He met several times with the General Conference executive committee and with the publishing committee of the Review and Herald publishing house. In addition, he consulted with David Paulson and other doctors at the Sanitarium about the "new edition" of *Christian*  

---


2W. C. White to E. G. White, Apr. 23, 1897, LB 11, 288; W. C. White to E. R. Caro, Apr. 25, 1897, LB 11, 294; W. C. White to W. K. Kellogg, May 14, 1897, LB 11, 342, EGWRC-AU.
Temperance, which Paulson was compiling from E. G. White's writings.  

W. C. White was charged with the disposition of materials received from his mother in Australia. "I am trying to make a proper use of the many MSS. which you have sent me," he reported to his mother. "I must confess that it is exceedingly perplexing to receive such a quantity of matter without headings, and without any intimation as to what use you have made of it, or what use you think ought to be made of it." Some of this material, he explained,

we are running through the Review and Home Missionary; some will be read to the Battle Creek Church to-morrow after-noon; and some will be published in Special Testimonies to be sent to the ministers. Some is being passed from hand to hand and read by men who need to study it; and some I fear will not find its proper use, because my time is so limited that it is difficult to give it proper consideration.

Another matter that consumed quantities of his time for a couple of weeks was sitting on "a committee of go-betweens" seeking to arbitrate a lawsuit brought by the former treasurer and manager of the Review and Herald, A. R. Henry, who had been fired for unfair management practices. During the "latter part of May," explained the new General Conference president G. A. Irwin, Henry had entered a suit for fifty thousand dollars against the General Conference Association, the legal holding body for General Conference property. Henry had subsequently agreed with I. H. Evans, General Conference Association president, to seek a settlement by arbitration. W. C. White was one of the five selected. He reported to his mother that after spending about a week of time in deliberations, over a two-week period, the committee "dispersed . . . without having accomplished a reconciliation." The matter delayed his departure from Battle Creek for about two weeks. He had "no

---

1 W. C. White to E. G. White, May 21, 1897, LB 11, 359-62; GCC Min, June 16, 1897, 8:00 A.M.; June 28, 1897, 5:30 P.M.; Aug. 5, 1897, 8:00 A.M.; RG 1, GCAr.

2 W. C. White to E. G. White, May 21, 1897, LB 11, 359-62, EGWRC-AU.
regrets to offer, however, regarding the time spent," because he thought the effort
had "accomplished something" in helping each party to better understand the
position of the other. Further arbitration was still being considered.1

The evening of Thursday, July 8, Willie traveled to Chicago, where he
spent five days with Edson and Emma White at the home of Frank and Hattie
Belden. Edson and Emma were "looking quite well and very glad to get away from
the heat of the South, and the perplexities of the recent season." The next
Thursday, leaving Emma with the Beldens in Chicago, Edson returned with Willie
to Battle Creek, where they roomed together for a few days.2

In mid-August W. C. White took the train for Oakland, California. There
he spent additional weeks at the Pacific Press formulating plans to publish several
new books (among which were The Desire of Ages and Christ's Object Lessons) and
to improve the format and illustrations of two that were already in print, Thoughts
from the Mount of Blessing and Patriarchs and Prophets.3

Then after traveling north to Vancouver, British Columbia, he boarded
ship and sailed for Australia on September 16. White reached Sydney on October
20, 1897, ten months after his departure.4

The Difficult Transition, 1898-1900

With the responsibilities of the union presidency laid aside, it might appear

---

1W. C. White to E. G. White, July 2, 1897, LB 11A, 47, EGWRC-AU; G. A. Irwin
to S. N. Haskell, June 20, 1897, RG 11, Bk 18, 275, GCAr.

2W. C. White to E. G. White, July 16, 1897, LB 11A, 108, EGWRC-AU.

3W. C. White to J. O. Corliss, Sept. 6, 1897, LB 11A, 226, EGWRC-AU.

4W. C. White to C. H. Jones, Sept. 15, 1897, LB 11A, 235; E. G. White, Diary,
Oct. 20, 1897, MS 177, 1897, EGWRC-AU.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
that W. C. White would have had time on his hands. In fact, his step down from president to vice-president gave but little relief. He was again elected chairman of the Avondale College board, a position he retained until his departure from Australia in 1900. He also sat on several other boards and committees, including those of the Avondale Health Retreat, the Sydney Sanitarium, the Summer Hill Sanitarium, and others. During his recent trip to the United States he had researched the methods and equipment needed to begin health food manufacturing in Australia. This enabled him to take an important part in the founding of the Sanitarium Health Food Company. He aided in founding the Avondale Press and several smaller institutions. After all this he also tried (with limited success) to carve out time for helping his mother with her book work.  

The details of his connection with his mother’s work during this period will be given below. It will suffice here to say that he had so little time left over for her work that she finally served an ultimatum: "I have decided not to depend on you at all... You cannot do my work and the work others give you to do, which you dare not refuse.... I shall not longer urge you to do that which is impossible." She would, she claimed, return to America and get Daniells, Uriah Smith, S. N. Haskell, G. A. Irwin, and Edson White to help her with the work W. C. White had no time for. Stung by this rebuke, White began anew to align his priorities with hers.  

---


2E. G. White to W. C. White, March 9, 1900, EGWRC-AU; see below, "W. C.
Although W. C. White would never completely disconnect from official denominational positions, a major disengagement had taken place by the time he and his mother sailed for America in August 1900. The experience he had gained in conference administration would be invaluable as he served as his mother's representative to church members and leaders at all levels, but his primary vocation for the rest of her life would be to help make her closing years as productive as possible.1

W. C. White’s Relationship to Ellen G. White and Her Work, 1891-1900

This section of chapter 3 shows both continuity and change in comparison to the topical sections of the previous chapters. It shows continuity in that there is again evidence that the relationship between Ellen White and her son was one of mutual benefit. Chapter 1 noted Ellen White’s shaping influence on her son in his childhood and early adult years, as well as his earliest involvement with her work. Chapter 2 showed that she was his personal mentor during the 1880s, especially during the years they spent together in Europe. On the other hand, he was also her most significant associate, serving as her escort, personal advisor, and editorial assistant. A similar pattern is seen in the present chapter covering the decade of the 1890s. While his role as her helper is of major interest, her influence on him was pervasively evident, especially in his work as organizer of denominational structures and institutions.

The present chapter, however, shows a significant change from the previous chapters. During the decade of the 1880s, while W. C. White had

1W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, July 30, 1900, LB 15, 818, EGWRC-AU.
endeavored to balance his tasks of church administration and assisting his mother, the preponderance of his time had gone into church administration. The 1890s were a transition period for W. C. White, from organizational leadership to the work of his mother. His relationship to his mother during the Australian years may be characterized under three main headings: his work as an organizer, in which she was his regular advisor; his role as his mother’s assistant, in which he advised her; and his transition from one career track to the other.

W. C. White as Organizer

When the Whites went to work in the British colonies of Australia and New Zealand in 1891, churches had been established only in a few major cities. The single denominational institution was a small publishing house in Melbourne.\(^1\) During the next nine years, W. C. White, with guidance from his mother, would lead in organizing several conferences and denominational institutions in Australasia. The present section explores the relation of Ellen White’s counsel to W. C. White’s work as an organizer by examining several major enterprises in which he was involved. It seeks to show the extent to which he was indebted to her for direction in his conference responsibilities.

Creating the Union Level of Conference Organization

One of the foremost exhibits of the impact of Ellen White’s counsel on the work of W. C. White is seen in his contributions to Seventh-day Adventist denominational reorganization. White was the originator of the union conference

\(^1\)E. G. White, Life Sketches of Ellen G. White: Being a Narrative of Her Experience to 1881 as Written by Herself; with a Sketch of Her Subsequent Labors and of Her Last Sickness Compiled from Original Sources (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915), 333.
level of organization, which was initiated in Australasia in 1894. But in the broader view he had been in the forefront of the push for organizational change at least since 1887 and would go on to have—in Oliver's words—a "marked impact" on the reorganization of the General Conference in 1901.¹

The aspect of White's role that is most significant for the present study is the evidence that his initiatives in organizational reform were informed not only by his own administrative experience, but especially by his mother's counsels. It may be suggested as a general pattern that White received the basic principles of his organizational reforms from his mother and then sought to give those principles concrete form, based on his own experience and on further counsel and conversations with her.²

In the 1850s, Ellen White had worked side-by-side with her husband in advocating church organization. About 1876 (as she recalled two decades later to O. A. Olsen), she was shown dangerous tendencies in proposals to consolidate North American publishing houses and instructed James White that the Pacific Press "was ever to remain independent of all other institutions." At least as early as 1883 she began actively calling for the decentralization of General Conference administrative authority, both to distribute responsibilities among a larger number of individuals and to empower local leaders to act on local issues without having to seek General Conference approval for every decision.³ Oliver notes that between

¹Oliver, SDA Organizational Structure, 127.
²See chap. 2, above, "From Jonah to Acting Captain" and "Conclusions, 1881-91."
183 and 1888 these calls were so alien to the prevailing view of General Conference authority that they received little response. The main exception occurred in 1887 when W. C. White, with support from his mother, successfully advocated the addition of three new officers to lighten the load of the General Conference president.1

The next move toward decentralization followed the 1888 General Conference session when White as acting president divided denominational work in North America into four districts. A year later the 1889 session rearranged the North American territory into six districts instead of four and listed all the "foreign conferences and missions" as district seven. This territorial division still prevailed when the Whites embarked for Australia in 1891.2

W. C. White had based his advocacy of the "district" plan in 1888 on Ellen White's advice that "it would be more pleasing to God and for the advancement of the cause, if men should be chosen to take charge of the work in various division[s] of the country, each one acting freely in his field, not refer[ring] all questions to one man." This indicates his acquaintance with her teachings against concentrating authority in a few men at headquarters.3

Evidence, however, that he did not yet fully grasp the breadth of her views on this subject is seen in his later vote for a resolution to consolidate denominational publishing work, a move she strongly opposed. At the 1889 General Conference a

1Oliver, SDA Organizational Structure, 59-60, 63, 114; see chap. 2, above.


3W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, Nov. 27, 1888, in MMM, 132.
committee recommended the formation of a "consolidated publishing association" to take "entire control of all" denominational "publishing interests, thus bringing the work under one general management." The resultant committee, of which W. C. White was a member, continued to meet over the next two years and recommended to the 1891 General Conference session that the General Conference Association (the legal holding body for the General Conference) be given control of all denominational publishing work.¹

White explained in a speech in 1905 that there had been confusion on the committee in 1891 in regard to how Ellen White's counsel should be applied. She told them to pray about it and seek divine guidance, but committee members, including W. C. White, assumed an application that fit their preconceived ideas. "Mother called together, in the committee room at the [Battle Creek] tabernacle," he remembered, a group of representative leaders and "read a testimony" based on Isa 8:12-14, that "was a decided reproof to us regarding confederacy."

There were at that time two plans for confederacy before us. One was our union with outsiders in the religious liberty work, and the other the question of the scope of the work of the General Conference Association. Some applied the testimony altogether to the former. Some of us felt in our hearts that it should be applied to our plans for the General Conference Association also. But instead of getting together and studying and praying over the matter until we comprehended what it meant to us, we called another meeting, and asked Sister White to come in and explain the matter that perplexed us. We questioned her as to whether the message applied to what we were planning for in the reorganization of the General Conference Association. She said she could not answer that question. Then we said, "Of course it does not apply to that."

We did not study and pray about it till we received light, but carried out our own plans. About six or eight years afterwards it was opened up to Mother plain and clear that the testimony was given us at that time to save us from

going into those plans which resulted in binding together many lines of work in an unsatisfactory and unprofitable connection.¹

Letters written by W. C. White after the move to Australia show his increasing awareness of his mother’s counsels on decentralization. Already noted in the chronological overview, above, were White’s letters to Olsen in 1893 calling for an organizational unit to coordinate the conferences more effectively than could be done by the General Conference in faraway Battle Creek.

Following the 1893 General Conference session White affirmed Olsen’s "plan to increase the responsibility of the District Superintendent," which he recognized as "a move toward the ideal presented to mother," but he remonstrated with Olsen for the "rapid return to the old plan of piling the heaviest loads onto men already overburdened," arguing that it would be "better for the cause to run large risks in the using of men not fully tried" than to concentrate all the burdens on "the few men of experience." He added that "the dividing of responsibility [General Conference districts] which was undertaken in earnest in 1889-91, was in harmony with the light repeatedly given to mother on this subject."²

To the Foreign Mission Board, who felt that White’s own leadership was sufficient to unite the Australasian work, he posed the searching question:

What is for the best good of our future work[?] For me, as Dist[ric] Sup[erintendent]t to manage matters after my mind, or to be educating a Com[mittee] of men in the management of these matters, so they will be able and wise managers of the work after I am gone[?]

It looks to me that the work here is suffering immensely, because there has been too much left in the hands of one man in the past, and too little thought

¹W. C. White, “Statements Regarding Mrs. White and Her Work: The Integrity of the Testimonies to the Church,” sermon at College View, Neb., Nov. 25, 1905, 3-4, SD, EGWRC-AU, emphasis added.

²W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, May 8, 1893, LB 2, 428-29, EGWRC-AU.
has been given to the education of men . . . to manage the work to its best interests.¹

Thus by 1893 White was arguing strongly for two aspects of decentralization—diffusion of decision-making authority from Battle Creek to a body of leaders closer to the local situation, and involvement of a larger number of individuals in the decision-making process. He was especially opposed to the attitude that it was perfectly satisfactory for "one man" to function as the repository of General Conference authority in a large geographical area. These are concepts that were central to Ellen White's understanding.²

The cumulative evidence is conclusive that in his drive for the formation of a union conference in Australasia, as in his agitating for denominational reorganization in general, W. C. White was guided by views which had been expressed and developed by his mother over almost twenty years—since the mid-1870s.³

Gilbert Valentine has noted that W. C. White, not A. G.Daniells, was the primary "architect of the Union Conference" level of denominational organization. Daniells, who nonetheless was personally involved, would later call White the "father of that new departure," the union conference development. White's development of the union conference idea was a major contribution to the reorganization movement as a whole. Daniells would come to the fore in 1901, with White in the supporting role, but behind both of these leaders stood the

¹W. C. White to W. A. Spicer, Secretary, Foreign Mission Board, Sept. 27, 1893, LB 3, 349, EGWRC-AU, emphasis added.
²Oliver, SDA Organizational Structure, 115-16, 120-21.
guidance and counsel that came through the visions of Ellen White.1

A significant difference between the gifts of Daniells and those of White is that while Daniells would grow into an administrator par excellence, White perceived himself as primarily an organizer. "Ever since Mother and I were called to Switzerland in 1885," he wrote to Edson, "it has been my work to assist in laying the foundations for organizations and institutions. This was my work in Switzerland, in Scandinavia; and, on my return to America, in California and in Battle Creek. This has been my work in Australia." Prescott observed that W. C. White did not have "the faculty of managing easily." It appears that while White was certainly not without administrative ability, he found that the nitty-gritty of daily administrative work wore him down rather than invigorating him. Daniells, on the other hand, seemed to take more naturally to the demands of administrative work and thrived on the kind of stresses that eventually undermined White's health.2

Ellen White characterized her son specifically as an organizer. "The Lord has given W. C. White a special work to do in this country ever since he first stepped upon its soil," she wrote to Prescott in 1898. "God has used him in a special manner as an organizer. This is the work to which he is appointed." She specifically denied that God had called him to look after finances. "He is appointed to a far greater work than that of a financier," she insisted. "He has been instructed by the Lord how to set things in order upon an organized plan."3

Despite this instruction, and others like it, warning White against over-

1Valentine, "Daniells and Organization," 79; A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, Mar. 23, 1905, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC; see also Oliver, SDA Organizational Structure, 104-105.

2W. C. White to J. E. White, Feb. 12, 1902, LB 18, 405-6, EGWRC-GC; W. W. Prescott to O. A. Olsen, May 4, 1896, RG 11, Misc. Letters, GCAr.

3E. G. White to W. W. Prescott, June 19, 1898, EGWRC-AU.
entanglement in conference financial affairs, some financial responsibilities he could not avoid. A major financial challenge of his Australian tenure concerned an institution he did not help to found, but where his administrative policies were significantly influenced by his mother's counsel. W. C. White's leadership at the Echo Publishing Company provides an illustration of his mother's influence on him in a specifically administrative rather than organizational role.

**Developing the Echo Publishing House**

An institutional challenge that would tax W. C. White's abilities to the limit was that of the Bible Echo Publishing House in Melbourne, Victoria. Variousy referred to as the Echo Publishing House (lettered on the front of the building) or Echo Publishing Company, the name was drawn from that of its principal periodical, *The Bible Echo & Signs of the Times*, that began regular publication on January 1, 1886.¹

The immediate trigger for the financial crisis at the Echo was that in 1891 the three-decades-long boom in the Australian economy took a downturn. In 1893 this economic decline would culminate in an "enormous bank crash" involving "two-thirds of Australia's twenty-eight commercial banks." The Echo was only one of thousands of businesses caught in the colony-wide depression.²

The Echo's vulnerability to this crisis had been created before White's arrival. Based on the unwise assumption that the boom economy would continue, and on unrealistically optimistic expectations of rapid growth in sales, the Echo

---


²Alwyn Fraser, "The Australian 1890s," 227-230; cf. W. C. White to W. W. Prescott, Aug. 2, 1894, LB 6, 81, EGWRC-AU.
management had expanded and diversified too rapidly. The economic downturn caught the Echo with inventory and overhead expenses far exceeding sales. This was the setting for W. C. White's involvement.

Just a week after arriving in Sydney from America, the Whites took a train to Melbourne, where the conference offices occupied part of the ground floor of the Echo Publishing House. Upstairs, in a room called Federal Hall, the Australian Conference session opened on Thursday night, December 24, with the main business meetings starting Sunday, December 27.1

During the conference Ellen White gave significant counsel (which she afterward expanded in written form) concerning the management of the Echo. The main lines of her diagnosis were, first, that the Echo institution "had been gathering up branches of work which it was not able to carry." "Too many lines of work were carried on," and the house was losing money in almost all of them. Second, there seemed to be "a labored effort" merely to "keep up appearances" in lines of work that could not succeed financially. Third, prices were too low. Both job printing and the publication of the Bible Echo were being done "at continual loss." Fourth, substantial losses were occurring through waste and nonessential expense which could be avoided by "wise generalship." Fifth, the "pride" and the lack of "kindness," "love," and cooperation among the workers not only lowered morale, but resulted in actual financial loss. Some workers were too proud to admit their lack of experience, so they did not ask for the instruction they needed to become efficient. Others were unsympathetic and "working at cross purposes with each other." She concluded that "the office was sick, throughout all its departments."

Despite the apparent severity of her counsel, G. C. Tenney, the Echo manager, told Olsen that the counsel was much appreciated, apparently because she pointed out so specifically the areas needing change.¹

As the district superintendent for the Australasian field, W. C. White was responsible to rectify the situation. He first moved to cut some of the unprofitable lines of work. Two papers, Good Health and Our Young Friends, whose circulation did not justify the expense of their publication, were discontinued, and the Echo's branch office in downtown Melbourne was closed. These moves were direct responses to the specific instruction Mrs. White had given to the workers at the Echo office, and she supported his efforts. W. C. White "must be in the [Echo] office," she affirmed, "for it is suffering for the help he can give it in the strength of the Lord."²

By February 1893, W. C. White was wrestling with the question of whether to terminate the flagship periodical, the Bible Echo itself. "If we could stop the big expense on the Echo," he reasoned in a letter to O. A. Olsen, "the profits on the Book Business would soon help us out" of the deficit, but White was reluctant to take such a drastic step. "I beg of you," he urged Olsen, "to go into this matter thoroughly" and "do not let anything hinder your giving [it] due consideration."³

Olsen's initial response to White's inquiry regarding the Echo situation in

---


²W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, Dec. 21, 1892, LB 2, 275; E. G. White to [addressee's name deleted], May 9, 1892 (Letter 92, 1892), EGWRC-AU.

³W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, Feb. 17, 1893, LB 2, 350, EGWRC-AU.
December 1892 was totally affirmative of White's judgment. "I have no special criticisms to make," he replied in January 1893. "Your arrangements are undoubtedly for the best." Later, with mounting concern for the Echo's indebtedness, he opposed any expenditures for capital improvements of the publishing house, but did not believe that Australasia "should be deprived of a paper," namely the Bible Echo. Repeatedly, however, Olsen confessed that he was too overburdened in his own realm to give much attention to the details of the Echo publishing house.¹

One obstacle to reform, White reported, was that "the members of [the] Echo Board" felt no responsibility for the losses, because the previous editor and manager, G. C. Tenney, "had received his appointment from America" and had "rather held the management above their heads." A basic step toward reform was to involve the board in the decision-making processes so that they would begin to own responsibility for the financial condition of the publishing house.²

As the cutting continued, Ellen White cautioned against taking it too far. "I have my decided convictions," she told Willie in June 1893, "that there is danger of uprooting too much in the Echo office. I am not so thoroughly satisfied with such a rapid going out of the little end of the horn." A month later she urged him in his economizing not to discontinue the Bible Echo itself. "I beseech of you," she wrote, "to help the things that have been ready to die. If any kind of means can be devised to give it a chance to breathe and live, do your very best in this line." She

¹O. A. Olsen to W. C. White, Jan. 25, 1893, RG 11, Bk 8, 718; idem, Feb. 22, 1893, RG 11, Bk 9, 91-2; idem, Mar. 17[-23], RG 11, Bk 9, 253, 259-61; idem, Apr. 19, 1893, RG 11, Bk 9, 580; idem, May 17, 1893, RG 11, Bk 10, 250, GCAr.

believed that "the decision to print the **Echo**," was "right, even if it is at a loss."

Regarding another publishing decision on which he had asked her counsel, she freely admitted, "I am not able to say anything in reference to it. I do not know."\(^1\)

As White surveyed the situation in a letter to O. A. Olsen, he identified the colonial "financial crisis" and the "lack of financial success at the Echo office" as obstacles to "raising funds" for school land and buildings. "It looks," he observed,

> as if it would take time to overcome the influence of past failures, and to establish confidence that will enable concerted action. It also looks as if it would require miracles to enable the Brethren to raise the necessary funds; but we do not faint at this, for we have often seen miracles performed in these lines.\(^2\)

This statement closely parallels White's comments a few months later to the Foreign Mission Board. "How keenly we feel," he wrote, speaking for the Echo board collectively, "the results of financial depression, and of our mismanagement of the Echo Company which have shaken the confidence of our people in our managing ability." Comparison to the previous statement suggests that the term "mismanagement" parallels the earlier expression, "past failures." The financial problems had originated before he arrived.\(^3\)

Against Olsen's objections, White argued that the only long-term solution for the problems of the Echo House was "to develop it into a first class, but small, Publishing House." Though initially opposed by Olsen, White's opinion won

---

\(^1\) E. G. White to W. C. White, June 15, July 2, 1893, EGWRC-AU.

\(^2\) W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, July 9, 1893, LB 3, 115, EGWRC-AU.

\(^3\) W. C. White to W. A. Spicer, sec., S. D. A. Foreign Mission Board, Oct. 31, 1893, LB 4, 5, EGWRC-AU; for a glaring example of Echo mismanagement prior to W. C. White's arrival, see O. A. Olsen to W. C. White, Jan. 1, 1892, RG 11, Bk 5, 396-97, GCAr.
acceptance with local leadership. Early in 1892 the floor space was "doubled," to
"about 7000 square feet." In 1898 the Echo again "doubled the capacity of the
publishing house" and also "bought from one thousand to fifteen hundred pounds
worth of new machinery." Happily, White could report in 1899 that "nearly every
day since the enlargement of the printing house, it has been working to its full
capacity, and . . . the financial success of the office would seem to be certain."

Founding Avondale College

Another enterprise that clearly shows Ellen White's influence on W. C.
White's leadership was the founding of the Avondale school. Both the Whites were
involved in the selection and purchase of the land, the planning and erection of
buildings, and the formative stages of developing a curriculum and faculty.
Extensive accounts of the beginnings of Avondale College have been given
elsewhere.2 The present paper focuses on the areas where the partnership between
the Whites is most clearly documented, i.e., the purchase of the land and some
incidents in W. C. White's subsequent board chairmanship.

W. C. White's involvement with the establishment of a "school in
Australasia" began with his election as chairman of the committee on "organization
and plans" at the year-end meeting of the Australian Conference in December 1891,
mentioned on page 155, above. The first official meeting of that committee took

---

1 O. A. Olsen to W. C. White, Apr. 19, 1893, RG 11, Bk 9, 580, GCAr; W. C.
White to O. A. Olsen, July 9, 1893, LB 3, 117-18; [editorial note], BE, Apr. 15, 1892,
128; W. C. White to Edward Murfet, Mar. 3, 1899, LB 12, 492-93, EGWRC-AU.

2 The definitive study is Milton Hook's dissertation, "The Avondale School and
Adventist Educational goals, 1894-1900"; see also Allan G. Lindsay, "The Influence of
Ellen White upon the Development of the Seventh-day Adventist School System in
Australia, 1891-1900" (M.Ed. thesis, University of Newcastle, N.S.W., 1978).
place almost a year later on December 13, 1892.¹

"We are now doing serious work in the matter of looking for land," wrote W. C. White to O. A. Olsen in July 1893. Another eight months would pass before they first viewed the Brettville Estate in Cooranbong. Ellen White was so impressed with the place that on May 9, 1894, she could write, "The decision we have so long contemplated has been made, in regard to the land we hope to purchase for the school. The tract comprises 1500 acres, which we [are obtain[ing]] for about $4500.00." She was aware that the land would take a lot of careful labor to develop, but the alternative was to purchase more expensive land at prices ranging from $15 to $75 per acre, making it impossible for them to afford a large tract. All things considered, she was certain that the Brettville Estate, priced at only $3 an acre, was the land they should have.²

Her convictions were confirmed by a dream she had sometime "before I visited Cooranbong." "In my dream I was taken to the land that was for sale in Cooranbong," she later related. As in her dream she was walking around the tract of land, she came upon a "neat-cut furrow that had been plowed . . . two yards in length." Two men looking at the soil thus exposed, criticized it, saying,

"This is not good land; the soil is not favorable." But One who has often spoken in counsel was present also and He said, "False witness has been borne of this land." He then described the properties of the different layers of earth. He explained the science of the soil, and said that this land was adapted to the growth of fruit and vegetables, and that if well worked it would produce its treasures for the benefit of man.


When she later visited the Cooranbong property, she said, her party unexpectedly came across a plowed furrow, and two men present made the predicted criticism of the soil.\(^1\)

The fact that the precise date of this experience has not been preserved has led some to question its authenticity. Milton Hook has shown that the occurrence did not happen on May 23 or 24, 1894, the traditionally assumed dates. While Ellen White, W. C. White, and A. G. Daniells all reported in some detail the activities of those two days, none of them mention the furrow story as taking place on May 23 or 24. However, while no records made at the time of the experience have been found, neither did any of Ellen White's contemporaries in Australia deny the story. The furrow story evidently occurred at some other time than traditionally assumed. Milton Hook has made a detailed examination of the furrow story and its documentation.\(^2\)

The dream's significance for Ellen White was that it countered the most persistent reason given for not purchasing the Brettville Estate—the belief that the soil was inadequate for successful agriculture—and she recounted it several times during the months in which the issue was in doubt. The dream also solidified her belief that God would prosper the school and agricultural program planned for this location.\(^3\)

Ellen White had very early affirmed the need for sufficient land for

\(^1\)E. G. White, *Selection of the School Land at Cooranbong,* MS 62, 1898, EGWRC-AU.


\(^3\)E. G. White to Edson and Emma White, May 1 [and 24], 1894; W. C. White to Edson White, June 17, 1894, LB 4, 457, EGWRC-AU; A. G. Daniells, *Wonderful Leadings of the Spirit of Prophecy in This Movement—Part 4.* UCR, Aug. 20, 1928, 2.
agriculture. "The one point that Sr. White has tried to impress on my mind more than any other," wrote Olsen to Prescott, when Olsen was in Australia, "has been the necessity [sic] of providing manual labor for the students." In view of the financial situation of the churches in Australasia, the Cooranbong property on the banks of Dora Creek seemed to be the only place where sufficient acres could be had for an affordable price.¹

Their financial limitations were underlined by a remark W. C. White made to C. H. Jones. "We are in a strange position financially," he said. "We are planning to buy a large tract of land, and we can scarcely get enough money to go and see it." White informed the Foreign Mission Board that a round-trip ticket from Sydney to Morisset (the station closest to the Cooranbong land) cost eleven shillings threepence, or about $2.81. Lindsay explains that this was "a little more than a day's wages" for an Australian laborer in 1894.²

On May 23, a delegation of twelve went to make an official investigation of the property. By boat and on foot they thoroughly explored the Brettville Estate. The next day, as they prepared to visit the land again, the group had "a most solemn season of prayer." Ellen White prayed "for the Lord to guide us in judgment," and "indicate . . . His holy will" regarding the "discussion of this day." She also "felt most earnestly for Brother [Stephen] McCullagh" who had been "quite feeble," and "prayed that the blessing of God might rest upon him." When McCullagh declared himself to be healed, and gave evidence that the "inflammation" had "left his throat and lungs," the committee considered this an indication of divine favor. Daniells,

¹O. A. Olsen to W. W. Prescott, Jan. 11, 1894, RG 11, Bk 11, 387, GCAr-AHC.
²W. C. White to C. H. Jones, May 16, 1894, LB 4, 385; W. C. White to Foreign Mission Board, June 10, 1894, LB 4, 420, EGWRC-AU; Lindsay, "Influence," 57.
more than thirty years later, attested the permanency of McCullagh's healing.

While Ellen White certainly agreed that the healing was an indication of divine beneficence, her acceptance of the land was based primarily on its suitability for their purposes and budget. "Our investigations," she wrote to her children, "confirmed every one of us in the belief that we had done the will of God in deciding to accept the land for the location of our school." The next morning W. C. White cabled Olsen in Battle Creek that the decision had been made to purchase the Brettville Estate.¹

Shortly after these experiences, the committee received the report of the government "fruit expert," A. H. Benson, who had visited the property the previous week. Benson's opinion was that two-thirds of the land was unfit for cultivation and that the remainder would be so expensive to make fertile as to not be worth the investment. The committee designated Daniells and W. C. White to deliver the negative report to Mrs. White. "This was a painful and embarrassing task," Daniells later recalled. "When we had made our statement, she calmly asked: 'Is there no God in Israel to inquire of, that ye have gone to the god of Ekron for counsel?' Then she reminded us of the experience of prayer and healing" and "told us that from that night she had felt no anxiety about the location."²

White showed commendable honesty, but probably a lack of astuteness, in


relaying to the Foreign Mission Board not only the full text of the fruit expert's report but also the negative reports of other persons acquainted with the place. Predictably, the Foreign Mission Board gave directions not to make any further commitments, pending consultation with O. A. Olsen, who was in Europe. Accordingly, the Australasian Union Conference committee "voted to suspend operations" until further word should come from the Mission Board.1

Meanwhile, Ellen White wrote to O. A. Olsen giving her own perspective on Willie's rather pessimistic letter quoting the fruit expert. "Willie is not fully satisfied with the land on which they are thinking of locating the school," she began. "He does not think the soil is of as good a quality on the whole as we ought to secure, yet all who have seen it seem well pleased with it." Because the property had some shortcomings, Willie, she said, felt very conscientious not to represent the land for which they have contracted, as of one jot or tittle of value above what he thinks it [is] worth. He knows that there may be criticism of his movements. He has had a taste of this in the past, and he dreads it, and he has not moved with that assurance and confidence that one needs in order to be in good spirits, and to make a success. He knows that much is at stake. Those who have been investigating land have found that they could procure no tract of country where there were not some unfavorable features. The land that was better than that negotiated for on Dora Creek . . . is very high priced . . . We have come to the conclusion that whatever purchase is made, some dissatisfaction will exist. On this account Willie carries a load which causes him to fear and tremble.2

Following the receipt of this letter in Battle Creek the Foreign Mission Board withdrew its opposition to the Cooranbong site and remanded the whole issue of the

---


2E. G. White to O. A. Olsen, June 24, 1894, EGWRC-AU.
land purchase to the judgment of the local leadership in Australia.\(^1\)

When Ellen White was invited, on August 30, to meet with the school location committee, she warned them against comparing the soil to that of Iowa. She commented in her diary that she had no question about the land, but that Daniells and Rousseau, the two who had farmed the black soil of Iowa, were "very firm and decided" in their opposition.\(^2\)

Daniells's opposition had begun with his observation that, compared to the black dirt of his native Iowa, the soil did not appear to be very fertile. His opposition was also based on financial considerations. As is shown in chapter 4, the focal point of Daniells's clash with J. H. Kellogg after the turn of the century was Daniells's insistence on a "no-debt policy" for the General Conference. Already in Australia Daniells was known for his aversion to indebtedness. "I think Bro. Daniells is doing all he can to keep the debt from growing," wrote Prescott to Olsen in 1895, "and that he would gladly decrease it if left to his own plans, but there might be a question if he would not circumscribe the work too much in his haste to pay off that debt." In view of the financial situation of the colonies and the conferences, Daniells and Rousseau felt that instead of the 1500 acres that Ellen White favored, it might be better to purchase "forty or fifty acres, one-half to be reserved for campus and for cultivation for the school," and the rest to be sold "as village lots" to Adventists who would locate near the school.\(^3\)

Ellen White strongly opposed this "mistake." An almost identical

\(^1\) F. M. Wilcox to W. C. White, Sept. 12, 1894, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

\(^2\) E. G. White, Diary, Aug. 30, 1894, MS 77, 1894, EGWRC-AU.

\(^3\) Ibid., W. W. Prescott to O. A. Olsen, Oct. 13, 1895, RG 11, Misc. Letters, GCAr; W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, Sept. 27, 1894, LB 6, 195, EGWRC-AU.
compromise had been made in Battle Creek twenty years earlier. She had wept
upon reading Willie’s letter reporting the purchase of the twelve-acre Hussey Estate
for the campus of Battle Creek College.¹ When the decision was taken to “suspend
operations” on the Cooranbong land, Willie was torn between his mother’s counsel
and that of his colleagues. “I am sorely perplexed to know what to do and say,” he
confided to Olsen.

I can easily see what my father would do if he were here, and what Elder
Haskell would do. They would push ahead, and carry things by storm, and
their brethren would applaud their courage and energy. God has often blessed
them in working this way, but my experience has been very different. I have
never received special blessing in leading out in any enterprise where there was
lack of union on the committee, and I do not feel that the work here would be
advanced by my taking large responsibilities, and go[ing] ahead merely with the
acquiescence of men who later on will bear the chief responsibility while I am
in another part of the world.²

Despite White’s refusal to push the decision unilaterally, the final vote in November
1894 would still be taken “merely with the acquiescence” of Daniells.

Discussion of the issue continued at the Ashfield camp meeting, which
convened from October 19 to November 5, 1894.³ The day the Ashfield meeting
closed, Ellen White wrote a letter to Willie to read to the committee. Frustrated
with her inability to convince them to move ahead, she sought to move herself out
of the conflict, urging the committee members involved to “seek the Lord” for
themselves. “I do now solicit my brethren to go to God, who is the Source of all
wisdom, for themselves,” she began.

¹Vande Vere, Wisdom Seekers, 21-22; W. C. White to Parents, Jan. 1, 1873 [1874],
²W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, Sept. 27, 1894, LB 6, 194-95, EGWRC-AU.
17, 1894, 296; W. C. White, “The Camp-Meeting at Ashfield, New South Wales,” BE,
Nov. 12, 1894, 345; idem, “The Close of the Ashfield, N.S.W., Camp-Meeting,” BE, Nov.
19, 1894, 353.
Ask of God for light to come to your own minds and then move in whatever way the Lord shall direct. I think I should have kept my own counsel, and [then] you [would have] followed the light God would give you. I am afraid I have made a mistake in communicating to you so much as I have done. I should have waited until after all of you had investigated the land fully yourselves. Please keep all that I have said, Brother Daniells, Brother Rousseau, and W. C. White, to yourselves, and if you present anything I have said, let it be as suggestions and propositions of your own through your own sincere, honest, convictions.

I want you all, brethren, to seek the Lord and see light for yourselves and follow your own convictions after the presentation of that which I consider light from the Lord. Do not make a decision unless that light is your own light and you can step forward in confidence because that which has been spoken by me to you commends itself to your judgment and it becomes light to you as it has to me. Will you keep this prayer constantly ascending to God, Show me thy way, O God? The Lord desires to lead you. . . . But if any one of you becomes wise in your own conceit, be sure the Lord will leave you to follow your own finite judgment. . . . Keep mind and heart in constant prayer when in consideration on the land. Oh, do not regard this matter [as] of little consequence, for it means much.¹

The challenge to go to God individually was balanced with warnings against pride, "self-righteousness," and "supposed wisdom." She charged them not to "consult worldly men, making their knowledge and their decisions supreme."²

The above communication contrasts remarkably with some conceptions of how Ellen White exercised authority. If she believed that her counsel represented the will of the Lord, how could she tell people to seek God's will independently of her counsel? Her apparent underlying assumptions were that if God was the source of her message, He was also able to convince others of its validity, provided that they were in an attitude of surrender to Him. Then all could move together, not from a sense of coercion but from a genuine unity of mind. The subjective element in this process was, of course, the very real possibility that individuals might assume they were in submission to God and on the basis of that assumption, critique and

¹E. G. White to W. C. White, Nov. 5, 1894, EGWRC-AU, emphasis added.

²Ibid.
reject her counsel. This example was, in fact, addressed to that very situation.

The above call to individual prayer came in the context of the committee's determined resistance to her recommendations. She, however, was certain that her view was from God and that if they came into submission to God they would recognize the wisdom of her counsel. Having been unsuccessful in persuading them to act on the basis of her testimony, she backed up and urged the "brethren" to simply "go to God who is the Source of all wisdom, for themselves." To them this advice came as giving them freedom to decide for themselves. From her viewpoint, she was gently recalling them to a position in which they should have been all along, a position of openness, humility, repentance, and total surrender to the will of the Lord. In this case, as she saw it, her method was vindicated and her expectations fulfilled. When they sought the Lord, they were individually convicted that the land she had designated was indeed the best choice of all the locations they had looked at. They still saw the land as having some deficiencies, but concluded that considering their financial limitations and other circumstances it was the best choice they had. That was all that she had claimed from the beginning.¹

Two weeks later, on November 20, 1894, the Australasian Union Conference executive committee voted to proceed with building the school on the Brettville Estate.² Six months had passed since Ellen White became certain in her own mind that the Cooranbong site was the one they should have. At least part of the reason for the delay was her own desire that there be no coerced action, no

¹E. G. White to W. C. White, Nov. 5, 1894; cf. E. G. White to Edson and Emma, Aug. 19, 1895, EGWRC-AU.

compelling the committee to vote a certain way because 'Mrs. White said so.'

The roles of the leading parties in the matter are succinctly summarized in a letter W. C. White wrote to the Foreign Mission Board in February 1895. "You are aware," he began,

that this enterprise has been in the fog for some time. My hesitancy about the place selected, the cautions of the Foreign Mission Board, and the aversion of Brethren Daniells and Rousseau to the place, put us where there could be no progress. I had not a doubt but that the Lord had led us in the purchase of the place, but I wondered if it might not be for some other purpose.¹

Ellen White noted "the united influence of Elders Rousseau and Daniells," but also faulted W. C. White for yielding to their influence. At the August 30, 1894, meeting in Sydney, she had urged the committee to purchase the Cooranbong land without delay, promising that "if they decided that it was not the place they should have," she would purchase it herself. "But nothing we could say made the least impression on their minds. They would not accept the land," she recalled later. "They were so strong and firm, that W. C. W. was afraid to venture."

Added to the typewritten manuscript are the words, in Ellen White's own handwriting, "here was the mistake[,] that W. C. W. did hesitate. He dared not venture to accept such great responsibilities"--of purchasing the land personally without the committee's agreement. Consequently, "the united influence of Elders Rousseau and Daniells" prevailed, and the purchase was delayed. "If the place had been purchased, and the deeds made out in my name, as I told them, we should not have had to sustain the losses that have come to us," she continued. Although she regretted that W. C. White had not been willing to go along with purchasing the land over her personal signature, she defended his basic actions in the matter. "The

¹W. C. White to the S.D.A. Foreign Mission Board, Feb. 20, 1895, LB 7, 183, EGWRC-AU.
criticizing and false reports carried to Melbourne, to Africa, and by letter to other places round, were pleasing to the enemy, but they did not please God." The false reports "left the impression on minds that Brn. [Metcalfe] Hare and White had proved themselves a failure" in their joint signing to purchase the land. She insisted that "He who knows the end from the beginning has laid no censure upon these men for a foolish outlay of means."\(^1\)

Not until October 1896, almost two years after the decision to purchase the land, did Daniells have a "change" in his "feelings" regarding the matter. He told Ellen White that "at the Adelaide camp meeting I was led to see that my attitude on this question had not been right in all respects." Subsequent review of the matter brought him to the conclusion that

> I have not viewed things in their true light. This has opened my mind to doubts and fears about the outcome, and this has weakened my hands, and this again has prevented me from being the help to you and brother White that I should have been in the past trying times. It has thrown heavier burdens on each of you, and increased the perplexities. I feel very sorry about this, and have asked to be forgiven. But as I feel that I have injured you, the Lord's servant, I ask your forgiveness. Since changing my attitude I have felt light and courage returning to my heart. I love the school enterprise and can cheerfully work for its interests. . . .

> I feel more deeply than I can express for Bro. White. He has tried so hard and has met with so many perplexities, and just at the time when he needed hearty sympathy I was unprepared to give it. What hard hearted creatures sin make[s] us. I love Bro. White. I admire his unselfish, upright course, and feel that in the future I can be more helpful than I have been in the past.\(^2\)

Ellen White recalled Daniells's telling her that for two years (from November 1894 to October 1896) "he had not helped at all, either by his faith or his influence, but had permitted Willie and me to drag the load uphill." With Daniells's

---

\(^1\)E. G. White to My Brethren, [1898] (Letter 3, 1898); cf. E. G. White to O. A. Olsen, June 24, 1894, EGWRC-AU.

\(^2\)A. G. Daniells to E. G. White, Apr. 15, 1897, A. G. Daniells Correspondence File, EGWRC-AU; cf. A. G. Daniells, "Wonderful Leadings of the Spirit of Prophecy in This Movement—Part 5," \textit{UCR}, Aug. 27, 1928, 1; idem, \textit{Abiding Gift}, 315.
change of heart, she was greatly encouraged. As for the report of the government fruit expert, the land he judged to be infertile proved to be not superior, but adequate. However, the swamp land that he had "pronounced worthless" was found, when ditched and drained, to be the "most valuable land" with soil that was "black and rich."¹

Meanwhile, W. C. White had dared to take another step which some viewed with about as much skepticism as the purchase of the Cooranbong land. On March 5, 1895, a "manual training department" was inaugurated as the first department of the new school. Twenty-six students accepted the offer to receive "Board, Lodging, and Tuition in two branches" of academic instruction, in exchange for their spending six hours per day in manual labor, clearing land, draining swamps, and "building roads and bridges."²

"You would be surprised," wrote W. C. White to his brother Edson, "to learn of the criticism, the opposition, and the apathy against which the proposition had to be pressed. The board said it would not pay, the teachers feared that it would be for them much labor with small results," and others said that "young men would not feel like study after six hours of hard work."³

The program was successful, however. Ellen White felt vindicated by students who said they could "learn as much in the six hours of study as in giving their whole time to their books." "More than this, the manual labor department is a

¹E. G. White to Sister Wessels, June 24, 1897; E. G. White to Edson and Emma, Aug. 19, 1895, EGWRC-AU.
²W. C. White to J. E. White, Aug. 3, 1895, LB 8, 32; L. J. Rousseau to All Our Brethren in New Zealand and Australia, Feb. 25, 1895, in "Historical Materials: The Avondale School, 1895-1907," Book 3, EGWRC-AU.
³W. C. White to J. E. White, Aug. 3, 1895, LB 8, 32, EGWRC-AU.
success for the students healthwise, " she exulted.

The students are rugged, and the feeble ones are becoming strong. Such wild young lads as Burr Corliss, under the discipline of labor, is [sic] becoming a man. He is becoming a Christian, transformed in character. Oh! how thankful are his parents that he is blessed with this opportunity.¹

Even Daniells, who was still unreconciled to the condition of the soil, endorsed in somewhat vague terms the contribution of the industrial department. "I had the privilege of spending a few days at the school location," he wrote to Olsen in July.

I tell you it is an industrial department and no mistake... The work they are doing improves the looks of the place. If it would only enrich the soil I would be rejoiced. It made me feel sick to go over that soil after seeing the rich fine land at Toowoomba. Well, I shall be glad to have this prove a hundred times more valuable than it appears to me."²

The arrival of W. W. Prescott in July 1895³ to spend nine months in Australia was advantageous for the developing school. W. C. White was prompt to have him elected to the union conference committee and to the chairmanship of the Avondale board, offices which Prescott held until his departure from Australia on May 1, 1896.⁴

Buildings were erected during 1896 and regular classes began in the early months of 1897. W. C. White's involvement with the Avondale school was

---

¹E. G. White to Edson and Emma, Aug. 19, 1895, EGWRC-AU.


³Prescott disembarked from the Monowai in Auckland, N.Z., on July 17, 1895, and spent several weeks "holding general meetings in Auckland, Napier, and Wellington," before arriving in Sydney the last week in August (W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, July 17-18, 1895, LB 7, 478-79; W. C. White to G. B. Starr, July 24, 1895, LB 7, 483, EGWRC-AU; [editorial note], BE, Sept. 9, 1895, 288).

⁴W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, Oct. 24, 1895, LB 8, 331; Mar. 13, 1896, LB 9, 342; May 1, 1896, LB 9, 422; W. C. White to Executive Committee of the Australasian Union Conference, Aug. 11, 1896, LB 10, 327, EGWRC-AU.
interrupted by his departure to attend the 1897 General Conference session in the United States. Daniells served as chairman of the board during White's ten-month absence, but upon his return White again took up the chairmanship and remained closely connected with the school until his permanent return to America in 1900. Some significant incidents in his administrative experience as a member of the Avondale board are mentioned elsewhere in this chapter.¹

In the purchase of land, White's faith was tested. He believed from the first that God was leading, but after the fruit expert's report, he questioned whether the land would be suitable for a school. Struggling with his own uncertainties, and fearful of criticism, he seemed unable to project confidence in the face of strong opposition. The outcome, however, vindicated his mother's predictions and strengthened his own faith. In the launching of the manual training department and in the development of buildings and faculty he showed increasing confidence in the divine leading through his mother's visions. Another enterprise that would severely test his faith was the founding of the Avondale Health Retreat.

Starting a Hospital on Faith: the Avondale Health Retreat

The Avondale Health Retreat was one of several small sanitarium-hospitals W. C. White was involved with between 1898 and 1900. Others were the Summer Hill Sanitarium, the Christchurch (New Zealand) Sanitarium, and the Newcastle Medical Mission. He also helped lay plans for the Sydney Sanitarium, which did

¹W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Dec. 4, 1896, LB 11, 107, EGWRC-AU; Avondale School Board Minutes, Dec. 18, 1896 through Jan. 3, 1899, AHC; Fourth Annual Announcement: The Avondale School for Christian Workers; see below, "Information Withheld."
not officially open, however, until after the Whites had returned to America.\(^1\)

The founding of the Avondale Health Retreat deserves special mention here in that it shows more starkly than any previous example the willingness of the Whites to press forward almost regardless of financial obstacles. The beginning of the Avondale Health Retreat is a brief case study of the relationship between W. C. White and Ellen White and their understanding of providence.

In May 1899 W. C. White wrote to General Conference president G. A. Irwin to express the gratitude of the Australian church "for the great goodness" of God "through the liberality of our brethren" at the 1899 General Conference session. Twenty-five thousand dollars had been pledged for the work at Avondale. White gave an account of the "circumstances during the last few months" to show how desperately the money was needed. In actuality, he was hoping to preclude its being diverted to other purposes as appears to have happened with a previous large donation.\(^2\)

"We have been led by the word of the Lord, through his servant [Ellen White]," he explained, "and also by the Holy Spirit in answer to prayers for guidance, "to go forward with certain enterprises necessary to the advancement of the Cause" even though "human wisdom said that it was presumption and that we were courting financial ruin."\(^3\)

White proceeded to paint a picture of spiritual and financial progress but of

---


\(^2\)W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, May 10, 1899, LB 13, 149-54; E. G. White to C. H. Jones, May 9, 1894, EGWRC-AU; see below, p. 212.

\(^3\)W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, May 10, 1899, LB 13, 149, EGWRC-AU.
extremely severe cash-flow problems. First, the Echo Publishing Company, now prospering, had borrowed money to erect new buildings. Then the receipt of "large contracts of profitable work" had necessitated further borrowing for materials, bringing the total debt of the Echo to £2,900 (at an exchange rate of about five U.S. dollars to an Australian pound). Second, the Summer Hill Sanitarium had a debt of about £300. Third, a successful evangelistic series in suburban Sydney had gathered a new congregation, necessitating the erection of a new church building, thus increasing the debt of the New South Wales Conference to about £600. Fourth, the June 1898 balance sheet of the Avondale school had showed a debt of £2,960. Since then, "extensive building operations" which were "absolutely necessary" and which "have been very carefully and economically managed" had nevertheless added another £1,000 to the school's cumulative indebtedness. Finally, the Sanitarium Health Food Company which had been "struggling to get its factory into operation" and which had been "repeatedly disappointed" in receiving "money promised" to it, "had pressing demands" from creditors for about £300. Thus the total indebtedness of church-related entities in Australia came to some £8,060, or about $40,000.1

As a temporary expedient, several "brethren in different colonies" had promised to loan money to the church. Conference administrators had regarded these pledges "to be as good as a promise from the bank, but when the time came" for receiving the money, "various difficulties arose," so that the money was not immediately available.2

The final blow came when "several persons who had loaned large sums" for the union conference to "use for several years, peremptorily demanded their

---

1 Ibid., 149-150.
2 Ibid., 150.
money and resisted every effort" of the conference "to arrange for an extension of their loans." White described their distress with an allusion to the Exodus:

Long before this we had seen that we were being led between the mountains and the Red Sea, and now we felt that the Egyptian army was after us and close at hand. The situation was altogether too serious for us to spend any time in regret or in censuring one another because of the embarrassing situation; we felt that the only things we could do were to pray and to work in harmony with our prayers.1

"Just at this time," White continued, mother received, from the International Missionary Association, 162 pounds [about $800 U.S.] gathered for our Avondale Health Retreat in response to Dr. Kellogg's appeals. Several of us felt that this should be loaned [not given] to the school, to help avert the financial crash and three times I went to mother's room to ask her consent. Each time she answered my question before I had time to ask it by telling me that the Hospital work must be begun immediately, and that we must not consent to allow the money sent for it to be used in any other enterprise.

Then I told our brethren in public that, notwithstanding [that] our financial distress was about as severe as seemed possible, yet we had reason to believe that this was the proper time to commence the Hospital and that here was an opportunity to show the world that we believed that we served a God who could make something out of nothing.

A few days after this, after a careful review of our financial situation before the School Board, Eld. Daniells spent from 9 P.M. till 2 A.M. in prayer and the next morning he came with joyous face to tell me that the burden had been lifted from his heart for he knew that God had sent us relief.2

Going to Melbourne to meet "angry creditors," Daniells received a bank loan "sufficient" to meet the "most urgent" demands of the Echo Company. "During the next two weeks he secured from various friends of the Cause" over 1,000 pounds—in further loans.3

Against this background of borrowing upon borrowing, the news of the General Conference offering came as good news indeed. That offering enabled

---

1Ibid.
2Ibid., 150-151.
3Ibid., 152; cf. Maxwell, Tell It to the World, 242-45.
construction of the Avondale Health Retreat to proceed. The dedicatory service for
the completed hospital was held December 27, 1899, and the first patients were
admitted the next day.¹ Some generalizations may now be drawn about the Whites’
philosophy regarding finances.

The Whites’ Financial Philosophy

It may be summarized that Ellen and W. C. White were willing to enter
into deliberate deficit spending when (1) they believed that the enterprise was
essential to God’s purpose, (2) they saw an opportunity that needed to be grasped
immediately, and (3) they had reason to believe they could pay for it eventually.
When these three factors came together, they felt that the risks of indebtedness and
action were preferable to the risks of inaction.

The validation of factor one above was often a visionary revelation through
Ellen White that convinced them that God had mandated the enterprise under
consideration.²

The second factor involved their mutual conviction that success often
depended on prompt action. "It often occurs," wrote W. C. White to J. A. Burden,
that in our work here, we have an intimation that we ought to move in a certain
manner, and if we prepare to do so, light comes to us individually, or through
mother’s testimony guiding and encouraging. Whereas, when we shake our
heads and say we do not see how that can be consistent, the matter rests, and
precious time is lost.³

Ellen White seconded this aggressive view of the work. "The statement
has been made that ‘God is never in a hurry,’" she penned in her diary. "But if the

¹W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Jan. 1, 1900, LB 14, 454, EGWRC-AU; SDA

²See, e.g., W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, May 10, 1899, LB 13, 149, EGWRC-AU.

³W. C. White to J. A. Burden, Aug. 29, 1898, LB 12, 125, EGWRC-AU.
human agent will step in and be the Lord's minute man, . . . then the work will move promptly," yet "without rushing and friction."¹

The third factor was the one that most challenged their own faith and that of those around them. The Whites sometimes began projects with borrowed money, not because they were willing to incur long-term indebtedness, but because they were trusting in promises for help from denominational sources in America. The most extreme financial embarrassments resulted from the failure of those promises. For example, in 1894 just at the time when the initial earnest money had been paid for the Avondale land, S. N. Haskell in California had written to Ellen White telling her that he had received two pledges totalling one thousand dollars for "the Australian missions." After some delays in collecting the money, Haskell sent it to the Whites through the Pacific Press, which had access to the financial channels for transferring the money to the Australasian Union Conference. The manager of the Pacific Press, however, appropriated the money to a local need he thought was more pressing. "This means had been given for a specific object," Ellen White protested, "and how dare you prevent it from going to the very purpose for which it was designated?" Not content only to make her opinion known to C. H. Jones at Pacific Press, she also protested vigorously and repeatedly to the General Conference president, not only about the diverted donation, but about the fact that the General Conference had also chosen this inauspicious moment to reduce her and her son's wages. As a result, the Pacific Press reversed itself and sent the promised thousand dollars to Australia.²

¹E. G. White, Diary, Aug. 12, 1899, MS 189, 1899, EGWRC-AU.

²E. G. White to C. H. Jones, May 9, 1894; E. G. White to O. A. Olsen, May 6, May 13, June 10, June 24, July 19, 1894; E. G. White to Edson and Emma White, Sept. 30, 1894, EGWRC-AU.
Finally, when they had started a project, the Whites did everything humanly possible to ensure that the enterprise would succeed. They put all available resources—time, energy, personal funds, and influence—into every project they were involved with. Arthur White documents some thirteen incidents during the Australian years in which Ellen White aided "the cause" by personal donations or by loans. She often served "as a bank to the cause," by borrowing from individuals so that she could in turn lend the same funds to the conference.¹

It appears evident from the foregoing examination of W. C. White as an organizer, that Ellen White's counsels exerted an extensive influence on her son's administrative leadership. Since W. C. White's personal interpretation of Ellen White's counsels stands close to the central interest of the present study, it is appropriate at this point to examine in more detail his use of her counsels to him.

**W. C. White's Application of Ellen White's Counsels to Him**

A striking feature of Ellen White's ministry during this period is the frequency of the visions she received. "Day by day and night by night the situation is presented to mother," White wrote to Daniells in 1898, "and she is prepared to give us counsel [that is] very much needed and I think very much appreciated."²

How highly W. C. White esteemed the privilege of this frequent direction through Ellen White is shown by a remark he made in attempting to recruit a teacher for the Avondale faculty. After discussing living conditions and pay, White


²W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, May 1, 1898, LB 11A, 669; cf. W. C. White to I. H. Evans, June 5-6, 1898, LB 12, 48, and W. C. White to William Crothers, Apr. 28, 1898, LB 11A, 642; see also, W. C. White to J. N. Loughborough, June 6, 1898, LB 12, 47, EGWRC-AU.
balanced some of the hardships with what he saw as the singular advantage of working at Avondale in 1898. "It may be right for me to suggest," he concluded, "that while this will not be an easy place to work, that it may prove to be a very profitable place for one who would value the frequent and pointed testimonies of instruction given to us regarding the principles and progress of our school work."  

While he placed the highest value on Ellen White's counsel, he did not despise the counsel of others. He showed his openness to diversity of counsel in the context of the need to fill two vacancies on the union conference executive committee. "The privilege of laying all important matters before mother, for advice, is greatly valued," White acknowledged, 

But it is also of value to have the counsel of men of experience, and sound judgment. The fact that Brethren Hare and Lacey are of different experience, and view matters from different point[s] of view, makes their counsels of much greater value than if both looked at all matters from the same standpoint.

W. C. White did not seek to gather around him a group of yes-men. In a letter to I. H. Evans he listed among the "most able" workers, W. W. Prescott and S. N. Haskell, both of whom were strong-minded men who did not hesitate to criticize White when they thought he deserved it. But if White was willing to accept counsel and constructive criticism from his colleagues, he was even more willing to receive these from his mother.

The most valid evidence of W. C. White's appreciation of his mother's counsel is his own following of that counsel, even when it brought opposition from

1W. C. White to E. A. Sutherland, Joseph Haughey, and the General Conference Committee, Dec. 29, 1898, LB 12, 394, EGWRC-AU.

2W. C. White to the Executive Committee of the Australasian Union Conference, Aug. 11, 1896, LB 10, 327, EGWRC-AU.

3W. C. White to I. H. Evans, June 5-6, 1898, LB 12, 49, EGWRC-AU.
other persons whose opinions he valued. An example of his compliance with her recommendations is provided by a notable letter he wrote to Prescott in 1900. Ellen White and her son had proposed that E. J. Waggoner leave his editorial post in England and come to Australia, an invitation which the British did not favor and which Waggoner declined.¹ For her part, Ellen White apparently did not know at the time all the reasons why she was instructed to call for E. J. Waggoner, but she recognized in his later experience developments that might have been prevented had he left England for Australia in 1900.²

W. C. White's explanation to Prescott, however, regarding his part in the matter, gives a remarkable picture of his thought processes regarding counsels from his mother which he did not understand or see the reason for, but which she believed were based on revelation from God.

"I have no intention nor desire to defend as logical or consistent the position I have taken, or the letters I have written," White confessed.

I entered into this as I do into many other things in which Mother is moved upon to take action. I take it for granted, when she is stirred to act in a certain line, that there is some wisdom superior to mine which is moving in the matter, and that it is my place to act in harmony with her, even though I cannot defend, by any process of reasoning, the consistency and wisdom of every act. I could never harmonize in my own mind the proposition to invite Dr. Waggoner here, and the objection to sending the best man we had to take his place. But having done all I could to present to Mother and to our brethren the situation of the work in England as I understood it, I could do no more. I have believed from what Mother said, that there would have been a marked blessing

¹W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, Dec. 28, 1899, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC; cf. A. G. Daniells to Brother and Sister [G. W.?] Morse, Dec. 19, 1899, A. G. Daniells correspondence file, EGWRC-AU.

²Waggoner, editor of the British Present Truth, became romantically involved with Edith Adams, his assistant editor. Eventually he was divorced from his wife and married Adams. E. G. White to E. J. Waggoner, Oct. 20, 1900, EGWRC-AU; W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, July 5, 1907, RG 11, W. W. Prescott, GCAr; Robert J. Wieland, “Interview with J. S. Washburn, at Hagerstown, MD, June 4, 1950,” 5-6, DF 242, EGWRC-AU.
in Dr. Waggoner's coming to spend a time in Australia, also in my Brother Edson's coming to spend a time here. Neither of these things have been brought about, and when I look at the work that these two men are doing, my human judgment says it is better that they did not come. Now as stated above, I have no desire to criticize what you have done, nor to justify the position that I have taken. I must let the matter rest, knowing I have endeavored to do my duty in view of the light I had; and the consequences must rest with Him who knows the past, the present, and the future.1

Analysis of the above example suggests five steps in White's approach to his mother's counsels. First, his basic a priori was an attitude of reverence toward her counsels. He took "for granted" that she was being moved by "some wisdom superior" to his and that he should "act in harmony with her." This, however, did not lead him to turn off his own cognitive faculties. Second, he would do some careful thinking and praying regarding the outcome of the proposed action, seeking to "harmonize" the various aspects of the situation from the standpoint of his own "human judgment." Evidently in most cases this step would provide additional confirmation of the counsel.

If, however, after careful study and prayer there still existed some apparent dissonance between her recommendation and what seemed right to his "human judgment," he would take a third step, which was to "present" to her (and sometimes to trusted colleagues) the "situation" as he "understood it." His words "having done all I could" and "I could do no more" are descriptive of vigorous advocacy. Fourth, if she remained unmoved by his presentation of different perspectives or options, he would accept her decision as final and "act in harmony with her," whether or not he could "defend, by any process of reasoning, the consistency and wisdom of every act." Finally, having done his "duty in view of the light" he had, he left the consequences to God, made a minimum of self-defense,

1W. C. White to W. W. Prescott, Feb. 11, 1900, LB 15, 261-62, EGWRC-AU.
and refrained from attacking persons who sincerely thought differently.

If W. C. White truly believed (as he stated to G. A. Irwin) that the counsel his mother gave on the basis of her visions was the "word of the Lord,"¹ then what need would there be to think and pray about how that counsel should be followed? It is essential for an understanding of their relationship to consider the reasons why Ellen White did not demand from him unthinking obedience. There were many times when she believed with absolute certainty that her convictions on a particular subject were based on direct divine revelation. There were other times when she gave her best judgment based on past revelations and on her long experience as one especially chosen by God for leadership. She considered revelation and experience as educating factors that made her judgment more reliable than that of persons who did not have those advantages. She explicitly stated this understanding in 1889.

With the light communicated through the study of His word, with the special knowledge given of individual cases among His people under all circumstances and in every phase of experience, can I now be in the same ignorance, the same mental uncertainty and spiritual blindness, as at the beginning of this experience? Will my brethren say that Sister White has been so dull a scholar that her judgment in this direction is no better than before she entered Christ’s school, to be trained and disciplined for a special work? Am I no more intelligent in regard to the duties and perils of God's people than are those before whom these things have never been presented? I would not dishonor my Maker by admitting that all this light, all the display of His mighty power in my work and experience, has been valueless, that it has not educated my judgment or better fitted me for His work.²

Despite her certainty that she had been "educated" through revelation and experience, she still did not claim infallibility. When rebuking obvious sin, she could be electrifyingly definite. When giving counsel regarding vocational or

¹W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, May 10, 1899, LB 13, 149, EGWRC-AU.
²E. G. White, Testimonies, 5:686, emphasis added.
administrative decisions, she was often, but not always, quite certain she spoke the word of the Lord. At other times she couched her counsel in words that left the other person free to follow his or her own convictions of duty. Particularly in her dealings with W. C. White, she repeatedly made it clear that she expected him to think for himself. Several examples occur in the literature from this period.¹

One occasion on which W. C. White disagreed with her regarding his "duty" occurred upon his return to Australia following the 1897 General Conference. After his arrival on October 20, 1897, he and his family were together for about two weeks at the camp meeting near Sydney. From November 4 till he left November 22 for another camp meeting near Melbourne, he evidently spent about fifteen days at home. The Melbourne convocation would include committee meetings that would decide the future of the health food manufacturing work in Australia. During his travel to the United States, W. C. White had invested substantial time in researching the materials, ingredients, and machinery for the manufacture of health foods in Australia, and he felt his presence at the Melbourne meeting was essential.²

Ellen White, however, keenly aware of her son's all-too-recent ten-month absence from his family and concerned for her own backlog of work, wrote to W. C. White to call him home. "I think you should be with me and not spend weeks just now in Melbourne," she pronounced. "The Lord has not appointed you

¹See. e.g., E. G. White to W. C. White, Feb. 6, 1894; E. G. White to Edson, May 30, 1897; E. G. White to W. C. White, Dec. 7, 1897, EGWRC-AU.

²W. C. White stayed in Sydney from Oct. 20 through about Nov. 2. Taking his family home between Nov. 2 and 4, he spent November 5-11 at home in Cooranbong, Nov. 12-13 in Sydney, and Nov. 14-21 at home again. See E. G. White, Diary, Oct. 20, Nov. 1, 12, 1897, MSS 177, 178, 1897; W. C. White to Friends at Sydney, Nov. 5, 1897, LB 11A, 305; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Nov. 11, 1897, LB 11A, 307; W. C. White to the Foreign Mission Board, Nov. 21, 1897, LB 11A, 335-36, EGWRC-AU.
to be an agent in the manufacture of home health foods." She reminded him that "you have other work to do" and listed some of it. "The manuscript for the life of Christ . . . is done, waiting for you to look it over. There are several chapters on temperance waiting for you to look over. The next mail goes one week from next Monday." Then came the concession: "I have no objections to your staying in Melbourne two months if you know it is the Lord's will," she allowed. "But there are matters on this end of the line fully as urgent as matters on that end of the line." Her son, however, had acted not from impulse but according to clear convictions of duty. Her next letter, three days later, confirmed those convictions. "The situation of things in Melbourne has been opened to me [in vision]," she wrote, "and I have no more to say."1

This kind of development taught W. C. White to think for himself before God, while at the same time prayerfully giving his mother's counsel all possible weight short of infallibility.

Another occasion on which W. C. White respectfully questioned whether his mother's wishes represented the will of God occurred just after the formation of the Australasian Union Conference in early 1894. While Ellen White was at home in Melbourne and her son was with O. A. Olsen in Sydney, a problem arose with Fannie Bolton, one of her editorial helpers, on which Ellen White felt the need to counsel with her son and O. A. Olsen. She wrote letters to both of them urging them to come to Melbourne immediately. In writing to Willie, however, she backed down from full certainty that he and Olsen should come to Melbourne. "I leave it with you to act as you shall judge best," she allowed. "Do as you think best." She asked him only to "telegram when I may expect you." In subsequent pages she

1E. G. White to W. C. White, Dec. 7, Dec. 10, 1897, EGWRC-AU.
reiterated her lack of certainty. "I have felt on the eve of saying I will go to Sydney this very day and talk matters over with you and Elder Olsen," she confided, "but this may not be the best plan."¹

After White and Olsen had received her letters, "talking over the questions raised" and making them the "subject of earnest prayer," White replied. "I would like to come," he said, "but I am confident that this is my place of duty at present." Leaving now "would make a sad break in our work here, and deprive me of having his [Olsen's] last counsels as he sails." He did not believe that an immediate return to Melbourne would represent a wise use of his time.²

It may be summarized that on the one hand, W. C. White accepted his mother's visions as expressing the divine will and was willing to stake his credibility and reputation on their fulfillment. On the other hand, he knew her as a human being. While her judgment was finely honed from long experience in the things of God and in leadership responsibilities, she remained fallible. At times she explicitly stated her expectation that he should exercise his personal judgment in a matter. At other times he evidently assumed the same expectation, even when she did not state it explicitly. This explains why he felt so free to discuss with her and even question her counsels or opinions. This free exchange of views sometimes led her to modify her view. More often, however, as in the matter he mentioned to Prescott concerning E. J. Waggoner, their discussion only confirmed her certainty, in which

¹E. G. White to O. A. Olsen, Feb. 5, 1894; E. G. White to W. C. White, Feb. 6, 1894; E. G. White to W. C. White, early 1894 [Feb. 5, 1894], (Letter 37, 1894), EGWRC-AU. Internal evidence from these three letters indicates that the last one was handwritten on Feb. 5, but not typed, and was the next day mailed with the letter of Feb. 6. Because of the discontinuity between the two letters, W. C. White may have hastily assumed it had been written a day later, hence he refers to it as "your letter of Feb. 7." There is also the possibility that there was yet a fourth letter, actually dated Feb. 7, which no longer exists.

²W. C. White to E. G. White, Feb. 9, 1894, LB 4, 117-18, EGWRC-AU.
case he would yield his judgment and accept her view regardless of other factors, believing that God was guiding her. W. C. White's combination of complete commitment to his mother's messages with cognitive evaluation of those messages was essential to his role as her confidant and assistant. That role is considered next.

W. C. White as His Mother's Assistant

It was seen in chapter 2 that W. C. White assisted his mother by accompanying her in travel, by helping prepare her writings for publication, and by serving as a counselor on a wide range of issues. The evidence from the 1890s shows no significant changes in these roles, except that during much of this period his administrative responsibilities were so heavy that they severely limited his availability for aiding his mother. His work as her assistant during the Australian years is discussed under three headings: W. C. White as exponent of the editorial process, as his mother's counselor, and as a conduit for communication between Ellen White and the many who corresponded with her.

W. C. White as Exponent of the Editorial Process

Chapter 2 analyzed in some detail W. C. White's work as an editor and editorial supervisor. It is unnecessary to cover that ground again. The most significant contribution of the present period was a further definition of the expectations and limitations of Ellen White's editorial assistants. This came as the result of questions raised about the work of Fannie Bolton, one of Ellen White's literary assistants. Bolton eventually withdrew from Ellen White's employ because of illness and dissatisfaction with her work. The story has been well documented and to consider it in detail is beyond the scope of the present study. Only that part
of her experience that sheds light on W. C. White's editorial function is considered here.¹

An incident from 1892 provides a concise glimpse into the difficulty. "I have quite a number of letters to go," Ellen White wrote to Willie, "but shall not try to have them fitted up [edited and typed,] for several [people] have written [to] me [saying] that when they could have the matter direct from my hand, it was far more forcible than after it had been prepared." They wanted letters in her own handwriting, because after Fannie's editing the letters no longer sounded like Ellen White. "I think Fannie feels that many of my expressions can be bettered," Ellen White said, "and she takes the life and point out of them."²

After leaving Ellen White's employ, Bolton made claims that she had largely authored some of the writings that went out over Ellen White's signature. Specifically, she claimed that a letter of reproof to A. R. Henry of Battle Creek had been outlined by Ellen White for Fannie to compose entirely. The allegations have since been refuted, but at the time they sounded plausible to some who were unfamiliar with Ellen White's writings.³

These allegations led W. C. White to make some pointed comments about the methods of Ellen White's editorial staff. "I have been very familiar with

---


²E. G. White to W. C. White, Oct. 21, 1892, EGWRC-AU.

mother's work for many years, and with the work that is required of her copyists, and editors," he affirmed,

and I never knew of any such request being made by mother, or of any such work being attempted by any of her workers. I do not know of any one who has ever been connected with her work [except Bolton], but would as quickly put their hand into the fire and hold it there, as to attempt to add any thoughts to what mother had written in any testimony to any individual.¹

He then proceeded to explain at some length the relationship between Ellen White and her literary assistants.

In His own time and manner, the Lord reveals to her precious truths and facts regarding the movements and dangers, and privileges of the church, and of individuals. These things she writes out as she has time and strength, often rising at a very early hour, that she may write while the matter is fresh in her mind, and before there is liability of interruption in her work.

As many matters are revealed to her in a very short space of time, and as these matters are sometimes similar, and sometimes different; so she writes them out, sometimes many pages on one subject, and sometimes dealing with many subjects in a few pages. In her eager haste to transfer to the written page the thought[s] that have been pictured to her mind, she does not stop to study grammatical [sic], or rhetorical forms, but writes out the facts as clearly as she can, and as fully as possible.²

W. C. White made it plain that Ellen White's use of literary assistants was not because she was inarticulate.

Sometimes, when mother's mind is rested, and free, the thoughts are presented in language that is not only clear and strong, but beautiful and correct; and at times when she is weary and oppressed with heavy burdens of anxiety, or when the subject is difficult to portray, there are repetitions, and ungrammatical sentences.

Mother's copyists are entrusted with the work of correcting grammatical errors, of eliminating unnecessary repetition, and of grouping paragraphs and sections in their best order. If a passage is not fully understood, the copyist asks [Ellen White to explain] its full meaning and proper connection. When corrected and plainly copied with the typewriter or the pen, the manuscripts are all carefully examined by mother, and corrected, wherever correction is required, and then copied again, if the corrections are numerous. This is done with many manuscripts, not only because corrections are made in the work of

¹W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, May 7, 1900, LB 15, 587-589, EGWRC-AU.

²Ibid., emphasis added.
the copyist, but because mother sees a way to express the thought a little more clearly, or more fully.

Often mother writes out a matter the second time, because she feels that it is very difficult to put in writing the scene, or events, as they are presented to her.¹

White went on to describe with some precision Ellen White's expectations of her editorial assistants. The techniques they employed were common editorial skills, but the goal was different from what is often implied by the term "edit." The purpose of Ellen White's editorial assistants was to remove imperfections without changing the thought or even the vocabulary of the author.

Mother's workers of experience, such as sisters Davis, Burnham, Bolton, Peck, and Hare, who are very familiar with her writings, are authorized to take a sentence, paragraph, or section, from one manuscript where the thought was clearly and fully expressed, and incorporate it with another manuscript, where the same thought was expressed but not so clearly. But none of mother's workers are authorized to add to the manuscripts by introducing thoughts of their own. They are instructed that it is [only] the words and thoughts that mother has written, or spoken, that are to be used.²

W. C. White insisted on making a clear distinction between Ellen White's thoughts and words and those of her workers, because he believed that the work of the Holy Spirit on the mind of Ellen White was of a different kind from the Spirit's work on the minds of her helpers.

Those who have been entrusted with the preparation of these manuscripts, have been persons who feared the Lord, and who sought him [sic] daily for wisdom and guidance, and they have shared much of His blessing, and the guidance of His Holy Spirit in understanding the precious truths that they were handling. I, myself, have felt the same blessing, and heavenly enlightenment in answer to prayer for wisdom to understand the spiritual truths in these writings, that I have in studying the Bible. This was a sweet fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit as a teacher and guide, in understanding the word. And in answer to prayer, my memory has been refreshed as to where to find very precious statements amongst mother's writings, that brought in connection with the manuscript at hand, would make a useful article.

¹Ibid., emphasis added.

²Ibid., emphasis added.
However thankful the copyist may be for this quickening of the mind and memory, it would seem to me to be wholly out of place for us to call this "inspiration," for it is not in any sense the same gift as that by which the truths are revealed to mother.

It is right here that Sister Bolton is in great danger of being deceived and of leading others astray. The blessing of a clear mind, and an active memory, she has called an inspiration, and the unwise use of the term has led those who know less of the work . . . to come to wrong conclusions about what she has done.¹

Citing his own experience, he confessed his belief that a "heavenly enlightenment," a "quickening of the mind and memory," was experienced by Ellen White's assistants in their editorial work. He recognized this as resulting from "the guidance of the Holy Spirit," but he denied that it was equivalent to the "inspiration" experienced by Ellen White.

In a second letter on the same topic, written the next day, White cautioned against becoming preoccupied with the "earthen vessels" (i.e., the human agents involved with the preparation of the writings), to the neglect or eclipse of the divine "treasure" contained therein. The greatest evidence of the inspiration of Ellen White's writings, he believed, was not the form but the content. He regretted any distraction that would tend to draw attention from the message to the method, from the content to the form.² Thus he defended both Ellen White's inspiration and the integrity and legitimacy of the editorial process. Another area in which integrity and legitimacy were key concerns was his role as his mother's counselor.

W. C. White as His Mother's Counselor

The section on "W. C. White as Organizer," above, focused on his mother's counsels to him. The section entitled "Conduit for Counsel," below,

¹Ibid., 589-90.

²W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, May 8, 1900, LB 15, 582, EGWRC-AU.
describes W. C. White's role in transmitting his mother's counsels to others. The present section deals with his role of "counselor" to her.

As noted in chapter 2, Ellen White frequently asked her son's advice in matters of personal business, such as whether to rent a house or pitch a tent, or whether to purchase a "horse and phaeton" for transportation. When considering a financial proposal of Edson's, she forwarded it to Willie with the comment that she thought he would have "no objections to complying with" Edson's "request." Then she added, "But you can see and understand these business matters better than I." 1

Information withheld

It was suggested in chapter 2 that W. C. White's counsels to his mother could be arranged on a continuum from "information withheld" to "effective persuasion," with several gradations in between. Some examples of "information withheld" that occurred during the 1890s considerably illuminate White's motives for not passing on to his mother all the denominational "news" that came to him.

One reason why W. C. White routinely withheld information from his mother was to save her from distress and thus enable her to conserve her energy for productive work. At her age of nearly seventy-three years in mid-1900, one perplexing letter from Edson could cost her two or three nights of sleep. When Fannie Bolton started misleading rumors in Battle Creek about her handling of Ellen White's writings, it was again cause for sleepless nights and consequent loss of

1E. G. White to W. C. White, Oct. 25, 1892, early 1894 (Letter 137, 1894), July 19, 1893. Examples of her requests for counsel about personal business matters abound in the correspondence; see, e.g., idem, Feb. 15, Feb. 21, Feb. 25, Mar. 1, Mar. 29, Aug. 2, 1894, EGWRC-AU.
efficiency the following days. "It is not advisable at present," White suggested to Frank Belden,

for anyone to write to Mother particulars about the lack of harmony, the lack of
tenderness, and the lack of missionary spirit in the office of publication and in
the church, because it seems to bring upon her a burden which is greater than
she can bear. When the Lord opens these matters to her mind, He gives her
strength to bear the load, but when individuals present these things, it seems
almost to kill her.

A second reason for not reporting to her everything he knew about goings-
on in the church was evidently to protect himself from accusations of "influencing"
hers. The "surmisings" that had "nearly killed him" in 1891 had led him to avoid as
far as possible giving any occasion for the allegation that he had "told Ellen White"
something that had become the basis of a reproof from her.

Linked with his desire to avoid charges of "influencing" her was the need
to maintain his own objectivity and openness to her counsel. "Some of the
brethren" during the early years at Avondale, White recalled in 1905,

felt that I was anxious to move too fast, willing to run too great risk, and that I
was taking unfair advantage of my close connection with Mother to bring her
influence into that work to carry out my wishes.

For the sake of those who were thinking along that line, as well as for my
own peace of mind and assurance, I decided to keep far away from anything
that could be a cause of perplexity to them or to me, and although I wanted
counsel very much, I decided to adopt a perfectly safe plan.

"At one important meeting," White recalled,

I determined not to tell Mother of the perplexities connected with our work, but
that I would tell the Lord all about them and ask Him to send us instruction

1 W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, July 13, 1900, LB 15, 792; W. C. White to F. E.
Belden, Sept. 25, 1899, LB 14, 128, EGWRC-AU.

2 See E. G. White to Edson and Emma, May 6, 1896; E. G. White to O. A. Olsen,
May 25, 1896; W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, June 3, 1896, LB 10, 40; EGWRC-AU.

3 W. C. White, "The Visions of Ellen G. White: W. C. White Statements Regarding
Mrs. White and Her Work," Remarks of W. C. White in Takoma Hall, [Washington,
D.C.], Dec. 17, 1905, 8, SD, EGWRC-AU.
according to our necessities. When I came home from Board meetings, late at night, I laid the matter before the Lord, and asked Him to help us, and send us messages as He would. Each morning I would go to Mother and say, Have you anything new for us this morning? Sometimes she would say, I do not know that I have; but I was in council last night [in vision], and we were talking over such and such a matter. Sometimes what she told me did not seem to have any bearing upon the subject that was on my mind, and sometimes it would answer the very questions that I had laid before the Lord the night before. Many times what she said gave light that was a direct answer to my prayer.

One morning after I had asked Mother if she had anything new for us, she said, "What are you doing in your Board meeting? What kind of a time are you having?" I answered, I do not need to tell you; the Lord can tell you what you need to know, better than I can, and I might not tell it impartially." She said, "Willie White, you tell me what you are doing." I asked, Why? Then she said, "It is presented to me that you are having a hard time, and when you reach a certain point, I am to have something to say. I want to know if you have reached that point." Mother, I said, we are having a hard time, but for several reasons I did not want to tell you about it. Then she insisted, and I told her the best I could from my standpoint about the status of our work. When I had finished she said, "That is all right. I do not believe I will go today, but I think you are getting pretty near to the point when I must come over and bear my testimony." In a day or two she came over and told us what had been presented to her.¹

At another time, when interpersonal tensions were straining relationships between members of the Avondale faculty, her son did not report the matter to her.

"W. C. White tells me not a word," she wrote, "but I know."²

A few weeks after the close of the 1897 General Conference session, W. C. White in Battle Creek wrote to his mother half a globe away in Cooranbong.

"Our committees are having a hard time," he started to inform her. Then he added, "But I need not tell you about it, for it has been presented to you beforehand." He believed this. The undergirding presupposition of his practice of withholding bad news was his confidence that God would inform her about anything that she really

¹W. C. White, "Statements Regarding Mrs. White and Her Work: The Integrity of the Testimonies to the Church," Sermon at College View, Nebraska, Nov. 25, 1905, 8, SD, EGWRC-AU, emphasis added.

²E. G. White, Diary, July 12, 1898, MS 184, 1898, EGWRC-AU.
needed to know. He did not feel the same hesitancy about giving her good news.¹

Supplying good news

What might be called W. C. White's "good news policy" toward his mother was his practice of seeking to lift her spirits by countering the bad news that often came to her with whatever good news he received. "As the Lord has chosen Mother to be His messenger for the correcting of wrongs in the church," he reasoned,

opening up to her the dangers, the mistakes, the errors, and weaknesses and wickednesses of men, and as these revelations burden her heart almost to death, therefore it cannot be wrong for me to gather up all the words of cheer, and all the good news that will comfort her heart.²

At least one instance of his "good news policy" backfired. Intending to spare her distress, he intensified it. This case shows the limitations of W. C. White's counsel. Despite his close connection with his mother, he did not have the prophetic insights that were granted to her. When O. A. Olsen was re-elected as General Conference president early in 1895, Mrs. White warned him about his being influenced by two of his colleagues, Harmon Lindsay, General Conference treasurer, and A. R. Henry, vice-president of the General Conference Association.³

E. G. White was so deeply burdened about the situation in Battle Creek that she confided her fears to her son and to W. W. Prescott, who was then in

¹W. C. White to E. G. White, Mar. 24, 1897, LB 11A, 20, EGWRC-AU.

²W. C. White, "Statements Regarding Mrs. White and Her Work: The Integrity of the Testimonies to the Church," Sermon at College View, Nebraska, Nov. 25, 1905, 4-5, SD, EGWRC-AU.

³E. G. White to O. A. Olsen, Apr. 12, 1895 (Letter 59, 1895), Sept. 10, 1895, EGWRC-AU.
Australia but would soon be returning to Battle Creek. Both men "tried to dissipate my fears," she wrote to Olsen.

They presented everything in as favorable light as possible. But instead of encouraging, these words alarmed me. If these men [White and Prescott] cannot see the outcome of affairs, I thought, how hopeless the task of making them see at Battle Creek. The thought struck to my heart like a knife. I said, I will not send the communication written to Eld. Olsen... For about two weeks I remained in utter feebleness. I was like a broken reed. I could not leave my room, could not converse with Brother and Sister Prescott. I did not expect to recover... But... my strength gradually returned to me.¹

Willie later told the story from his own viewpoint. "For years I have felt," he explained in 1905, "that it was my privilege to do all I could to draw Mother's attention to the most cheerful features of our work, to the many hopeful experiences in our institutions and conferences," and "to bring to her attention the bright side of things." "One day while we were living at Cooranbong, New South Wales," he recounted,

we received letters from the President of the General Conference, filled with cheering reports, telling us about the good camp meetings, and how that some of these business men who had been reproved by the testimonies [Lindsay and Henry] were going out to various states and speaking in the camp meetings, and that they were getting a new spiritual experience, and were a real help in the meetings.

We were made very happy by the reading of these letters. We were fairly overjoyed about it, and we united in praising the Lord for the good report. Imagine my surprise when in the afternoon of the next day Mother told me that she had been writing to these men of whom we had received the good report, and she then read to me the most far-reaching criticism, the most searching reproof for wrong plans and principles in their work, that were ever written to that group of men. This was a great lesson to me.²

The "lesson" was evidently the reminder that being the son of a prophet did not give him prophetic insight. On this occasion, his attempt to cheer her with

¹E. G. White to O. A. Olsen, May 25, 1896, EGWRC-AU.

²W. C. White, "Statements Regarding Mrs. White and Her Work: The Integrity of the Testimonies to the Church," Sermon at College View, Nebraska, Nov. 25, 1905, 4-5, SD, EGWRC-AU.
"good news" failed because of the limitations of his own insight. Attempted persuasion based on too-limited understanding could also receive her emphatic rejection.

Attempted persuasion

When a minister in the Australian Conference, Stephen McCullagh, was taking much of Ellen White's time in seeking advice about his ministerial responsibilities and local conference business, Ellen White happened to mention some of McCullagh's perplexities in a letter to her son, who was then in New Zealand. "Mother, I do not want you to get the Australian Conference on your back," he replied,

for it is not your part of the work. If Elder McCullagh would learn to work with his colaborers, and with them bear the burdens he would do better than to try to load it all onto your shoulders. If he does not learn to bear his own burdens, but loads them onto your back he will be doing a great wrong, and will lose choice blessings, which are in store for the courageous.1

White's next sentence reveals his personal agenda. Ellen White had been arguing that her writing and her counseling with McCullagh about conference matters were too pressing for her to take time to travel to Tasmania for a church "convention" and for Willie's wedding to May Lacey. "Mother, I most sincerely hope that you will lay all these burdens down," White concluded, "and that you will make the visit to Tasmania that we have talked about."2

In this instance, she rejected his counsel regarding the conference situation. "Be assured I shall not write anything to perplex you again," she replied tartly, "for you do not understand the situation, and come to wrong conclusions." Subsequent


2W. C. White to E. G. White, Feb. 25, 1895, LB 7, 201, EGWRC-AU.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
developments suggest that her willingness to spend extensive time in counsel with McCullagh was motivated in part by her intense desire to help him find a stronger foundation for his own faith and thus prevent the apostasy which he later fell into. As for the trip to Tasmania, she was reluctant to leave her writing on the life of Christ, but eventually decided to go.¹

In another case, the persuasive communication occurred as W. C. White sought to safeguard his mother's health by convincing her to reduce her work load. "I have tried to persuade her not to write so many private letters," W. C. White wrote to O. A. Olsen, "but to report her journeyings and labors in the Review, and let this serve instead of letters." The context suggests that in this case she had accepted his advice. The long-term result of their effort to reduce the burden of her correspondence was the further development of his role as a "conduit" for her counsel.²

W. C. White as Conduit for Counsel³

One of the most important aspects of W. C. White's work in connection with his mother was in transmitting her counsels to others and their communications to her. This came about as a way of dealing with two needs: the need to keep up correspondence with many people and the need to conserve Ellen White's time and declining energies for book production. Therefore she asked her son to take over some of her less crucial correspondence obligations, communicating her wishes in letters written over his own signature. First of all this involved "conduct[ing] her

¹E. G. White to W. C. White, Mar. 11, 1895, EGWRC-AU; A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 4:275-86; E. G. White to Edson and Emma, May 15, 1895, EGWRC-AU.

²W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, Apr. 20, 1893, LB 2, 389, EGWRC-AU.

³The helpful term "conduit" was suggested by Hook, "Inter-Relationships," 103.
business correspondence," sending acknowledgments for donations, and writing other rather routine letters.¹

Sharing the mail

Since many of the concerns Ellen White asked her son to correspond about were prompted by information received through the mail, their relationship regarding mail is an important part of his role as "conduit." Early in their term in Australia they shared much of their incoming correspondence. "One week from today we receive our American mail," she wrote to him in 1892. "I wish you could be here to peruse it with us." Later the same year when she was in Adelaide and he at their temporary home in Melbourne, she instructed him, "Open any letters you please that arrive for me, and read them, then send them on afterward without delay."²

During the peak years of his union presidency, however, he was so occupied and so much away from home that he read very little of her mail. "Willie is called hither and thither in his work," she wrote to J. H. Kellogg in 1895. "Letters have come to me from you . . . that he has not seen. Not one letter in a hundred comes to his notice," she said.

I cannot urge him to consider any matter that is connected with my position of trust, when I know that his brain is weary and congested with considering important matters that need his attention. He has plenty of his own burdens

¹See, e.g., W. C. White to A. T. Robinson, May 10, 1899, LB 13, 195; W. C. White to Walter C. Twing, Apr. 30, 1899, LB 13, 125, EGWRC-AU.

²E. G. White to W. C. White, Mar. 25, Oct. 13, 1892; cf. idem, July 19, 1893, EGWRC-AU.
without bearing any of mine. He is with me but a very small portion of time so I cannot expect help from him.¹

When he was home and available he endeavored to give more help with her mail, especially after his resignation from the union presidency in 1897. Most incoming letters demanded some kind of response. White confided to Haskell that

Mother

is getting a steady stream now, of perplexing questions from all sorts of people, ranging from Conference presidents to strangers, who do not even state their perplexities, but ask her to consult the Lord for them, and write to them the answers of their prayers. I hardly know how we shall take time to answer all the letters that are coming to us, and make any progress with our general work.²

Consequently Ellen White conserved her time by directing W. C. White, as her representative, to write letters of information and responses to questions. Such letters were written over his own signature and preserved in his correspondence files, not hers. A letter to the union conference executive committee began typically. "I am instructed by Mother," Willie wrote, "to say to you that she is in favor of our making appropriation from the funds sent to us by Pastors Haskell and Irwin as follows . . . ." In a similar vein, he wrote to the board of the Review and Herald in Battle Creek: "I am instructed by mother to present to you some plans" regarding her proposed donation of Christ's Object Lessons for "the financial benefit of the educational institutions."³

Entire letters were sometimes delegated to W. C. White to answer if they did not involve personal matters. For instance, a letter she received from N. D.

---

¹E. G. White to J. H. Kellogg, Oct. 25, [1894] (Letter 46a, 1894), EGWRC-AU.
²W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, May 8, 1900, LB 15, 581, EGWRC-AU.
Faulkhead was forwarded to her son with the remark,

I might employ all my time answering letters. I wanted to answer the one from Brother Faulkhead, but I dare not cut up my time unnecessarily. I thought you could answer it. You were there in person and could talk with him, and learn his purposes and then could know what counsel to give him.¹

Another way the Whites economized on the time they spent in correspondence was by sending duplicate copies of letters to individuals who might benefit from the information contained in them. Documents were often duplicated by Hectograph, a gelatin-based duplicating process. A letter placed face-down on a gelatin pad would leave enough ink on the surface of the gelatin to make several additional copies. By 1898 they had a home recipe for the gelatin solution that enabled them to replenish it without purchasing the commercial mixture sold under the Hectograph trademark.² A second means of duplication was the letter book, which used onionskin paper treated with a chemical so that when moistened it would dissolve enough ink from the surface of a letter to preserve a copy. The image could easily be smeared in the making and was prone to fade with age. A third method of duplication was by simply retyping a document, with the desired number of carbon copies.

Two excerpts from W. C. White's correspondence illustrate the use made of duplicate copies of letters. "The Lord in his mercy has opened up to mother many things regarding this work," White wrote to Prescott (who had recently left Australia for South Africa), "and I shall take the liberty to send you copies of two or three of her letters regarding it. You will recognize the three-page letter as


²A. O. Tait to W. C. White, "Hectograph Pad," [Dec. 1898], LB 12, 318, EGWRC-AU.
written to Eld[er] Corliss, and the six-page letter to brother and sister McCullagh."

White sent copies of the same letters to A. G. Daniells, with some additional words
of advice about their use. "Mother has permitted me," he said,

to send you copies of letters recently written by her to Brn. McCullagh, and
Corliss. The principles in these are important, and you may think best to let
some other of the labourers and burden bearers read them. Use them wisely,
so that no one will feel that they have weapons to hurt someone else with.¹

The last sentence above shows that White recognized the potential for
misuse of such letters. After 1900, such sharing of letters formed a regular part of
the Whites’ correspondence with then General Conference president A. G. Daniells,
and to a lesser extent with other denominational leaders. It was inevitable in such a
free circulation of letters that some "leaks" would occur, with consequent
embarrassment to the original addressee and to the Whites. Valentine relates an
example. Portions of two letters of reproof from Ellen White to Prescott, which she
hesitated for months about sending, seem to have been given by W. C. White to
others before the original reached Prescott.²

Interviews

When W. C. White received questions on which his mother’s advice was
desired, he would watch for an appropriate time to bring them to her attention,
seeking to adapt as far as possible to her convenience. One example is related in a
letter from W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, who was by then the Australasian Union
president. W. D. Salisbury, manager of the Echo Publishing Company, had asked
White’s "opinion" about Salisbury’s going on a proposed trip to South Africa,

¹W. C. White to W. W. Prescott, Aug. 25, 1896, LB 10, 376; W. C. White to A. G.
Daniells, Aug. 19, 1896, LB 10, 354, EGWRC-AU.

²Valentine, The Shaping of Adventism, 194-95.
England, and America to improve his knowledge of the publishing business. White replied that he "would prefer to think more about the matter and to confer with mother." "When she is more rested," White told Daniells, "I shall read Salisbury's letter to her, and then secure as much definite counsel from her as I can." Already, however, before he had even broached the subject to her, she had given an indication of how she might respond to Salisbury's question.

From a brief conversation this morning, I think she has been warned to caution us against leaving our work to make long and expensive trips. She says that many of the trips which have been made around the world have been unprofitable, and that God's blessing would have rested upon these labourers had they remained at their duty, and the Holy Spirit would have enlightened them [with the solutions they hoped to find by research in distant places] and made them mighty men while carrying forward their appointed work.¹

The most frequent and basic interview format was simply an informal conversation between W. C. White and Ellen White. In answer to some questions from Daniells, White replied: "I have just come from an interview with Mother, in which she has referred to these things." At other times he might be joined by several persons who would call on her for the purpose of counseling together.

"Yesterday afternoon I invited brethren [L. J.] Rousseau and [Metcalfe] Hare to go over to mother's house, and we spent about three hours in consultation," wrote White to Daniells. "We endeavored to canvass the matter in all its bearings, and at the close of our interview we were unanimous in the opinion that it would be well for Eld. Farnsworth to come to Australasia."² This group interview is similar to the formal interviews after the turn of the century which were sometimes stenographically recorded.

¹W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Nov. 13, 1898, LB 12, 258, EGWRC-AU.

²W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Sept. 18, 1899, LB 14, 92; June 1, 1896, LB 9, 481, EGWRC-AU.
Some interviews were remarkably comprehensive in scope. One such interview was related by W. C. White to Daniells in 1899. "This afternoon I found opportunity to talk with Mother," he reported,

about some of the matters that have been much upon our minds, and about which we feel we need counsel. A few days ago I introduced to her some of our perplexities regarding the starting of church schools. To-day I find that she has been thinking about it, and has received some intimations as to the course we ought to follow. In her dreams she was in counsel with us about the work of the Avondale school, the building of the Sydney Sanitarium, the completion, furnishing and opening of the Avondale Health Retreat, the establishment of our missionary printing plant [Avondale Press], the preparation for and the conducting of our camp meetings, the carrying forward of vigorous, successful tent meetings to follow, the building of the Newcastle meeting house, and the establishment of church schools.\footnote{W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Aug. 16, 1899, LB 13, 447-450, EGWRC-AU.}

In her dreams she had been instructed, W. C. White continued, "that everything that is done must be done solidly and well. Nothing must be hurried. We must not take [on] so many enterprises at once as to make failure a certainty."

Here is seen an example of how Ellen White's counsels varied with changing situations. Sometimes she called for aggressive advance almost regardless of obstacles. At other times she came down on the side of caution. "We must not begin to build without sitting down and counting the cost," W. C. White continued. "The impression made upon Mother's mind about this was that much is to be done to perfect our work at the Avondale school." The enterprises already begun must be sustained. After relating further details of Ellen White's vision and counsel, White applied the counsel to the questions that he and Daniells had been considering. "In view of all these things I feel that we must relinquish any plans that have been made" to push the rapid development of church schools. The development of church schools must be addressed soon, but could not be done immediately.\footnote{Ibid.}
Two additional conversations between White and his mother mentioned in the same letter make this an excellent example of his reporting of informal interviews prior to 1900. It is also instructive as an illustration of White's function as a "conduit for counsel" between Ellen White and A. G. Daniells.

W. C. White as conduit between E. G. White and A. G. Daniells

The three-way relationship between E. G. White, W. C. White, and A. G. Daniells was cemented in Australia but was to gain even greater significance after 1901, when Daniells became General Conference president. Several valuable studies have been done regarding this triumvirate.¹

At the very beginning of Daniells's experience as Australian Conference president he was very much the protégé of W. C. White, as he himself acknowledged. He worked directly with W. C. White and received written communications from Ellen White. It was during this time, as Milton Hook has shown, that Daniells "began to communicate regularly" with Mrs. White, not initially "for the purpose of soliciting advice from her," but "simply to keep her informed of committee decisions and sundry news reports." Daniells sent reports to her regularly for almost two years before he began to specifically ask for her counsel. Then to spare her the burden of additional correspondence he formed the habit of sending his communications to her through W. C. White. When W. C. White returned to the United States for the 1897 General Conference, Daniells was "led to consult directly with Mrs. White rather than via her son." Upon W. C. White's return, Daniells again resumed communicating to Ellen White through him,

out of respect for her heavy load of writing and other literary work, as Robertson has shown. Hook concludes that

Daniells' appreciation of her counsel developed with time. His early letters are newsy and friendly, but as time goes on, Daniells turns more and more to Mrs. White for counsel. Often, he is apologetic for seeking her out so much, taking her time and energies in communicating with him, and so he resorts to W. C. White as a conduit, but in the absence of W. C. White there is a heavy dependence on her counsel directly.¹

By the time Daniells was elected General Conference president in 1901, there was a rather well-established three-way relationship between him and the Whites. Between 1901 and 1915 he wrote very frequently and at length about virtually every issue of importance with which he needed to deal. W. C. White shared these concerns with his mother and then reported to Daniells her responses. Thus by 1908 Daniells (responding to a warning from Ellen White to beware of the influence of certain of his colleagues) could assert to W. C. White: "I think the man who has the greatest influence over me is the one I am now addressing."²

The sharp drop in the number of Daniells's letters to W. C. White after the death of his mother shows that it was primarily her counsel, not his, that had prompted Daniells as a very busy church executive to keep up such a voluminous correspondence. Nevertheless, for nine developmental years in Australia and for the first fourteen years of Daniells's General Conference presidency, he had the benefit of frequent and detailed guidance from Ellen White through the "conduit" of W. C. White.³


²Robertson, "A. G. Daniells," 113-14; A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, June 25, 1908, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

W. C. White's Transition from Conference Work
to Employment by Ellen G. White

It was noted in chapter 2 that from 1881 to 1891 Ellen White repeatedly invited W. C. White to connect with her as a full-time assistant. The main reasons he did not do so were evidently two: his natural preference for administrative work, and a dread of the criticism that seemed especially targeted at those closely connected with his mother. "My connection with this [Ellen White's] work is not of my own seeking or choosing," Willie insisted to his brother Edson in 1905. "If I were to follow my own preferences, I should now be connected with some large publishing house, or school."1

"The criticism brought to bear upon Mother's helpers is severe and unmerciful," he continued.

It brought great sadness to Father, to Sister [Lucinda] Hall, to Sister [Marian] Davis, to Sister [Eliza] Burnham, and also to those now in the work. When we returned from Europe [in 1887], I felt this so keenly that I was glad to be fully occupied with other work. When Mother left the Sanitarium Hospital [in 1889],2 and united her family with yours [Edson's], I hoped that you would gradually take more and more burden of her work. I felt that you were more capable in many ways.

When we went to Australia, I carried for years lines of work that gave me but little time to help about Mother's work, and I should have continued to give my principal attention to institutional work, had it not been for a distinct and repeated call to free myself from other work. Again and again Mother told me, and also the leading brethren, that I must be freed from other responsibilities, that I might give myself to her work.3

White's reference to his mother's "distinct and repeated call" to him to

---

1W. C. White to J. E. White, Oct. 24, 1905, LB 29, 331-32, EGWRC-AU.

2When E. G. White went to Battle Creek after the 1888 General Conference session she did not expect to stay long, so she took a room at the sanitarium for four months—until Feb. or Mar. 1889 (A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 3:452). After leaving the sanitarium she shared a house with Edson and Emma and they united with her in her work during parts of 1889 and 1890 (E. G. White, Diary, February 1889, MS 18, 1889; E. G. White to W. C. White, Apr. 21, 1890, EGWRC-AU).

3W. C. White to J. E. White, Oct. 24, 1905, LB 29, 331-32, EGWRC-AU.
free himself from other responsibilities is well documented in the existing correspondence. What is not so well known is that the "distinct and repeated call" had been extended to Edson also.¹

Careers in Conflict

Willie was like the rope in a tug-of-war, pulled from one side by his conference responsibilities and from the other side by the needs of his mother and her work. This was to some extent due to circumstances beyond his control, but was intensified by his own ambivalence between the visible accomplishments that went with conference leadership and the more subordinate role of assisting his much-criticized mother. ("To be connected with and attending meetings with your mother" is not "an inferior matter," she would remind him in 1895.) The dilemma between the desire to help his mother and the concern for what might be "best" for his own career was acknowledged in a letter to his mother in September 1894. "I have no desire to make plans for myself," he declared.

My future is in His [God's] hand. He can care for me, and my children. The matters I spoke about, when we drove to Castle Hill, were air castles. They have vanished, without being named. There will not be any balancing of interests, and deciding between what is best for you and me. If I follow God's will, it will be best for all of us. I will patiently wait. . . . Self seeking would only result in many miseries, and loss of the approval of God. He has better things for me, I am sure.²

The mention of his "children," who were then with a guardian in Battle Creek, plus the mention of "air castles" and "self seeking" suggests that White had

¹E. G. White to W. C. White, Feb. 15, Feb. 13, 1894; see, e.g., E. G. White to Edson and Emma, May 1[, 24], May 2, 1894; May 30, 1897; E. G. White to O. A. Olsen, May 6, 1894; W. C. White to J. E. White, June 17, 1894, LB 4, 457; Oct. 19, 1894, LB 5, 75; June 21, July 3, 1899, LB 13, 304, 370-71; Sept. 12, 24, 1899, LB 14, 52-57, 116, EGWRC-AU.

²E. G. White to W. C. White, July 11, 1895, EGWRC-AU; W. C. White to E. G. White, Sept. 24, 1894, WCWF, EGWRC-GC, emphasis added.
been doing some daydreaming about his future in Battle Creek. The Whites had not originally intended to remain nine years in Australia. O. A. Olsen was planning in 1894 for the Whites to spend another year or two in Australia, visit Africa for a few months and then return to the United States. It is also known that by early 1896, O. A. Olsen was promoting W. C. White to succeed him as General Conference president. It is not improbable that some conversations between White and Olsen during Olsen’s visit to Australia in 1893 and 1894 may have already planted that hope in White’s mind. Whatever his aspirations, he recognized a potential conflict with his mother’s needs. He resolved to let go of whatever might diverge from "God’s will" and to "patiently wait" for that will to be unfolded.1

White’s willingness to surrender future ambitions did little to lessen his present work load. Within a month he was extending to Edson and Emma an invitation to come to Australia. Edson could "help forward the book work," and Emma could help "make a pleasant home" for Ellen White, with the goal of helping her to complete her book on the life of Christ. "I should then feel free," Willie explained, "to undertake some of the work naturally devolving upon a district superintendent which at present I cannot touch."2

Edson did not come, however, and Willie’s conference work continued to keep him occupied. His mother’s patience was wearing thin by March 1895. "I shall not make any calculation to be connected with you, or you with me," she penned to W. C. White.

---

1W. C. White to E. G. White, Sept. 24, 1894, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC; O. A. Olsen to E. G. White, Apr. 26, 1894, RG 11, Bk 12, 75; O. A. Olsen to W. C. White, Apr. 27, 1894, RG 11, Bk 12, 80; O. A. Olsen to E. G. White, Apr. 24, 1896, RG 11, Bk 15, 394; O. A. Olsen to W. C. White, Apr. 23, May 21, 1896, RG 11, Bk 15, 384, 660, GCAr; E. G. White to Edson and Emma, May 6, 1896, EGWRC-AU.

2W. C. White to J. E. White, Oct. 19, 1894, LB 5, 75, EGWRC-AU.
That idea has been a farce much of the time since coming to this country, and after your marriage I shall have no more hope of its being changed to a reality, that our interests will blend, and we be associated in each other's society. Your work is quite enough for you, without being linked up with your mother. This I do not ever expect, so shall have nothing to be disappointed over. Your work and mine are in different lines.¹

She did not, however, give up her conviction that it was God's ultimate intention for them to work together. "The light has always been given me," she had written earlier, "[that] Willie, his mother, and Edson should be connected in the work as a three-fold cord, one helping the other."²

**A Higher Vision of Leadership**

Ellen White sent her son a key communication in July 1895. W. C. White was planning to organize a separate conference for New South Wales, and Ellen White supported this plan—with some reservations. Previous to the actual organization of the new conference she had a vision in which she was shown that W. C. White (already president of the union conference) should refuse to be president of the New South Wales Conference. He was to be "free to help his mother get out her books and to accompany her in her journeying from place to place."³

O. A. Olsen thought the move to organize the New South Wales as a separate conference was premature. He mentioned "the perplexity of finding a suitable person to act as pres[ident]" of the small conference and opined to White, "As yet I do not see any one there fit to take this position but yourself." Perhaps Olsen’s assessment about the scarcity of presidential candidates in the small new

---

¹E. G. White to W. C. White, Mar. 15, 1895, EGWRC-AU.
²E. G. White to W. C. White, Feb. 15, 1894, EGWRC-AU.
³E. G. White to W. C. White, July 11, 1895, EGWRC-AU.
conference was correct. M. C. Israel, who would be elected president at the new conference's first regular constituency meeting a few months later, had not yet moved to the conference at the time Olsen made the reference. For whatever reasons, W. C. White did accept the leadership of the New South Wales Conference for a few months.¹

White was subsequently criticized by the New South Wales constituency for the unilateral manner in which he precipitated the organization of the new conference with little input from the members of the churches involved. Prescott "doubted the wisdom" of the move, but "did not feel free to oppose it." Had White not been so willing to become president, perhaps the move would have been delayed, and he might have been spared some of the criticism that followed.²

Much more was involved, however, in Ellen White's letter of July 11, 1895, to her son, than simply the organization of the New South Wales Conference. The totality of the instruction given to W. C. White in this letter seems in retrospect to have been of pivotal significance for the course of his career in Australasia. "The light which the Lord had given me," Ellen White related from the same vision, "was that W. C. White should be relieved largely of details. Others should take up that work [of conference finances, especially] and he should be left to better qualify himself for preaching the Word." Other men "can serve in places where he is

¹O. A. Olsen to W. C. White, Mar. 28, 1895, RG 11, Bk 14, 255; Apr. 27, Nov. 30, 1895, RG 11, Bk 14A, 33, 119, GCAr; W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, May 1, 1896, LB 9, 422, EGWRC-AU.

expected to serve," she maintained, but he should "be left free to occupy his place appointed of God to preach the Word."\(^1\)

"You must not allow your brethren to make duties for you," she solemnly challenged, that "so occupy your time and energies" that none are left for preaching. Because "your brethren have taken it for granted that another business line of work was your talent" and "have not encouraged you" to preach, she told him, "the Lord has seen fit to send a message to you and to them to lay fewer details of work on you that you may take your position in the work of ministering." "Reduce your board meetings," she urged him, "and increase your talents of speaking the Word of the Lord." "There are stormy times before you," she cautioned, "and you should become familiar with the work of feeding the flock of God."\(^2\)

She did not neglect to acknowledge his strong points and areas of success. She affirmed his "Christlike ambition to advance the work," and assured him that as he should renew his commitment to preaching that he would "have help from God." He would, "under the impression of the Spirit of God, be led to make appeals to young men to consecrate themselves to the work," and to stir up their "missionary spirit" to do more efficient work. "Your devotion so long to the duties of communication in the foreign missionary work has given you tact and skill in communicating," she recognized.

This work has improved your talent as a speaker to the point [being a concise communicator]. You have had nearly a world-wide theatre of operation and you will be led and taught of God as you take up your long-neglected work in ministerial lines. You have been willing to toil in various lines irrespective of honors or gains and now the Lord would have you stand more to the front in the place where he has appointed you as a minister of the gospel, prepared to

---

\(^1\)E. G. White to W. C. White, July 11, 1895, EGWRC-AU.

\(^2\)Ibid.
take the burden largely from me while my faculties are good [so] that I can oversee and understand the things that are prepared for the press.¹

Aware of the high vision she had set before him, she cautioned him not to blur the distinction between his work and hers. She did not want him to make the mistake of Fannie Bolton and suppose that he could contribute anything of content to her writings. "It is not for me," she told him, "or [for] any other person to enter into my special work, to be afterward tempted of the devil and say, I fitted that up; I did that work." She herself did not take credit for her work; much less should he expect honor or recognition.² Rather, he should recognize the privilege being offered to him. "It is for you to drop off the things of far less consequence and help me to get my books prepared for publication.... It is your mind that is needed, your talent connected with my work."³

This letter, coming just eighteen months after his acceptance of the presidency of the Australasian Union Conference, constituted a clear articulation of what she understood to be the divine will for her son. It basically called him to delegate the administrative and financial details to others and reduce his committee time so that he could develop his abilities as a preacher and also aid his mother in her book work. It called him to consider her work rather than conference work as

¹Ibid., emphasis added.

²Ibid.; cf. W. C. White’s comment to G. A. Irwin in the same context: "Do not permit the thought to prevail that Mother would withhold from Sr. Bolton, any credit and praise, [in order] that more might be given to herself.... Mother takes no credit to herself and wishes no praise. She wishes the divine truths to be recognized as coming from God, although clothed with human form. Is it not reasonable to believe that if mother should seek praise for the expression of truths which God has mercifully revealed to her for the benefit of others that He would remove from her the gift? It certainly would be a fearful thing for her to seek personal praise or honor" (W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, May 7, 1900, LB 15, 590, EGWRC-AU, emphasis added).

³E. G. White to W. C. White, July 11, 1895, EGWRC-AU.
his primary vocation. He did not reject the call, but the changes called for seemed so difficult that it took him five years to make the transition.

**Years of Dilemma**

From time to time during the next two years she made brief references to her wish that he could have devoted significant time to forwarding her work. "My son Willie was to be with me and help me," she wrote pensively in August 1896. "Now you can see how it goes. . . . You, my son, will do all in your power, but weighty responsibilities rest on you. I should not take your mind or your time."¹

A couple of weeks later she wrote to Edson and Emma, exulting over the agricultural development of the Avondale school and encouraging them to do "in the Southern field" in America a "similar work" to that being done at Avondale. There was this time no urging them to come to Australia, but the subject was mentioned in the last paragraph of the letter. "Gladly would I have you, my children, with me," she wrote, wistful again.

I have very little of Willie. He is not on the ground here. He is at Granville. I know not, when Emily goes, who will be my special companion. Your brother Willie is full of care and so pressed with his correspondence that I dare not ask him a question. I dare not write [to] him, for he has no time and must not be interrupted. . . . Willie was to be with his mother. He might just about as well be in America for all the help I receive. When I have help it must be from one who will not be overwhelmed with responsibilities in his line. But the Lord will give me helper[s], even if I get so little from my children. I would not call you here away from your field of duty. God help you. I have longed for your society, longed for the help you might be to me, but it was not in the providence of God that it should be, and I will continue to stand alone, trusting in God. Let not these words make you sad. Let them not in any way discourage you. I know my life is in the hands of Jesus Christ. I trust in Him.²

¹E. G. White to W. C. White, Aug. 6, Aug. 6, 1895 (Letters 148, 149, 1895), EGWRC-AU.

²E. G. White to Edson and Emma, Aug. 19, 1895, EGWRC-AU, emphasis added.
In anticipating W. C. White's resignation from the union conference presidency in 1897, his mother had expected that someone else would be found to "take his place as general manager" and "look after the financial responsibilities" so that he could give his time to her work. This was his own expectation as well. He told Daniells he would "transfer from the work of the Union Conference to mother's employ" as soon as the Foreign Mission Board could send "a new man to act as District Superintendent." The action of the 1897 General Conference, however, in returning him to office as vice-president of the Australasian Union Conference left the complex financial burdens of the rapidly growing field still on the shoulders of the same group of men, principally Daniells and White.¹

When his mother perceived the import of what had happened, she was deeply disappointed. "It is certain," she told him,

that the prospect here is not flattering in regard to the [book] work before us. It looks just as hopeless, and impossibilities just as large, as it has done for years. I am resolved to do what I can, and leave what cannot be done.

I have not from the first counted on you. I do not now. I question about it being your duty. Other things will be constantly drawing you away and my dependence on you is like leaning on one I cannot depend on, even in the very largest crisis that can come to me and my work. It is not your forte. You will not act the part that one must act for me. Your whole nature needs a different line of work and I do not count on you, notwithstanding all the resolutions of any conference and board. Resolutions--I have had enough of these. And if a large share of the time spent in board meetings and committee meetings were devoted to seeking counsel from God, His wisdom would be of more value than the best council and committee meetings. . . .

I want you to plan in the line of work you are best fitted for, for which you are best adapted and can accomplish the most in the general work. I will now commit my case to God and say with my whole heart, I have done my best. The farce of providing me so large help [as was promised] in coming to Australia amounted to just nothing, and now I shall do what I can and no more. God helping me, I stand alone as I have done.

I do not want you to suppose I feel tried [provoked] with you, for I do not. You have been educated to a different line of work altogether. Take up your line of work and do that work in which you can do the most for the interest of

¹E. G. White to Edson and Emma, May 6, 1896; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, June 1, 1896, LB 9, 487, EGWRC-AU.
the cause and I will be satisfied. But I feel little confidence that you can be the help [that] I must have, for you will be called here and there, and the demand is imperative and I could not say, Do not go, for I would not interpose, you well know, to restrain you in any way. I write now that you may consider these things in relation to the work and cause of God and adjust yourself to it where you can accomplish the most good in various lines, and I will not say anything to bias you in this matter.¹

She left him free to decide, but her final sentence indicated how crucial she felt his decision to be. "May the Lord direct in all things," she advised, "but let us not make a mistake in this matter." Evidently he sensed the seriousness of turning her down, but it took him several months to effectively clear his schedule.²

Her Call Accepted

The above letter of December 1897 prompted W. C. White to make significant changes in the allocation of his time. He would never be totally free from his connection with conference work. However, from the beginning of 1898 he began to work toward reserving substantial time in his schedule for his mother's work. When a call came for him to assist A. T. Robinson in an evangelistic series, Ellen White "entered a solemn protest against" his "leaving her again when she needed" his help "so much." W. C. White was again torn between seemingly conflicting obligations. "Three times she presented this matter," White explained to Daniells, "but finally consented to my going, in view of the fact that Elder Robinson . . . would be all alone in his work in Adelaide, if I did not go." When word came from Daniells three days later that White was not needed because other help had been found for Robinson, White saw the cancellation as providential and that it was his "privilege to at once enter upon" his work with his mother. The next day he

¹E. G. White to W. C. White, Dec. 8[-9], 1897, EGWRC-AU.
²Ibid.
reported the change to Robinson. "As I take hold of mother's work, I see that it is none too soon," he confessed. "I am distressed as I see what I ought to have been doing in this work during the last three years."1

For several months in 1898 he evidently resisted the pull of conference work. "W. C. White and Elder Daniells have had some conversation with me upon school matters," his mother explained to S. N. Haskell in December of 1898, "but I tell them that W. C. White will hold no office with my consent while he is connected with me in my work. His health is poor, and this burden shall not come upon him again. It is hard enough when his work is appreciated." What she meant by "hold no office" is not clear. It is known that White was and remained chairman of the Avondale board during this time. It is possible, but not probable, that the school board was considering giving him some faculty position in addition to his board membership (as Daniells was named school principal for a time in 1898), but the seemingly obvious meaning of her words is that she wished he were not even on the board.2

The degree of success he achieved in his attempts to reallocate his time is indicated by his "time statement" to the conference for the first quarter of 1899. Itemizing his time by half days, White reported five and two-sevenths weeks or thirty-seven days spent in union conference business and two and five-sevenths weeks or nineteen days "worked for the Avondale School." Presumably, a

1W. C. White to A. T. Robinson, May 12, 1898, LB 12, 11; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, May 11, 1898, LB 12, 8, EGWRC-AU.

2E. G. White to Brother [S. N.] and Sister Haskell, Dec. 28, 1898, EGWRC-AU; Avondale School Board Minutes, Oct. 22, 1897 through Jan. 3, 1899, AHC.
substantial part of the remaining seven weeks in the quarter were given to his mother's work.  

However, his physical presence in Cooranbong did not mean he could simply dismiss from his mind the needs of the conference. In August 1899 his mother wrote her strongest protest yet to his involvement with other interests. Shortly afterward, however, she was shown in vision that it was not God's will for W. C. White to totally disengage from conference work.

**First Ultimatum**

What might be called Ellen White's "first ultimatum" to her son was written just after S. N. Haskell had boarded ship for the United States. She began by paying high tribute to him. "I shall miss Elder Haskell very much," she said. "He could appreciate the character of my work as no one else now living has ever done." Evidently she felt that W. C. White had not yet grasped the uniqueness of his privilege to work in such close connection with her. "If your mind were not called in so many ways, engrossed in so many things, you might in time be the best help I could have," she wrote wistfully. "But it is not possible for me to expect this." "Business is your forte," she said. "Whenever a call has been made you were up and off." "I do not think you have felt the burden of my work."

When you give yourself to the work you can do that which no other one can do; but this has been only for a limited period of time. Then you accepted other burdens, some of which were apparently a necessity, some things—I might say many things—were placed first and [my] work second or thirdly.

She then recounted the extent to which she had supported him financially.

---


2 E. G. White to W. C. White, Aug. [11-13], 1899 (Letter 245, 1899), EGWRC-AU.
so that he could work for her. She had paid others to do the work which he should have done, and which would now have to be redone because inexperienced workers had been working without the supervision he was to have given. "Could you have given to me more of your time the large bills paid for that work that amounts to nothing would have been saved." Finally she reached her conclusion. She saw no point in employing him while his time was absorbed in other interests. "Do not withhold yourself from any position you think you should take," she advised,

for you might just as well have the position assigned you as to do the work without the appointment. You can then have your pay from the Union conference and do the work you are accustomed to do, and have been educated to do, and then I will not count upon you and will shape myself to the situation and manage, if possible, to get some help from a woman, not a man. I will take right hold myself with Sister Peck; we will read matters together, and then I will not be looking forward to and expecting your help, which I do not get.¹

"I shall not be hindered any longer," she determined. "I shall do my best now while life shall last, to press these testimonies right into circulation. . . . I shall not wait one day for you, my son, or for any other one. The work I supposed would be done is not done." A day or two later she added a postscript. "My son," it began,

do not think I do not appreciate your work when you give yourself to it, for I do appreciate it highly.

But I have lost all hope of any success while I wait your notion or freedom to work in the matter so important to me. I cannot have you take hold of the work in a sort of catch it up [manner], [and then] to drop it to do work at the school, and I keep the burden of matters, of planning and devising methods and ways, while I have a very little of your mind, for it is on something else.

When you proposed last night to have Sister [Sarah] Peck [one of Ellen White's editorial assistants] take a class of teachers to educate for church schools I said to myself, What does he mean? Can he have any real sense of my labors and the burdens I carry? It is a hopeless case. He would suggest things to take away the only working force I have on these important matters which should come to the people. There can not be catching up my work as a woman would her knitting work and dropping it just as readily. Every time

¹Ibid.
Sister Peck has her mind called to other work that mind and its power, which the work should have, is diverted.¹

About a week later on August 18, Ellen White had a face-to-face confrontation with her son "in regard to the necessity of giving his whole time to the work of preparing my writings for publication." She evidently took much the same position she had written in the above letter. "My mind was much troubled," she wrote in her diary, "and after going to rest, I could not sleep." When at length she "fell asleep," a revelation awaited her that directly addressed her frustrations regarding W. C. White's work and calling. "In the night season, light came to me," she wrote,

that W. C. White had from his childhood been trained in the Lord's work. Before his birth he was dedicated to God; and after his birth he was chosen of God to serve Him with singleness of purpose. He is to stand ready to serve where necessity requires. It is not possible to separate him from the general work in which he is so intensely interested. I am instructed that if he will trust wholly in God, the Lord will work with him and through him, giving him judgment to do the Master's service aright.

It is essential also that he shall be connected with his Mother's work. The preparation of my writings for publication in book form should receive his attention. And there are other responsibilities that he must bear in this country. He is better prepared than some others to see the needs of God's cause, and present those needs before the people in a way that will arouse them to give these matters proper attention. Through his connection with the work of his mother, whom the Lord has instructed, W. C. White can give to the people the light that is essential in regard to plans and methods.²

She concluded the diary record with a statement of her own acquiescence to the will of God.

As this is the light given me, I now renewedly dedicate my son, W. C. White, to the Lord's work,—a work that includes the preparation, with as little

¹Ibid.

delay as possible, of the matter which the Lord has given me to present to the world, to our churches, and to individuals.\(^1\)

Despite the reassurance to W. C. White that he was not to totally ignore the demands of conference work, he still had reference to previous visions which directed him to curtail the detail work, delegate the financial responsibilities, and free himself for the work of preaching and helping his mother to prepare her writings.\(^2\) Consequently he made renewed attempts to limit his conference commitments. When Ellen White was called to a camp meeting in Toowoomba, Queensland, from October 13 to 23, 1899, W. C. White remained in Cooranbong. "Please do not have a moment's anxiety about my burdens in connection with your work and workers," he assured her. "All I want to know is your wish, and that is my plan. . . . I shall assist Miss Peck, in any matter th[at] she or you wish me to, cheerfully. Beyond that I have no anxiety." Again, however, his good intentions were little match for the demands of all the committees on which he retained membership.\(^3\)

**Second Ultimatum**

In March 1900, five months after the above assurances from W. C. White, Ellen White delivered her "second ultimatum." It was preceded by two successive nights during which she "reasoned and prayed," finally deciding it was her "duty," as soon as she could "adjust matters, to go to America without delay." Her primary reason for planning this move was to "secure the very best kind of help possible and

---

\(^1\)Ibid.

\(^2\)See, e.g., E. G. White to W. C. White, July 11, 1895, EGWRC-AU.

get out Christian Temperance\(^1\) and Testimonies to the Church and other matters. I shall not spare money but shall work with all the ability the Lord shall please to give me. . . . The consuming desire to get out the works is too much for me. I shall now do this work," she wrote to Willie.

You have done the best you could under the circumstances, but it is not required that you should carry so many responsibilities. Therefore I will not press my work upon you, but say, Do whatever you feel is your duty and that you do not seem able to avoid. But my duty seems now to be made more plain and clear, . . . and go I must as it now appears.\(^2\)

Two days later she wrote the "second ultimatum," essentially insisting that W. C. White make a decision as to which track he would follow. Would he, or would he not, devote himself wholeheartedly to her work? "I want to go [to America] if it is the will of the Lord that I shall go," she began.

If [it is] not [His will] I wish to remain, but [in that case] I have no hope of accomplishing anything in the line of my book making. . . .

I am all the time worried, perplexed, and distressed. Your many engagements, which I can see no way out of, make me feel the time has come for me to change the order of things. Certainly your work cannot be taken up with so many things outside of the work with my workers, which needs all your brain power and your talent. . . . I will prefer to have you no longer attempting the impossible. . . .

I shall go to America if the Lord will, and in the name of the Lord set men and women at work. The Lord signified to me that these things [her writings] which come first are not made to appear.

Now be free, Willie, perfectly free. I shall have Sister Peck’s preparation of matter examined by those I think can give it attention at once; I am not fully decided just who it shall be. The Lord instructed me that Elder Haskell and yourself and Uriah Smith were to be my helpers. Had Elder Haskell remained in Australia I could have had him and Sister Peck read over the matter together and he could, knowing the truth from the early stage of the work, have helped

\(^1\)Christian Temperance had been published in 1890. The process of revision and enlargement that Ellen White referred to in this letter of 1900 resulted in a new book, The Ministry of Healing (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905). Other chapters from Christian Temperance were incorporated into Counsels on Health and Instruction to Medical Missionary Workers (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1923) and Fundamentals of Christian Education: Instruction for the Home, the School, and the Church (Nashville: Southern Publishing Assn., 1923).

\(^2\)E. G. White to W. C. White, Mar. 7, 1900, EGWRC-AU.
Sister Peck to work understandingly. She says she could have done tenfold more if W. C. W. had come in close relation to my work, but all that she does seems to be in a mystery. She cannot think she is working to my advantage.

... Now, as I dare not say you must drop everything and take up my work, the one work which is of more consequence to me than sanitarium or health retreat or school or church, I have decided not to depend on you at all... You cannot do my work and the work others give you to do, which you dare not refuse. I am perplexed, weary, disappointed, and now take my books, my writings, and go to America.

Elder Smith told me at one time when I wrote to him several years ago, that he would be pleased to help me in every way possible, ... in messages to be given to the world. I am sorry, so sorry, that matters are as they are, but see no help for it. I dare not tear you away from responsibilities that rest upon you. Elder Daniells supposes he will attend the General Conference [early in 1901]. I can have Elders Daniells, Uriah Smith, Haskell, and Irwin, Edson White, and several others to help me—of women as well as men.

Now this is the shape things have taken in my mind. Three nights I have been unable to sleep over the matter, and I must settle something at once. I am sure I shall not longer urge you to do that which is impossible...

And now I must close. All are in good spirits, cheerful and happy. God bless you, strengthen you for every work God gives you to do, is the prayer of your mother.1

The "second ultimatum" got his attention. When she suggested leaving him in Australia to sit on his committees while she would return to America and get Daniells and Haskell and Edson White to do the work he had neglected, W. C. White finally saw things in something closer to her perspective. From this point onward, he began to see the divestiture of his administrative responsibilities as more of a privilege than a sacrifice. "I have been shaking myself free from some of the responsibilities here," he wrote to Irwin. "I feel much blessed in the change, and I think it is better for the work" because responsibilities would now be borne by individuals who had previously depended on White to carry them.2

Not until they sailed for America was W. C. White able to fully free himself of his other responsibilities. Never again would he become so entangled in

1E. G. White to W. C. White, Mar. 9, 1900, EGWRC-AU, emphasis added.
2W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, July 17, 1900, LB 15, 801, EGWRC-AU.
outside commitments as to be unavailable to his mother. "All my workers and W. C. White himself understand," she wrote upon arriving in the United States, "that in leaving Australia W. C. W. laid off every official duty that he might help me in my book work. I employ him as my general helper in this work." From 1900 until her death in 1915, he would be her spokesman, liaison, and chief of staff. In the process, he would be preparing to be the primary custodian of her writings after her death.¹

Conclusions. 1891-1900

On the basis of the evidence presented in this chapter, several perspectives can now be suggested regarding W. C. White's relationship to his mother.

First, W. C. White's dependence on his mother for direction in his administrative work is more clearly evident during this period than before. W. C. White's position as chief executive during the formative stage of the work in Australasia gave him broad scope for innovation, with a minimum of restrictive influence from Battle Creek. These circumstances were favorable for the development of a relationship in which she was the primary, though not the sole, counselor to her son.

Her influence on her son was now very extensive. As demonstrated in chapter 1, his very character and personality had been formed under her training. It was seen in chapter 2 and further substantiated in the present chapter that his philosophy of church leadership was strongly shaped by her instruction. The present chapter also shows that issues facing the Australasian Union Conference committee were often placed before her for review, and her counsel was almost always

¹E. G. White to the Officers of the General Conference, Oct. 24, 1900; E. G. White to F. M. Wilcox, Oct. 23, 1907, EGWRC-AU.
followed. Workers were called from abroad or reassigned within the local area, policies were instituted or rescinded, and expenditures authorized or denied on the basis of her counsel. The importance of her guidance as a component of W. C. White's administrative success can scarcely be overvalued.

Another perspective from which to assess the overall significance of W. C. White's work in Australia is that of the long-range needs of the church. In the early 1890s, massive problems had developed at denominational headquarters in Battle Creek. This situation resulted partly from the denomination's outgrowing its organizational structure, and partly from the spiritual decline caused by opposition to the renewal that had been initiated in 1888. The needed solution was a new organizational structure and new leadership.

The most creative member of the General Conference executive committee in 1891 was W. C. White, and the source of his creativity was the seminal suggestions of his mother. But his voicing of her suggestions met with determined resistance that led to the exile of both of them to Australia. Deprived of her immediate influence, the situation at Battle Creek continued to deteriorate, only more rapidly. Where would new leadership be found?

The first answer to that question was W. C. White. As district superintendent and then union president he became an agent for carrying out his mother's vision for denominational work in Australasia. This helps to explain some of her ambivalence regarding his conflicting career roles. On the one hand, she fervently wished she could have his full-time help. On the other hand, she recognized that the conference needed him too. When her own needs overwhelmed her and she was moved to the point of demanding his help, she was reminded in vision how much the conference work needed the contribution that, because of his
connection with her, he was uniquely qualified to make. He did not, however, have the physical stamina to do all that the conference wanted him to do and help her as well. She repeatedly called on him to delegate his work, but like his father, W. C. White saw the work and its success as so much his "lifeblood," that it was almost a matter of anguish to delegate any of it to those of less skill or dedication. His reluctance to delegate and his unwillingness to refuse those who called for his help kept him deeply involved in administrative work right up to the time of the Whites' departure for America in 1900.

The second answer to the question of where new leadership would come from was A. G. Daniells. Under W. C. White's tutelage, Daniells's natural aptitudes developed rapidly until he outstripped his mentor in administrative ability. By the time W. C. White reached the limits of his personal stamina in 1896, Daniells had matured sufficiently to take on the presidency of the Australasian Union Conference. In this second stage of his relation to W. C. White, Daniells relied on his vice-president, White, not only for counsel, but for administrative legwork as well. The third stage of Daniells's relation to W. C. White came with Daniells's election as president of the General Conference in 1901. Now W. C. White was completely in the background, having eschewed most administrative responsibility in order to work primarily for his mother. In this role, however, he was ideally situated for service as a communicative conduit between Ellen White and A. G. Daniells, affording Daniells the benefits, both spiritual and conceptual, of frequent communication with her.

With the General Conference of 1901, the denomination gained both the new leadership and the new structure it so badly needed. The needed renewal, however, had only begun. The breaking free from the Battle Creek mold and the
development of a new generation of leaders would consume most of the remaining years of Ellen White. But throughout that time she would have virtually direct access to the General Conference president through the bond, forged in Australia, between Daniells and W. C. White. The crises and changes of the years from 1900 to 1915 are the subject of chapter 4.
CHAPTER 4

TRUSTEE IN TRAINING, 1900-1915

The inescapable reality that cast its shadow over everything the Whites did during the years from 1900 to 1915 was the fact of Ellen White's aging and the realization of her impending death. Already seventy-three in 1900, she could not be expected to live many more years. This widespread realization gave rise to many questions about the possibility of a prophetic successor. It was in this context that Ellen White wrote one of her most detailed statements about the work of W. C. White. "Whether or not my life is spared," she declared,

my writings will constantly speak, and their work will go forward as long as time shall last. My writings are kept on file in the office, and even though I should not live, these words that have been given to me by the Lord will still have life and will speak to the people. . . .

W. C. White has his commission. I have instructed him to labor untiringly to secure the publication of my writings in the English language first, and afterward to secure their translation and publication in many other languages. He should be respected in the performance of his duty. He has been chosen by the Lord to take charge of the publication of my writings, if I should lay off the armor. He has been long connected with the work, and God has given him experience and good judgment. I feel clear in entrusting my writings to his hand, because the Lord has fitted him for the work by giving him a decided experience.1

Her answer to the question of a successor was to underscore the enduring value of what she had already written and to designate W. C. White, not as a prophetic successor, but as one who had the "experience and good judgment" to "take charge of the publication" of her writings.

1E. G. White to [F. M.] Wilcox, Oct. 23, 1907, EGWRC-GC.

262
W. C. White also recognized the educative value of his experience with his mother. Edson sometimes complained about his "disadvantage in being away from Mother practically all the time," while his brother had virtually unlimited access to her. "Yes, Edson," Willie replied,

it is a misfortune that you have been so much separated from Mother. I wish it had been otherwise. There have been times when Mother needed very much the help that you could have given her, and I wish with all my heart that you had seen your way to connect closely with her and be her helper. By a continual contact with her work, you would have gained an experience and learned lessons that no one can learn so well as those who are with her daily. . . . I do not say this to criticize. I simply want you to see that the relation which I sustain to Mother's work is the result of many years of experience which I could not have gained without laying upon the shelf my own plans, my own ambitions, and giving myself to be a servant.

In former letters I have pointed out that the more weighty responsibilities which I bear in connection with Mother's work are not of my own choosing. I have been called definitely and repeatedly to this work, and my connection with the work has meant to me privileges and trials, advantages and sacrifices, joys and sorrows, honor and condemnation; but most of all it has meant to me an education which necessarily has fitted me to some degree, for the larger responsibilities and heavier burdens which come with the years as Mother grows older. Many times in the past, I have wished that I might be free from this responsibility[..] But now I do not say that I am ready to give up this place to anyone who is willing to take it, because I believe that the one who occupies this place needs the years of training that I have gotten in it.

Regarding the fairness, the justice, the equity and the honesty with which I have done my work, I must leave the measurement of that until the day of judgment. I know what I have tried to do. There are many who say I have failed, and I know very well that my work has been imperfect. But this I know, that I have sought the Lord earnestly for wisdom and strength to be fair, to be kind, to be true and loyal to my brethren, and to use the best I could the strength God has given me to do the things that Mother has told me she wanted me to do.¹

The varied roles and functions that W. C. White filled during the last decade and a half of his mother's life have a common thread. While they met immediate needs, they also served to prepare him to be the chief custodian of her writings and to extend her work after her death.

¹W. C. White to J. E. White, Oct. 18, 1908, LB 34, 281, EGWRC-GC, emphasis added.
Among his responsibilities during this period were those of editor, counselor, spokesman, and interpreter of her writings. He continued to serve as the communications link between Ellen White and denominational leaders, particularly A. G. Daniells. As Ellen White's strength declined she limited her public appearances and W. C. White became her representative at many denominational meetings and councils. He had prior experience in all of these areas of responsibility. However, the accumulation of sensitive trusts, plus his mother's aging, provided fertile ground for questions regarding his relationship to her.

Thus the period from 1900 through 1915 was not only the era of denominational reorganization, the transfer of headquarters from Battle Creek to Washington, D.C., the extension of church work in the South, and the rapid expansion of medical institutions, particularly in California. It was also for W. C. White the era of doubts about his aged mother's competence and of private suspicions and public allegations regarding his own integrity as her co-worker and spokesman. A chronological overview of the period prepares the ground for consideration of specific issues regarding W. C. White's relationship to Ellen White.

**Chronological Overview, 1900-1915**

The work of W. C. White from 1900 to 1915 may be divided into three periods: the return to America and denominational reorganization, from 1900 through 1901; the Battle Creek crisis, from 1902 to 1907; and the years of conflict and achievement from 1907 until his mother's death in 1915.

**Return and Reorganization, 1900-1901**

The Whites sailed from Australia on the *Moana* August 29 and
disembarked in San Francisco on September 21, 1900.\footnote{W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, July 30, 1900, LB 15, 818; W. C. White to Editor, RH, Oct. 4, 1900, LB 15, 892, EGWRC-AU.} The first seventeen months following their arrival in the United States were occupied with three major tasks: establishing residences, preparing for the 1901 General Conference session, and finishing pre-publication work on Testimonies for the Church, volume 6.

**Resettling in California, 1900**

Ellen White at first "proposed" that they return to the home she still owned in Healdsburg, California, but W. C. White argued that they "should not be near any school." Both of them believed it would be advantageous to live near the Pacific Press in Oakland. But after a few days of "house hunting" Ellen White concluded that the prices were too high and the climate "too cold and foggy" in Oakland for her health at nearly seventy-three years of age.\footnote{E. G. White to Brother and Sister [S. N.] Haskell, Aug. 13, 1900; E. G. White to Brother and Sister [E. W.] Farnsworth, Oct. 8, 1900; E. G. White to Sister Wilson, Dec. 12, 1900, EGWRC-AU.}

At Willie's suggestion she decided to take a break from the search for housing and visit the St. Helena Sanitarium. As she described to a long-time friend, Mrs. J. L. Ings, her "disappointment" in "house-hunting," Mrs. Ings replied, "Well, there is a place under the hill that will suit you. It belonged to Robert Pratt's brother. Brother Burden has bought it, and he will be glad to sell it to you."

Investigating, she discovered a farm with orchards, vineyards, barn, stable, and, best of all, "a house furnished throughout," ready for occupancy. The total cost was less than she had received for the sale of her place in Cooranbong. Thus within a week of her arrival in the United States she found a house ready for her to move into. "This place was none of my seeking," she exulted in a letter to Stephen and W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, July 30, 1900, LB 15, 818; W. C. White to Editor, RH, Oct. 4, 1900, LB 15, 892, EGWRC-AU.
Hetty Haskell. "It has come to me without a thought or purpose of mine. The Lord is so kind and gracious to me. I can trust my interests with Him who is too wise to err and too good to do me harm."¹

She took possession of the Pratt place on October 16, 1900. The name "Elmshaven," derived from the large elms in front of the house, was applied to the home some three months later. One seven-acre parcel of land was deeded to W. C. White, a "beautiful location" where he would build a home ("Rosehaven") the next summer; but for now he would "fix up an old cottage on the place" as temporary housing for his family of seven. Initially, Willie and May and the three youngest children occupied "three small rooms" in "Brother Atwood's cottage," a ten-minute walk away, while Ella and Mabel stayed with their grandmother.²

With the housing issue settled for the time being they could concentrate on the completion of volume 6 of the _Testimonies_, hopefully in time for the General Conference session which would begin April 2, 1901, in Battle Creek. Their work was slowed by a stream of friends, colleagues, and others who deluged Ellen White with letters or traveled to St. Helena seeking personal interviews. Sara McEnterfer, Nellie Druillard, and W. C. White were all pressed into service to help answer the avalanche of mail. On February 20, 1901, just fifteen days before the Whites were scheduled to leave for Battle Creek, Ellen White was busy giving a final reading to


the articles prepared for volume 6. "I have much to do before going to conference," she explained to J. H. Kellogg.

There are some things to be complete[d] for Testimony 34. . . . I must select the most important matters for the Testimony, and then look over everything prepared for it, and be my own critic; for I would not be willing to have some things which are all truth to be published; because I fear that some would take advantage of them to hurt others.

After the matter for the testimony is prepared, every article must be read by me. I try to bring out general principles, and if I see a sentence which I fear would give some one excuse to injure some one else, I feel at perfect liberty to keep back the sentence, even though it is perfectly true.1

She had sometimes endeavored to save eye strain by having her staff members read manuscripts aloud to her, but this time she was so fatigued that "the sound of the voice in reading or singing" was "almost unendurable," so she read every article to herself. With W. C. White negotiating the printing details with Pacific Press, the task was finished before they left for Battle Creek.2

W. C. White was an indefatiguable traveler who seldom made a cross-country trip without visiting Adventist schools, sanitariums, churches, and conferences along the way. In this manner he kept in frequent personal contact with denominational institutions in the regions through which he traveled. Because of her age, Ellen White no longer traveled as much as she had in her younger years, but her deep interest in the progress of denominational work everywhere led her to make as many contacts with denominational institutions as she had strength for. The trip to the 1901 General Conference is a good example.

The Whites left St. Helena on March 7, traveling the southern rail route through New Orleans to Vicksburg, Mississippi, where Edson White met them at the

---

1A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 5:45-48; E. G. White to J. H. Kellogg, Feb. 20, 1901, EGWRC-AU.

train on Friday morning, March 15. The river steamboat Morning Star, Edson's floating headquarters, was their home for the weekend. On Sunday they dedicated a new Seventh-day Adventist church in Vicksburg, one of the first congregations created in response to Edson's preaching in the South. After spending Tuesday and Wednesday at a Nashville convention of Edson's Southern Missionary Society they took a night train to Chicago, where they visited the denomination's American Medical Missionary College and met with the Adventist congregation there. W. C. White took the Saturday night train to Battle Creek in order to prepare for a publishing convention that would begin on Monday. His mother and the rest of the party followed on Sunday, March 24.  

Reorganization of the General Conference, 1901

For a number of leading delegates, the effective opening of the 1901 General Conference session occurred the day before the official call to order. On April 1, Ellen White addressed a large group of denominational leaders in the Battle Creek College library, setting before them the challenges facing the church. Without specifying exactly how the work should be done, she called for a thorough reorganization of denominational structure. In this reorganization, W. C. White would play a significant part.

The session proper was called to order by incumbent president G. A. Irwin on April 2. Following Irwin's brief address, Ellen White took the speaker's stand


2E. G. White, "Talk by Mrs. E. G. White in College Library, April 1, 1901," MS 43, 1901, EGWRC-AU.
and challenged the delegates to do a work "that should have been done . . . ten years ago." In the conference of 1891 "the brethren assented to the light God had given," she said, "but no special change was made to bring about such a condition of things that the power of God could be revealed among His people." Now she renewed the call for personal reconversion and denominational restructuring. "What we want now is a reorganization," she declared. "We want to begin at the foundation and build upon a different principle."¹

While she was not prepared to prescribe "just how" this reorganization was "to be accomplished," she did insist that the heavy responsibilities of leadership should rest on a larger group of men. "There are to be more than one or two or three men to consider the whole vast field. The work is great, and there is no one human mind [that] can plan for the work which needs to be done." She urged the delegates to take seriously the work to be done at the conference. "Let every one of you go home, not to chat, chat, chat, but to pray. . . . Go home and plead with God to mold you after the divine similitude."²

The first motion to be placed before the assembly was by A. G. Daniells, who had chaired the meeting in the college library the day before. Speaking for "many" who had been present in that meeting, he moved to suspend "the usual rules and precedents for arranging and transacting the business of the Conference," and that a broadly representative "general or central committee" be appointed to grapple with the challenges of reorganization and to prepare proposals to come before the delegates. After some debate in which both Ellen and W. C. White participated, the

²Ibid., 23-27.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
motion was unanimously passed. The central committee came to be called the committee on counsel and Daniells was elected its chairman.\(^1\)

The subcommittee on organization, chaired by W. C. White, would bring to the floor a series of recommendations involving substantial changes to the General Conference constitution. One of these was a proposal that union conferences and union missions, modeled after the successful experiment in Australia, be organized throughout the world field. These unions would supersede local conferences as the constituent units of the General Conference. Another recommendation was for a sweeping recomposition of the General Conference Committee. It would be enlarged to from thirteen to twenty-five members, six of whom would be appointed by the Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association in compensation for the fact that the medical association (whose 2000 employees outnumbered the 1500 of the General Conference) was underrepresented at the General Conference session. The title of General Conference President was discontinued. Instead, the chairman of the executive committee, elected by that committee, would be the chief executive officer. A third proposal was that the auxiliary organizations, previously separate entities, be integrated into the General Conference as departments. The exception was the medical department, which would not be actually organized as a department until 1905.\(^2\)

Another notable development at the session was the April 12 vote to move Battle Creek College to a rural location. "It is time to get out now," said Ellen

\(^{1}\)Ibid., 27-29.

\(^{2}\)General Summary of Organizations and Recommendations as Adopted by the General Conference and the General Conference Committee, April 2 to May 1, 1901," GCB, 1901, 499-506; Barry Oliver, SDA Organizational Structure, 173-75; R. W. Schwarz, Light Bearers to the Remnant, 276-80; A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 5:81-96.
White to Percy Magan, "for great things will soon be happening in Battle Creek."

During the last week of the session Ellen White confronted the "holy flesh" movement that had taken root in the Indiana Conference over the previous three years. At the 5:30 A.M. meeting, Wednesday, April 17, she repudiated the teaching that human beings may attain "holy flesh" in the present life. "Let this phase of doctrine be carried a little further," she warned, "and it will lead to the claim that its advocates cannot sin, that since they have holy flesh, their actions are all holy. What a door of temptation would thus be opened!" She labeled the teaching a "dangerous delusion" and said that those who had "sustained this fanaticism . . . might far better be engaged in secular labor," where they would not be "dishonoring the Lord and imperiling His people." The issue would become significant for the study of W. C. White because of an incident that took place in Indianapolis, Indiana, two and a half weeks later.

The Indianapolis Incident, 1901

Ellen White’s call for a change of leadership in the Indiana Conference led to a special weekend session of the Indiana Conference from May 3 to 5, in Indianapolis. R. S. Donnell, Indiana Conference president, had agreed to resign, but as the business meeting began on Saturday night, he was wavering and told W. C. White he would like to "have a talk" with Ellen White about the situation. White related later that he “promised” Donnell that he would "arrange for an

1 P. T. Magan, "From City to Vineyard, 1901," Founders’ Day Speech, Apr. 20, 1924, p. 13, TMs, VFM 1328, AHC.

2 E. G. White, "Regarding the Late Movement in Indiana," GCB, 1901, 419-21.

interview if possible early next morning." Due to the lateness of the business meeting, W. C. White did not have an opportunity to present Donnell's request to her on Saturday night. But "early the next morning" Willie came to her room saying that Donnell "desired to have an interview with her, and would come in a few minutes." This caught her by surprise. She had been "absorbed" in writing on a different subject and "seemed much perplexed at the thought of an interview with Donnell. "What does he want?" she asked. "What can I say? Have I not borne my testimony?"¹

Seeking to aid her in making the abrupt transition from one train of thought to another, Willie "suggested to her that she could point out to him in a few words the things which he could do to relieve the situation," i.e., resign. In so doing he was merely reminding her of what she had said in the address printed in the General Conference Bulletin a few weeks earlier and that Donnell had there publicly agreed to.²

Willie's reminder, however, had been given rather loudly because Ellen White was growing deaf. The thin walls of the Indianapolis Sanitarium where they were staying allowed his voice to be overheard by the occupants of the next room, Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Greenlee. The latter, a cook at the sanitarium, hearing someone enter Ellen White's room about 5:00 A.M., stepped into the closet to listen. It sounded to her as if W. C. White were "dictating" to his mother, "telling her what she ought to say to the people, that she ought to advise Bro. Donnell to step down and out like a Christian gentleman." Comparing the conversation she had

¹W. C. White to Ira J. Hankins, Dec. 24, 1901, LB 18, 181-82.

heard through the closet wall with Ellen White’s address to the constituency later that morning, it sounded to Mrs. Greenlee as if the content of the talk had come from W. C. White.¹

The case of the eavesdropping cook remained private until the Indiana camp meeting at Greenfield in September. When Greenlee met ex-president Donnell on the campground, she related her story, causing him to question whether his resignation had been God’s will expressed through Ellen White, or merely a coup engineered by Willie. As Mrs. Greenlee’s story spread through the Greenfield campground, it came to the knowledge of the conference president, I. J. Hankins, who visited at some length with her and with Donnell, then wrote to W. C. White about it. It was a situation W. C. White had been long familiar with. "I can readily see," he wrote to Hankins, "how that a person not acquainted with the circumstances might think that I was planning, advising, and suggesting to mother what she ought to do; but to one acquainted with the character of mother’s work this need not be a stumbling block, and to one who knew the circumstances it could not be the occasion of any criticism or perplexity." White insisted to Hankins that in refreshing his mother’s memory he had "not suggest[ed] to her any new thoughts. It was not my place to do so. I simply recalled to her mind things that she had formerly written and said regarding what these brethren ought to do." When charges of manipulation were raised in 1905, W. C. White would mention the incident as an illustration of how Ellen White’s age and seeming vulnerability

¹W. C. White to Ira J. Hankins, Dec. 24, 1901, LB 18, 181-82, EGWRC-AU; Ira J. Hankins to W. C. White, Sept. 25, 1901, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
combined with W. C. White's close relationship with her could lead to misleading conclusions.¹

From Indianapolis, Ellen and W. C. White took a circuitous route home. After appointments in Iowa, Colorado, Washington, and Oregon, they reached home in St. Helena the last week in May 1901. He stayed close to his work at Elmshaven through the summer, leaving in October for the first annual fall council of the General Conference Committee in Battle Creek. While he was in Battle Creek, his mother decided (against his advice) to make a winter trip to New York City to mediate conflicts that had developed between evangelistic workers there. W. C. White met her train in Chicago on November 10 and escorted her on a journey that kept them on the road until mid-January, 1902.² A month after they returned home, the first domino fell in a chain of events that would involve the denomination in turmoil for five years.

The Battle Creek Crisis, 1902-1907

Often referred to as the Kellogg Crisis, the turmoil through which the denomination passed during the years 1902 through 1907 involved several major dimensions, including theological conflict, power struggles between major divisions of the denominational structure, and all the disruption associated with the removal of major institutions (Battle Creek College, the Review and Herald, and the General Conference) from Battle Creek and their reestablishment in different locations.

¹Ira J. Hankins to W. C. White, Sept. 25, 1901, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC; W. C. White to Ira J. Hankins, Dec. 24, 1901, LB 18, 181-82, EGWRC-AU; see also W. C. White, "The Integrity of the Testimonies to the Church," Nov. 25, 1905, SD; idem, "The Visions of Ellen G. White," Dec. 17, 1905, SD, EGWRC-GC.

²W. C. White to W. A. Spicer, Oct. 14, 1901, LB 18, 78, EGWRC-AU; GCC Min, Oct. 23, Nov. 2, 1901, GCAR; E. G. White to W. C. White, Nov. 4, 1901; W. C. White to N. H. Druillard, Jan. 19, 1902, LB 18, 281, EGWRC-AU.
Richard W. Schwarz\(^1\) and others\(^2\) have written extensively about this period. The present study can deal with these issues only to the extent that they involve W. C. White and his relationship with his mother.

**The Sanitarium Fire and Its Aftermath, 1902**

On February 18, 1902, W. C. White received word via telegraph that the main buildings of the Battle Creek Sanitarium had burned to the ground. "When the first report came, I refused to believe it," he wrote to Pacific Union Conference president W. T. Knox, "but the second report seems to bear evidences of authenticity. I join with all our people in mourning at this great loss."\(^3\) Little did he realize the ramifications that would develop from the disaster.

His mother's first response to the sanitarium fire was to caution against any hasty fixing of blame. "Let no one attempt to say why this calamity was permitted to come. Let everyone examine his own course of action. Let everyone ask himself whether he is meeting the standard that God has placed before him." To close friends she confided,

> I feel very much troubled about the burning of the Sanitarium. . . . I fear there are among our people those who will put their own construction on this accident, and will act the part of Job's Comforters, searching for something to condemn in Dr. Kellogg.\(^4\)


\(^3\)W. C. White to W. T. Knox, Feb. 18, 1902, LB 18, 425.

She herself would withhold judgment while she waited to see how Kellogg would respond to the emergency. The immediate questions facing the medical leaders concerned whether or not to rebuild at the same location and how large and expensive a new building should be. Ellen White, Kellogg, and Daniells all expressed themselves at different times as favoring the removal of the Battle Creek Sanitarium from its urban environment. She had expressed some of these thoughts publicly about a year earlier. Just before the 1901 General Conference session she had told a group of institutional leaders including Kellogg that the Battle Creek Sanitarium "should be moved into the country and not be so large. Unless there is a change, God's hand will be laid heavily upon you."  

At some point Kellogg had apparently been open to the possibility of moving out of Battle Creek. "The climate here is unhealthful for very many," Kellogg had said to Ellen White on one occasion. "If these Sanitarium buildings were not in existence," he had declared, "I would find a better climate, and establish the institution there. I would have fewer buildings and more land. I would arrange for the sick to live out of doors much of the time, where they would be surrounded by the beauties of nature."  

A. G. Daniells, as well, initially favored rebuilding a smaller sanitarium in Battle Creek, with the headquarters of the medical work somewhere else. "I have thought much about the future work of the Sanitarium at Battle Creek," he wrote to Prescott a week after the fire.

For many reasons I would like to see a rather moderate institution rebuilt there. At the same time, I can clearly see the arguments that will be used in support of a large, fine institution. . . . Were it not for the other large institutions,

1S. P. S. Edwards, "Story of a Meeting," n.d., DF 2058a, EGWRC-AU.

2E. G. White to David Paulson, July 7, 1902, EGWRC-AU.
especially the College property, I think that I should decidedly favor the erection of a small building. I am aware that Battle Creek has a reputation, but I believe that if the headquarters of our sanitarium work were placed in some other good location, it would soon become as widely known as Battle Creek.

Daniells wrote the above from Oakland. He hoped to be in St. Helena by evening to see what Ellen White and W. C. White thought about the situation.¹

No records exist of the conversation between Daniells and the Whites on February 25 and 26, but Ellen White had committed her thoughts to paper a few days earlier. She did not condemn a modest rebuilding in the country near Battle Creek, but she opposed erecting a "mammoth institution." She believed that the "purpose of God" would be better carried out "by making plants in many places."²

Whatever passing thought Kellogg may have given to the option of moving out of Battle Creek, it is evident that that possibility did not receive any lengthy consideration in the days following the fire, for within a week he announced in the Review his plan to rebuild in Battle Creek. Near the end of March, a month after his overnight stop at Elmshaven, Daniells informed W. C. White that the General Conference committee had approved Kellogg’s plan. Daniells reported that the Sanitarium’s insurance policy had paid $154,000, the citizens of Battle Creek had raised some $80,000 in cash and pledges, and the city had promised perpetual exemption from taxes. These promises of support, together with Kellogg’s enthusiasm, convinced the committee to approve the rebuilding in Battle Creek. An architect’s plans for a "plain, but dignified" building had been accepted. "We propose to erect an absolutely fire-proof building, and to pay . . . cash for everything," Daniells wrote. "We suppose that when it is finished, furnished, and

¹A. G. Daniells to W. W. Prescott, Feb. 25, 1902, RG 11, Bk 26, GCAr.
²E. G. White, "The Burning of the Sanitarium," Feb. 20, 1902, MS 76, 1903, EGWRC-AU.
fully equipped for business, the cost will be between $250,000 and $300,000. But the board is determined that no debt shall be incurred by the erection of this building.¹

Daniells’s determination not to incur additional debt would become a main focus of conflict between him and Kellogg before the year was out. A second point of contention arose in connection with fund-raising plans. It was proposed that Kellogg write a small, practical manual on health that could be sold inexpensively by Adventists all over the world as a fund-raiser. Kellogg subsequently developed what Daniells believed to be "a grand proposition," designed to raise $500,000 to retire the existing indebtedness on the Battle Creek Sanitarium and three other Adventist sanitariums. If the existing $250,000 indebtedness on the Battle Creek Sanitarium could be paid off, the insurance money and donations from Battle Creek citizens would cover the cost of the new building. Kellogg offered to donate the manuscript and the publishing costs of a new book, The Living Temple, and furnish to the General Conference 400,000 copies "free" provided the General Conference would "take up the sale of the book, and have the entire proceeds go to the Sanitariums."²

Daniells reported to Kellogg in April that Adventists in various places were enthusiastic about "selling something like half a million copies" of The Living Temple. Plans were being laid to release German and Scandinavian language editions "simultaneously with the English edition." Yet Daniells felt "anxious"

¹J. H. Kellogg, "The Battle Creek Sanitarium Fire," RH, Feb. 25, 1902, 125; A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, Mar. 25, 1902, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
about one aspect of the plan. "You know," he confided to Kellogg, "there are some who fear that you are grazing about very close to pantheism. In fact, some have felt from your talks about God in man, that you are practically a pantheist. I do not believe this," Daniells assured him.

I should never report from anything I have heard in your talks on this topic, that you are a pantheist. And yet some get this impression. Now I feel anxious that your thoughts [in Living Temple] shall be so carefully and wisely and clearly stated that there will be no ground for misunderstanding and criticism.¹

The first reason Daniells gave for this caution was that "none of us want to disseminate error, whether it be intentional or not." Second, he noted that if the book should get a "black eye from the start," it would become "very difficult for us to push it" on a denomination-wide basis. He was glad that Kellogg had requested W. W. Prescott, recently appointed editor of the Review, to "examine the manuscript."²

Prescott's initial report for Kellogg and Daniells was submitted May 19, 1902. After five pages of rather brief suggestions, some minor, some major, Prescott concluded:

In view of the purpose for which this book is to be used, it seems that it will be doubly necessary to exercise all vigilance in keeping out of it questions that would lead to controversy. If the idea should once get abroad that there were topics in the book treated in a questionable way, I do not believe we should be able to arouse any popular enthusiasm for the sale of the book.

For this reason, it has seemed to me that it would be a wise policy to omit a considerable portion of those paragraphs which deal with such abstract subjects as the soul, consciousness, identity, personality, mind-cure, Christian Science, and other paragraphs of similar sort.³


²Ibid.

Neither Daniells nor Prescott seemed to anticipate anything but understanding and cooperation from Kellogg in regard to the revision of The Living Temple. At this stage, neither evidenced any disposition to condemn him for holding variant views, though they were not in favor of his propagating them. A year would pass before W. C. White and his mother would be invited to evaluate The Living Temple.

Meanwhile, as construction plans for the new Battle Creek Sanitarium gathered momentum, Ellen White had a dream the night of April 30, 1902, which she related to Kellogg in a letter the next day. "I have been given a message for you," she began.

You have had many cautions and warnings, which I sincerely hope and pray you will consider. Last night I was instructed to tell you that the great display you are making in Battle Creek is not after God's order. You are planning to build in Battle Creek a larger sanitarium than should be erected there. . . . Battle Creek is not to be made a Jerusalem. There are calls for means to establish memorials for God in cities nigh and afar off. Do not erect an immense institution in Battle Creek which will make it necessary for you to draw upon our people for means. Such a building might far better be divided, and plants made in many places. Over and over again this has been presented to me.¹

Ten days later in Battle Creek, the cornerstone was laid for the new sanitarium. In the keynote speech on that occasion, Kellogg called the new sanitarium a "temple" to "truth" and eulogized those who, from near and distant parts, are to-day looking up to this place with interest and sympathy and love almost like that which kindled in the heart of the ancient Israelite when he turned his face toward his temple-city, Jerusalem."²

¹E. G. White to J. H. Kellogg, May 1, 1902, EGWRC-AU, emphasis added.

1950, J. H. Kellogg Case File, GCAR.
With the laying of the cornerstone, construction began.

Summer found both Daniells and Kellogg crossing the Atlantic to attend a European General Conference. Kellogg hoped to establish a new sanitarium in England. On finding a suitable location he cabled Daniells, who was then in Norway, asking him to come see the property. Daniells and three associates met Kellogg at the publishing house in London for what proved to be a stormy meeting. Kellogg wanted to borrow thirty thousand dollars, with the British conference assuming responsibility for five or ten thousand dollars and the General Conference assuming the remainder. Daniells reviewed for the committee the existing indebtedness of the denomination and refused to add to it.¹

Later in the day, according to Daniells's account, Kellogg followed him into a washroom, blocked the door, and harangued him on the theme that the denomination had always expanded its institutions by borrowing and paying later. "I know we have," Daniells retorted,

but we have never paid up yet, and we are in debt heels over head everywhere, the Pacific Press, the Review and Herald, all our schools, everything we have got is just buried with debt, and we are paying out interest enough to purchase an institution. I am pledged to my committee and to our people not to go on any longer with this borrowing policy.²

The argument continued for "nearly two hours" until Daniells raised his hand and said, "Look here, Doctor. It is no use for you to say another word. I am set. My conscience is in this, and I will not violate my conscience. You can stop right here, for I will never consent to this thing, until I have the approval of Sister White and of the General Conference Committee." Daniells recalled that Kellogg "just settled

¹ A. G. Daniells, "How the Denomination Was Saved from Pantheism," copy B, p. 6, DF 15a, EGWRC-GC.
² Ibid., 8-9.
his eyes on me like a dark shadow falling over me. Then he said, 'Well, sir, I will never work with you on this cash policy. I will see you in America. Good day.'

The issue would be thoroughly debated at the fall council of the General Conference Committee in November. Before that council, Daniells paid a visit to Ellen White at Elmshaven, where on October 19, 1902, he and several other denominational administrators interviewed her about financial policy. Daniells became more settled in his position as he heard her express strong disapproval for Kellogg's grandiose plans and support for Daniells's policy of incurring no further debt.

Her determination to apply the no-debt policy impartially led her in the same interview to withdraw her approval of Edson White’s management of the Southern Publishing Association, which was gradually increasing the indebtedness which it had incurred at its inception. Neither the Pacific Press nor the Review and Herald had enough denominational work to keep presses busy, and influential administrators, including Daniells, believed that Edson should be removed and the publishing house reduced to the status of a book depository for the Review and Herald. Financially, there was much less at risk with Edson than with Kellogg, but Ellen White felt her credibility was at stake.

Sensitive to the perception that she was defending Edson just because he was her son, Ellen White authorized Daniells and his colleagues to deal with Edson

---

1Ibid., 8-9; see also idem, "A Statement by A. G. Daniells," Mar. 3, 1903, RG 11, 1903, A. G. Daniells Fld, GCAr.

2"Report of a Portion of a Council-Meeting Held at Mrs. E. G. White's home, 'Elmshaven,' St. Helena, Cal., 8:00 a.m., October 19, 1902," MS 123, 1902, EGWRC-AU.

as they would anyone else in a similar situation. "I want the brethren to feel free to
take hold of this matter," she said. "I do not want them to make any reference to
me. I want them to act just as they would as if my son was not there."¹

Believing he had a clear mandate to remove Edson from leadership at the
Nashville publishing house, Daniells left for Battle Creek. That very night,
however, Ellen White had a vision which led her to reverse herself. "The Lord
instructed me that I had taken a wrong position." She was shown that powerful
enemies were looking for faults in Edson, and that untruthful rumors had been
circulated about his work. She was shown that with encouragement he could yet
make a success at the publishing house. Three years later Edson cited this 1902
interview as an example of "how W. C. White, A. G. Daniells, and their associates
wire-pulled and confused" his mother to get her to support their plans against him.
Others thought Ellen White's love for Edson had swayed her to write in his favor.
As a case study regarding the allegations of manipulation, this incident is dealt with
in more detail below.²

Autumn Council, 1902

Two weeks after the October 19 interview, W. C. White received a
telegram which read: "Important conference meeting at Battle Creek, November

¹"Report of a Portion of a Council-Meeting Held at Mrs. E. G. White's home,
'Elmshaven,' St. Helena, Cal., 8:00 a.m., October 19, 1902," MS 123, 1902, EGWRC-
AU.

²A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, Oct. 12, 1905, EGWRC-GC; see "Charges of
Manipulation," below.

³Cited in W. C. White to W. T. Knox and A. T. Jones, Oct. 31, 1902, LB 20, 552,
EGWRC-AU. W. T. Knox was Pacific Union Conference president and Alonzo T. Jones
was California Conference president.
The Battle Creek meeting in the fall of 1902 was the second such autumn council of the General Conference Committee. White left St. Helena about November 5 and did not return till the end of January 1903.\(^1\)

The council continued from November 10 through 26. The agenda item for which the council would be remembered was the effort to define "the financial policy of the denomination . . . with reference to incurring debt."\(^2\)

The discussions of the council ranged over the relation of the Medical Missionary Board to the General Conference Committee, the organization and proper authority of the General Conference Committee, and denials by both Daniells and Kellogg that they had any personal controversy between them. The "stormiest day of the council" according to Daniells, came on Sunday, November 16, when Daniells made a blunt statement that the "difference in policy between himself and Dr. Kellogg" was the question of "our financial policy, whether we shall follow the custom of making debts, or whether we shall heed the instruction given us . . . to rise up and roll away the reproach of debt." Daniells declared that the "present effort to liquidate the indebtedness of our schools" was "constantly hindered by fear that additional obligations would be assumed." He believed that "those [the rank and file members of the denomination] who must pay our debts are to be consulted before they are incurred," and called on the committee to decide whether this policy "met with their favor or their disapproval." He substantiated his argument with a narrative about the clash with Kellogg in England the previous summer.

---

\(^1\)A. G. Daniells to Members of the General Conference Committee, Sept. 4, 1903, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC, reviews the beginnings of the yearly "autumn council" (much later called "annual council") which Daniells had initiated in 1901; see also SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 ed., s.v., "Annual Council"; W. C. White to J. E. White, Nov. 4, 1902, LB 20, 578, EGWRC-AU.

\(^2\)GCC Min, Nov. 10, 26, 1902, GCAr.
Daniells had finished, Kellogg reviewed the British Sanitarium issue from his own point of view and protested that Daniells's account of Kellogg's talk in England was "very different from what I [actually] said."¹

Despite the wish of some to get on with "the business for which the Council had convened," the debate over the relation of the General Conference Committee to the Medical Missionary Board continued for two more days. It climaxed on Tuesday, November 18, after which Daniells and Kellogg seemed to come to agreement regarding the "British medical work." H. E. Osborne, the committee secretary, noted that "these explanations did much to make clear the misunderstandings that had arisen." W. C. White reported to his mother that the Spirit of God had "influenced Dr. Kellogg in a special manner" on Monday and Tuesday. "He has made conciliatory statements, and withdrawn accusations, and has agreed to plans and principles . . . that give us hope for a little more opportunity for united work."²

The finance committee's report on November 20 supported Daniells's no-debt policy.

Whereas, Unless careful management be given to the operations in extending the message, large debts will be contracted; therefore,--

1. We recommend, That all evangelical and missionary enterprises carried on in the name of the denomination . . . be conducted on a strictly cash basis.³

The report recognized that many of the existing assets and liabilities of the General Conference had recently been transferred to the newly organized union conferences

¹A. G. Daniells to G. A. Irwin, Dec. 12, 1902, RG 21, 1902-D; GCC Min, Nov. 16, 1902, 10:00 A.M., 3:00 P.M., GCAr.

²GCC Min, Nov. 17-18, 1902, GCAr; W. C. White to E. G. White, Nov. 18, 1902, WCCWF, EGWRC-GC.

³GCC Min, Nov. 20, 1902, GCAr.
and requested "the officers of the General Conference Association" to "use every endeavor to liquidate the remaining liabilities as rapidly as possible." The teeth in the policy from Kellogg’s point of view came in the fourth recommendation. It was voted "that the General Conference or Mission Board from this day be not held financially responsible for any obligations which they have not assumed by their own action." This notice struck directly at the cost overruns being incurred in the rebuilding of the Battle Creek Sanitarium and in the purchase of other sanitarium properties. The council did approve, however, Kellogg’s plan to raise money for the Battle Creek Sanitarium by a bond issue.¹

The council also discussed the use of Kellogg’s new book The Living Temple as a means of raising funds for the new building. Eventually, a three-man committee appointed to evaluate The Living Temple made its report. J. H. Kellogg and David Paulson recommended the book’s acceptance for the fund-raising campaign. W. W. Prescott, in a minority report, assessed the theological portions of the book as "tending to harm rather than to good" and expressed the "hope" that it would "never be published." As discussion revealed that the council leaned toward the minority report, Kellogg withdrew the book from consideration for the fund-raising campaign. Thus on the two major issues--financial policy and the publication of Living Temple--Kellogg’s preferences were rejected.²

It soon became clear that Kellogg was not about to surrender on either of these points. He intensified his efforts to secure the acceptance of Living Temple and began to campaign for the overthrow of A. G. Daniells. Some of his most

¹GCC Min, Nov. 20, 1902, GCAr.

²GCC Min, Nov. 22, 1902, GCAr; A. G. Daniells to G. A. Irwin, Dec. 12, 1902, RG 21, 1902-D, GCAr.
intensive lobbying on both of these issues was directed toward W. C. White.

White remained in Michigan almost four weeks after the close of the council. On Saturday, December 20, he received an invitation from Kellogg "to spend the evening with him at his home." Arriving about 8:30 P.M., White was "somewhat surprised to find three of his [Kellogg's] adjutants present,—his brother W. K. Kellogg, his brother-in-law Hiland Butler and his literary assistant George Thomason," M.D. The meeting lasted until 6:00 A.M. ¹

Kellogg rehearsed the whole story of his involvement in SDA medical work. W. C. White, according to his own account, attempted to agree with Kellogg where he could, but "in a guarded way." Kellogg continued for several hours arguing his case "that Sister White had changed in her attitude toward him, that she had criticised him and condemned him and weakened his hands in doing the very work that formerly she had instructed him to do." ²

"A little before midnight," when Kellogg appeared to be closing his argument, White said, "Dr. Kellogg, in all fairness to you and to your associates, I must tell you that I do not take any stock in your arguments or your representations. I do not accept them as correct and it is only fair that you should know this." White said later that he "had hoped that this would terminate the interview." To his surprise, Kellogg reiterated the whole story, arguing for the same conclusion, "that he had been treated unfairly by Sister White." About 2:00 A.M. White again interrupted him to say that "it was only just and fair" that Kellogg know that White "did not accept" Kellogg's "representations." Kellogg then "went back and


²W. C. White, "An Appeal for the Use of the Telescope," May 24, 1932, pp. 10-13, DF 107d, EGWRC-GC.
traversed the ground the third time and thus the night was occupied." About 6:00 A.M. the "interview broke up in a rather informal way and I was glad to depart," wrote White.¹

About a week later, White received "a nicely-worded note from the Doctor," inviting him to "spend Sabbath afternoon with him and Dr. Paulson, and clearly intimating that this was to be a friendly interview." This time Kellogg and Paulson "alternated in a rhapsody of regret" that the young people of the denomination had been taught to believe in a sanctuary in heaven, thus diverting their attention from "the sacredness of the human body as the temple of the Holy Ghost." Then the two doctors eloquently presented "what might be accomplished yet by gathering together the brightest of our young people and teaching them this wondrous doctrine and sending them abroad into the world to teach it to others."

As White "caught a glimpse of their vision," "fully equal to anything that our people have imagined regarding the work and the influence of the Loud Cry," he also realized that the grand plans were "based upon" the rejection of the most central pillars of the Seventh-day Adventist faith. Reflecting much later on the experience, White said he had then understood his mother's warnings that "the teachings of Dr. Kellogg" "savored of infidelity" and "if carried to their logical conclusion, would do away with Christ, the atonement and the plan of redemption."²

Soon after this meeting, W. C. White left Battle Creek for Nashville. From there he joined Daniells on a fact-finding mission to the Guadalajara, Mexico,

¹Ibid.; W. C. White to E. G. White, Dec. 24, 1902, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

²W. C. White, "An Appeal for the Use of the Telescope," May 24, 1932, pp. 13-14, DF 107d, EGWRC-GC.
Sanitarium, before arriving home in St. Helena at the end of January. Kellogg, for his part, sat down to dictate a letter to Ellen White. "I have just finished a 75-page letter to send you," he explained, "stating the truth as I see it in relation to the matters which have been under controversy." Before sending it he prepared an "abstract" to accompany it so that she could "get the gist of the matter" without having to read all of it, yet have the "complete statement to refer to if necessary." The second paragraph in Kellogg's cover letter announced the burning of the printing plant of the Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Last night the main building of the Review & Herald was burned to the ground and everything in it burned up, an experience exactly parallel with that of the Sanitarium. Eld. Evans, Prof. Prescott, and Eld. Daniells are, of course, crushed under the burden which has fallen upon them and I have no desire to add one feather's weight to the burdens they will have to carry. They have been wholly mistaken as to my attitude toward them and toward you, but I think it possible that this experience may open their eyes or in some way change their attitude, and with that hope I shall let matters rest. . . . I desire to drop all controversy of every sort in the interests of peace and harmony for the sake of the truth."

Contrary to reports he thought she may have heard, he denied that he "intentionally" "took a stand" against her at the recent autumn council. "If anything I have said gives color to a different understanding, I most certainly regret it and apologize for the same most humbly." He assured her that "there is no place in the world where there is a more loyal feeling toward you than at the Sanitarium. Whatever has been written or said to you to the contrary does not truly represent the facts." "I trust," he concluded, "that a spirit of sympathy for one another in kindred misfortunes will lead to a burying of controversies over trifling matters so that peace

---

1 W. C. White to A. Boehner, Dec. 29, 1902, LB 20, 635, EGWRC-AU; W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, Jan. 18, 1903, RG 11, 1903, W. W. Prescott Fld, GCAr; J. H. Kellogg to W. C. White, Jan. 21, 1903, Coll 6, Bx 1, Fld 5, MSU.

2 J. H. Kellogg to E. G. White, Dec. 31, 1902, Coll 6, Bx 1, Fld 3, MSU.
may be declared and our work may proceed with less embarrassment." 1

By January 1903 Kellogg's well-laid plan to remove Daniells from the presidency appeared to be gathering momentum. The 1901 constitution, by omitting the title of General Conference President and giving the General Conference Committee (instead of the General Conference in session) the authority to elect its own chairman, had made such an ouster a distinct possibility. S. H. Lane, a leading minister, reported from an interview with Kellogg on January 24, 1903, that "every possible effort" would be made "to overthrow the present administration at the next General Conference" and to "make Brother A. T. Jones the President." Prescott reported to Daniells that "on the hill" (the site of the sanitarium), a "very persistent" rumor claimed that Ellen White had condemned Prescott and Daniells for their role in the autumn council and that "on the strength of this Testimony" it was expected that the two would "be put out of office at the next session of the General Conference." In February Kellogg wrote to G. I. Butler (who had recently come out of retirement to become president of the Southern Union Conference) that he hoped Butler might be restored to his "old place again as president of the General Conference." "If you will not do it," he urged the sixty-nine-year-old Butler, "then Eld. A. T. Jones is the next best man. I believe that you and Eld. Jones are the only men who can unify the interests of our work. It would be ruinous to have Eld. Daniells take the presidency the next term." 2

Thus Kellogg sought to build a coalition against Daniells. In letters to W. C. White, Kellogg criticized Daniells and ridiculed Prescott in the strongest

1Ibid.

2W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, Jan. 26, Jan. 25, 1903, RG 11, 1903, W. W. Prescott Fld, GCAr; J. H. Kellogg to G. I. Butler, Feb. 8, 1903, Coll 6, Bx 1, Fld 6, MSU.
terms, while seeking to gain the support of White. "I must say," he wrote to White in Guadalajara,

that your attitude has been quite different from what I expected it to be after I heard the report of the missionary convention at St. Helena in which your mother denounced us so strongly and which [report] you scattered abroad. I did not see how you could do such a thing as that unless it was your settled purpose to crush us and make our burdens as heavy as possible. Your kindly attitude and co-operation [in Nashville in January] in my efforts to get the medical missionary work in shape in the South has helped me to take a different view of your purpose and I hope I may be able to hold my confidence, and that I may find reason for increasing confidence.  

"I have no hope for the future of this work unless the Daniells-Evans-Prescott ring can be broken up," he wrote to White a week before the opening of the session in Oakland. "If I see a chance to get off for a few days" to attend the conference, "I will come," he said, "but I do not care to spend any time squabbling" or in "hair-splitting discussions." The December interviews in Battle Creek and the letters of January and March all indicate a strong effort on Kellogg's part to secure the support of W. C. White and if possible, his mother, for his conflict against Daniells and Prescott.  

The 1903 General Conference Session

The two main issues from the autumn council in 1902 (the "cash basis" financial policy and the relation of the Medical Missionary Board to the General Conference) would again be prominent at the 1903 General Conference session. The destruction by fire of the Review and Herald building added another dimension to the conflict—the question whether to rebuild the publishing house in Battle Creek

---

1 J. H. Kellogg to W. C. White, Jan. 21, 1903, Coll 6, Bx 1, Fld 5, MSU.
2 J. H. Kellogg to W. C. White, Mar. 18, 1903, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
3 GCC Min, Nov. 20, 1902, GCAr.
or follow the college in exodus from the headquarters city.

The session opened in Oakland on Friday, March 27, 1903. In her Sabbath morning sermon, Ellen White set all the perplexing issues that faced the conference within one context—that of personal devotion to God and the finishing of the work of the gospel on earth. She saw the erecting of "mammoth buildings" as a "snare," a diversion that gave glory to men and ultimately hindered the work of God they were intended to advance.¹

"God is watching His people," she declared in another address Monday afternoon.

We should seek to find out what He means when He sweeps away our sanitarium and our publishing house. . . . God wants us. . . . to seek for the meaning of the calamities that have overtaken us, that we may not tread in the footsteps of Israel, and say, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we," when we are not this at all.²

She spoke of what "might have been" at the 1901 General Conference had the delegates not only accepted new structures, but also "confessed their sins" and "made a break" from the spiritual status quo. Had they done this, "the power of God would have gone through the meeting, and we should have had a Pentecostal season."³

The business proper began on Monday morning. In the opening address, Daniells reported that by operating on a cash basis for the past two years the General Conference had reduced its total debt by $250,000, but that much more remained. The very first motion placed before the conference addressed the relation

³Ibid.
between the Medical Missionary Association and the General Conference. It called for a committee of five "to examine" the "financial standing" of all Seventh-day Adventist institutions, "to investigate their relationship" to the denomination, and "to devise and recommend some plan whereby all institutions, as far as possible under existing corporation laws, be placed under direct ownership, control, and management of our people." The motion became the subject of a heated debate on April 2 and 3 and was passed on April 6 without major alteration.¹

On April 2 the Committee on Plans and Constitution recommended that both the Review and Herald publishing house and the General Conference headquarters be moved out of Battle Creek. In speaking to this issue, Ellen White made an eloquent appeal for fair treatment of J. H. Kellogg. "Many souls have been converted," she declared, and "many wonderful cures have been wrought" through the work of Kellogg and the Battle Creek Sanitarium. She decried the opposition he had received. Some had tried "to make the work of Dr. Kellogg as hard as possible, in order to build themselves up," and many had rejected and ridiculed the health reform principles he taught. "God gave the light on health reform," she affirmed, "and those who rejected it rejected God. One and another who knew better said it all came from Dr. Kellogg, and they made war upon him."²

While she pled for a supportive attitude toward Kellogg and toward the


newly rebuilt Sanitarium, she refused to endorse his theological theories and called for study as to how the Battle Creek Sanitarium could be directly owned by the General Conference. She was unequivocal in her support of moving the publishing house out of Battle Creek. "Never lay a stone or brick in Battle Creek to rebuild the Review office there," she said. "God has a better place for it." The conference authorized a committee to investigate suitable locations for relocating the Review office and the General Conference headquarters.¹ W. C. White was to take a significant part in the search process.

A second major debate at the Oakland session grew out of the question of the relation of the medical missionary work to the "evangelical" work of the denomination. As noted above, the 1901 constitution had used the title "chairman" instead of "president" for the denomination's chief executive officer. Along with this came the provision that the "chairman" be elected by the General Conference Committee. Thus the chief executive officer could potentially be changed at any time the committee might choose. In 1903, Kellogg and A. T. Jones sought to make use of this provision to dispose of Daniells. Others were just as adamant in defense of Daniells and his policies.

The contention over whether the General Conference should have a "president" had originated with a communication that Ellen White had sent to be read at the 1897 General Conference session. "It is not wise to choose one man as President of the General Conference," she had written. "The work of the General Conference has extended, and some things have been made unnecessarily complicated. . . . There should be a division of the field, or some other plan should be devised to change the present order of things." Prior to the 1897 General

¹Ibid.
Conference session, O. A. Olsen, General Conference president, had also been head of the Foreign Mission Board and of the General Conference Association, which was the legal holding body for denominational properties and finances. The 1897 conference had distributed these responsibilities among three men (which some believed satisfied the immediate intent of Ellen White's statement). The 1897 session had gone even further, however, as Oliver explains, also dividing the "territory" of the General Conference "into three, so that there were in actual fact three General Conferences (Australasia, Europe, and North America, with the latter retaining general oversight of the other two)," an arrangement which did not last.1

At the 1901 and 1903 General Conference sessions the single sentence, "It is not wise to choose one man as President of the General Conference," was used as an imperative for the abolition of the office of president. Barry Oliver has dealt with this at length. For the present study it is sufficient to note that at the 1903 General Conference session Daniells opened the debate by reading the original statement in context and arguing that it called for a division of responsibilities, not the abolition of the office of president. W. C. White supported him, as did W. W. Prescott, G. I. Butler, and others. Opposed were A. T. Jones, E. J. Waggoner, and J. H. Kellogg. After extended discussion, the session voted to amend the constitution, reinstating the office of president and specifying that the president would normally be elected by the General Conference session directly, not by the General Conference Committee.2

---

1E. G. White to Conference Presidents and Counselors, Aug. 1896 (Letter 24a, 1896), EGWRC-AU; cf. R. A. Underwood to W. C. White, Mar. 18, 1921, and enclosure, R. A. Underwood, "The Relation of the Testimonies to the Bible and Their Place in the Church." [1921], WCWCF, EGWRC-GC; Oliver, SDA Organizational Structure, 186-87.

In summary, the 1903 General Conference session revised the constitution to restore the office of president, re-elected Daniells, and endorsed his no-debt policy. The session also passed a resolution that the International Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association should "so arrange its constituency, and its constitution" to become "a department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists." It was also voted to move the denominational headquarters and the Review and Herald publishing house out of Battle Creek to a location not yet determined.¹

Relocating Denominational Headquarters, 1903

As early as April 24, W. C. White had conveyed to Daniells the conviction of Ellen White that Daniells should "go straight forward" with "the removal of the General Conference headquarters from Battle Creek. Many things which can not be done in a hurry will naturally follow this move. Let there be no delay in this." By mid-June news was coming to Elmshaven about prospective sites near Fishkill, New York, and Washington, D.C. White informed Daniells on June 19 that "Mother grows more and more in earnest about our duty to give Washington favorable consideration at this time."²

Unlike Kellogg, who plunged ahead with his plans hoping Ellen White would not interfere, Daniells pled with her for guidance. He reported the discovery of a "magnificent" piece of wooded land in Takoma Park, lying "partly in the District [of Columbia] and part[ly] in Maryland," and wished that Ellen White could

¹*General Conference Proceedings,* GCB, 1903, 216.

²W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Apr. 24, 1903, RG 11, 1903, W. C. White Fld 1, GCAr; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, June 19, 1903, LB 22, 23; EGWRC-AU.
live near the developing institution as she had at Avondale, but he doubted that would be possible. As the next best option, he urged Willie to come. "We must not make any mistakes. We want to do just right. You have been in close touch with your mother, and know better than anyone else the light that has been given her; consequently, we do most earnestly desire your presence with us."  

In response to this appeal for direction, W. C. White discussed the matter with his mother and promptly dispatched to Daniells a terse, two-page handwritten letter listing seventeen specific recommendations from Ellen White. Number one was: "Arrange as quickly as possible for the General Conference headquarters to be located in Washington, D.C." Number two recommended locating the Review and Herald in the same place. Number ten suggested that the property near Fishkill, New York, be purchased by the Greater New York Conference for a sanitarium and school. Number seventeen described the limitations of the no-debt policy, and must have reminded Daniells of some times in Australia when the Whites' views of finance were less conservative than his own. It read: "Do not think you can always wait for all the money to be in hand before you act upon a proposition, or before you begin work." Four days after sending the letter, W. C. White followed in person. He met Daniells in Battle Creek, and they traveled to New York and Washington to negotiate the purchase of the two key properties. White would not be home again until September 15.  

While Daniells and White were purchasing property on the East Coast, Prescott in Battle Creek was preparing to move the Review and Herald. He

---

1A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, June 21, 1903, RG 11, 1903, GCAr.

2W. C. White to Dear Brethren, June 27, 1903, WCWF, EGWRC-GC; W. C. White to M. H. Brown, June 30, 1903, LB 22, 116, EGWRC-AU.
reported on August 6 that all of the "furniture, machinery, and printing out-fit which we can take from here" had been loaded into four boxcars. The last of these left Battle Creek August 6. Within days Prescott and his staff would begin publishing the Review and Herald from rented quarters in downtown Washington, D.C. ¹

Autumn Council, 1903

Accompanying his formal call for "a council of the General Conference Committee at Washington, D. C.," Daniells sent a special invitation to W. C. White. "I suppose it is altogether useless to expect you to attend this council," he confided,

but you can not know how deeply I regret this. You can see that although the program I have outlined is a stiff one, it does not begin to cover the ground. You ought to be with us to help us in this work. How greatly I wish your mother could be present. Please let her read my letter to the members of the Committee, and tell her we earnestly desire her to counsel us freely. If you both feel it your duty to come, we shall welcome you heartily, and take the very best care of you.²

The Council convened from October 7 through October 21, 1903. W. C. White and his mother did not feel free to attend, but she sent some manuscripts that profoundly affected the course of the council. A quarter of the agenda that Daniells distributed at the opening meeting concerned "Washington enterprises." Under this heading were questions concerning the need for local evangelism and for the establishment of a publishing house, sanitarium, and college. The question of the Battle Creek situation and Living Temple was not on the agenda. Despite the 1902 fall council’s rejection of the book for fund-raising purposes, Kellogg had proceeded

¹W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, Aug. 6, 1903, RG 11, 1903, W. W. Prescott Fld, GCAr.

²A. G. Daniells to Members of the General Conference Committee, Sept. 4, 1903; A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, Sept. 4, 1903, WCWF, EGWRC-GC.
with plans for publication. When the initial printing plates were destroyed in the Review and Herald fire of December 30, 1902, Kellogg gave the manuscript to another printer in Battle Creek who produced the book early in 1903. By autumn it had been widely read among Seventh-day Adventists. The arrival at the Washington council of several physicians from Battle Creek again propelled the issue to the forefront and the question was reopened. David Paulson, who would the next year open the Hinsdale Sanitarium in suburban Chicago, was a leader in this group of physicians.¹

On October 13 the issue of The Living Temple was discussed at the council, but no conclusions were reached. Late in the evening Paulson accompanied Daniells from the meeting, arguing for the correctness of the views in The Living Temple. "As we stood under a street lamp," Daniells later recalled, "he said to me, 'You are making the mistake of your life. After all this turmoil, some of these days you will wake up to find yourself rolled in the dust, and another will be leading the forces.'" To this Daniells replied, "I do not believe your prophecy. At any rate, I would rather be rolled in the dust doing what I believe in my soul to be right than to walk with princes, doing what my conscience tells me is wrong.²"

Arriving home that night, Daniells found two letters waiting for him from E. G. White. The next morning he would read them to the assembled council. The minutes for the morning of October 14 are terse:

After an earnest devotional season, the Chairman read from the Testimonies solemn warnings regarding the teachings of the book "Living Temple," the dangers before us as a people, and the solemnity of the work of those who are set as watchmen.

After the reading, nearly all present spoke of thankfulness to God for the instruction given, and of humility of soul because of lack of power and consecration.

The entire morning was so devoted.¹

An example of the impact of the testimonies read in that meeting is seen in the experience of Paulson. "The first testimony regarding the 'Living Temple' was received and read while we were there in session," he later recounted to F. E. Belden.

In spite of the "new light" that I had received [from Kellogg] regarding the testimonies, I had enough spiritual sense left to appreciate that there was something in that testimony that would have to be reckoned with either in time or eternity so I stepped to a long distance telephone and rang up Dr. Kellogg in Battle Creek and asked him to come down. After he arrived the following evening, he and I spent a good share of the night in the New Willard hotel earnestly seeking God for wisdom and for light, and it was during this experience that there came from Dr. Kellogg’s lips one of those brilliant flashes of truth which I had so often heard him enunciate in other great crises and perplexities on other questions.

He said, "Doctor [Paulson], this talk of the 'human side' of the Testimonies has been a snare to us. No doubt there is a human side to the Testimonies, but with all that there is so much more divinity in the Testimonies than there is in us, that God will never permit us feeble mortals to show up or point out this human side. A weaker thing can never destroy a stronger thing. We must treat whatever comes from that source with the highest respect and seek God for wisdom how to apply it to our lives and our course."

I saw in an instant that he had enunciated correct principles of how to relate ourselves to the Testimonies, and I told him gratefully, "Doctor [Kellogg], you have given me light, light that I needed."²

Kellogg’s insight was reflected in his address to the council on October 18. Mentioning the E. G. White testimony about Living Temple, he told the council "that he would revise the book, and that it was his desire to work in harmony with the General Conference." In the weeks following he sent circular letters to "all" his "medical missionary colleagues" tactfully confessing that he had made some


²David Paulson to F. E. Belden, Dec. 7, 1913, Bx 601, Kellogg Material Fld, LLU.
fundamental mistakes in his career and expressing his desire to work in the "capacity of a servant." His change of attitude was transient, however. Paulson observed that within a few weeks Kellogg "had entirely lost his grip on the great truth that God used him to give to me." By January, I. H. Evans was echoing the opinion of G. A. Irwin that "there seems to be a little armistice now, but how long will it last is the question."¹

Following the close of the autumn council, Daniells and Prescott attended the session of the Atlantic Union Conference at South Lancaster, Massachusetts. While there Daniells received another letter from Ellen G. White entitled "Decided Action to be Taken Now." In it she explained the story behind the timing of the testimonies sent to the autumn council. The letter would be a major point of reference for Daniells and Prescott during the next four years. "Shortly before I sent the testimonies that you said arrived just in time," Ellen White wrote to Daniells,

I had read an incident about a ship in a fog meeting an iceberg. For several nights I slept but little. I seemed to be bowed down as a cart beneath sheaves. One night a scene was clearly presented before me. A vessel was upon the waters, in a heavy fog. Suddenly the lookout cried, "Iceberg just ahead!" There, towering high above the ship, was a gigantic iceberg. An authoritative voice cried out, "Meet it!" There was not a moment's hesitation. It was a time for instant action. The engineer put on full steam, and the man at the wheel steered the ship straight into the iceberg. With a crash she struck the ice. There was a fearful shock, and the iceberg broke into many pieces, falling with a noise like thunder upon the deck. The passengers were violently shaken by the force of the collision, but no lives were lost. The vessel was injured, but not beyond repair. She rebounded from the contact, trembling from stem to stern, like a living creature. Then she moved forward on her way.

Well I knew the meaning of this representation. I had my orders. I had heard the words, like a living voice from our Captain, "Meet it!" I knew what my duty was, and that there was not a moment to lose. The time for decided

¹GCC Min, Oct. 18, 1903; J. H. Kellogg to Dear Friend and Colleague, Dec. 16, 1903, RG 11, 1903, J. H. Kellogg Fld; David Paulson to F. E. Belden, Dec. 7, 1913, Bx 601, Kellogg Material Fld, LLU; I. H. Evans to A. G. Daniells, Jan. 24, 1904, RG 11, 1904, I. H. Evans Fld 1, GCAr.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
action had come. I must without delay obey the command, "Meet it!"

This is why you received the testimonies when you did. That night I was
up at one o'clock, writing as fast as my hand could pass over the paper.

We have all stood at our posts like faithful sentinels, working early and
late to send to the council instruction that we thought would help you.  

"I do not think you will ever be able to know," Daniells wrote to W. C.
White, "what great relief these communications from your mother bring to us. We
have been under a strain of anxiety and perplexity that can not be described." The
storm was far from over, but he felt greatly strengthened.  

Meanwhile back at Elmshaven, W. C. White was assisting his mother in
preparation of Testimonies for the Church, volume 8, which they hoped to have
issued in December 1903, but which did not actually come out until several months
later.  

Travels and Trials, 1904

The year 1904 was a year in which W. C. White spent ten months away
from home. It was also the year in which he became so closely identified with the
Daniells-Prescott side of the controversy that he consequently became the target of
intense criticism from those loyal to the Battle Creek leadership. During an
itinerary to the East Coast during February and March he spent two weeks in
Washington helping to plan for the building of a school and a sanitarium there. To
his astonishment, he was appointed chairman of the board for the Washington

__________________________

1A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, Nov. 20, 1903, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC; E. G.
White to A. G. Daniells, Nov. 1, 1903, EGWRC-AU.

2A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, Nov. 20, 1903, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

3W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Nov. 18, 1903, RG 11, 1903, W. C. White Fld 2,
GCAr; W. C. White to H. H. Hall, Dec. 27, 1903, LB 23, 85, EGWRC-AU; cf. J. E.
White to W. C. White, Feb. 26, 1904, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Sanitarium in addition to being vice-president of the reorganized Review and Herald Publishing Association.¹

Most of 1904 would be spent in similar fashion. As chairman of the publication committee (forerunner of the General Conference Publishing Department), he would attend overlapping meetings of the publication committee and the Central Union Conference session in Omaha the first two weeks in March.² He then returned to California in time for the Pacific Union Conference session at Healdsburg from March 18 to 28.

W. C. White reached Healdsburg on Sunday, March 20, where May White had come to meet him. They had a week together during the Pacific Union Conference session at Healdsburg and a bit more than a week at home in St. Helena before Willie headed out again on another itinerary that would occupy him for six months. That trip began with Willie's attending the California Conference session in Los Angeles. Then he went on to San Diego to formalize (on behalf of E. G. White, Mrs. J. Gotzian, and E. S. Ballenger) the purchase of the property that would become the Paradise Valley Sanitarium.³

That transaction completed, he joined his mother and others on the "Sunset Limited" to Washington for the spring council of the General Conference

---


Committee. On May 15, they would leave Washington for the Lake Union Conference session at Berrien Springs, Michigan.¹

The Berrien Springs Meeting, 1904

The convocation that has gone down in Adventist history as the “Berrien Springs Meeting” was the 1904 session of the Lake Union Conference and related entities, which met from May 18 to 25, with some meetings continuing till May 27. On this occasion, Ellen White made a supreme effort to draw together three diverging groups within the denomination—the medical workers, led by Kellogg; the educational reformers, led by E. A. Sutherland and P. T. Magan; and the General Conference administrators, led by Daniells and Prescott.²

The Whites arrived in Berrien Springs Wednesday morning, May 18, and stayed in the home of P. T. Magan on the three-year-old campus of Emmanuel Missionary College. Ellen White’s first address to the session Wednesday evening dealt with pantheism and The Living Temple. Prescott was scheduled to speak Friday night and intended to follow her opening with another sermon against pantheism, evidently in the spirit of “meet[ing] the iceberg.” Friday morning Ellen White told Prescott to “go ahead” with his intended topic. But after the conversation with Prescott, she sent him a note saying she had changed her mind. She had already addressed the pantheism issue and felt “deeply impressed” that for Prescott to take up the same topic would cause some “to think that Dr. Kellogg is

¹W. C. White to Ella and Mable White, Apr. 24, 1904, LB 23, 810-13; W. C. White to Ella May White, May 15, 1904, LB 23, 917, EGWRC-AU.

²Vande Vere, Wisdom Seekers, 115-17; W. C. White to E. G. White, May 30, 1904, LB 25, 230, EGWRC-AU; Maxwell, Tell It to the World, 260-61; see also, Knight, From 1888 to Apostasy, 212-14; Schwarz, Light Bearers, 294; Valentine, Shaping of Adventism, 156-59.
receiving a thrashing." Instead she advised Prescott to speak on a topic that would "touch and tender hearts" and "bring in faith and love and unity." She asked W. C. White to hand the one-page note to Prescott, but he asked and received her permission not to deliver it. W. C. White's role in the matter of the undelivered letter is examined further below. Not having received Ellen White's note, Prescott on Friday night preached against Kellogg's pantheism. As Ellen White had feared, Prescott's thrust provoked a counterattack. At the 5:45 A.M. meeting on Monday, A. T. Jones launched a six-hour tirade against Prescott, seeking to prove that he had taught pantheism before Kellogg.1

Sunday morning, May 22, when W. C. White "went out to split wood" for some exercise, "Dr. Kellogg called" to him "from his window" in Sutherland's house and invited Willie to "have a chat with him." They went down the bank into the grove and discussed the issues until 2:00 P.M. "It was a very interesting conversation," Willie wrote to May White. He felt that he and Kellogg "both understood better each other's" viewpoints as a result.2

After speaking seven times during the conference, Ellen White concluded on Tuesday night, May 24, that her work was done. Early Wednesday morning she and Edson departed for Nashville, leaving one "document" behind for W. C. White to read to the conference at the closing meeting. W. C. White prefaced his reading of the manuscript with a brief explanation of her decision to leave the meeting a few


2W. C. White to Dearest May [White], May 26, 1904, LB 25, 191-93, EGWRC-AU. W. C. White wrote some eighty pages of correspondence from Berrien Springs during the meeting. Unfortunately, the ink-transfer solution on the letter book paper was water soluble, and two-thirds to three-quarters of each page in this section of LB 25 has been made unreadable by extensive water damage.
hours early, citing the strain of her travels and the "heavy burden of speaking" she
had borne in Berrien Springs. After reading her communication and "earnest
prayers" the meeting was closed.¹

Following the Berrien Springs meeting, White was invited to Battle Creek
for a meeting with the Medical Missionary Board. They tried to persuade him of
the value of calling a council of the General Conference Committee, all the
conference presidents, and the leading physicians, for a "thorough study of the
doctrines taught" in Living Temple, but White refused to endorse any such
congress.²

Leaving Battle Creek for Tennessee, White joined his mother and brother
on the Morning Star. The Whites, with Sutherland and Magan, spent a few days
resting and sailing the Cumberland River in search of land on which to found the
school which would eventually become Madison College. W. C. White would visit
the Madison enterprise frequently over the next ten years and retain a deep interest
in it for the rest of his life. During the summer of 1904, he spent almost a month
visiting Adventist schools and institutions in Tennessee and Alabama and spent six
weeks in Washington helping to plan for the institutions being established there.³

Leaving Washington on August 21, W. C. White stopped in New York
City and later attended camp meetings in Maine and Quebec before rejoining his

¹W. C. White to Dearest May, May 26, 1904, LB 25, 191-93; W. C. White to E. G.
White, May 30, 1904, LB 25, 230, EGWRC-AU.

²W. C. White to J. H. Kellogg, May 27, 1904, LB 25, 214; W. C. White to I. H.
Evans, June 7, 1904, EGWRC-AU.

³W. C. White to Friends at Home, June 10, 1904, LB 25, 302; W. C. White to A. G.
Daniells, June 15, 1904, LB 25, 332; W. C. White to Geo. A. Hare, June 16, 1904,
LB 25, 359; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, July 3, 1904, LB 23, 974-75, EGWRC-GC;
W. C. White to J. R. Scott, July 11, 1904, LB 23, 936; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells,
Aug. 21, 1904, LB 24, 288, EGWRC-AU.
mother who had gone by a different route to Battle Creek. Still attempting to draw together the diverging factions within the denomination, she spoke to congregations in Battle Creek on September 7 and 8. She and Willie had previously arranged appointments in Omaha and College View (Lincoln), Nebraska, but when those had been met they caught a night train on September 26 back to Battle Creek to continue the campaign there for another week. W. C. White worked on various tasks related to his position as chairman of the publication committee, while his mother spoke repeatedly at the tabernacle and the sanitarium, still seeking restoration for Kellogg and his colleagues. Finally the Whites left Battle Creek for California, arriving home October 9. There they found Marian Davis (the editor of The Desire of Ages who had worked with Ellen White for twenty-five years) nearing the end of a long, wasting illness. She died at the St. Helena Sanitarium on October 25.1

After a brief respite, W. C. White was gone again for most of November and December—his third lengthy absence from home in 1904. He was deeply involved in the development of institutions in Southern California—the financing and operation of two sanitariums purchased in 1904 but not yet transferred to conference ownership, and the relocation of the Pacific Press from Oakland to a new plant in Mountain View. He arrived home December 29 from “seven weeks’ labor in Southern California.” “Mother had been away from home six months” during 1904, he observed, “and I found that I had been with my family only twenty days in more than ten months. Of course, we find much to do in straightening out tangled work

and getting everything in order; but we are making daily headway.**1

During the first four months of 1905, W. C. White made four visits
totalling about four weeks at the new Pacific Press plant in Mountain View, where
he was arranging the publishing details for Ministry of Healing. He also made at
least two trips to the developing Paradise Valley and Glendale Sanitariums.**2

As W. C. White was considering which of the staff to take to the 1905
General Conference session in Washington, D.C., in May, he received an interesting
suggestion from Dores E. Robinson, one of Ellen White’s secretarial assistants who
had been courting Ella May White, W. C. White’s eldest daughter. Dores
suggested “that he and Ella marry soon, and stay at home, and take care of Henry,
Herbert, and Gracie” (W. C. White’s younger children) so that May White could
accompany her husband to the General Conference. “This proposition was quite a
surprise to me,” Willie told Ellen White, “but the more I think of it, the more I
think it is right.” He officiated at Dores and Ella’s wedding on May 1 in the St.
Helena Sanitarium chapel. Two days later, W. C. White, May White, and Ellen
White joined some twenty other Adventists who would travel together across the
continent, arriving in Washington, D.C., the morning of May 9.**3

---

29, 1904, RG 11, incoming letters, 1904-W, GCAr.

**2W. C. White to G. I. Butler, Jan. 19, 1905, LB 26, 459-461; W. C. White to E. G.
White, Feb. 16, Feb. 26, 1905, LB 26, 824, 828; W. C. White to Dearest May, Apr. 10,
1905, LB 27, 27; W. C. White to E. G. White, Apr. 18, 1905, LB 27, 197; W. C. White
to T. H. Robinson, Apr. 23, 1905, LB 27, 239; W. C. White to C. C. Crisler, Apr. 18,
1905, LB 27, 251, EGWRC-AU.

**3W. C. White to E. G. White, Apr. 23, 1905, LB 27, 204-6; W. C. White to A. G.
27, 1905, LB 27, 261; E. G. White to Edson and Emma [White], May 10, 1905; W. C.
White to C. H. Jones, May 10, 1905, LB 27, 320, EGWRC-AU.
The 1905 General Conference Session

The first General Conference session to be held in Washington, D.C. convened from May 11 to 30, 1905. A major landmark of the conference was the formation of the General Conference Medical Department. One intention of the 1901 and 1903 sessions was to integrate Kellogg’s International Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association as a department of the General Conference, but Kellogg had declined to accept that proposal. The organization of a Medical Department without Kellogg’s involvement signaled that the General Conference leadership had given up on obtaining Kellogg’s cooperation and had decided to move on without him. The Battle Creek crisis had not ended, but the acute stage of the conflict had passed.1

The most significant events for W. C. White and the present study were not mentioned in the official records of the conference. The first was an action to purchase the property that would become the Loma Linda Sanitarium. On the basis of visions, Ellen White had some months earlier charged John A. Burden to search diligently in the vicinity of Redlands, California, for a property suitable for a third southern California Sanitarium. He had found a resort hotel called Loma Linda on seventy-six acres. It had cost its owners $150,000 to develop, but had failed financially and been placed up for sale. When repeated price reductions made it available for $40,000, Burden wrote letters to Ellen White and to G. W. Reaser, Southern California Conference president (both of whom were at the General

Conference session in Washington, D.C., transmitting the offer and the owners' desire for an immediate response.¹

W. C. White vividly described the session milieu into which Burden's letters came. "Elder Burden expected us," Willie later reported to C. W. Irwin, to place this matter, not only before the delegates from the Pacific Coast, but before the Conference, and secure the council of our brethren regarding the purchase. But coming at such a time, when many of our leading men were offering cautions and criticisms regarding the increase of institutions; when one Union Conference President said before the whole assembly that he thanked God that there were no institutions in his Union conference; when the members of the President's Cabinet, who sat on the treasury benches were anxious to make such representations as would lead our people to call a halt; and when we were spending our evenings from seven o'clock till eleven discussing the terrible possibility of having to raise seventy-five to ninety-thousand dollars to meet the deficit of . . . [Kellogg's] Medical Association, . . . there was little encouragement for us to present the Loma Linda proposition before the General Conference.

I remember well the day when mother received and read Elder Burden's letter. She read it aloud to me, and then she said that she believed this place was one that had been presented to her in vision several years before. Its description answered more closely to what had been presented to her than anything she had ever seen. And as the Lord had been moving on her mind to appeal to our people to do something immediately in establishing a sanitarium in Redlands and Riverside, and as this place described by Elder Burden seemed to be so perfectly in accord with our needs, . . . she said we must take action at once.²

In a later account, W. C. White recalled the conversation. His mother had asked him,

"Willie, will you do what I tell you?" I said, "I usually do, Mother." Then she told me that she wanted me to telegraph to Elder Burden to secure Loma Linda, and to do this without taking counsel with anyone. I suggested that this was a very strange thing to do, that it was not the way that we had worked in the past, and I asked, "Why should not I take counsel with the brethren?" Mother replied, "Will you do what I tell you?" I said, "That is what I promised to do." Then she said, "Go and send the telegram without delay."

¹W. C. White to C. W. Irwin, Sept. 19, 1905, LB 28, 441-42, EGWRC-AU.
²W. C. White to C. W. Irwin, Sept. 19, 1905, LB 28, 442-43, EGWRC-AU.
And the message was sent according to the instruction. I did not know the reasons at the time, but I think I have learned them since.¹

The telegram to Burden was sent on Friday, May 12, and Ellen White followed it with a letter on May 14. "Secure the property by all means . . . and then obtain all the money you can and make sufficient payments to hold the place," she urged. "I pray that the Lord may be gracious, and not allow any one else to get this property instead of us." Burden faced almost insuperable difficulties in taking on an obligation of $40,000, and when conference president Reaser telegraphed, "Do not make deposit on Sanitarium," Burden's nerve failed. He "told the Loma Linda Company" that he "would not attempt to buy the place." Just "a few hours" after he had given this message to the owners, he received Ellen White's second letter. "We do not desire to bring perplexity upon the Conference regarding this matter," she wrote. "Be assured, my brother, that I never advance anything unless I have a decided impression that it should be carried out, and unless I am firmly resolved to assist." She encouraged him to "by all means secure the property," adding, "we can as a company raise the required sum, I believe." At this Burden took heart again, borrowed $1000 over his own signature, and paid it down to "bind the bargain" for the Loma Linda property.²

In the above incident, W. C. White carried out his mother's directions, despite the fact that her action was contrary to denominational financial policy. In a second experience at the same conference, he again defended the regular financial

---
¹W. C. White, "A Series of Surprises: Speech . . . in a Symposium on Loma Linda College of Medical Evangelists, Mar. 31, 1911," DF 380.2, LLU.

policies and this time dissuaded his mother from another appropriation request she wished to make. The result was a second undelivered letter, which is discussed below.¹

The Whites left Washington June 7 for the homeward rail trip through Atlanta and New Orleans, reaching Redlands, California, June 12. They spent one day at Loma Linda, two in Los Angeles, four at the Paradise Valley Sanitarium, and two more in Los Angeles, during which the conference constituency and executive committee decided to accept the responsibility for purchasing and operating the Loma Linda Sanitarium. John Burden, manager of the Glendale Sanitarium, was requested to take up similar responsibilities at Loma Linda, which was tentatively set to open early in September. To Willie's "surprise," after this hectic schedule, Ellen White proposed that they take in the San Jose camp meeting, which they did from June 23 to July 2, arriving home the evening of July 2.²

On July 6 and 7, W. C. White was present as the Pacific Union Conference reversed its previous advice not to purchase Loma Linda and pledged itself "to do all in our power to assist the Southern California brethren in making this institution a success." The Southern California camp meeting, which convened in Los Angeles from August 13 to 23, was the opportunity for raising in cash and pledges the remainder of the $40,000 purchase price of Loma Linda.³

¹See below, "Undelivered Letter to Daniells, 1905."


³"Extracts from Minutes of Meeting of the Pacific Union Conference Committee, Held at Mountain View, California, July 6, 7," LB 27, 442-45; W. C. White to C. W. White to C. W.
Speeches about Ellen White and Her Work, 1905

After a couple of months at home, W. C. White received an urgent request from Daniells that he attend a General Conference Medical Missionary Convention to be held at College View, Nebraska, November 21 to 26. "Now the point I want to emphasize," Daniells wrote, "is that you shall attend this convention. You must be with us." In calling together all the physicians loyal to the General Conference, Daniells expected influential opposition and wanted White's support. "You may think it difficult for you to leave California," he argued, "but you must be present." ¹

Consequently, on Sabbath morning, November 25, the day before the close of the Medical Missionary Convention in College View, White addressed the delegates on the subject of "The Integrity of the Testimonies to the Church." He began by reviewing the recurrent cycle of church history, how new movements arise in relative purity then gradually decline from their "first principles." He believed that the same trend was operative among Seventh-day Adventists but that the testimonies of Ellen White were a means by which God was countering the natural tendency toward declension and apostasy. White discussed the long-standing divergence between medical and ministerial work and workers in the denomination and how Ellen White had reproved faults on both sides. He discussed apparent contradictions in her testimonies and showed how testimonies had often been misinterpreted through lack of careful study and prayer. Defending himself against allegations of personal influence over Ellen White's testimonies, he cited incidents

¹A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, Oct. 13, 1905, WCWF, EGWRC-GC.

Irwin, Sept. 19, 1905, LB 28, 447-49, EGWRC-AU.
from the Indiana conference meeting in May of 1901 and from the Oakland General Conference of 1903. "With reference to the integrity of the writings sent out from mother's office," he declared, "I can assure you that mother is responsible, intelligently responsible, for the letters, manuscripts, and other documents that go out from her office over her signature."1

Three weeks later, at the autumn council in Washington, D.C., he made a similar presentation. This time he dwelt in more detail on Ellen White's experience while in vision and her methods of writing what she had seen. Three incidents cited in the first speech were reiterated—an Avondale experience, the 1901 Indianapolis incident, and some aspects of the 1903 General Conference.2

From Washington, D.C., he traveled to New York City, arriving on Christmas Day, probably to consult with W. A. Reaser, an Adventist artist who prepared illustrations for many of Ellen White's books. From January 4 through 14 he was in Nashville for the Southern Union Conference session. Returning by way of Kansas City, and Boulder, Colorado, he was reunited with his family on February 14, 1906.3

The Climax of the Crisis, 1906-1907

It was noted above that the Kellogg/Battle Creek crisis had several major dimensions. The theological dimension was epitomized in the debate over The

1W. C. White to C. W. Irwin, Nov. 15, 1905, LB 29, 635; W. C. White, "The Integrity of the Testimonies to the Church: Remarks at College View, Nebraska," Nov. 25, 1905," SD, EGWRC-AU.


Living Temple, which lost influence in the denomination after its condemnation by Ellen White in the autumn of 1903. The organizational conflict between the General Conference and the International Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association virtually ended with the dissolution of the IMMBA (a legal process begun in 1904 and completed in 1905) and the creation of the General Conference Medical Department in 1905.\(^1\) The removal of the Review and Herald Publishing Association and the General Conference offices from Battle Creek served to reinforce the separation that had taken place and to diminish Kellogg's continuing influence in denominational affairs.

The one major dimension of the crisis still unresolved in 1906 was a rather widespread questioning of Ellen White's authority, the validity of her claims, and the integrity of W. C. White as her assistant and representative. "The controversy is now over the spirit of prophecy," wrote Daniells in January 1906.\(^2\) This aspect of the Battle Creek crisis would climax with the publication of several pamphlets in 1906 and 1907 and would be a factor in the disfellowshipping of J. H. Kellogg in 1907.

The first salvo in the pamphlet war was Religious Liberty, the transcript of an address given by A. T. Jones to the "Battle Creek Sanitarium family" on February 4, 1906. Jones's main point was that no one had the right to inquire whether someone else believed the testimonies. Religious liberty meant exemption from "domination" and from "any questioning or inquisition" about the beliefs of

\(^1\)A. T. Jones to A. G. Daniells, Jan. 27, 1905, RG 11, 1905-J Fld, GCAr; cf. SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 ed., s.v., "International Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association."

\(^2\)A. G. Daniells to E. G. White, Jan. 26, 1906, RG 11, 1906, Alonzo T. Jones Fld, GCAr.
another. "It is not given to you or to me to pronounce when a man believes the testimonies or when he doesn't," he maintained. "That is between the man and the Lord."

The background for Jones's publication of Religious Liberty was that A. G. Daniells had conducted meetings in the Battle Creek Tabernacle in December, 1905, a few weeks earlier. Daniells reported that "scores came to us" after the meetings and "told us plainly that their confidence" in the testimonies "was badly shaken." He also "found much suspicion regarding W. C. White." "I was glad," he wrote to Ellen White,

that I could honestly tell all, both privately and publicly, that in my fifteen years' close association with you and Brother White, I had never seen one thing that led me to believe that Brother White takes undue liberties with your writings, nor that he is the source of your inspiration. I could and did say this with a clear conscience before the Lord and all the people. If I am deceived in this, I am surely a misled man. But I know that I am not."

Through public meetings and private interviews afterward, Daniells said, "scores of nurses and helpers in the Sanitarium were rescued from the mist and fog in which they were groping" and renewed in their faith in the testimonies of Ellen White. This development was what stirred Jones to react in February with the leaflet, Religious Liberty.

A month later Jones again addressed the "Sanitarium family" and published the speech as Some History, Some Experience, and Some Facts. This pamphlet of seventy-six pages reviewed the "history" of the Kellogg crisis from the point of view of Jones's own "experience" in it. The larger part of the work is a verbatim

1A. T. Jones, Religious Liberty ([Battle Creek, MI]: n.p., 1906), 16-19.

2A. G. Daniells to E. G. White, Jan. 26, 1906, RG 11, 1906, Alonzo T. Jones Fld, GCAr.

3Ibid.
reproduction of a long letter Jones had written to A. G. Daniells in January, detailing his grievances with denominational leadership. Jones's primary conclusion was that the course of such men as A. G. Daniells and W. C. White had "compelled" him to make a fundamental change in his attitude toward the testimonies of E. G. White. Jones declared that before the then-current crisis began, "I was as honest as a man can be in believing that everything that was issued in writing by Sister White was Testimony and from the Lord. And now I am not going to be dishonest in believing it, when by the evidence of immutable facts I have been compelled to recognize that it is not true."1

Jones's charges were so serious and detailed that the General Conference felt the necessity of responding with a ninety-five-page booklet, A Statement Refuting Charges Made by A. T. Jones Against the Spirit of Prophecy and the Plan of Organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination, published in May 1906. This publication was a documented point-by-point rebuttal of Jones's two previous pamphlets. Daniells and Prescott apparently did the main writing, using documentation supplied largely by W. C. White and C. C. Crisler. Daniells was understandably relieved to know that both Ellen White and W. C. White were "favorably impressed" with the work, since W. C. White had at first expressed some reservations about making a direct rebuttal.2

Jones soon replied with a rebuttal to the rebuttal, entitled The Final Word


and a Confession. The term "final word" referred to his taking issue with some details of the material in A Statement. The "confession" was an apology addressed to eight men in particular (including O. A. Olsen and A. R. Henry) to whom Jones had been the bearer and reader of personal testimonies from Ellen White. He now held that "these [Ellen White's] messages, being from God, lie between God and the individuals concerned: and that no man nor any set of men has the right to use them to call anybody to account."¹

Meanwhile, back at Elmshaven, Ellen White had not been sitting by uninvolved. Upon reading, in March, Jones's second pamphlet, Some History, Some Experience, and Some Facts, she wrote a letter "To Those Who Are Perplexed Regarding the Testimonies Relating to the Medical Missionary Work," requesting those who were troubled about her work to write to her and she would try to explain the difficulties.²

This letter elicited responses from many individuals, including physicians David Paulson, W. S. Sadler, and Charles E. Stewart. By mid-May Ellen White had begun to respond to these. Some of the questions she referred to members of her staff, particularly to W. C. White and C. C. Crisler. According to Tim Poirier, she personally wrote more than thirty letters in answer to these questions.³

Some time after beginning this process she said she was "directed by a

¹Alonzo T. Jones, The Final Word and a Confession ([Battle Creek, MI]: n.p., [manuscript written in May 1906], 47, 26, 51.

²E. G. White to Those Who Are Perplexed Regarding the Testimonies Relating to the Medical Missionary Work, Mar. 30, 1906, EGWRC-AU.

messenger from heaven" that she need not attempt to solve "all the sayings and
doubts that are being put into many minds." An example of how she understood
this occurs in a lengthy letter to David Paulson. Some of his concerns she explained
in detail, but regarding others she was less definitive. "To some of the questions
you have asked," she told him, "I am not to answer Yes or No. I must not make
statements that can be misconstrued" by those who "try to vindicate their personal
unbelief."

Sadler and Paulson were convinced by her replies, but Stewart was not.
He felt that Ellen White's decision not to attempt a definitive answer for some
questions amounted to "dodging the issue."

Round two of the pamphlet war commenced in October 1907 when Stewart
published his longest letter to W. C. White in the form of an eighty-nine-page
booklet. Called the "Blue Book" because the first edition had a blue cover and
because its full title was too cumbersome to be easily remembered, Stewart's
compilation placed quotations from Ellen White in parallel columns to highlight
supposed contradictions and to demonstrate literary dependence. In addition to some
issues already published in Jones's Some History, Some Experience, Some Facts,
the Blue Book placed in writing some charges that had previously been circulated
only as rumors.

---

1E. G. White, "Hold Fast the Beginning of Your Confidence," June 3, 1906, MS 61,
1906, emphasis added; E. G. White to David Paulson, June 14, 1906, EGWRC-AU; Tim
Poirier, "To Those Who Are Perplexed . . . ," 1, 3, EGWRC-GC.

2C. E. Stewart to W. C. White, Oct. 22, 1906; cf. W. C. White to C. E. Stewart,
Dec. 12, 1906, RG 11, 1906, W. C. White Fld 2, GCAr.

3Chas. E. Stewart to W. C. White, May 8, 1907, DF 213a, EGWRC-GC; [C. E.
Stewart], A Response to an Urgent Testimony from Mrs. Ellen G. White Concerning
Contradictions, Inconsistencies and Other Errors in Her Writings (Battle Creek: Liberty
Missionary Society, 1907).
The letter which formed the bulk of the "Blue Book" was addressed to Ellen White as a response to her invitation for questions, but was mailed to W. C. White. "I am sending this to you," Stewart wrote to W. C. White in a cover letter of May 8, 1907, "so that you can give it personally to your mother if you think best." Within a few weeks of receiving the epistle, W. C. White invited Daniells to visit Elmshaven for a council meeting on how best to respond to it, but this meeting did not materialize. As a result, suggestions were exchanged by mail, leading to an agreement in February, 1908, that six issues should be researched and addressed in detail. These included questions about the use of milk, eggs, butter, and drug medications; a "statement of facts regarding the relation of the General Conference representatives to the rebuilding of the Battle Creek Sanitarium"; the "charge of plagiarism"; and the "proper use of the tithe." The memorandum concluded that "the other questions touched upon in the ‘Blue Book’" had either been "answered in the pamphlet relating to A. T. Jones's charges," or "rest[ed] so plainly upon insufficient basis" and were "maintained by quibbles," that it was "not deemed necessary" to make any formal response. The substantial questions would be researched and presented in separate documents.¹

Meanwhile, in Battle Creek the developing schism between Kellogg and the denomination had culminated in his excommunication from the Battle Creek Tabernacle. The process required a visit from church officers to inquire about his relationship to the church and to notify him of the possibility of the action. This

¹[Stewart], A Response to an Urgent Testimony, 3; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, July 5, 1907, RG 11, 1907, W. C. White Fld 2, GCAr; [A. G. Daniells?] "Memoranda, Stewart Tract," DF 213, EGWRC-GC; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Feb. 4, 1908, RG 11, 1908, W. W. Prescott Fld; [W. C. White], "Memorandum of Plans Agreed Upon in Dealing with 'The Blue Book,'" n.d. [Feb. 1908], RG 261, F. M. Wilcox Reference Files, E. G. White Testimonies of Special Interest Fld, GCAr.
was the setting for Kellogg's famous "Last Interview as an Adventist."  

Interviewed by two veterans of the church, G. W. Amadon and A. C. Bourdeau, Kellogg reiterated many of the real or supposed grievances which he had rehearsed to Daniells, Prescott, W. C. White, and others on earlier occasions. Kellogg's main theme was that Ellen White's testimonies could not be trusted because through misinformation she was vulnerable to manipulation. In support of this thesis he attacked several church leaders, particularly W. C. White. The account is far from objective and contains demonstrable distortions and misrepresentations. Nevertheless it affords a view of then-recent events from Kellogg's perspective. Of the issues that Kellogg raised, the most significant for the present study are considered in the topical section, below.

Years of Conflict and Achievement, 1906-1915

Ellen White's final nine years were characterized by one challenge after another—the doctrinal debate over the "daily" in Daniel, the preparation of the 1911

---


3 This is the assessment of his biographer, Richard W. Schwarz. He quotes J. H. Kellogg's brother, W. K. Kellogg, who wrote to the doctor: "I notice that for some things you have a very unusual memory. Sometimes I think you have a memory for details of things that really never happen" (W. K. Kellogg to J. H. Kellogg, Sept. 23, 1915), quoted in R. W. Schwarz, "Kellogg vs. the Brethren," Spectrum 20 (April 1990):48.

4 Tim Poirier, "The 1907 Interview with John Harvey Kellogg," 1987, SD, EGWRC-AU.
edition of The Great Controversy, the obstacles involved in the development of health institutions and a medical college in southern California, and searching questions about the interpretation of her writings and about W. C. White's involvement in her work. As the greatest institutional accomplishment of Ellen White's Australian years was the establishment of Avondale College, so the crowning institutional achievement of her Elmshaven years was the founding of the Loma Linda Sanitarium and the College of Medical Evangelists.

Burden for Expansion, 1906-1907

The circumstances of the purchase of the property that would become the Loma Linda Sanitarium were noted in the section on 1905 above. Shortly after John A. Burden followed Ellen White's lead in pledging to purchase the Loma Linda property, the Southern California Conference accepted its ownership and operation and named Burden the business manager. In this capacity, Burden carried on an extensive correspondence with Ellen White and W. C. White about the steps to be taken in developing the institution. In addition, either one or both of the Whites made frequent visits to Loma Linda, as they also did to the Glendale and Paradise Valley sanitariums.

W. C. White spent most of 1907 in California, about evenly divided between meeting responsibilities at Elmshaven and attending meetings in southern California. He was home on October 5 when May White presented him with his sixth child and her fourth, Arthur Lacey White. Their youngest, Francis, was born on Sept. 29, 1913.¹

Three times in 1907—in spring, summer, and fall—he made extended

---

¹W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Oct. 9, 1907, LB 34, 215; W. C. White to P. T. Magan, Oct. 7, 1913, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
journeys to the Loma Linda, Glendale, and Paradise Valley sanitariums. At the end of the third such itinerary, about December 10, he boarded a train in Los Angeles bound for El Paso, Texas, and from there traveled to Mexico City for a conference meeting. From Mexico City he traveled with Daniells to Nashville for the Southern Union Conference session, returning home by January 25, 1908.1

Elmshaven Councils, 1908

The "daily," the "Blue Book," and a proposed "anti-meat pledge" were subjects of council meetings at Elmshaven in 1908. The first of these meetings was held Sunday morning, January 26, "for the purpose of considering the question of the ‘Daily’ of Daniel 8:12, and similar passages." Present were A. G. Daniells and W. W. Prescott, the protagonists for the "new view"; J. N. Loughborough, S. N. Haskell, and Mrs. S. N. Haskell, defenders of the "old view"; W. C. White, C. C. Crisler, and D. E. Robinson, who were open to the new view but hopeful of mediating some agreement between the two groups and thus precluding divisive conflict.2

The meeting lasted several hours, until Daniells left to catch the afternoon train. Hetty Haskell registered a prompt protest the same day. "It has occurred to me," she penned hastily to Daniells,

that the report may be circulated that both views in regard to the "daily" were presented this morning, or that an opportunity was given to present both views. I thought it no more than just to state, that both views were not given.

1W. C. White to E. G. White, May 12, 1907, LB 34, 3-10; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Aug. 21, Aug. 28, 1907, LB 34, 107, 113; W. C. White to J. J. Wessels, Nov. 3, 1907, LB 34, 234; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Dec. 9, 1907, LB 34, 251; W. C. White to E. G. White, Dec. 14, 1907, LB 34, 253; W. C. White to E. G. White, Jan. 9, Jan. 16, 1908, LB 34, 262, 265; W. C. White, Diary, Jan. 23-25, 1908, EGWRC-GC.

Bro. Prescott talked for four hours and Eld. Haskell did not interrupt him in any way; but let him tell the full story. When he finished[,] Eld. Haskell’s head was so tired, it was not easy for him to present any views, but every time he commenced a sentence about the "daily" Bro. Prescott interrupted him . . . until [the] time came [that] you had to leave.¹

On Monday her husband, S. N. Haskell, placed his reaction on record.

"Since the interview yesterday morning I have less confidence in the position taken by Elder Prescott than before," Haskell informed Daniells. "I verily believe that the publication of this position will have a disastrous effect on a belief in the Testimonies, and will influence some of the people to renounce them. Even if there be some truth in it I do not understand it to be vital."² It was an inauspicious beginning for a conflict that would take up hundreds of hours for W. C. White and C. C. Crisler over the next two years.

There also remained some leftovers from the previous crisis to be disposed of. W. C. White spent parts of January 27 and 28 and February 2 with Prescott, Crisler, and Robinson studying a tentative response to Stewart’s "Blue Book" for Prescott to carry back to Washington. Several more days were given to a "minority" session of the General Conference Committee and other meetings in Mountain View. On Thursday, February 6, White took Prescott to the 8:00 A.M. train in St. Helena for his return trip to Washington.³

Another Elmshaven meeting took place when Daniells paid a week-long

---

¹W. C. White, Diary, Sunday, Jan. 26, 1908, EGWRC-GC; Mrs. S. N. Haskell to A. G. Daniells, Jan. 26, 1908, RG 11, Incoming, 1908-H, GCAr.

²S. N. Haskell to A. G. Daniells, Jan. 27, 1908, RG 11, Incoming, 1908-H; see also, C. C. Crisler to W. W. Prescott, Mar. 9, 1908, RG 58, Ref. Files of L. E. Froom 1920-30s, "The Daily" Fld 2, GCAr.

³W. C. White, Diary, Jan. 27-Feb. 6, 1908; W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, Feb. 21, 1908, WCWCF; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells and Prof. F. Griggs, Feb. 6, 1908, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
visit from July 30 to August 5. One of the agenda items on that occasion concerned a letter Ellen White had written him in which she had called for a "temperance pledge" for "abstinence from flesh foods, tea, and coffee, and some other foods that are known to be injurious." After Daniells discussed the matter with Ellen White and W. C. White, the plan of widely circulating an anti-meat pledge was basically dropped. The question of whether the eventual results represented Ellen White's own intentions is considered below.1

Just after Daniells's visit, White made an extended itinerary to the Los Angeles camp meeting and the southern California sanitariums. For most of 1908, he stayed close to home, except for occasional short trips to Oakland, Mountain View, Fernando, and Lodi.2

The day before Christmas, 1908, W. C. White again headed south. December 27 found him meeting with the Southern California Conference Committee, voting to support "the establishment and maintenance" of a new Pacific Union College. At Loma Linda the next day, a demographic analysis of the college enrollment led him to conclude that "Loma Linda is not merely a Southern California school, but a world school, like Washington [D.C.] Seminary." December 29 he boarded the train for El Paso, Memphis, and the January session of the Southern Union Conference in Nashville. On the way from Nashville to Washington, he spent a day in Atlanta. "Our little Atlanta Sanitarium is full of patients," he reported, "and there seemed to be a real good spirit in the institution."

---

1W. C. White to George W. Amadon, Aug. 14, 1908, LB 36, 333; E. G. White to A. G. Daniells, Mar. 29, 1908; A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, July 17, 1908, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC; see below, "The Anti-Meat Pledge."

2W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, Aug. 16, 1908, LB 36, 346-48; W. C. White to W. W. Prescott, Aug. 20, 1908, LB 36, 382, EGWRC-GC.
At an Adventist elementary school for Blacks, he "told stories to the children."

After two weeks of meetings with the General Conference Committee in Washington, D.C., he returned to Oakland for further deliberations February 3 through 10 about the new Pacific Union College. In April he crossed the continent again, this time accompanying his aging mother to her last General Conference session.¹

The 1909 General Conference Session

In his traveling, W. C. White—as was observed earlier—seldom made a journey without making frequent stops to visit denominational institutions along his route. In this way he kept himself in touch with situations and leaders virtually nationwide and prepared himself to give well-informed counsel. The trip to the 1909 General Conference was no exception.

W. C. White, Ellen White, Sara McEnterfer, and Minnie Hawkins left St. Helena on April 5, more than a month before the opening of the conference in Washington, D.C. They spent a week in southern California, stopped in College View, Nebraska, visited Edson in Nashville for several days, and spent a week in Asheville, North Carolina, arriving in Washington May 4, nine days before the opening of the convocation.²


²E. G. White to Edson and Emma, Mar. 17 and [30], 1909 (Letter 183, 1909), EGWRC-AU; W. C. White to E. A. Sutherland, Apr. 4, 1909, LB 37, 949; W. C. White to Dear Ones at Home, Apr. 11, 1909, LB 37, 951; W. C. White to H. W. Lindsay, Apr. 12, 1909, LB 37, 957; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Apr. 30, 1909, LB 37, 958; W. C. White to J. E. White, Apr. 30, May 4, 1909, LB 37, 959, 976-77; W. C. White to D. A. Parsons, May 4, 1909, LB 37, 967-68; W. C. White to Mrs. W. C. White, May 26, 1909, LB 37, 981, EGWRC-GC.
The 1909 General Conference session convened from May 13 through June 6. The main meetings were held in a large tent pitched on the campus of the Washington Seminary. The Bulletin contains no record that W. C. White made any formal presentations at the session, but Ellen White spoke eleven times, including three of the Sabbath morning sermons.¹

The Whites journeyed home by way of Philadelphia, New York City, and South Lancaster, Massachusetts. They spent about a week in Ellen White's girlhood home, Portland, Maine, where she spoke several times at a camp meeting. After another appointment in Massachusetts, she went to Michigan while W. C. White doubled back to spend July 22 to 25 in Washington. The General Conference Committee was considering an important resolution on the Loma Linda College of Evangelists,² and W. C. White felt he needed to be present. The committee voted that the school be financially supported by the Pacific Union Conference (not merely by the Southern California Conference) and that the course of study provide for the training of qualified nurse-evangelists. Before adding a proposed two-year pre-medical course, the committee requested further "definite information" regarding the necessary changes in the curriculum, the requirements that would be made by the medical schools that would accept the students for their final years, and estimates of


²A. L. White, Ellen G. White, 6:210-14; W. C. White to Paul C. Mason, July 22, 1909, LB 39, 9-18, EGWRC-AU; GCC Min, July 25, 1909, GCAr. The Loma Linda College of Evangelists was the name given the school prior to its opening on Sept. 20, 1906. It would be renamed College of Medical Evangelists when the State of California, on Dec. 9, 1909, authorized the school to grant degrees in medicine (SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 ed., s.v., "Loma Linda University").
Pressing concerns in the closing months of 1909 were the questions of whether or not the Loma Linda College of Evangelists should seek state approval for its curriculum and whether it should provide a full medical course or only the first two years, leaving the students to finish at other schools. To J. A. Burden, superintendent of the Loma Linda institution, this was an issue of highest priority. These questions would be on the agenda of the 1909 autumn council appointed for College View, Nebraska, October 5 through 15. As the council approached, and Burden was invited to attend, he wrote to Ellen White asking her counsel.2

In answer to his questions, Ellen White wrote on October 11 and November 5, 1909, opposing the idea of a two-year program which would force Loma Linda graduates to "complete their medical education in worldly colleges." Regarding the issue of complying with state requirements, she set forth three principles. First, she said, "We cannot submit to regulations" involving "the sacrifice of principle, for this would imperil the soul's salvation." Second, she cautioned on the other hand that Adventists should not seek exemption from legitimate regulations. "Whenever we can comply with the laws of the land without putting ourselves in a false position, we should do so," she advised.

Wise laws have been framed to safeguard the people against the impositions of unqualified physicians. These laws we should respect, for we are ourselves by them protected from presumptuous pretenders. Should we manifest opposition to these requirements, it would tend to restrict the influence of our medical missionaries.3

---

1GCC Min, July 25, 1909, GCAr.


3E. G. White to J. A. Burden, Oct. 11, Nov. 5, 1909, EGWRC-GC.
Third, she observed that some requirements might fall between the two extremes, and such might be solved by negotiation. "We must carefully consider what is involved in these matters. If there are conditions to which we could not subscribe, we should endeavor to have these matters adjusted, so that there would not be strong opposition against our physicians. The Saviour bids us to be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."¹

The October 11 letter reached Burden at College View, where the committee recommended to the "board of management of the Loma Linda College of Evangelists to secure a charter for the school, that it may develop as the opening providences and the instruction of the Spirit of God may indicate."²

Pursuant to this action, the Loma Linda school applied to the State of California for legal authority to grant degrees in medicine. The school was chartered December 9, 1909, as the College of Medical Evangelists.³ Despite this advance and Ellen White's evident approval, many denominational leaders were not yet convinced that the church could or should undertake the massive financial responsibilities connected with the development and operation of a full-fledged medical school. This issue was one in which W. C. White would continue to be deeply involved during 1910.

The Pacific Union Conference Session, 1910

The actions of the General Conference Committee to place the financial

¹Ibid.


³SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 ed., s.v., "Loma Linda University."
responsibility of the medical school on the Pacific Union Conference made the question of the College of Medical Evangelists a central concern of the Pacific Union Conference session that convened January 25, 1910, at Mountain View, California. W. C. White was very much involved in the debate. The committee on plans submitted a letter to Ellen White on January 26, asking her the direct question:

Are we to understand, from what you have written concerning the establishment of a medical school at Loma Linda, that, according to the light you have received from the Lord, we are to establish a thoroughly equipped medical school, the graduates from which will be able to take State Board examinations and become registered, qualified physicians?¹

Ellen White had come to Mountain View for the session, so the letter was "handed to her" Wednesday afternoon, January 26, by I. H. Evans, the first signer of the letter. When W. C. White called on her the next morning to ask if she wanted to go to the 8:30 A.M. meeting, "she began to talk about her interview" with Evans the previous afternoon. "Then she inquired about the meetings--how they were progressing," W. C. White recorded afterward. "I told her that one of the matters which was delaying the progress of the meeting, was the question" that had been "submitted to her in writing, about the Loma Linda Medical School." Seeing that "the document was lying on her table," he "handed it to her, and she read it again."²

"Then she began to repeat to me," White continued, what she had said to Elder Evans regarding the work that must be done for the sick by nurses, and by intelligent people who are not physicians. Then I said to her, Mother, there is quite a general agreement on the part of our people that a great amount of work of this kind ought to be done, and that the Loma Linda School should train people to take a part in this work. But the question which perplexes

---


many, is this: There are some among our young people who believe they ought to pursue a full line of studies that will enable them to receive diplomas, and take State examinations, and be prepared to meet all the requirements of a legalized physician. Shall the Loma Linda School undertake to furnish them the education they require, notwithstanding the large expense involved, or shall we permit the few who think they must qualify to be regular physicians, to get their education at the world's best colleges and universities, as they are doing at the present time?

The answer was: "Whatever education our young people preparing to be physicians, require, that we must give."

Afterward, she took pencil and paper, and wrote out a more complete statement, and sent it to Brother Crisler to be manifolded and placed in the hands of our brethren.1

The epitome of her written reply was that for

those of our youth who have clear convictions of their duty to obtain a medical education that will enable them to pass the examinations required by law of all those who practise [sic] as regularly qualified physicians, we are to supply whatever may be required, so that these youth need not be compelled to go to medical schools conducted by men not of our faith.2

W. C. White's involvement can be seen in that first he was on the committee that submitted the question to Ellen White. Second, he conversed with his mother about the matter just before she wrote her reply. Third, when the conference voted to create a five-man committee to "present this entire question to the General Conference and the Union Conferences . . . and to lead out in the establishment of this medical school," W. C. White was one of three individuals appointed by name to the committee.3

Fourth, as the motion was debated, W. C. White gave the final speech before the vote was taken. He predicted that this "tremendous enterprise" would

---

1W. C. White, "Story of an Interview between Mrs. E. G. White and W. C. White, Thursday Morning, Jan. 27, 1910, Mountain View, Calif.," pp. 1-2, WCWCF, 1910, A. G. Daniells Fld, EGWRC-GC.


involve more "expense and sacrifice, than we may estimate to-day," but that it would
mean many times more to us in results—in the saving of souls, and in the fitting up of efficient missionaries—than we can possibly calculate today. And while the world will continue to say to us, as it has said in the past, "Ye are not able to go up and possess this field of usefulness," I believe that our people will unite in saying, "We are well able to go up and possess it, and do this great work." I pray God to give wisdom to those who may be connected with this work, that it may be conducted in such a way that God can bless and guide.¹

The recommendation was voted by the session without dissent. Three months later the General Conference Committee also approved the proposal, resolving to "unite with the Pacific Union Conference in establishing a medical school at Loma Linda" and authorizing an appropriation of up to one thousand dollars to the medical school "during the year 1910."²

Improving Great Controversy, 1910-11

After two years of escalating acrimony over the "daily" (which had been the subject of one of the Elmshaven councils in 1908), Ellen White brought the conflict to a close with a personal cease-and-desist order in August 1910. Typical of this controversy, both sides were able to interpret the testimony as a victory for their viewpoint. W. C. White's role is examined further, below.³

As the controversy over the "daily" was winding down, another sensitive project was already underway. In January 1910, the Whites received word that the printing plates used for printing Great Controversy since 1888 were badly worn and

¹W. C. White, "We Are Well Able," PUR, Feb. 3, 1910, 15.
²"Final Action," PUR, Feb. 3, 1910, 15; GCC Min, April 13, 1910, GCAr.
the type needed to be reset. Ellen White saw this as an opportunity to improve the volume. "I determined," she wrote to F. M. Wilcox, "that we would have everything closely examined, to see if the truths it contained were stated in the very best manner, to convince those not of our faith that the Lord had guided and sustained me in the writing of its pages." Consequently a rather wide circle of individuals was invited "to call our attention to any passages that needed to be considered in connection with the resetting of the book." One of these individuals was W. W. Prescott, who returned in April a thirty-nine-page catalog of suggestions, first of which was that all citations to historical authorities ought to be identified with quotation marks and properly credited. On May 23, 1910, A. G. Daniells and Homer Salisbury (president of Washington Missionary College) joined W. C. White and others at Elmshaven to consider all the suggestions that had been received from various individuals. When Ellen White was asked what should be done about the historical references, "she was prompt and clear in her opinion" that "proper credit" should be given wherever possible. The matter of verifying the historical quotations would become a major research project, in the course of which Clarence Crisler would collect "several hundred pages of historical data." Much of 1910 and the first half of 1911 would be consumed in this work.1

W. C. White spent most of 1910 in California. He made a trip to Washington, D.C., in April for the spring council of the General Conference Committee, at which the College of Medical Evangelists was a major agenda item. A follow-up meeting was held at the Loma Linda campus on May 6, 1910. While

traveling by train from Washington to Loma Linda, Daniells, Salisbury, and W. C. White began considering the suggested improvements in *Great Controversy* that they would finalize at Elmshaven on May 23.1

Returning to Washington in November 1910 for the autumn council, White sandwiched a side trip to New York between sessions of the committee. By January 20, 1911, he was home again, to oversee the completion of the new edition of *Great Controversy*. Although W. C. White met many committee and camp-meeting appointments during 1911, the *Great Controversy* project would dominate the year. The first copies of the new edition were received at Elmshaven July 17. At the fall council in Washington, October 30, he would make some significant remarks about its preparation. W. C. White's involvement in and defense of this project are further discussed below.2

More Land for Loma Linda, 1912

During the first half of 1912, the development of the Loma Linda Sanitarium and the College of Medical Evangelists continued to occupy much of the attention of both W. C. White and his mother. Following the decision to develop a full-scale medical college, the issue of how much indebtedness was acceptable for the developing institution was widely debated.3

---

1GCC Min, Apr. 13, 17-18, May 6, GCAr; W. C. White to J. E. White, Mar. 14, 1910; W. C. White to W. W. Prescott, May 30, 1910, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.


3See, e.g., W. A. Spicer to A. G. Daniells, W. T. Knox, and W. C. White, Dec. 26, 1911, RG 21, Bk 57, 453-63, GCAr.
W. C. White reported a rising concern on the part of California laymen over the "pooled indebtedness of the Lodi Academy, the Healdsburg College [closed, but not debt free], and the $60,000 purchase price of the Angwin place," site of the new Pacific Union College. At a conference-wide meeting of local church elders, January 16 and 17, 1912, "some felt that in order to be true to their churches, they must insist upon a pledge" that conference leaders "make no further investments until the old debt was cancelled, and until the people had authorized further investment."

At the annual meeting of the St. Helena Sanitarium a week later, the issue of growing indebtedness was again a central issue. When the committee on plans (probably at W. C. White's instigation) introduced a resolution that 5 percent of that institution's annual net profit be donated to the College of Medical Evangelists, many were in favor of the proposal, but others were adamantly opposed. W. C. White, who "strongly advocated" the measure, reported to Burden that some of the delegates "repeatedly drew the attention of the convention" to "testimonies" from Ellen White showing that the managers of the Loma Linda enterprise had been instructed over and over again to avoid large indebtedness, but in the face of this [instruction] they had made an indebtedness of $80,000; then increased it to about $120,000 when taken over by the new organization [the Pacific Union Conference], and since that time had raised the indebtedness to $160,000, and were now preparing to urge the constituency to take additional land which would raise the indebtedness to about $225,000.

For his part, W. C. White felt the opposition people were quoting testimonies out of context. "Many of the cautions read by these brethren from the testimonies," he explained to Burden, "were written at a time when the General

---

1W. C. White to J. A. Burden, Jan. 28, 1912, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

2Ibid.
Conference and the Pacific Union Conference disclaimed any responsibility regarding the institution, and when the officers of the local conference, which was then already heavily burdened with debt, were afraid to be responsible for any considerable advance move. White held that "indebtedness" may be "large and dangerous" or not, relative to the "probable earning capacity" of an institution and the "ability of the constituency to handle the indebtedness in case there is disappointment regarding the earning capacity." Therefore he reasoned that "when the foundation of the [Loma Linda] institution was broadened by the organic connection of our Eastern Union Conferences, that the risk and peril of the indebtedness was correspondingly decreased." It appeared that his mother agreed. She was the one who for several years had been urging the purchase of more land adjoining the Loma Linda campus and had personally pledged one thousand dollars to start the needed donations.1

Despite the widespread concern about the growing cost of the College of Medical Evangelists, Ellen White, in a thirty-minute speech to the 1912 constituency meeting, repeated the call to purchase more land. "It is proper that we keep as much land as we have," she affirmed. "Every jot and tittle of land in our possession must be held. We shall need it all. We may not see this now but we shall see it in the future." Following her address, the constituency voted to purchase an eighty-six-acre tract adjoining Loma Linda and to secure an option to buy another tract of forty-seven acres.2

---


2Minutes of the Meeting of the Constituency of the College of Medical Evangelists Held at Loma Linda California, Mar. 27-Apr. 2, 1912, DF 5, EGWRC-GC.
With further important meetings scheduled in the fall of 1912, Ellen White made what turned out to be her final visit to Loma Linda. She and Sara McEnterfer left St. Helena November 7 and spent almost a month at Loma Linda. W. C. White and Crisler accompanied them and also visited other places in southern California, returning in early December to attend nine days of meetings at Pacific Union College and to tackle a backlog of correspondence.\(^1\)

**Book Production, 1912**

Besides the development of the College of Medical Evangelists, the other great priority during the second half of 1912 was book production. W. C. White declined Daniells’s invitation to fall council in Washington because of the importance of the literary work. Ellen White was working with great urgency on a new book on Old Testament history, as yet untitled. It would be known initially by the first words of its original title, *Captivity and Restoration of Israel*, but would be later known by the last words of that title, *Prophets and Kings*. She hoped to have it ready for distribution at the General Conference session in 1913.\(^2\)

On February 9, 1912, she signed the final edition of her will and was racing against time to get as much of her writings as possible into print while she was still able to supervise the process. Willie reported in August that she was "trying to grow old gracefully and she is succeeding much better than I thought possible." He had expected it to be a "terrible discouragement" to her to no longer


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
have "strength to visit the camp meetings," but found instead that she accepted "in a very sensible, philosophical way" the fact that she was growing old.¹

"To those who are closely connected with mother," Willie continued, it is very remarkable that in her age and feebleness she is able to give us such valuable counsel and direction regarding the book work. She does not mark the manuscripts very much, but here or there she puts on a word, a phrase or a sentence to round out the thought or make it more emphatic, and every few days when she is reading manuscript she comes out to the office or calls Brother Crisler to her room and then she tells him the importance of searching for manuscripts making very clear and plain such and such features of the work.

[Then] . . . Crisler makes another search in her manuscripts for material along the lines she has been pressing upon his attention, and in so doing, he finds choice matter which in the light of mother's suggestions he can use with the original manuscripts, making the subject much more complete.²

The 1913 General Conference Session

On Tuesday, May 6, W. C. White left California as part of a delegation of about twenty for the General Conference session in Washington, D.C. Before the meeting began, he made his usual two-day side trip to New York City to confer with artists, probably regarding illustrations for the book on Old Testament history.³

The session convened on May 15 and W. C. White gave two addresses. On Sunday, May 30, he made a presentation entitled "Confidence in God," in which he addressed directly the issue of Ellen White's death, the question of a prophetic successor, and provisions she was making for the carrying on of her work. In the

¹E. G. White, "Last Will and Testament of Mrs. Ellen G. White," Feb. 9, 1912, SD, EGWRC-AU; W. C. White to J. E. White, May 13, 1912; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Aug. 26, 1912, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

²W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Aug. 26, 1912, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

³W. C. White to W. L. H. Baker, May 2, 1913; C. C. Crisler to E. G. White, May 14, 1913, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
midst of reading documents that described his own designated role as her "helper and counselor," he paused to remark:

Some of this may seem to be quite personal, but . . . I do not know how to bring before you the instruction that has been given mother with reference to the handling of her work, without presenting it to you in the connection in which it has been written. So please forgive me if in reading this, I am presenting some things that it might seem better for me not to present. I want you to know what has been presented to mother as the basis of her confidence regarding the future and the basis of her plans regarding the handling of her manuscripts and her books.¹

He mentioned the work of "gathering into chapters what mother has written on Old Testament History." "You may say," he anticipated,

What do you mean by this "gathering"? Did not Sister White sit down and write out quite fully and connectedly that which she had to say about . . . Jereboam and Rehoboam, about Jeremiah and Isaiah and other Old Testament characters?—no, not on all the principal characters.

White proceeded to give a rather detailed explanation of how Ellen White wrote, how her helpers functioned in gathering materials from her file, her own re-reading and editing of the previously written manuscripts, and the role and limitations of her editorial staff. As he usually did on such occasions, W. C. White took the opportunity to give some solid education about the work of Ellen White and her editorial staff.²

His presentation on June 1 was a less formal continuation of the former address. In it White referred to "one question that a good many ministers and some laymen" had asked him: "'Is everything that Sister White says or writes inspired?'" He then "read from her writings very clear and decided answers" to "this question."³

¹W. C. White, "Confidence in God," GCB, 1913, 218-21.
²Ibid.
³W. C. White, "On the Spirit of Prophecy," GCB, 1913, 233-36; W. C. White to
The issues White had addressed at the General Conference session were not merely academic questions. They were problems of the highest priority for a denomination that for almost seventy years had placed great weight on guidance perceived to have come from God through Ellen White. Regarding the interpretation of her writings, the court of last resort was a direct personal inquiry to her. But as she grew more feeble and it was evident that she would not be able much longer to stand as counselor to denominational leaders, there was an urgently sensed need to establish principles of interpretation that would preserve denominational unity after her death. The sometimes harsh scrutiny of W. C. White’s personal relationship to her and her writings was a trying experience for him. In retrospect, however, the exchanges that took place in these situations of conflict elicited information that greatly enriches the understanding of Ellen White and how she worked. It was of the utmost value for the future understanding of her and her work, that so many questions of significance could be raised while she was alive to comment on them.

That the issues W. C. White addressed at the 1913 General Conference session were genuine concerns is seen in the fact that they could not be easily solved. Indeed, his presentations in May and June seem to have merely ignited and fueled the discussion. The debate would smolder through the summer and explode in a series of stormy sessions at the council in the fall.

**The 1913 Autumn Council**

The 1913 autumn council convened on October 14, 1913, in the chapel of the Washington [D.C.] Foreign Mission Seminary. W. C. White was first present

G. F. Watson, Dec. 28, 1913, DF 384, EGWRC-GC.
the morning of October 16. A week later, on Thursday, October 23, he became the
focus of harsh criticism during a discussion of "institutional debt and leadership."
"The cash policy and my relation to it was most thoroughly considered" was his
terse report to Edson. According to W. A. Colcord's eyewitness report, E. R.
Palmer, then head of the General Conference Publishing Department, accused W. C.
White of "double management," presumably meaning that White endorsed a cash
policy for others but did not follow it himself regarding the Loma Linda institutions.
In reply to this "charge," W. C. White insisted that in his policies toward Loma
Linda he was only acting as his mother's agent. The Thursday meeting was only
the first of four in which W. C. White's relation to his mother was hotly discussed
and, by some, sharply criticized.1

On Saturday afternoon, October 25, an "informal meeting of the council"
was called for W. C. White to respond to questions "regarding the relation of the
organized work to independent enterprises." As the meeting opened in the Review
and Herald chapel, the scheduled topic was interrupted with emotional questions
about a related issue, "What attitude should be maintained toward the Testimonies"
and whether everything Ellen White wrote was to be considered inspired. Since it
was an informal meeting, no minutes were taken, but it is evident from references in
the correspondence that White laid aside the notes he had prepared and endeavored
to respond extemporaneously to a barrage of questions. David Paulson, who was
present, reported that "consideration on this matter continued till about seven
o'clock" and that "positions were taken there by some brethren that seemed
strangely like the very arguments I have so often heard used against the Testimonies

1GCC Min, Oct. 14, 16, 1913, GCAr; W. C. White, Diary, Oct. 16, 23, 1913;
W. C. White to J. E. White, Nov. 28, 1913; W. A. Colcord to W. C. White, Aug. 27,
1916, DF 491, EGWRC-GC.
by our Battle Creek friends." The immediate result of the meeting was that the
topic of independent ministries was placed on the regular agenda for Monday,
October 27.¹

On Monday, W. C. White again endeavored to take up the matter of the
"independent work" and his "relation to it" and the "use of the Testimonies."
Minutes were not preserved, except for an action to appoint a committee of three to
investigate rumors and allegations and "report upon the matter of our relation to
independent work." The ensuing discussion spilled over to the Tuesday meeting,
appointed for a study of the "Loma Linda situation." W. C. White's diary carries
the laconic reference, "WCW Grill." His prepared defense was cut short for lack of
time and because without opportunity for questions, White felt that his statements
were liable to be misunderstood. Believing that the Loma Linda issue was of high
priority, he accepted the time handicap, but he wrote several lengthy letters in
December and January to some of the principle participants in the discussion,
seeking to clarify their understanding of Ellen White's inspiration. This issue is
further considered below.²

Time Running Out, 1914-1915

W. C. White spent the first nine months of 1914 mostly at home. During
the summer, he and D. E. Robinson worked on the manuscript for a new edition of
Gospel Workers, while Clarence Crisler gave "nearly all his time" to the manuscript

¹GCC Min, Oct. 27, 1913, GCAr; W. C. White to E. G. White, Oct. 24, 1913;
W. C. White, Diary, Oct. 25, 1913; David Paulson to E. A. Sutherland, Dec. 18, 1913,
WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

²GCC Min, Oct. 27, 1913, GCAr; W. C. White, Diary, Oct. 27-28, 1913; W. C.
White to A. G. Daniells, Dec. 31, 1913, EGWRC-GC; see below, "W. C. White's
Understanding of Ellen White's Inspiration."
on Old Testament history, now titled Captivity and Restoration of Israel. Edson spent almost a month at Elmshaven, from April 15 to May 12. Sometime shortly after this, Ellen White suffered either a light stroke or a "slight hemorrhage in the brain" which resulted in partial paralysis of her "whole right side for a day or two." She had some "trouble" with "her right foot for a week," and with "her right hand for two weeks."  

October 6, 1914, found White leaving California enroute to autumn council in Washington, D.C. Typing on the train, he gave directions to the staff at home: Clarence Crisler was to "forge ahead" on the last chapters of Captivity and Restoration, while D. E. Robinson, Maggie Hare Bree, Mary Steward, and Minnie Hawkins Crisler were to "concentrate their labors on perfecting for the printer" the manuscript of Gospel Workers. As for the council in Washington, it proved relatively uneventful for W. C. White, compared to the one the year before.  

Following the council, he headed southwest, spending some time with Edson in Nashville, attending meetings of the Southeastern Union Conference in Atlanta, and working with A. W. Spalding on two book manuscripts, one of which traced the backgrounds and early years of Madison College and eventually would be published as The Men of the Mountains.  

Meanwhile, Crisler reported from home that Ellen White had taken "one  

---

1W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Aug. 4, 1914; J. E. White to W. C. White, Apr. 13, May 14, 1914; W. C. White to J. E. White, Dec. 15, 1914; C. C. Crisler to W. C. White, Dec. 23, 1914; WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.  


of the most marked changes for the worse since your departure—the inability at
times to grasp surrounding circumstances, and to realize that she is where she is.
But even when thus confused as regards minor and local matters, she seems to be
very clear on spiritual topics," he added. "Her hand continues somewhat swollen,
and we do not like this unnatural condition, as we fear it presages a repetition of
that which came over her a couple of months or so ago," evidently a reference to
the stroke.1

"Sister White seemed quite clear-minded on Friday," Crisler reported two
weeks later,
and I was able to read her a few pages of advance work on the Old Testament
articles. . . . Today I have read half a dozen pages with her of advance
chapters, and she seems able to grasp the various lines of thought quite well.
She makes a good many comments, but we cannot get much in addition to that
which is on file.

In general, she is today about as usual. She is still more or less confused
as to her whereabouts. Miss Walling tells me that your Mother spends a good
deal of the time, nights, in prayer, evidently mostly in her sleep. Sometimes
she seems to be holding prayer-meetings. The other night she preached for an
hour, and as she was using her voice in full strength, Miss Walling at last
thought to suggest that she had preached long enough, and that now she should
rest and sleep, which she did.

I write you thus freely, that you may know just how your Mother is on
these minor matters at times. This sort of thing is on the increase. . . . On the
other hand, when we touch spiritual topics, the mind seems lifted above
confusion. When a Scripture is partially quoted, she very often finishes it. I
have tried this over and over again, especially when repeating the promises.
And . . . Jeremiah and other Old Testament Scriptures seem very familiar to
her, and she catches them up, and comments on them, and goes forward with
the quotations, as of old. I regard this as a special providence in our favor just
now.2

The above letter is typical of Crisler's almost daily reports to W. C. White
regarding his mother's condition. "She says," he reported two weeks later, that
she does not wish to make any great noise about having courage continually,

---

1C. C. Crisler to W. C. White, Nov. 7, 1914, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
2C. C. Crisler to W. C. White, Nov. 22, 1914, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
although she has [courage]; and she adds that the very fact that members of the household are waked up at times hearing her repeating the promises of God and claiming them as her own, is proof that she still has battles of her own to fight against Satan. The enemy is still in the land of the living, and we must needs plead the promises; but we may have strong faith in God’s power to deliver, and our hearts may be filled with courage.¹

Meanwhile, Crisler informed White that he was "in the midst of the final work on the first four of the six lacking chapters" of Captivity and Restoration. On December 17 he reported having read to her two of the Daniel chapters. Her "frailty . . . is becoming more and still more manifest, and we know not how it may end," Crisler observed on December 23. "We are glad, profoundly glad, [that] she seems to keep clear on spiritual subjects, even when brain-weary, and that apparently she enjoys going over her books, over the pages of the Review, and over chapters presented for consideration." Nevertheless, Crisler urged White in Nashville to study how to shorten his journey homeward. "If you have matters of paramount importance that you feel you must have her counsel on, every day gained during the return journey may count for much. I am sure you are determined in your own mind not to presume on the goodness of God in sustaining your Mother so remarkably." White still planned to visit Chicago, New York City, Philadelphia, Washington, Nashville again, and College View before coming home.²

W. C. White arrived home on January 27 and "was immediately called to Loma Linda for a week." Then he attended other meetings in Oakland and Mountain View. On Friday, February 12, he was at home again, and spent a few minutes of the afternoon with his mother outdoors in the yard, "walking about in the bright sunshine, and talking about the progress of the message in all the world."

¹C. C. Crisler to W. C. White, Dec. 2, 1914, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

About noon the next day, February 13, as she was "entering her study from the hallway, she tripped and fell." Subsequent "X-ray examination at the Sanitarium" showed a fracture of the left hip at the joint.

It was now clearly evident that Ellen White could not live much longer. The editorial staff at Elmshaven accelerated their work on a final edition of Life Sketches of Ellen G. White and on biographical information, photographs, and obituary materials to be released to the news media upon the event of her death.

On Friday night, July 9, she had a severe spell of vomiting, after which the attending physician "stopped the treatments." A week later on July 16, 1915, she "fell asleep without a struggle" at 3:40 P.M.

Memorial services were held in three locations. The first took place "under the Elm trees, just [in] front of her house," Sunday afternoon, July 18. The next morning a second service was held at the California Conference camp meeting then in progress in a suburb of Oakland. The third funeral was conducted in the Battle Creek Tabernacle on Sabbath, July 24, followed by burial in Oak Hill Cemetery.

A note written nine days before Ellen White's death epitomizes W. C. White's feelings at this time. "Mother is slowly losing ground," he confided to F. M. Wilcox. "She talks but little now, and longs for rest. It is now 144 days

---


2C. C. Crisler to W. L. Burgan, Apr. 29, 1915; C. C. Crisler to C. H. Jones, June 6, 1915, WCWF, EGWRC-GC.

3W. C. White to E. E. Andross, July 11, 1915; W. C. White to David Lacey, July 20, 1915, WCWF, EGWRC-GC.

4W. C. White to David Lacey, July 20, 1915, WCWF, EGWRC-GC.
since the accident. What a strange world this will be to me when mother is
gone.  

The present study has been delimited to the period of W. C. White's
relationship to his mother during her lifetime. An analysis of that relationship
during the period from 1900 to 1915 is the focus of the next section.

W. C. White's Relationship to Ellen G.
White and Her Work, 1900-1915

The preceding overview has provided a chronological framework for the
issues that occupied Ellen White and her son during the last fifteen years of her life.
The remainder of this chapter considers topically the major aspects of W. C.
White's relationship to his mother during this period: chief of staff, editor,
counselor, and interpreter of her writings.

W. C. White as Chief of Staff

The title "chief of staff" is an appropriate one for W. C. White during this
period because he not only supervised Ellen White's editorial staff but acted as her
personal spokesman and representative.

Ellen White had asserted in her "second ultimatum" to W. C. White in
1900 that her fundamental motivation in returning to the United States from
Australia was to secure a larger staff and thus accelerate the publication of her
accumulated writings. When it was rumored in 1900 that W. C. White would be
elected to high office at the next General Conference session, she insisted strongly
that he sought no office and would devote his full time to her work.  

1W. C. White to F. M. Wilcox, July 7, 1915, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
2E. G. White to W. C. White, Mar. 9, 1900; E. G. White to Officers of the General
Conference, Oct. 24, 1901, EGWRC-AU.
Ironically, by the close of the General Conference session in the spring of 1901, W. C. White had not only been reappointed to the General Conference committee, a position he had resigned four years earlier, but had been placed in other positions of responsibility as well. His overextension compromised his efficiency in his mother's work and called forth a third ultimatum, similar to the two she had written him in Australia. "When I learned that you were placed on so many committees here and there, I felt my spirit sink to the lowest ebb," she wrote to him in the summer of 1901. "Here is one year passed into eternity and what have I done to get before the people the burden of true education?" Again she sought to convince him that the work of publishing her writings was of higher priority than the other demands made upon his time. Competing entanglements not only consumed his "time and strength and capabilities," but took up her time as well because the perplexities he met in his committee work he would present to her for counsel. Again she insisted that he "prayerfully" decide whether he could devote his full time to her interests. If not, she would find someone else to help her.\(^1\)

While his mother's communication did not lead W. C. White to make a total divestiture of other responsibilities, he did respond in two definite ways. His primary response was to develop a larger staff. Carefully selected and personally trained individuals composed a staff to whom he could delegate a large volume of her secretarial and editorial work. This enabled her to work with efficiency, while it permitted him to respond to the needs of the General Conference.

He also made recurring attempts to curtail his other responsibilities and spend more time at Elmshaven. Two comments to Daniells in 1906 indicate the reordering of White's priorities. After listing four committees and conventions then

\(^1\)E. G. White to W. C. White, Aug. 1901 (Letter 221, 1901), EGWRC-AU.
going on he remarked, "I think you know me well enough to understand that I
would much prefer to attend these meetings than to stay here in the office; but there
is a work to be done . . . and we are now in a good position to advance this work if
we stay by it." The following day he again wrote to Daniells:

You ask if I am planning to attend the General Conference Council in
Europe next spring. No, my brother, I am planning to stay home and saw
wood. We can not hope that Mother will be able for many years to do the
work she is doing now. Just now she has laid out for us much important work.
When it is done or when by her death the work is brought to a sudden
stand[still], as it must be sometime, then I will go anywhere that duty calls.
But at present duty calls me to stay here and work with Mother; not
intermittently as in the past, but steadily so that we can accomplish something
in response to the command, "Gather up the fragments; let nothing be lost."[

Thus W. C. White acknowledged that his work as a General Conference
officer and advisor to the president could not take precedence over his work as
editor for his mother.

W. C. White as Editor

Ellen White's personal priority for herself and W. C. White for the last
years of her life was to get her writings published "as fast as possible." "This work
must no longer be interrupted," she declared to A. G. Daniells in 1901.2
Accordingly, she saw W. C. White's role as editor and publisher as of first
importance among the services he performed for her at this time. It was also the
aspect of his work that would continue most nearly unchanged after her death.

In addition to actual editing, W. C. White was responsible for training and
supervising other staff members. "It was made emphatic," he later wrote regarding

1W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Aug. 5, Aug. 6, 1906, RG 11, 1906, W. C. White
Fld 2; cf. W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Apr. 13, 1908, RG 11, 1908, W. C. White Fld
1, GCAr.

2E. G. White to A. G. Daniells, June 24, 1901 (Letter 65, 1901), EGWRC-AU.
the training of editorial helpers, "that only Mrs. White's thoughts were to be used, and also her own words as far as grammatically consistent in expressing these thoughts. In no case was the copyist given the privilege of introducing thoughts not found in Mrs. White's manuscripts." All materials received editorial attention regarding "spelling, punctuation, and capitalization." Published material received more extensive editing than private letters.

In cases where paragraphs and sentences lost some of their power because of imperfect arrangement, Mrs. White's secretaries were instructed to make transpositions, leaving out what was clearly a repetition, when preparing matter for the printer. In the cases of letters to individuals, the repetition of important thoughts would often tend to make them more effective.¹

As noticed in earlier chapters, the materials thus edited included letters, articles, books, and pamphlets.

**Letters**

Beyond the usual editing for grammatical form, W. C. White was occasionally asked by his mother to edit the content of a letter. An example occurred in 1903. "I am sending you," she informed her son, "two letters written to Elder A. T. Jones.

They have not yet been sent to him. If you see anything in them that you think would be better left out, I hope that you will feel free to use your judgment. There are some thing[s] which, though quite true, it might not be best to present now. We must be wise as serpents and harmless as doves."²

It should be noticed that she gave him permission to delete but not to add material.

It was noted in chapter 2 above that compilation was a basic editorial method used extensively in the preparation of Ellen White materials for publication.

¹W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Mar. 9, 1907, RG 11, 1907, W. C. White Fld 1, GCAr; W. C. White and D. E. Robinson, "The Work of Mrs. E. G. White's Editors," 1933, pp. 3-4, DF 445, EGWRC-AU.

²E. G. White to W. C. White, Aug. 3, 1903, EGWRC-AU.
Occasionally even letters became vehicles for compiled materials. For example, N. D. Faulkhead, who was well known to W. C. White from their working together at the Echo Publishing Company in Australia, wrote in 1911 a letter inquiring whether Ellen White had any counsel regarding the plan to establish a sanitarium in Warburton, Victoria, Australia. W. C. White replied that his mother did "not seem inclined to write anything directly upon this subject," suggesting instead that what she had already "written and published regarding the establishment of sanitariums in suitable places should be understood by our people as an indication of what their duty is in such a place as Warburton." However, she had "consented" to Willie's "looking through her letters and selecting anything [he] could find which seemed to bear upon the subject." Accordingly, he enclosed for Faulkhead's perusal extracts from two letters, a paragraph from Testimonies volume 9, a four-page article by Ellen White on "Cooperation between Schools and Sanitariums," and a copy of a recent letter from W. C. White to Guy Dail that touched on a related subject. In summary, the reply to Faulkhead was a W. C. White letter with several pieces of Ellen White material incorporated or enclosed.1

A similar letter written at the height of the Kellogg crisis elicited sharp criticism from the doctor. A. T. Jones, by now firmly allied with Kellogg, had been maneuvering to obtain "control" of the Battle Creek Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was then owned by the local congregation through a board of trustees. One way of making its ownership secure for the denomination would be to deed it to the West Michigan Conference or to the General Conference, but some of the trustees were opposed to either of these options. Perplexed, A. G. Daniells wrote a

1W. C. White to N. D. Faulkhead, Mar. 26, 1911; cf. W. C. White to C. B. Haynes, Dec. 20, 1911, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
note to W. C. White. "I earnestly request you to place the situation before your mother and write us early any counsel you have to give."1

When W. C. White talked to his mother about it, she said she "had been instructed to point out the danger of the Tabernacle being used by those who ought not to use it, and the danger of its being finally controlled by them," but she felt that "what she had [already] said was plain enough, earnest enough, and clear enough for the Trustees and the Church Committee to act upon without her specifying exactly what should be done." To save her any further involvement, she "instructed" Willie to "look over her letters in which she had spoken of this matter and to copy out" forDaniells "those paragraphs" that "referred to the dangers of the situation." Subsequently W. C. White compiled extracts from five letters she had recently written on the topic and quoted them in his reply to Daniells.2

When the resulting W. C. White letter came to the attention of Kellogg, he ridiculed it as a "'testimony' from Willie." In fact, W. C. White's letter gives a straightforward account of his conversation with his mother and then incorporates several paragraphs quoted from and credited to specific Ellen White letters.

Kellogg's report of the matter was factually correct until just before his conclusion. After the remark about the "'testimony from Willie," Kellogg asserted that "Sister White in that document does not in a single instance say that the Lord has shown her I was trying to do such a thing as she said I was." He thus admitted that "she said [he] was" seeking control of the Tabernacle, but denied that she had stated in that letter that "the Lord has shown her" this. The implication is that he would believe it

1A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, Nov. 22, 1906, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

2W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Dec. 20, 1906, RG 11, 1906, W. C. White Fld 2, GCAr.
if "the Lord has shown her," but would not accept her word unless it was something given her by direct revelation.¹ 

However, Kellogg's profession to believe even direct revelation is seen in this instance to be a dodge. In the letter referred to, while she did not use the precise words "the Lord showed me," she did use equivalent terms at least four times. She asserted that "it has been clearly presented to me," "the word that is given to me is," "light has been given to me very distinctly," and "I have seen" that the "leaders in the medical work in Battle Creek will try to secure possession of the Tabernacle."² The point is that W. C. White wrote a straightforward report of a conversation with his mother, accompanied by extracts from her writings on the topic in question. He wrote the letter as her delegate but sent it out over his own signature, so there was no basis for Kellogg's insinuation of deceptive intent.

Articles and Pamphlets

During this period, Ellen White continued her lifelong practice of supplying articles for denominational periodicals. While the publishers would accept whatever she chose to send, they sometimes requested material on a specific topic. For instance, W. A. Spicer sent an urgent note enclosed with the Week of Prayer program for the fall of 1911, asking W. C. White to "please provide a reading from Sister White, really at once, or as soon thereafter as possible." A few weeks later Spicer acknowledged receipt of the article which, he said, "seems excellently adapted to leading out in the first Sabbath of the week of prayer, and the title fits

¹W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Dec. 20, 1906 (notarized copy in Kellogg's files), Coll 6, Bx 3, Fld 6, MSU, emphasis added; "Interview at Dr. J. H. Kellogg's House, Oct. 7, 1907," 42-46, DF 45k, EGWRC-AU.

²W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Dec. 20, 1906, Coll 6, Bx 3, Fld 6, MSU.
exactly the general idea of the reading suggested by the Committee."

She repeatedly consented to write or have compilations made in support of General Conference financial appeals. An example is her support of the "big fund," an endeavor to raise $150,000 for some fifteen different institutional building projects. Accordingly, W. C. White compiled "selections from Mother's writings, published and unpublished," for inclusion in a 32-page pamphlet published in 1907.²

Books

Some thirteen books were published or prepared for publication during the last fifteen years of Ellen White's life.³ To provide a detailed history of each of them is beyond the scope of this paper, but some examples are cited that illustrate the role of W. C. White in their preparation.

The process of book preparation began with Ellen White's urgent conviction that her writings must be preserved in permanent form. As W. C. White came to share this sense of urgency, he began to plan how it might be accomplished. "I find that as I give my time more to Mother's work," he confided to Daniells in 1903, "the Lord opens to my mind ways of doing that which Mother has been telling us for three or four years ought to be done, but which we have not seen how to undertake." In another letter White expounded "a plan which has been revolving

---

¹W. A. Spicer to W. C. White, July 12, Aug. 8, 1911, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.


in my mind for the last two months regarding the publication of some of Mother's writings which she has been asking for for the last four or five years.1

Examples of books for which W. C. White did much of the planning include *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* and *The Story of Our Health Message*. In response to Ellen White's desire for these books, W. C. White made initial plans in 1906 and laid those plans before Daniells, Prescott, and G. A. Irwin for their suggestions. White's daughter, Ella May Robinson (who was twenty-four in 1906), assisted him in gathering materials for *Life Sketches*. C. C. Crisler eventually became the main compiler, assisted by D. E. Robinson and W. C. White, and the book went to press in 1915.2

*The Story of Our Health Message* had its beginnings in 1903. Ellen White spoke to W. C. White in that year about the need to publish "the story of the rise of the health reform movement among Seventh-day Adventists." Compilation of materials was begun by Crisler in 1906. Crisler, however, was occupied for years on *The Great Controversy*, *Acts of the Apostles*, and *Prophets and Kings*. In 1916, after Ellen White's death, he accepted a call to mission service in China, where he died in 1936. Not until 1943 was *The Story of Our Health Message* completed by D. E. Robinson.3

One of W. C. White's major projects in 1903 and 1904 was preparation of

---


Testimonies for the Church, volume 8. As with previous volumes, this one was prepared by collecting previously unpublished letters and manuscripts that were judged to be of particular importance to the church. As Maggie Hare finished arranging the articles which would form the first "department" of this "testimony," W. C. White sent a "rough outline" of the contents of the proposed volume to A. G. Daniells for his comments. Daniells (who had spent some time at Elmshaven helping compile volume 6 of the Testimonies) was invited to go through his personal collection of Ellen White letters and recommend any manuscripts not previously published that he felt were especially suited for inclusion in the forthcoming volume. Daniells responded with a list of her communications that he believed had been "like a guiding star to our ministers" and had "allayed fears and apprehensions" during the Kellogg crisis. "It seems to us," he observed, "that all the people of the denomination should have this light now."¹

W. C. White again sought Daniells' advice in 1911 concerning the revision of Gospel Workers, a book first published in 1892. W. W. Prescott made some 105 specific suggestions concerning the preparation of the 1911 edition of Great Controversy, of which about half were accepted.² Another book whose production process was particularly noteworthy was Acts of the Apostles.

Acts of the Apostles was a revision and enlargement of two earlier books, Spirit of Prophecy, volume 3 (1878) and Sketches from the Life of Paul (1883), to which were added additional material from Ellen White's letter and manuscript files.

¹W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Dec. 10, 1903, RG 11, 1903, W. C. White Fld 2, GCAr; A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, Jan. 15, 1904, WCCWF, EGWRC-GC.

W. C. White described to L. R. Conradi in Hamburg, Germany, "how we all labored together in the preparation of the MS. for the printer." He reported that Ellen White "took a very lively interest in planning" the new book. Five members of Ellen White’s editorial staff spent "about five months" in "reading and research," from February to early July 1911.1

White’s comments to Conradi provide detailed insight into Ellen White’s working practices as late as 1911. "Day by day," White reported, manuscripts found in Mrs. White’s files "were submitted to Mother for reading."

To these she gave her first attention early in the morning when she was rested and her mind was fresh, and she marked the MSS. freely, interlining and adding words, phrases, and sentences to make the statements more clear and forceful, and these were passed back [to her staff] for a second copying.

As the work progressed, Mother would frequently give us instruction regarding points of importance . . . which she knew she had written and which she wished us to take special pains to search for in her writings. Sometimes this instruction was given to those who brought her the MSS. in her room, and often times after reading a few chapters or early in the forenoon after some important feature had been impressed upon her mind in night visions, she would come over to the office and talk the matter over with Brother Crisler. One day when she was talking with him and me together, she said, This book will be read by heathen in America and in other lands. Take pains to search out that which I have written regarding the work and teachings of Saint Paul that will appeal to the heathen [non-Christians].

At another time she said, This book will be read by the Jews. Take pains to use what I have written that will appeal to the Jews, and also that will appeal to our people as encouragement to work for the Jews.2

This account portrays Ellen White as not only intimately involved with the day-to-day development of the work, but as receiving "night visions" on the specific matters being treated in the book. Furthermore, she was raising the conceptual level of the material as compared with "the old book," Sketches from the Life of Paul.

W. C. White noted that the new book gave "less room" to "detailed descriptions of

---

1W. C. White to L. R. Conradi, Dec. 8, 1911; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, May 26, July 21, 1911; W. C. White to E. F. Forga, July 6, 1911, WCWF, EGWRC-GC.

2W. C. White to L. R. Conradi, Dec. 8, 1911, WCWF, EGWRC-GC.
places and journeyings" and "more room" to Paul's "teaching and the lessons to be drawn therefrom."  

By mid-July W. C. White was sending printer’s proofs of the early chapters to individuals such as Daniells and Edson White for their suggestions. The subsequent correspondence with Edson provides helpful insights into W. C. White’s openness to suggestions regarding his editorial responsibilities. Some of Edson’s suggestions were accepted and Acts of the Apostles came off the press in November 1911, just before Ellen White’s eighty-fourth birthday.  

One aspect of W. C. White’s work was supervising the work of translators. When Great Controversy was being translated into Spanish, the translator noted the absence of any chapter on how the Reformation had affected Spain, corresponding to the treatment of the Reformation in other European countries. Consequently Crisler was assigned to prepare what was initially designated “an appendix chapter” for the Spanish edition of Great Controversy. Leon Caviness helped by reading Spanish sources and H. H. Hall, vice-president of Pacific Press, also contributed to the manuscript preparation. This project eventually became chapter 13 of the Spanish Great Controversy and carried a footnote at the beginning of the chapter identifying it as the work of Crisler and Hall which was “inserted in the book with the approval of the author.”  

An incident that illustrates the flexibility that Ellen White accorded W. C.

---

1Ibid.


White in his editorial duties occurred in connection with the 1913 publication of *Counsels to Teachers, Parents, and Students Regarding Christian Education*. Several leading educators were asked to critique the manuscript prior to its publication. One of these educators, C. W. Irwin, president of Pacific Union College, thought that part of the section dealing with campus social regulations did not seem consistent with statements published earlier. Whereas previous statements had appeared to rule out any form of courtship on campus, Irwin noted that the new statement seemed to allow courting "under certain conditions," namely, for older, mature students. Irwin inquired of W. C. White whether the new section "is some new light that has been given to Sister White which she has written out, independently of anyone else; or is it something that has been submitted to her for her opinion."¹

Willie replied that the new material had been included because the previous statement prohibiting courtship of any kind had originally been written for the early Avondale situation where students were mostly of high-school age. To apply that counsel to all situations without exception would not adequately represent Ellen White's beliefs. Therefore, in counsel with Ellen White, the paragraphs in question were added. They "were drawn from the records which I had made of several interviews with Mother, at different times. . . . When they were written out, Mother went over them carefully, and commented on each principle, expressing her approval. Otherwise we would not have included these paragraphs in the article."²


²W. C. White to C. W. Irwin, Feb. 18, 1913, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
While Ellen White trusted Willie implicitly in the editing of her writings, he reciprocated by giving her ample reason to trust him. He often sent her copies of his letters on sensitive issues so that if she had corrections to offer she could do so before he sent materials out.¹

Not everyone had the degree of confidence in W. C. White that his mother did. S. N. Haskell, seventy-six years old in 1909, was both a long-time friend and an occasional critic of W. C. White. Haskell accepted only reluctantly the editing of Ellen White's writings. He had a personal collection of hundreds of her letters from which he often read selections when he was preaching or leading out in meetings. "If people could only read those letters as they were written," he observed to Ellen White,

read . . . the counsel and reproof that came to me under all circumstances and conditions, it would do the people good.

There is so much editing lately of your writings that it seems to me the power and vitality, much of it, is taken out to have them readable and adapted to the present condition of things. . . . It is very much like the revised translation of the Bible. In some respects they are made to read smoother. But God's hand has been over the work; He inspired His own word, and chose His own servants to translate it in the days of King James, and its simplicity and vitality the people have become accustomed to. So it is with your writings. To my mind there is a power in them. They may not be so grammatical, but your husband had the gift of editing them without taking you out of them.²

Haskell mentioned the same concern in a letter to W. C. White a couple of months later. "If you had . . . had the experience that I have had," he challenged the younger man,

in meeting this matter of dropping out and of changing your mother's writings, you would never allow one sentence to be dropped out, or changed, in her writings that have gone before the public. We have enemies of our faith that

¹See, e.g., W. C. White to F. M. Wilcox, Oct. 12, 1911; W. C. White to E. G. White, Oct. 13, 1911; W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, Oct. 31, 1912, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

²S. N. Haskell to E. G. White, Sept. 24, 1909, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
are watching just such points, and when they find one they make big capital of it. . . .

It is the dropping out of some of these things from what has been published in your mother's writings, and the changing of some things, that has been taken advantage of by the enemies of the truth and today is the cause of some of our best brethren losing confidence in you; because they think you change your mother's writings and call it "editing." Now, I do not mean by this that you make changes in the thought, but in the wording and the reading of them.

I believe that your mother has the spirit of prophecy, that she is a prophet; and I interpret her writings as I would the Bible. Every objection that I have ever heard against your mother's writings I can defend from the Bible; and this I have said many times in public when there were many that criticized them quite severely. The sharpest criticism that I ever heard, and one that put me to my stumps the nearest of any was in Fresno. I had made the statement that I was prepared to defend your mother's writings from the Bible, and one of those sharp critical women arose and said, Can you prove from the Bible that a prophet ever had sons that changed the prophet's testimony, and called it "editing." I replied to her in substance as follows:— that I could prove from the Bible that prophets had sons that did not always do right, and their not doing right tested the people. She sat down and said no more. 

As delicate as was W. C. White's role as his mother's editor, his work as her personal counselor was even more so. Perhaps it was the most sensitive aspect of his relationship to his mother.

W. C. White as Counselor

The term "counselor" as used here refers to W. C. White's function in giving information or opinions to his mother for her consideration. It refers especially to the interactive dynamic of stimulating her thinking through conversation. The term was one that Ellen White had used earlier and would continue to apply to her younger son during the present period. W. C. White "has been faithful to the work laid upon him," she wrote in 1911. "He is my counselor. I have been shown that the Lord gives him special guidance."  

---

1S. N. Haskell to W. C. White, Nov. 27, 1909, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

"continuum" is again used as a convenient way to systematize the various kinds of "counsel" provided to Ellen White by her son. The most basic of these levels was that of providing information.

Information

Ellen White was constantly receiving information from various conventional sources. "There are times when common things must be stated," she explained,

and information given that has passed from one to another of the workers. Such words, such information, are not given under the special inspiration of the Spirit of God. . . . We converse about houses and lands, trades to be made, and locations for our institutions, their advantages and disadvantages.¹

Thus she acknowledged her indebtedness to human sources for a great deal of ordinary information. For the interpretation of these data, however, she maintained that while open to the opinions of others she was not dependent on any other human and was often assisted by divine revelations.

W. C. White justified her basing testimonies at least in part on information received from human sources by citing the experience of the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor 1:11. "There is a part that men have to act," he said, "in bringing facts regarding the progress of events, by writing and by word of mouth, to the Lord's messengers." Willie had learned, however, by hard experience, the cost to himself if the recipient of a reproof from his mother so much as suspected that it had been occasioned by a report she had received from him. Therefore, for his own sake as well for hers, he had formed the habit of not passing on to her many of the negative items of information that came to him in the course of his conference-connected

responsibilities. This was quite thoroughly discussed in chapter 3, above.¹

When he perceived, however, that she might be in danger of making a decision based on one-sided information, he regarded it as his "duty to present the other side" in order to give balance to the information she received.² In addition to providing information, he often expressed opinions and made recommendations to her.

Recommendation

A number of instances could be cited of W. C. White's recommending to his mother what appeared to him a desirable course of action. First are cited some minor examples and then an issue that involved more weighty considerations.

Minor examples

A rather unusual recommendation was the subject of a hastily scribbled letter from W. C. White to his mother following an all-night interview with Kellogg in 1902. This occurred at the earliest stage of the Kellogg crisis, when few within the church had yet imagined to what end the conflict would go. W. C. White seemed to be feeling some of the empathetic pain that in Ellen White's early ministry had tempted her to soften her reproofs. "I hope you will not have to write much to Dr. K. just now for he is very sensitive and feels greatly hurt." Willie suggested.

He is especially aggravated [sic, aggravated] by the statements made in the Medical Missionary Meeting at the Sanitarium in which you spoke of asking the Battle Creek Sanitarium for help, and failed to acknowledge

¹See e.g., W. C. White to J. E. White, Aug. 15, 1912, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Feb. 14, 1907, RG 11, 1907, W. C. White Fld 1, GCAr.

²W. C. White to J. E. White, Oct. 18, 1908, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
... the gift of the Medical Missionary Association of five thousand dollars, sent to Sydney Sanitarium.

In addition to letting up on her reproofs for awhile, he suggested that "by-and-by" she "acknowledge" the five-thousand-dollar donation. No record was found of a response on her part to this unasked-for advice.¹

A few months later he urged her on when she felt tired and uncertain about a letter she was writing to Kellogg and "his associates." "She would write a little," Willie reported,

and then in her weakness and weariness the question would arise if the time had come to send it, or if she ought to let the matter rest for further developments. She desired to read to me what she was writing, and I thought I discerned in it that which would be of untold value to the medical missionary workers just now during your council; therefore I have done all that I could to encourage Mother to continue her writing, and to let the letters be copied and sent forward without delay.²

The anti-meat pledge

A major incident that shows W. C. White joining A. G. Daniells in a recommendation was the matter of a proposed anti-meat pledge, called for by Ellen White in 1908 but never implemented.³

She had initiated the idea in a letter to A. G. Daniells. "Let the good work begin at Washington," she urged,

¹W. C. White to E. G. White, Dec. 24, 1902, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.


and go forth from there to other places. I know whereof I am writing. If a temperance pledge providing for the abstinence from flesh foods, tea and coffee, and some other foods that are known to be injurious, were circulated through our ranks, a great and good work would be accomplished. I ask you at this time, Will you not circulate such a pledge?

When Daniells made no immediate reply, W. C. White followed up his mother's letter with one of his own. "What use have you made of Mother's letter dated March 29 but sent to you four weeks ago in which she speaks of the backsliding on health reform?" he asked. Daniells responded in July that he was "perplexed" about the issue. "I feel that I need counsel regarding this before I shall know just how far to go in this direction," he pleaded. "As I am hoping to see you soon I ask the privilege of talking with you about this question before taking steps to circulate a pledge. When we have done this and counseled with your mother then I shall take the matter up just as she says the Lord directs that we should do." 

At the resulting interview in the first week in August, Daniells "talked over the food problem in various countries," "reviewed the uninstructed condition" of many Adventists "regarding the broad principles of health reform," and cited previous experiences with "extremists." The consensus of the interview, as Daniells remembered it years later, was that "an extensive well-balanced educational work should be carried on by physicians and ministers instead of entering precipitately upon an Anti-meat Pledge Campaign." Ellen White appeared to be convinced that an anti-meat pledge would have considerable potential for legalistic misuse if not preceded by a thorough program of health education to secure intelligent consent to

---

1E. G. White to A. G. Daniells, Mar. 29, 1908, EGWRC-GC.

2E. G. White to A. G. Daniells, Mar. 29, 1908, EGWRC-GC; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, June 26, RG 11, 1908, W. C. White Fld 2, GCAr; A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, July 17, 1908, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

3A. G. Daniells, "A Brief Statement," Apr. 11, 1928, DF 509, EGWRC-GC.
the issues addressed by the pledge. Consequently the proposal was tabled.

A year later Ellen White spoke to the 1909 General Conference session on "Faithfulness in Health Reform." In that address she incorporated much of the material from her original letter to Daniells, but dropped the specific call for a "pledge."¹

When the issue was raised in 1911 at two California camp meetings, W. C. White said that his "feelings and sympathies were all in favor of the circulation of a pledge for the non-use of meats, provided it was placed upon the right basis, accompanied by wise instruction, and carried forward in the right spirit." But he expressed concern for "the perplexities which might come into our work by the launching of a pledge in such a way that it would be regarded as a test of loyalty to the Testimonies." He asked to see how their pledge was worded. "When they produced a copy, I found it was just what I feared," he reported to G. A. Irwin. "This is the way the pledge read:-- 'In compliance with the revealed will of the Lord, and trusting in His help, we pledge ourselves to abstain from the use of tea, coffee, and flesh foods including fish and fowl.'" W. C. White argued that "such a pledge as this would naturally lead to endless controversies regarding the authority of the Testimonies and the exact meaning of their teaching." He felt that the wording of the pledge "should be based upon our general information regarding the dangers of meat-eating rather than upon revelation from the Testimonies."²

When W. C. White's correspondence of June 1911 was given to his mother for her comments, she dictated to a stenographer a short manuscript on

¹E. G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9:153-66.

²W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, June 15, 1911, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
October 10, 1911. "Regarding the testimonies," she wrote,

nothing is ignored; nothing is cast aside; but time and place must be considered. Nothing must be done untimely. Some matters must be withheld because some persons would make an improper use of the light given. Every jot and tittle is essential and must appear at an opportune time.¹

Later in the manuscript she directly addressed the question of an abstinence pledge concerning meat. "I am not prepared to advise that we make the matter of meat eating a test question with our people," she cautioned.

There are some things on this subject that I can write out to be read before the churches, which it is essential for believers to understand; but when it comes to making this a test question, I dare not place it before our people in that positive way. There are those who would stumble over such a presentation, and there are others who would make it a stone of stumbling.

Let us give this matter due consideration. I am prepared to stand for some things; but not yet are we as a people fully ready for this issue. There should be first a fair representation of the subject, and it should be considered in all its bearings. Read carefully the record of Genesis 18:6-8 [where Abraham prepared a calf as a meal for the Lord].

The Lord has given us much instruction on the subject of meat-eating; and from the light He has given we should not prepare meat and place it on our tables for our families.²

Two days later, W. C. White quoted an edited version of the above paragraphs in a letter to F. M. Wilcox, which he then submitted to Ellen White for her evaluation.³ She read the letter and in three places appended handwritten comments. The first one came directly between the second and third of the edited paragraphs from the October 10 manuscript and indicated her approval of his use of the material. Following the cited paragraphs, W. C. White had summarized:

From this it is evident that with Mother there is no wavering regarding the principles of health reform and our duty to teach them, and no question as to

¹E. G. White, "Regarding the Testimonies," Oct. 10, 1911, MS 23, 1911, EGWRC-AU.
²Ibid.
³W. C. White to F. M. Wilcox, Oct. 12, 1911; W. C. White to E. G. White, Oct. 13, 1911, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
the good that would come to the cause in Washington if the brethren there would thoroughly study this matter and take the initiative in the anti-meat-eating campaign.

To this she gave a one word response, "correct," in her own unmistakable handwriting, and added her initials: "EGW." At another place in the letter, however, where W. C. White mentioned the opinion of some "officers of the General Conference" that "the movement on the part of our people to pledge themselves to not eat flesh, would cause unnecessary strife and unnecessary criticism of our people in mission fields," she penned in the margin, "No[,] no[.] It is truth that must appear decidedly. EGW."¹

Thus she affirmed the value of an "anti-meat-eating campaign," denied that the use of a pledge would necessarily lead to "strife" and "criticism," and yet maintained that such a pledge should not be made a "test question." Her handwritten comments seem to indicate agreement with W. C. White's view that if a pledge were "placed upon the right basis, accompanied by wise instruction, and carried forward in the right spirit," it could be a means of "rich blessings."²

The documentary evidence suggests that Daniells differed slightly from Ellen White in the degree of importance he placed on the promotion of a vegetarian diet. While she was concerned that such promotion be accompanied by adequate instruction on the health principles involved, she was equally concerned that the force of habitual eating patterns not be permitted to inhibit people's progress in this area. Daniells conceded the value of a vegetarian diet but seemed reluctant to promote it. He seemed to prefer using only education, without the specific call to

¹W. C. White to F. M. Wilcox, Oct. 12, 1911, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
²Ibid.
decision that a pledge would represent. In practice it was evidently easier to implement an approach of "no pledge—general education only," than to undertake a health education program thorough enough to secure general acceptance of an anti-meat pledge.

This case of recommendation shows Daniells and W. C. White contributing some dimensions to Ellen White's decision-making process but evidently not in a manipulative way, for after having three and one-half years to reflect on the 1908 interview, she still held to the opinion she had formed through that discussion. Some stronger expressions of W. C. White's convictions are considered under the heading of persuasion.

Persuasion

Some revealing insights into the relationship of Ellen and W. C. White are provided by the recorded instances in which he persuaded her to a course of action different from her original intention. First to be considered are some instances in which the results of W. C. White's persuasion seem to have been desirable.

In the weeks preceding the 1903 General Conference session, with its potential for a major confrontation between Daniells and Kellogg and their respective supporters, Kellogg sent Ellen White a seventy-five-page epistle cataloging the issues as he saw them. Upon receiving the letter, Ellen White asked W. C. White to read it, saying that "she was not then able to read it, and was not sure that she ought to read it before the Conference" session in Oakland. "I gave the letter a careful reading," reported Willie to Jesse Arthur, "and then plead[ed] with Mother to read it." For weeks she had been "brain-weary," but by mid-March

---

1A. G. Daniells, "A Brief Statement," Apr. 11, 1928, DF 509, EGWRC-GC.
she had regained some strength and finally just eleven days before the session she
did read the "long letter."  

A similar sequence of events occurred when Kellogg sent her a copy of
The Living Temple. The book was received at Elmshaven "some weeks" before
July 17, 1903, when Sara McEnterfer wrote to Kellogg to thank him for it. "I have
not yet gone very far into it," Sara said, "but so far as I have read it has pleased me
very much." She also reported that "at first Sister White did not feel disposed to
look at the book, but I left it in her room and in a few days she told me that she had
been reading it and that she found it to be quite a different book than she had
supposed it to be." Ellen White "intended to read it all," Sara thought, but "of
course, you know that she will be some time in doing this."  

Ellen White evidently did not continue reading it, for W. C. White told
Kellogg later that he too had "suggested several times that she examine it and write
to you [Kellogg] about it, but [that] some way she seemed to be restrained from
doing this." Two months after Sara's letter to Kellogg, White wrote to Daniells that

until to-day, Mother has refused to look at the Living Temple. To-day I
plead[ed] with her to read at least portions of it so that she might know how
matters are presented in it. She read the preface. Then I read to her the first
chapter, and we turned over and read passages here and there, relating to the
all-pervading presence of Deity.

Prompted by this introduction, and by a letter from Paulson "in which he proposed
to substantiate all the theories in the Living Temple by extracts from her writings,"

---

1 J. H. Kellogg to E. G. White, [Dec. 1902], DF 45h, EGWRC-AU (the 75-page
letter); J. H. Kellogg to E. G. White, Dec. 31, 1902, Coll 6, Bx 1, Fld 3, MSU (the cover
letter); W. C. White to Judge Jesse Arthur, Mar. 17, 1903, LB 21, 269, EGWRC-AU.

2 Sara McEnterfer to J. H. Kellogg, July 17, 1903, LB 21-A, 224, EGWRC-AU.
Ellen White concluded that it would now be "her duty to state her views regarding this matter."¹

In the matters of Kellogg's "long letter" and the Living Temple, W. C. White first "suggested" and then "pleaded" with his mother to read the material. How much of her eventual acquiescence was due to his persuasion and how much was due to changing circumstances which brought her to a sense of timeliness is difficult to determine.

Two instances of persuasion that W. C. White came to regret involved the non-deliverance of two letters that became widely known in 1904 and 1905. The general circumstances have been given in the chronological overview, above.

Undelivered letter to Prescott, 1904

The first of these two undelivered-letter incidents occurred at the Berrien Springs meeting of the Lake Union Conference on Friday, May 20, 1904. Ellen White had encouraged Prescott that morning to proceed with a planned sermon against pantheism on Friday night. Later she thought better of this advice and penned him a short note urging him to defer the polemic against pantheism and preach on a subject that would facilitate reconciliation rather than deepen the existing divisions. The note was given to W. C. White to pass to Prescott, but White "asked and obtained" Ellen White's "consent" not to deliver the note.²

But that was not all. Ellen White, following her Friday morning visit with Prescott but evidently before seeing Willie, had also talked to David Paulson and

---

¹W. C. White to J. H. Kellogg, Dec. 15, 1903, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Sept. 23, 1903, LB 22, 218, EGWRC-AU.

²W. C. White, "The Influence of Sister White's Helpers over the Testimonies," [June 1906], 10, DF 107d, EGWRC-GC.
W. S. Sadler and had given them a copy of the letter W. C. White was to deliver to Prescott. So on Friday night when Prescott preached against pantheism, Paulson and Sadler at once noted the discrepancy between Ellen White’s instructions and Prescott’s address. When inquiries were made about what appeared to be Prescott’s blatant disregard of the testimony, it became known that the letter, a copy of which had reached Kellogg, had never been delivered to Prescott. According to Sadler’s recollection, W. C. White then "publicly stated before the conference" that he had "failed" to deliver the letter, "thinking that the purpose of the Lord would be better served by his withholding it, and allowing matters to proceed as they were" (i.e., allowing Prescott to proceed with his plans to attack pantheism).  

In the aftermath of the Berrien Springs meeting, the matter of the undelivered letter and its implications for the relationship of W. C. White to his mother were widely discussed. One of the first to comment on it was Willie’s brother, Edson. "Near the close" of the Berrien Springs meeting, Sadler talked with Edson White "concerning the unpleasantness that had arisen there," and Edson "spoke very positively against his brother Willie," alleging that Willie was "seeking to manage things" and "make them come his way, by his influence" over Ellen White. "I have since learned," Sadler reported to Ellen White, "that this was told to many others besides myself, and can you wonder at the trouble and confusion that is abroad in the land, when your own son takes such a view of the matter?" Edson later denied that Sadler had quoted him with precision but admitted the substantial accuracy of the report.  

The bitterest expressions came from J. H. Kellogg, who later cited the

1W. S. Sadler to E. G. White, Apr. 26, 1906, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

2Ibid.; W. C. White to W. S. Sadler, July 10, 1906, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
incident as evidence that W. C. White was "a schemer" who had been "manipulating things right along, making things different from what they were."\(^1\)

W. C. White’s own explanation of why he spoke against his mother’s proposed course of action was quite different from the speculations of his critics.

"Mother has no human help in the writing of the Testimonies," he maintained, but

in the copying and preparation for the press, she has several helpers. And in the decision as to when and to whom she shall send the message written, she often takes counsel. When asked why she does not deliver every message as soon as it is written, she says, "Nothing must be done untimely. I must deliver the message when it seems that it will do the most good. . . ."

Sometimes Mother is given a message with instruction to deliver it when certain things take place, and that she may know, she reads the Review, and makes inquiry of leading workers, by correspondence. Sometimes she requests them to visit her and tell her of the progress of the work.

Often times I have been commissioned to carry Testimonies to meetings to be read at the most appropriate time, or not to be read, as seemed best. Sometimes I have been given messages to leading workers, to be delivered under certain conditions. Sometimes I have been given messages with instruction not to deliver them if conditions had changed, or if it seemed that the proper time had not come. . . .

It was in harmony with these experiences, that during the [Lake] Union Conference of 1904 at Berrien Springs, I asked permission to hold a document given me to hand to Elder Prescott. To this [Ellen White’s] consent was given, and the document was not delivered to Brother Prescott at that time.\(^2\)

A major reason why White took the position he did at Berrien Springs was that he vividly remembered his mother’s experience in connection with the 1903 General Conference session. "Before the Oakland Conference of 1903," he recalled,

Mother had told me many times that she carried a heavy burden on her heart that must be relieved by her bearing a very plain testimony to the medical men who were associated together in Battle Creek and Chicago.

Twice during the [Oakland] Conference, an appointment was made and physicians and ministers gathered in Pacific Press Chapel. But some of those whom Mother hoped to see were absent, and some were present whom she

\(^1\)“Interview at Dr. J. H. Kellogg’s House, Oct. 7, 1907,” 41, DF 45k, EGWRC-AU.

\(^2\)W. C. White, “The Influence of Sister White’s Helpers over the Testimonies,” [1906], 7-10, DF 107d, EGWRC-GC; for earlier examples of W. C. White carrying messages to be delivered or not at his own discretion, see chap. 2 above, “Counsel Concerning Timing and Delivery of Letters.”

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
feared might be tempted to make a wrong use of the message she had to bear, and so she took up another subject. After the Oakland Conference, the burden returned to Mother and she mourned and mourned that she had not borne at the Oakland Conference the messages that were burdening her soul.¹

Five months after the Oakland conference, Ellen White decried Kellogg's efforts "to bind the medical institutions" under his personal control. "This selfish, underhand[ed] work I was going to bring out in Oakland, but I thought we would give the Doctor another chance," she explained. "But I have [since] been instructed to write him no letters . . . and to have no conversation with him." She charged W. C. White, who was then in Battle Creek, to "make not one concession," but to "stand stiffly for the truth." In the fall of 1903 she issued the further call to "meet the iceberg," i.e., confront the doctrinal heresy.²

In the spring of 1904, just before coming to Berrien Springs, the Whites had spent three weeks in Washington, D.C., during which the upcoming Berrien Springs meeting had doubtless been a topic of discussion. "I had heard Mother say to Daniells and Prescott in several conversations before the Berrien Springs meeting," W. C. White affirmed,

that a decided testimony must be borne by them at that meeting to unmask the false teaching which was coming into our ranks, and which leads to Pantheism. . . . I had heard them say that if this was done, some would cry out that personal attacks were being made and would stir up feeling against them [Daniells and Prescott]; and Mother replied that nevertheless the false teaching must be exposed.³

¹W. C. White, "The Influence of Sister White's Helpers over the Testimonies," 9-10. W. C. White’s report here that at the Oakland General Conference session Ellen White repeatedly changed her mind about the presentation of a message is corroborated by S. P. S. Edwards, M.D., "The Testimony Mrs. White Could Not Present," 1964, DF 967j, EGWRC-GC. Edwards was one of the physicians present at the 1903 General Conference session.

²E. G. White to W. C. White, Aug. 4, 1903; E. G. White to A. G. Daniells, Nov. 1, 1903, EGWRC-AU.

In addition to the instruction given to Daniells and Prescott, Ellen White had "repeatedly before the Berrien Springs meeting" told W. C. White that this time "thorough work must be done, and that no fear of offending men must stand in the way of fully meeting" the controverted issue. "With these experiences fresh in my mind," Willie explained, "I asked and obtained Mother's consent to let me caution Brother Prescott not to be personal in his discourses, instead of handing him the document advising him to change the plan of the meetings."\(^1\) At the time White may have feared that her longing to see J. H. Kellogg reconciled was weakening her resolve to "meet the iceberg." In any case, he wanted to spare her a repetition of the regret she had suffered following the Oakland Conference. W. C. White's explanation is both plausible and factually corroborated by external evidence. Whatever one's assessment of the outcome of his action, it cannot be demonstrated that he was exceeding the bounds of his expected role as counselor. A similar situation occurred just a year later.

Undelivered letter to Daniells, 1905

The background of the second undelivered letter was the 1905 General Conference session, briefly sketched in the chronological overview above. The settling of debts relating to Battle Creek institutions, the legal costs of reorganizing and transferring to Takoma Park, Washington, D.C., and the expenses of erecting new buildings there had created a massive deficit. To meet this need, the General Conference promoted the raising of a "Washington Fund" of $100,000 for the establishment of church headquarters in Washington. During the 1905 session the total receipts for this fund were reported to have surpassed $87,000, and the

\(^1\)Ibid., 10.
treasurer expected the full amount to be reached before the meeting ended. ¹

"Near the close" of the session, Ellen White had a dream in which she saw S. N. Haskell "telling of the opportunity" to "purchase in Nashville a good church building in an excellent location." The price was five thousand dollars, but the "people in Nashville . . . could not raise the money." As the vision continued, "the question was asked, 'Has the full amount of the Washington Fund been raised?'

The answer was, 'Yes, it has, and several thousand dollars overflow has come in.'"

After a "prayer and praise service" had been held, she saw "a piece of paper" handed to Haskell.

Unfolding it he read, "This is to signify that we deem it to be the wise and Christian part to act toward our brethren in Nashville to place the first five thousand dollars surplus that has come to Washington, in the hands of those faithful servants of God, that they may secure the house of worship in Nashville, which they greatly need."

After seeing this representation, I awoke, and I fully expected that the matter would take place as it had been represented to me.²

Soon after this, Haskell was telling her of the financial difficulties they were facing in the "Southern work," and she replied, "Have faith in God. You will carry from this meeting the five thousand dollars needed for the purchase of the church."³

Two things are evident so far. First, the vision had predicted that Nashville would receive the first five thousand dollars of the surplus after the goal had been reached. Second, in Ellen White's certainty that the vision would be fulfilled and in her sympathy for the work of Haskell she had promised him that he would "carry from this meeting the five thousand dollars." She had made similar

¹J. S. Washburn, "Washington, D.C.,” RH, June 1, 1905, 32.

²E. G. White to I. H. Evans and J. S. Washburn, July 19, 1905, Coll 6, Bx 3, Fl 1, MSU.

³Ibid.
assurances to G. I. Butler, president of the Southern Union.¹

Confidently she "wrote a few lines to Elder Daniells suggesting that this be done. But Willie did not see that the matter could be carried through thus, because Elder Daniells and others were at this time very much discouraged in regard to the condition of things in Battle Creek. So I told him that he need not deliver the note," she wrote later.²

Apparently Ellen White herself did not initially interpret the vision as a direct command to send money to Nashville immediately. From the prediction of an overflow, however, she inferred the possibility of sending help to the South in anticipation of the overflow, rather than waiting till the funds were actually in hand. Perhaps her note to Daniells was as much motivated by her sympathy for Haskell as it was directly commanded by the vision. If this interpretation is correct, it could explain why she so readily consented for Willie to hold the note. She had made promises to Haskell and Butler on the assumption that it would make little difference to the General Conference whether the five thousand dollars was sent immediately or a few weeks later. When W. C. White, speaking for Daniells, objected, she acceded to their wishes. As weeks passed, however, and she "could not rest" regarding this matter, she concluded that she must respond to the need immediately and wrote a pair of letters to the General Conference treasurer and assistant

¹W. C. White, "The $5000 Given Nashville for the New Church: Some Facts Regarding Sister White's Request that $5000 of the Overflow of the Washington Fund Be Sent to Nashville," [1905], DF 107d, EGWRC-GC.

²E. G. White to I. H. Evans and J. S. Washburn, July 19, 1905, Coll 6, Bx 3, Fld 1, MSU, emphasis added; cf. E. G. White to A. G. Daniells, May 31, 1905 [marked "not sent"], EGWRC-GC.
treasurer and to the General Conference Committee, calling for an immediate remittance to Nashville.1

Both these letters found their way into the files of J. H. Kellogg, who shared their contents with his colleagues internationally. Ellen White had plainly stated W. C. White’s action in the matter and by early fall the incident was known around the world. Daniells encountered the story in England, where “the Doctors Richards” in Leicester showed him a letter they had “just received” from Kellogg giving the doctor’s version of the incident. Kellogg alleged that the General Conference had “ruthlessly” broken their “solemn pledges to the South,” but that “Sister White was getting hold of the situation and beginning to bring [the General Conference leaders] to time.” Kellogg had also “enclosed copies of the Testimonies sent to the General Conference Committee and to Elders Evans and Washburn regarding funds for the South. These were to show that the hammer had begun to strike in the right place, and that we would yet go under as a result of its blows.”2

A. T. Jones insisted that W. C. White’s action in objecting to the letter proved he had no “real loyalty to the Testimonies.” “Is it true,” Jones asked,

that “Willie” is the supreme source of knowledge and understanding in the work of the Lord— even above and against the instruction of the Lord? Or did “Willie” believe a particle in that instruction’s coming from the Lord? If it was from the Lord, then how much loyalty to the Testimonies had “Willie” when he set it aside?3

For his part, W. C. White claimed that in the rush of business at the close of the session, Ellen White had not told him that her request was based on a vision.

1 E. G. White to I. H. Evans and J. S. Washburn, July 19, 1905; E. G. White to General Conference Committee, July 20, 1905, Coll 6, Bx 3, Fld 1, MSU.

2 A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, Oct. 3, 1905, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC; cf. George Thomason to J. H. Kellogg, Oct. 11, 1905, Coll 6, Bx 3, Fld 4, MSU.

3 A. T. Jones to A. G. Daniells, Jan. 26, 1906, Coll 6, Bx 3, Fld 8, MSU.
This agrees with her own account that in the first note she had merely "suggest[ed]" that the money be sent. Knowing the financial burdens of the General Conference at that time, he had felt it better to wait until the money was in hand to make an appropriation to the Southern field, and she had consented to this reasoning. The fact that she readily consented to his reasoning, without telling him of the vision, supports the idea that she may have initially regarded the dream more as a prediction than a command.

Not until they had returned to California did W. C. White learn that her suggestion had been based on a vision. "When Mother began to write about the matter here in California, I was greatly surprised," he wrote to Prescott in August. "At first I could not understand it, but as she continued to write, the matter cleared up, and I am prepared to stand firmly with you and share the responsibility of doing what we are bidden to do, that is, to send the first $5000 overflow to Nashville."2

The responses from W. C. White's critics were predictably similar to their reactions to the undelivered letter of 1904. Kellogg brought the matter up again in his famous 1907 interview. "She had a vision in the night," went Kellogg's version, and told Brother Haskell he would carry $5000 back with him; so he expected to have the money, and she wrote out the letter and sent it to Elder Daniells and Will White held that up, did not let Elder Daniells have it. And I received a letter, a copy of a letter in which she wrote that to Elder Evans and instructed them that they must go ahead and carry it out, and it explained the whole thing. That shows Will's manipulation right straight along.3

The point that Kellogg either overlooked or chose to ignore was that in

1W. C. White, "The $5000 Given Nashville for the New Church: Some Facts Regarding Sister White's Request that $5000 of the Overflow of the Washington Fund Be Sent to Nashville," [1905], DF 107d, EGWRC-GC.


3"Interview at Dr. J. H. Kellogg's House, Oct. 7, 1907," 42, DF 45k, EGWRC-AU.
both these instances of withheld letters W. C. White both asked for and received Ellen White’s permission for the course of action he followed. He was completely open with her regarding his rationale and intentions as well as his actual actions. Whatever his mistakes, there was neither deception nor deliberate disregard of her wishes, as Jones and Kellogg tried to establish.

Furthermore, in both instances, W. C. White was acting within the ordinary scope of the responsibilities given him by Ellen White. As early as 1882 she had taken W. C. White into her confidence regarding decisions as to when a written testimony should be delivered.1 This continued in the present period as well. "Last Friday I was stirred strongly to write out some things," she informed Willie in September 1903. "I had this manuscript copied, thinking that I must send out a message of warning at once; but afterward the Lord signified to me, Lay it aside for future use. If men do not evidence that they have changed, you [E. G. White] will be prepared to give instruction in regard to their cases."2

In 1893 she had delivered some "personal testimonies" that she "had written out one year before, but could not feel clear to send." She then spent three hours with one individual, "reading" to him the testimony that she "had held so long." When she was through reading it he said, "'Sister White, had you sent that to me I would not have received it, but the Lord has moved upon you to move discreetly. For three nights past I dreamed that the Lord had shown my case to Sister White, and [that] she had a message for me.'"3

---

1 See chap. 2 above, "Counsel Concerning Timing and Delivery of Letters."
2 E. G. White to W. C. White, Sept. 6, 1903, EGWRC-AU.
3 See pp. 145-49, above; E. G. White to Brother and Sister Maxson, Mar. 20, 1893, EGWRC-GC.
"It requires much wisdom and sound judgment, quickened by the Spirit of God," she believed,

to know the proper time and manner to present the instruction that has been given. When the minds of persons reproved are under a strong deception, they naturally resist the testimony; and having taken an attitude of resistance, it is difficult for them afterward to acknowledge that they have been wrong. . . .

Some portions of that which I write are sent out immediately to meet the present necessities of the work. Other portions are held until the development of circumstances makes it evident to me that the time has come for their use.\(^1\)

The determination as to when was "the proper time" was one in which she had repeatedly for years invited W. C. White's participation. To some persons, however, W. C. White's "counsel" looked like manipulation.

Charges of Manipulation

It was noted above that the undelivered letters were cited by various persons as examples of W. C. White's "manipulation" of his mother. A third incident mentioned as an example of "manipulation" took place at the October 19, 1902, Elmshaven "council meeting" regarding Edson White and the Southern Publishing Association. Three years after this meeting occurred, it was used by Kellogg and his colleagues as evidence of "how W. C. White, A. G. Daniells, and their associates wire-pulled and confused his Mother to get her support."\(^2\)

The Elmshaven council, 1902

The background to the meeting in question was the successful leadership of J. Edson White in developing denominational work in the South. Working initially from his steamboat, the Morning Star, he pioneered educational work among Blacks and founded the Southern Missionary Society in 1898, three years before the

\(^1\)E. G. White to [W. S.] Sadler, July 8, 1906, EGWRC-AU, emphasis added.

\(^2\)A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, Oct. 12, 1905, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
organization of the Southern Union Conference. J. E. White at first produced evangelistic books and periodicals from a printshop on board the Morning Star, but in 1900 he purchased land in Nashville, Tennessee, for a permanent publishing house. This plant, founded and owned by J. E. White, was incorporated in 1901 as a denominational institution, the Southern Publishing Association, with J. E. White as president. About the same time, the Review and Herald branch office in Atlanta, Georgia, was transferred to the ownership of the Southern Publishing Association.¹

The beginnings of the Southern Publishing Association were controversial for several reasons. Some saw no need for a third publishing house in North America. Others had no confidence in a publishing house led by J. E. White. Edson's evangelistic and publishing work, though officially approved by the General Conference, was conducted semi-independently of conference leadership and his fund-raising appeals were seen by some conference leaders as draining finances from the "regular channels."²

Ellen White favored both the formation of the Southern Publishing Association and the transfer of the Atlanta branch of the Review and Herald to its control. However, as Arthur White explains, "under Edson White's unsteady financial hand, and with the use of worn-out equipment, losses mounted." By the summer of 1902, these losses became great enough to attract the attention of A. G. Daniells, whose no-debt policy had just brought him into a monumental conflict with J. H. Kellogg. Ellen White had strongly encouraged Daniells in his determination


not to repeat the mistakes of the 1890s, when O. A. Olsen, yielding to the wishes of Kellogg and others, allowed the accumulation of debt to near-catastrophic levels.¹

A further element in the background of the interview was that a Nashville newspaper published a sensationalized article about the Dixie Pure Food Company (recently started by W. O. Palmer, a close associate of Edson White) and forecast that "half a million dollars" would be expended in establishing the business. When this came to the attention of Ellen White in Elmshaven and denominational leaders in Battle Creek, all seem to have accepted it as accurate reporting. Edson later repudiated the story as journalism "of the yellow order"--the product of the reporter's imagination. Edson further declared that he had personally "never put a dollar into the Dixie Food Company"--it was strictly Palmer's enterprise. Nevertheless, the scandal sheet was read and believed both in Battle Creek and in California.²

The burden of denominational debt and what to do about it was the topic of the "council meeting" held at Elmshaven on October 19, 1902. Present were Ellen White, A. G. Daniells, E. R. Palmer (then secretary of the General Conference and the leading opponent of the Southern Publishing Association³), W. T. Knox (president of the Pacific Union), A. T. Jones (president of the


³See W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Nov. 3, 1902, RG 9, A. G. Daniells Fld 3, GCAr; J. E. White to E. G. White, Oct. 14, Nov. 14, 1902, WCWF, EGWRC-GC.
California Conference), J. O. Corliss (a minister in California), W. C. White, and
Clarence Crisler (Ellen White's stenographer). The first part of the discussion
concerned Daniells's response to Kellogg's desire to continue expanding the medical
work "on borrowed capital." The remainder of the interview was devoted to
another situation of indebtedness—that of the Southern Publishing Association in
Nashville.¹

"I know very well," asserted Daniells, that Edson White and his associates
"had instruction from you [Ellen White] that they were not to go into debt; that they
were not to [expand] any faster than they were able to pay their way, and that when
they would come to a place where they could not pay their way, they should stop
until they received means with which to continue their work." Daniells estimated,
however, that contrary to this counsel the Southern Publishing Association was now
some $25,000 in debt. "I feel that we must take hold of this thing, and stop it, and
put it right, and place the institution in a position where it will not continue to lose
in its operation."²

Ellen White observed that if Edson and his colleagues had limited their
expenditures to what they could pay cash for, they would not have built such a large
building and the entire situation "would have been a great deal better than it is at
present." Daniells continued: "I think that it can be arranged so that they can meet
expenses"; to which she replied, "If it cannot be, it had better be closed."³

123, 1902, 1-7, 8-17, EGWRC-AU.

²Ibid., 9.

³Ibid.
A bit later in the conversation W. C. White summarized the concerns of Daniells and his colleagues.

The question with us is, Shall we wait another period of time for things to evolve down there? or has the time come for the General Conference and the Southern Union Conference men to get together, and, in prayerful, thoughtful counsel, to readjust those matters, and put the best man that they can find, in charge of the printing house, and put things on an actual paying basis, . . . and bring the business where it will not be continually going into debt? Has the time come for this action? 1

"It has," replied Ellen White,

and I say go ahead. God's cause must not be left to reproach, no matter who is made sore by arranging matters on a right basis. Edson should give himself to the ministry and to writing, and leave alone the things that he has been forbidden by the Lord to do. Finance is not his forte at all.

I want the brethren to feel free to take hold of this matter. I do not want them to make any reference to me. I want them to act just as they would act if my son was not there. . . .

I must always stand on the right side of every question. I do not want any one to feel that I am sustaining Edson in a wrong. He has felt that it is terrible for me to write to him in the straight way that I have written. I have presented things to him just as they are presented to me. 2

Questions were also raised about the independent structure and treasury of the Southern Missionary Society, also headed by Edson, and of his independent fund-raising activities for these enterprises.

QUESTION [speaker not identified]: Would you think it best for Edson to insist on the future existence of the Southern Missionary Society as an independent organization?

Mrs. E. G. White: I cannot give countenance to Edson's operating independently, because I know that he is not a close financier.

QUESTION [speaker not identified]: Is it God's will for him to carry the burden of an independent Society and an independent work within the Southern Union Conference, and to do things and to carry burdens that the Union Conference does not feel free to do and to carry; and also to appeal for means in ways that the Union Conference can not approve?

Mrs. E. G. White: No. 3

---

1Ibid., 11-12.
2Ibid., 12-13.
3Ibid., 15.
Following the council, Daniells left for Battle Creek, believing that he had a clear mandate to "clean house" at the Southern Publishing Association. That night, however, Ellen White had a vision in which she saw a physician preparing to amputate human limbs "immediately." One "who seemed to have authority" interrupted the proceedings with the command, "Never amputate a limb until everything possible has been done to restore it." She was shown that she had "taken a wrong position" regarding Edson and the Southern Publishing Association. "For three nights in succession," she wrote,

I was instructed by the Lord that I had spoken unadvisedly; that matters had not been correctly represented to me, some of the particulars not being given; and that I should not consent, merely because Edson White is my son, to allow him to be condemned, or to allow his God-given work to be hindered and wronged.1

Ellen White here admitted that she had given counsel based on incomplete information. In subsequent visions, however, she was shown that if the critics of the Southern Publishing Association "had passed through the same experience that the brethren in Nashville have, not one of them would have accomplished as much as the workers there have. They would have given up discouraged." She was shown that the spirit of criticism had magnified some small mistakes all out of proportion to their importance. Consequently she resolved to "publish in book form what I have written in regard to the work in the Southern field. . . . When this book is out, I shall know that I have done my part to undeceive minds." The book she contemplated was never published as a separate monograph, but sections on the Southern work were included in Testimonies, volumes 7 and 9.2

---


Meanwhile, Edson in Tennessee had heard that following the fall council in Battle Creek, members of the General Conference committee planned to visit Nashville and make some decisions about the Southern Publishing Association. "I made up my mind," he wrote to Willie, "that I must know more than I did about the situation and my duty before I could be ready for such a meeting." Consequently he arrived at Elmshaven, three weeks after the crucial interview, to spend a week, November 11 through 18, with his mother.¹

Edson's coming apparently led Ellen White to again review some of the materials she had written about the work in the South, and she was overwhelmed by a fresh wave of regret regarding the interview. On November 13 she sent a telegram and a letter to Willie, who was now in Battle Creek for the financial council on the no-debt policy. She told him that she had been "so burdened" with remorse about the interview and the position she had taken that she had "cried over the matter like a child."

According to Edson's account, not till Friday, November 14, did he "come across a report of the interview" of three weeks earlier, of which he had known nothing till he saw the document. "The telegram sent you by mother yesterday was not called out by a word from me," he protested to Willie,

for I did not know about the interview. But I will say that when mother began to look over her past writings, prepared during the past few weeks, she began to feel a terrible burden come upon her. Sarah [sic, Sara McEnterfer] came into her room yesterday morning and mother cried like a child, for she felt such a burden of perplexity over the situation. I did not go into her room until she got off that telegram to you, and not until she had done the writing that she sent in that mail. I have been very careful here, for I WILL NOT in any way influence her, or endeavor to do so, notwithstanding what others have done in

---

¹E. G. White to W. C. White, Nov. [13], (Letter 264, 1902), Nov. 21, 1902, EGWRC-AU.
that line, or have attempted to do. I feel that God has matters under contemplation, and will not allow injustice to be done, or an injury to the work.¹

In a subsequent letter to Willie, his mother exclaimed, "Oh, I hope that the burden I have carried will cease soon." She urged him to retrieve the stenographic report of the October 19 interview that Clarence Crisler had sent to Daniells. "I want that report of the conversation here to be placed in your hand," she insisted, "for I am instructed to recall it, for it was not the will of the Lord that I should stand in any such position. Elder Daniells has a copy and I must have it; please to do this errand for me." He may have been successful in retrieving the original document, for the type size and style of the copy eventually preserved in Daniells's files is unlike the type used in the Elmshaven office but appears to be a carbon copy of the one in Kellogg's files, which Kellogg received three years later from Edson.²

The October 19, 1902, interview was one occasion when Ellen White admitted being influenced, and she was mortified when subsequent visions, as well as "figures and statements" provided by Edson, convinced her she had erred.³

Palmer, however, rejected the explanation that she had initially been wrong and had been corrected by visions from God. He had been foremost in pushing for the closure of the Southern Publishing Association⁴ and thought her original

1. J. E. White to W. C. White, Nov. 14, 1902, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.


4. J. E. White to E. G. White, Oct. 14, Nov. 14, 1902, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
position had been the right one. Her later reversal in support of Edson was evidence in Palmer’s eyes of what he had believed "for a long time"—that she simply had "a mother’s love for her boys, and to a great degree has done as other mothers do in considering questions pertaining to them."  

How one interprets the evidence will obviously be determined largely by one’s presuppositions. A view that accords with the evidence of her integrity and of the supernatural in her experience suggests that Ellen White was indeed very conscious of her "mother’s love" and determined to resist the natural bias it represented. Her zeal to be impartial with Edson, combined with the one-sided information she received from Palmer and Daniells, led her to a serious error in judgment. This experience also gives an example of her course of action when she became conscious of such a mistake. She was sorry, acknowledged her mistake, and set about to correct it as far as possible.

In the immediate aftermath of the experience, Edson was too relieved to be angry, but three years later, in the summer of 1905, he became furious. Probably the 1905 undelivered letter, which involved the delay of a large appropriation to the Southern field, had touched a sore point with him. During a trip to Battle Creek in August he freely indicted W. C. White for "manipulation" of Ellen White, citing especially the 1902 incident. However, the timing of the blast and the use Kellogg made of it suggest that Edson spoke of the 1905 incident also, perhaps even furnishing Kellogg the supporting documents which he sent to other physicians in September.

1 E. R. Palmer to A. G. Daniells, Jan. 16, 1903, RG 11, 1903, E. R. Palmer Fld, GCAr.

When Edson's "manipulation" charges came to Willie's ears, Willie attempted to show his brother how the affair appeared from his side. Because the letter reveals much about how W. C. White saw himself in relation to his mother, it is quoted at some length. "For a long time I have longed to have a good heart-to-heart talk with you," he began,

about my work as Mother's helper. It is a work that is attended by very many blessings and privileges. . . . There are also grave responsibilities connected with this work, and burdens, perplexities, and trials.

My connection with this work is not of my own seeking or choosing. If I were to follow my preferences, I should be now connected with some large publishing house, or school. . . .

When we went to Australia, I carried for years lines of work that gave me but little time to help about Mother's work; and I should have continued to give my principal attention to institutional work, had it not been for a distinct and repeated call to free myself from other work . . . that I might give myself to her work. . . .

In this service, I have tried to do just what Mother has instructed me to do, and nothing more. I realize that, in many respects, the service has been very poor; for I am slow, and hesitating. But I have tried to be honest, loyal, and true. I have pleaded with God for largeness of heart, that I might understand and do His will.

I have heard many criticisms and accusations from those who have been often counseled and reproved by the Testimonies regarding the medical work. At first, I tried to correct mistakes and misunderstandings. But when I found that the warfare was a wilful effort to discredit the Testimonies, I stopped protesting, and tried to close my ears to the reports of misrepresentations and cruel insinuations.

Recently, I am hearing of many criticisms from you regarding the integrity of my work, and I know it is my duty to protest, not for my own sake so much as for the sake of the influence that such criticisms may have upon the work that Mother is given to do.1

Without revealing the source of his information, W. C. White related what he had learned about Edson's recent trip to Battle Creek and the accusations that had

Thomason to J. H. Kellogg, Oct. 11, 1905, Coll 6, Bx 3, Fld 4; E. G. White to I. H. Evans and J. S. Washburn, July 19, 1905; E. G. White to General Conference Committee, July 20, 1905, Coll 6, Bx 3, Fld 1, MSU.

1W. C. White to J. E. White, Oct. 24, 1905, LB 29, 331-39, EGWRC-AU.
been made about the October 19, 1902, interview. "Now, Edson," Willie continued,

as regards the document giving the report of our interview with Mother three years ago about the Southern Missionary Society, . . . you and I know what led up to it. . . . We all knew that the difficulties had to be met in some way, and we hoped that Mother had some counsel for us, that would help us to know how to meet them in the right way.

For one, I was surprised at her answers to the questions asked.

I, and those who were with me, know that we did not "wire-pull" nor try to deceive Mother, or manipulate her opinions.

Mother, in answer to our questions, made an honest statement of her views. Later, the Lord gave her a view of the case that corrected her opinions, and led her to correct her statements. Nathan and David had a similar experience to this, when David proposed to build the temple, and Nathan approved. . . .

For one, I accepted Mother's corrected views and statements, and have endeavored to work in harmony with them. . . . Why should you cherish the memory of this, and bring it out again and again, as you have done in your conversations and correspondence with me? I have repeatedly asked for your forgiveness for any harm that I unwittingly did you in that matter, and I have shown by my works that I heeded Mother's counsel.1

In closing, Willie explained what he considered to be the motivation behind the manipulation charges coming out of Battle Creek.

I do not accuse you [Edson] of saying the things at Battle Creek which are reported. It may be that men have borne false witness of you, and it may be that a word dropped has been exaggerated and magnified and colored according to the fancy of him who repeated it. But I am sure that you ought to know the reports, and be cautious about placing stumbling-blocks in the way of those who desire to believe, and are perplexed by conflicting reports.

During the past summer, there have been some wonderful victories gained for the unity of our work, in Colorado, and at the College View Council. It was Mother's Testimonies in each case that saved the situation.

But in each case the men whose way was crossed, whose plans for division and disintegration were condemned, in their desire for self-vindication, declared that either Sister White had been misinformed, or that that she did not write what was read as her Testimony.

The scripture says that "a house divided against itself can not stand." But there are men among our people who for years have been working for a divided house. They are determined to have it, that they, as head of one of the divisions, may strive for the supremacy.

You know, Edson, that the leader of the medical work in Battle Creek has determined that it shall be chief. You know that he has fought bitterly every

1Ibid.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
president of the General Conference that has held office since he came into prominence. In Father's day he began to gather stones to stone him to death. And he has been gathering stones ever since, to use against those who oppose him. He has a great heap gathered to use against Mother, if occasion requires.

I sincerely hope that the time will never come when you or I shall take our grievances and misunderstandings to Battle Creek, and leave them where Dr. Kellogg can gather them up and add them to the pile he has gathered to be used in breaking the force of Mother's Testimonies.¹

Ellen White's response was not so restrained. "What kind of a move was it that you made in rushing to Battle Creek and saying to those there that W. C. White, your own brother, for whom you should have respect, manipulated my writings?" she began. "This is just what they needed to use in their councils to confirm them in their position that the testimonies the Lord gives your mother are no longer reliable.²

"I shall have to speak," she declared. "I cannot and will not suffer reproach to come upon the cause of God and my work that God has given me to do, by your saying he manipulates my writings. It is falsehood—but what a charge is this! Not one soul manipulates my writings." Then she described Willie's actual role of recommendation and persuasion—in a context that Edson had little thought of.

He, W. C. White, has wished me to change a word that expressed the action of ministers so that it would not be too strong, so those who had judgment would not handle such men severely, and hurt them, because that is so easy to do—to exercise no mercy but to be severe and overbearing—if they have an opportunity to show their authority. He has kept me from writing to you [Edson] the burden of my soul lest some one would hear of it and make it an excuse to hurt you.³

Thus she approved Willie's expression of opinions to her, even about the wording of a testimony. She also appreciated his jogging her memory about issues on which

¹Ibid.

²E. G. White to J. E. White, [late 1905], Letter 391, 1906, EGWRC-AU.

³Ibid.
she had expressed herself to him. But this, too, could look like manipulation.

Apparent manipulation

Another aspect of W. C. White's work as counselor which occasionally gave rise to suspicions of "manipulation" was the fact that as Ellen White grew older she sometimes needed him to refresh her memory about matters she had earlier spoken to him about.

The most notable illustration of this "reminding" was the early morning interview at the Indianapolis meeting in 1901, explained at length in the chronological overview, above. Either because the instances of such prompting were becoming more frequent and obvious as she reached her seventy-eighth year or, perhaps, because the manipulation charges were becoming so widespread, W. C. White felt the need in the last two months of 1905 to offer public explanations.

"Some have wondered why it is," Willie explained,

that sometimes when Sister White is speaking, toward the close of her remarks she will turn to me and say, 'Have I covered the points, Willie?' and from this they have drawn the conclusion that I have been prompting Mother regarding what she shall say in meeting.

It often happens that Mother tells us a few days, or a few hours before the meeting the line of thought which she wishes to present, and she sometimes asks me to remind her if any essential point is left out. Then in closing her remarks she feels anxious to know if any essential features of what she intended to present have been overlooked.1

Such occurrences could appear to be cases of W. C. White dictating policy or plans to Ellen White. To the contrary, both of them maintained that he was only reminding her of her own views of which she had earlier informed him.

In summarizing W. C. White's work as counselor to his mother, there is abundant evidence that he freely and often persuasively expressed his views to his

mother. There is, however, no evidence of manipulation in the sense of attempting through deception or dishonesty to influence or control her thinking. He did not claim to be free from mistakes, but when he realized he had erred he acknowledged it and sought to correct it as far as possible. His consistent integrity was a major reason why his mother so completely trusted him as her spokesman and representative. The next section considers his role as interpreter of his mother’s prophetic inspiration.

W. C. White as Interpreter of Ellen White’s Prophetic Inspiration

The remaining two sections of the present chapter concern W. C. White’s role as interpreter of his mother’s inspiration and of her authority in theology and history. These sections are unique within the present study in that they deal with issues involved in W. C. White’s transition from his relationship with his mother during her life to his relation to her writings after her death. As the one commissioned to "take charge" of his mother’s writings after her death, White would become the leading interpreter of her writings during the years from her death in 1915 until his death in 1937. To trace the development of that responsibility after 1915 is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, his work as her interpreter in later years was not an innovation but the continuation and extension of a function he had earlier practiced with her approval and under her general supervision.

For three decades W. C. White functioned as a conduit between his mother and other individuals and groups. After her death, he would become, in a sense, a conduit for the communication and exposition of her counsels and principles to all who sought contextual and explanatory insights regarding her writings. This would be an essential part of his work as trustee. In view of the importance of his role as
her interpreter after her death, and in view of the fact that this role was the extension of his responsibilities in the present period, the investigation of W. C. White's relationship to his mother between 1900 and 1915 would not be complete without an examination of his role as her interpreter.

Such an examination requires, in some places, presentations that are more theologically detailed than those that have characterized most of the present study. The presentation of contextual events and issues occasionally necessitates somewhat extended treatment, but this is justified by the illumination these events give to W. C. White's statements on his mother's inspiration and authority.

The issue to be addressed under the present heading is W. C. White's understanding of his mother's inspiration. He saw her prophetic gift as a broader phenomenon than merely the receiving and reporting of visions. He recognized as inspired testimonies many writings that were not directly based on visionary revelations. He appears to have held what might be called a holistic view of her inspiration, embracing her whole prophetic calling. He did not see her prophetic gift as an on again, off again, phenomenon by which one letter might be considered inspired and another, written perhaps on the same day, might be considered less inspired or uninspired.

Some of his most significant statements on inspiration were made in the aftermath of the 1913 autumn council. Questions very similar to those raised by Kellogg's colleagues in the "pamphlet wars" of 1906 and 1907 were argued by union presidents at the 1913 autumn council.

No "Spurious" Testimonies: The 1913 Autumn Council

As noted in the chronological overview, three of the meetings of the 1913
autumn council were dominated by heated arguments over the question of whether all of Ellen White's testimonies were equally inspired. One union conference president in attendance, S. E. Wight, afterward claimed that W. C. White had admitted that three "supposed testimonies" under discussion were "not testimonies at all," but were "spurious," or "non-authentic."\(^1\)

These allegations, the administrative problems that stood behind them, and the discussion that followed, form the background of W. C. White's comments about his mother's inspiration. The placing of these factors in their historical context helps to clarify the implications of W. C. White's statements on his mother's inspiration.

While setting the context for these conclusions requires somewhat extended treatment, the narrative contributes significant further insights into the manipulation question and illuminates W. C. White's relationships with some of his contemporaries. These broader contributions to the understanding of W. C. White seem to justify the extensive treatment of the issues raised at the 1913 council.

The three documents said to have been acknowledged as "spurious" were an Ellen White letter to G. F. Watson on tithing, an Ellen White letter to W. J. Fitzgerald regarding the Philadelphia Sanitarium, and an article on religious liberty by W. A. Colcord which had been mistakenly attributed to Ellen White. The Colcord article was cited in the fevered atmosphere of the 1913 council as evidence that the Elmshaven staff was careless in handling its file documents.\(^2\) Although

---

\(^1\)W. C. White, Diary, Oct. 25, 27, 1913; [C. P. Bollman], "Notes of a Council Held at the Union Conference Office, Nashville, Dec. 1, 1913"; E. A. Sutherland to W. C. White, Dec. 3, 1914; P. T. Magan to W. C. White, Dec. 31, 1913, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

\(^2\)W. A. Colcord], "Undated MS. 28," pp. 10-11 in "Our Attitude Toward Sunday Laws: Selections from the Testimonies," DF 132; W. A. Colcord to Vesta J. Farnsworth,
this was a source of embarrassment, the Colcord article did not generate the degree of controversy produced by the letters to Fitzgerald and Watson. A brief discussion of the latter two documents prepares the way for the presentation of some of W. C. White's perspectives on his mother's inspiration.

The Fitzgerald letter

The Fitzgerald letter was written by Ellen White to W. J. Fitzgerald, then president of the East Pennsylvania Conference, regarding the Philadelphia Sanitarium. Founded under the auspices of the International Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association in 1901, the Philadelphia Sanitarium was transferred to the ownership of the East Pennsylvania Conference in July 1904. In March 1905, it was moved to newer quarters at an investment cost of "nearly fifty thousand dollars." In May 1905, Fitzgerald appealed to Ellen White for counsel regarding the sanitarium's financial situation. He explained that the institution was earning enough to pay expenses but not enough to repay its indebtedness. When J. H. Kellogg offered to help by visiting once a month and doing surgery free of charge, the resident physician, H. B. Knapp, had "proposed to assume the obligation and management of the institution, relieving the conference." Fitzgerald asked Ellen White, then in Washington, D.C., attending the 1905 General Conference, for counsel whether the conference should continue to manage the institution or whether they should "turn the institution over to Dr. Knapp, who would doubtless then work to a considerable extent under the direction of Dr. Kellogg."¹

Beginning the journey home from the conference, Ellen White took a few minutes in the Atlanta train station to pen a reply to Fitzgerald. "I wish to say to you, my brother," she began, "that we cannot encourage you to look to the General Conference to take the responsibility of paying the debts of the sanitariums that are being established. Nevertheless, I write to you . . . to go right forward, and do your best, having courage that the Lord will surely open ways before you." On the one hand, she suggested an aggressive fund-raising program and urged Fitzgerald to enlist "every member of the church" in the sale of Ministry of Healing (which she had donated to the denomination for relieving the indebtedness of medical institutions). On the other hand, she cautioned him not to obligate the sanitarium to Kellogg by accepting his services free of charge. "Do not allow him to perform the operations unless he will allow you to settle with him for his labor, and will give you a receipt in full. I know what I am saying."¹

Either the fund-raising was inadequate for the needs, or the sanitarium generally failed to prosper, because by 1911 the General Conference had been called on to "put $21,000 into" the Philadelphia Sanitarium, "to save terrible distress."

W. A. Spicer in 1911 blamed this outcome on the Pennsylvania leadership's placing too much faith in Ellen White's "cheery words" and not enough faith in the cautions from the General Conference. "Evidently feeling that every word from Sister White was a command, they took her cheery phrase to go forward, regardless of their fears, and launched on the way to certain disaster," Spicer said. This opinion would be repeated by delegates at the 1913 council.²

¹E. G. White to W. J. Fitzgerald, June 8, 1905, EGWRC-GC.

²W. A. Spicer to Elders A. G. Daniells, W. T. Knox, and W. C. White, Dec. 26, 1911, RG 21, Bk 57. 453-63, GCAr; W. C. White to S. E. Wight, Dec. 24, 1913, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
Closer examination of the situation, however, shows that Spicer had misplaced Ellen White's letter chronologically, leading to a misinterpretation of it. "The brethren in Pennsylvania," according to Spicer's interpretation, "felt that a letter written by Sister White in the Atlanta railway station, giving them some cheery words, fully authorized them to go on with their enterprise at a time when they could have withdrawn for two thousand dollars." This was not true in 1905. It was in 1904 that they could have withdrawn for $2,511.84. Following a fact-finding visit on February 9, 1904, W. C. White had reported to the conference that the "International [Medical Missionary and Benevolent] Association was ready to relinquish its control, when its investment was paid." The accompanying financial statement gave the institution's net worth as $2,511.84. The offer was accepted and the title transferred from the IMMBA to the East Pennsylvania Conference in 1904. It was a year later, in the spring of 1905, that the two newer buildings were purchased at an investment of some $50,000, a transaction that had already been completed when Fitzgerald wrote his letter of inquiry to Ellen White.1

These facts are confirmed by an analysis of the Fitzgerald correspondence. Comparing Fitzgerald's letters with Ellen White's reply from Atlanta, it is clear that Fitzgerald was not asking for advice on the purchase of the property. The property had already been purchased. He was asking whether or not the conference should relieve itself of the financial burden by selling the sanitarium to Dr. Knapp to operate in cooperation with Kellogg. Regarding the $50,000 investment, Ellen White implicitly recognized that there might be reason for regret. However, since the purchase had already been finalized, there was nothing to be gained by brooding over it. "In the place of mourning because you have secured facilities to do the

1W. C. White, "The Philadelphia Sanitarium," [1904], DF 135e, EGWRC-GC.
work you desire to do, praise God that you have these advantages." In view of the indebtedness they had incurred, she urged the adoption of the most aggressive fund-raising program they could manage. It was not in the context of purchasing the property, but concerning the raising of money to remove the indebtedness that she had encouraged the Pennsylvania members to "stand up manfully as one all through the ranks, and move forward by faith."  

Some of the delegates at the 1913 council argued that "unwise counsel" from Ellen White to "purchase" the $50,000 property was received as a "revelation direct from heaven," but that when Ellen White actually visited the property she said that "it was not a fit place for a sanitarium." Confronted with this dilemma, W. C. White suggested off the cuff that perhaps it was like the answer of the biblical prophet Nathan when David proposed building the temple. Nathan told David to go ahead, but was later shown he had been wrong. Certain ones present seized on that conclusion and labeled the letter from the Atlanta railway station "not a testimony." However, when White reexamined the documentary evidence, he retracted this interpretation. "It was ignorance of the facts in that case that led me to that conclusion," he wrote to S. E. Wight afterward.

Accepting the premises as presented, I gave a logical answer. But logic based upon a faulty premise is very weak. If you wish it, I can send you a copy of the Fitzgerald letter and Mother's answer, and you will see that the principal question raised in the Fitzgerald letter, was not over the Girard Street property, but it was the question of turning over the medical work in Pennsylvania to Dr. Kellogg and his associates.  

The Fitzgerald letter is an example of a phenomenon which occurred repeatedly in the heated emotional discussions of the 1913 autumn council. Facts

---

1E. G. White to W. J. Fitzgerald, June 8, 1905, EGWRC-GC.

2W. C. White to S. E. Wight, Dec. 24, 1913, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
which were almost right were pressed to conclusions which were wholly wrong. When all the facts became known, through a careful reading of the documents involved, there was no ground for considering Ellen White’s letter to Fitzgerald as the cause of the problems at the Philadelphia Sanitarium.

During the debate, however, the council did not have the documentary evidence immediately at hand. Believing that the financial debacle at the Philadelphia Sanitarium was directly traceable to Ellen White’s counsel, several concluded that her letter to Fitzgerald was a "spurious" testimony. On the contrary, W. C. White refused to "classify" it as other than a fully genuine testimony, regardless of the difficulties that might be associated with it. The criticism of the Fitzgerald letter was small, however, compared to the furor over the third document questioned at the council, the Watson letter on tithing.  

The Watson letter

Of all the issues discussed at the 1913 autumn council, the Watson letter was the most controversial. The communication was written by Ellen White to G. F. Watson, then president of the Colorado Conference, on January 22, 1905, concerning the use of tithe, particularly in relation to independent institutions and ministers.  

The reason the letter aroused such emotion was that it was perceived as favoring independent ministries at the expense of conference organizations and as undermining the financial foundation of the denomination.

The Watson letter is important for the present study for several reasons. First, it illuminates the three-way relationship between W. C. White, his mother,  

---

1E. A. Sutherland to W. C. White, Dec. 3, 1913; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Dec. 31, 1913, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.  

2E. G. White to G. F. Watson, Jan. 22, 1905, EGWRC-GC.  

---
and his brother. Second, it is an example of an incident in which Ellen White was said to have been manipulated. The fact that in this case the blame fell more on Edson than on Willie does not diminish its value as an example. Third, the Watson letter seemed to some at the 1913 council to directly contradict other writings of Ellen White's on the subject of tithing, thus lending apparent support to the charge that it was produced by manipulation. Finally, consequent to all the above, the Watson letter was labeled in 1913 a so-called testimony that was "not inspired," a categorization that W. C. White adamantly denied, despite his regret over the misuse of the letter.¹ The reason for including the narrative here is to set the context for the subsequent W. C. White statements on inspiration. Because of the significance of the context to the position statements that follow, the story is dealt with at length.

The background to the Watson letter included two main factors—problems in the disbursement of denominational funds and the poverty of the mission work for Black Americans in the southern United States. As early as 1899 Ellen White had asserted to the president of the General Conference that "the neglect of the men in responsible positions to heed the appeals that have been made for the Southern field" had "left the burden upon the workers to feel free to go anywhere, in any part of the American field, and call directly upon the people and ask them to help, their means not to pass through any office or society." "I am sorry to have to say this," she continued, "but the Lord's work in His vineyard must be done, and if the men in responsible positions make no special effort to prepare the way for the workers [by

¹G. F. Watson to W. C. White, Dec. 15, 1913, WCWF, EGWRC-GC.
supplying their financial needs], they must devise and plan to prepare their own way."\(^1\)

This condition of things began to improve after 1901, but Ellen White perceived a continuing reticence to meet the needs of the Southern Missionary Society, which was the chief denominational agency for conducting "mission schools and evangelism" among Black Americans.\(^2\) To what extent this neglect was due to racial prejudice is outside the scope of the present investigation. Whatever the reason, it does not appear that many within the church had the burden that Ellen White had for this area of the work. Her anguished writing about the needs of the South had motivated Edson in the 1890s to build the Morning Star and undertake his special mission.\(^3\)

Furthermore, her urgency increased in 1904. "The work in the Southern field should be fifteen years in advance of what it now is," she wrote to Edson. "Warning after warning has been given, saying that the time to work the Southern field was fast passing, and that soon this field would be much more difficult to work. It will be more difficult in the future than it is today."\(^4\) Her perception that the work that Edson's Southern Missionary Society was doing for Blacks was of high priority was central to the general background of the Watson letter.

The immediate context of the Watson letter was a fund-raising contact by

---

\(^{1}\) E. G. White to [G. A.] Irwin and [S. N.] Haskell, Sept. 12, 1899, EGWRC-AU.


\(^{3}\) Graybill, Mission to Black America, 16-18.

W. O. Palmer, a close associate of Edson White's in the work of the Southern Missionary Society (and not to be confused with E. R. Palmer, who had been secretary of the General Conference in 1902). In the summer of 1904 W. O. Palmer and Edson White "learned of some people in the West" who were "deeply interested" in their work for Black Americans. Subsequently, Palmer traveled to the church in Grand Junction, Colorado, to present the work of the Southern Missionary Society. The people there knew so little about the society that they "seemed surprised to find out that the J. E. White who was connected with this work" was "the son of Sister White of California. When these things became clear to them they were more enthusiastic than ever, and more earnest in their efforts to raise means to help forward the work."1

In addition to some liberal offerings, the people gave about $270 in tithe. This was later justified by W. C. White on the basis that it would be used to pay the salaries of Black ministers employed by the Southern Missionary Society. Palmer seems to have made some critical remarks about the way money was handled by conference officials, and that "any money that they wanted to reach the Southern Missionary Society should not be sent either to the General Conference or the [Southern Union Conference] headquarters in Nashville, for if it was sent to either of these places, the S. M. S. would never see a cent of it."2

When these things came to Watson's ears, he fired off an indignant complaint to Daniells. Then he learned that Edson White had written a letter to the Grand Junction church "upholding W. O. Palmer." Watson informed Edson that "if

---

1 J. E. White to E. G. White, Oct. 20, 1904, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

2 W. C. White, "Regarding the Use of the Tithe," [ca. 1911], 1, DF 113d, EGWRC-GC; G. F. Watson to A. G. Daniells, Nov. 20, 1904, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
he wished the co-operation of the Colorado Conference in his work, he had better see that the tithe carried off by W. O. Palmer got back into the Colorado Conference Treasury.¹

The role of Watson and Daniells in the matter shows how sticky the whole question of manipulation could become. Two weeks after Daniells received the second letter from Watson, Daniells forwarded both of Watson’s letters to W. C. White, along with an eight-page letter of his own. Daniells severely criticized both W. O. Palmer and Edson White and was obviously hoping for some kind of intervention from either Willie or his mother. "I place this correspondence and my own personal views in your hands," Daniells confided to W. C. White, "with the earnest desire that this condition of things may be brought to an end." Thus Watson’s letters came to the attention of Ellen White, who, instead of rebuking Edson as Daniells expected, wrote a letter rebuking Watson for being so upset over a mere $270 that had been sent to a field more needy than his own.²

The sequel was that three weeks later on January 15, 1905, Edson came to Elmshaven. On January 17, he accompanied Willie to Mountain View for meetings at the Pacific Press, where they were joined on January 19 by Ellen White.³ It was from Mountain View that she penned the controversial letter to Watson on January 22.

Exactly what Edson said to his mother between January 15 and 22 cannot be determined. It is known that Edson was not above pleading with his mother to

¹G. F. Watson to A. G. Daniells, Nov. 20, Dec. 14, 1904, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

²A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, Dec. 25, 1904, WCWCF; E. G. White to G. F. Watson, Jan. 22, 1905, EGWRC-GC.

³W. C. White to G. I. Butler, Jan. 19, 1905, LB 26. 460, EGWRC-AU.
vindicate him with her pen,¹ and that while she sometimes declined to do so,² at other times she wrote strongly in his favor.³

Watson would later call the letter from Ellen White "spurious" and tell Edson to his face that he considered the letter "a product of your own evil brain." W. C. White at the 1913 autumn council gave his opinion that the letter had been "called out" by a letter from Edson "stating the condition of the treasury" (this describes a letter Edson sent her in December 1904), but W. C. White absolutely denied that either he or Edson "had anything to do with the [actual] writing" of the letter to Watson.⁴

As the letter is not long, and every paragraph is relevant to the charges made at the 1913 autumn council, it is quoted in full. Paragraph numbers have been added for reference purposes.


Elder [G. F.] Watson,—

[1] My brother, I wish to say to you, Be careful how you move. You are not moving wisely. The least [sic, less] you have to speak about the tithe that has been appropriated to the most needy and the most discouraging field in the world, the more sensible you will be.

[2] It has been presented to me for years that my tithe was to be appropriated by myself to aid the white and colored ministers who were neglected and did not receive sufficient, properly to support their families. When my attention was called to aged ministers, white or black, it was my special duty to investigate into their necessities and supply their needs. This was to be my special work, and I have done this in a number of cases. No

¹J. E. White to E. G. White, Mar. 28, Apr. 14, May 2, May 10, 1909, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

²E. G. White to J. E. White, May 5, 1909, EGWRC-GC.


⁴W. A. Colcord to J. E. White, Feb. 3, 1914, RG 17, Belden Fld, GCAr; J. E. White to E. G. White, Dec. 23, 1904; W. C. White to G. F. Watson, Dec. 7, 1913, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
man should give notoriety to the fact that in special cases the tithe is used in this way.

[3] In regard to the colored work in the South, that field has been and is still being robbed of the means that should come to the workers in that field. If there have been cases where our sisters have appropriated their tithes to the support of the ministers working for the colored people in the South, let every man, if he is wise, hold his peace.

[4] I have myself appropriated my tithe to the most needy cases brought to my notice. I have been instructed to do this; and as the money is not withheld from the Lord's treasury, it is not a matter that should be commented upon; for it will necessitate my making known these matters, which I do not desire to do, because it is not best.

[5] Some cases have been kept before me for years, and I have supplied their needs from the tithe, as God has instructed me to do. And if any person shall say to me, Sister White, will you appropriate my tithe where it is most needed, I shall say, Yes, I will; and I have done so. I commend these sisters who have placed their tithe where it is most needed to help do a work that is being left undone; and if this matter is given publicity, it will create a knowledge which would better be left as it is. I do not care to give publicity to this work which the Lord has appointed me to do, and others to do.

[6] I send this matter to you so that you shall not make a mistake. Circumstances alter cases. I would not advise that any should make a practice of gathering up tithe money. But for years there have now and then been persons who have lost confidence in the appropriation of the tithe who have placed their tithe in my hands, and said that if I did not take it they would themselves appropriate it to the needs of the most needy ministers they could find. I have taken the money, given a receipt for it, and told them how it was appropriated.

[7] I write this to you that you shall keep cool and not become stirred up and give publicity to this matter, lest many more shall follow their example.

Evidence (but not proof) of a linkage to Watson's letters is the reference to "sisters" in paragraphs 3 and 5. Watson had mentioned two "well-to-do" widows in the Grand Junction church who, according to his sources had given tithe (one had given $75 and the other $35) to the Southern Missionary Society.

The only element found in every paragraph of the letter but the sixth is the caution to keep the whole matter confidential. Ellen White recognized that wide knowledge of this case would lead "many more" to "follow their example"

---

1E. G. White to G. F. Watson, Jan. 22, 1905, EGWRC-AU.

2G. F. Watson to A. G. Daniells, Dec. 14, 1904, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
(paragraphs 5 and 7), thus tending to break down the orderly system of handling church finances.

Despite the repeated emphasis placed on keeping the matter quiet, Ellen White herself assumed the risk of giving a copy to Edson. Oblivious to the cautions about confidentiality, or assuming they applied only to Watson, Edson promptly shared the letter with some members of the Grand Junction church, and no doubt with others as well.¹

Ellen White's fears that the letter would be misused were amply justified by what followed. When a copy came to A. T. Jones, who had sided with Kellogg and subsequently broken with the church, Jones distributed it widely, which did nothing to relieve Watson's distress. Deeply concerned, Daniells drew on his most tactful vocabulary to articulate his convictions to W. C. White that "care should be exercised" by Ellen White and by her son as her counselor to avoid "making statements that can be used by the enemies of this cause to deceive the simple." He urged that "instruction" could be "given in a guarded way" just as effectively as by the use of "unguarded or unmodified expressions, which taken alone give a very one-sided view . . . of what the writer actually believes and teaches." One focus of his concern was the use Jones was making of the Watson letter. "It did seem to me," Daniells remarked,

that the expressions set forth should have been stated more guardedly.

I hope that in making these statements I am not stepping out of proper place. I suppose that it is here [that] our fallibility sometimes is manifested. Not only A. T. Jones, but men in different states are using that text regarding tithing to induce people to pay them their tithes, and they are meeting with altogether too much success. I have many times wished that we would state the

¹J. E. White to Mrs. R. Leitzman, May 8, 1914, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
other side of the truth regarding tithing, and so prove an antidote to the influence of designing men.¹

In view of the widespread misuse of the Watson letter in 1907 and 1908, it was decided to include a section on tithing in Testimonies, volume 9, "with the hope that it would counteract the evil work being done by the wrong use of the Watson letter."²

In volume 9, which came out in 1909, Ellen White wrote,

Let none feel at liberty to retain their tithe, to use according to their own judgment. They are not to use it for themselves in an emergency, nor to apply it as they see fit, even in what they may regard as the Lord's work. . . . Some have been dissatisfied and have said: "I will not longer pay my tithe, for I have no confidence in the way things are managed at the heart of the work." But will you rob God because you think the management of the work is not right? Make your complaint, plainly and openly, in the right spirit, to the proper ones. Send in your petitions for things to be adjusted and set in order; but do not withdraw from the work of God, and prove unfaithful, because others are not doing right.³

Watson was pleased with Testimonies, volume 9, but it only increased his suspicion that there was something false about the letter he had received in 1905. In September 1913 Watson, now president of the Southwestern Union Conference, publicly compared the 1905 letter with the contrasting passage in volume 9, telling the ministers present that he believed Edson White had "forged that letter" even though Edson "denied it." Watson told the ministers that "no doubt . . . many letters had been sent out which were spurious and that the tracts on the Madison school had no doubt been secured in the same way."⁴

¹G. F. Watson to A. G. Daniells, May 17, 1907; A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, June 23, 1908, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

²W. C. White to G. F. Watson, Dec. 28, 1913, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC; cf. W. A. Spicer to G. F. Watson, Jan. 9, 1914, RG 21, Bk 60, 938-941, GCAr.

³E. G. White, Testimonies, 9: 247, 249.

⁴Leslie Littell to W. C. White, Sept. 29, 1913, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
This was the frame of mind in which Watson and some others came to the 1913 autumn council. When W. C. White made presentations on the relation of the conferences to independent work, Watson made several impassioned speeches.1

As noted in the chronological overview above, the discussion on the last day of the 1913 council was severely limited for time. When for the second day in a row the council exploded in heated discussion, W. C. White found it necessary to omit important parts of his presentation in order to close at the time agreed on. Disappointed at this outcome he resorted to placing his views in writing. The subsequent correspondence reveals clearly some of W. C. White's key concepts regarding Ellen White's inspiration.

W. C. White on Ellen White's Inspiration

Following the 1913 fall council, W. C. White carried on an extensive correspondence concerning the issues raised there about his mother's inspiration. When Watson sent out a form letter alleging that W. C. White had said that the letter on tithing "could not be considered as a testimony," W. C. White corrected him. "However much I regret the way the letter was used," he wrote to Watson, "I have no ground for discrediting it."2

Watson then reminded White that he had said at the council that he was "very sorry that the Watson Letter was ever written" (a statement W. C. White would take issue with). "Why should you be sorry for anything that God dictated?" he demanded, adding, "if it be so that he dictated the Watson Letter." Despite

1W. A. Colcord to J. E. White, Feb. 3, 1914, RG 17, Belden Fld, GCAr.

2G. F. Watson to My Dear Brother, Nov. 7, 1913; W. C. White to G. F. Watson, Dec. 7, 1913, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
Watson’s frustration at the “probing” he had received “for the last nine years” since the writing of the troublesome letter in January 1905, he affirmed his belief that Ellen White “is a prophet of God.” “While I believe that,” he added, “I do not believe [that] all she writes and all she says is inspired, in other words, I do not believe in verbal inspiration.”1

White accepted Watson’s conclusion about verbal inspiration as a starting point for further discussion. “It seems to me, he said, “that you are in harmony with the views held by the pioneers in our cause.” However, to clarify that issue, White suggested that Watson read the presentation White had made on June 1 at the 1913 General Conference. “I then referred to the question which many of our ministers and laymen have often presented, ‘Is everything that Sister White ever writes or says inspired?’ In answer to this question I read from her writings very clear and decided answers.”2

Regarding his words at the fall council, White explained to Watson why he had spoken as he did. “From year to year,” he said,

I have been made acquainted with the sorrow and trouble that have come to you and others because of the wrong use made of copies of this letter [on tithing], and when you presented the matter so strongly and feelingly at the Council, I felt that I was doing right to manifest the sympathy I felt, and to tell you how sorry I was for the evil results that followed the unwise and wrong use of the letter. I stated that the letter itself forbade such a use. I said I was sorry a copy had ever been sent to my brother. I could not confess wrong-doing in the matter, for I had only done that which Mother told me to do, in sending a copy to my brother. But neither Mother nor I anticipated that the letter would be used as it has been used. It shows upon the face of it that it was private counsel to you, and its public use by anyone is a violation of the spirit of the instruction.

If I said at the Council that I was sorry that the letter had been written, I went too far, and must ask your forgiveness and the forgiveness of my

1G. F. Watson to W. C. White, Dec. 15, 1913, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

brethren. Your strong and repeated presentation of what you had suffered drew strongly on my sympathies, and I may have said more than was right to say. I did not say that "Volume Nine was written to counteract the Watson letter." I said that the article on tithing from which you read a portion, was published in "Testimonies for the Church, Volume Nine," with the hope that it would counteract the evil work being done by the wrong use of the Watson letter.1

Taking up Watson’s question of how "Volume Nine and the Watson letter could both have come from the same source," White reminded him of Luther’s difficulty in accepting both James and Paul. He went on to deny that there was "any difference in the validity and authority" between the "bound volumes" and the "Special Testimonies," affirming that both categories of her writings "stand on the same broad basis." However, he suggested, "there may be a vast difference in the breadth of the field to which they apply, and that is often shown in the document itself."2

In a parallel passage in his letter to Daniells three days later, White developed this idea further. "Regarding the Fitzgerald letter and the Watson letter and other letters which may perplex us and others," he reasoned, "it might be much easier to repudiate a few documents that perplex us, and say they were forgeries, but it is the truth that makes us free, and I do not know of any way in harmony with the law of God than to deal with these matters just as they are." Despite the difficulties, White refused to "classify" the letters in question as any less inspired than her other writings.3

"If my brethren deem it necessary to classify Mother’s writings," he

1W. C. White to G. F. Watson, Dec. 28, 1913, WCWF, EGWRC-GC, emphasis added.

2Ibid.

3W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Dec. 31, 1913, WCWF, EGWRC-GC.
they must take the responsibility of doing so. I cannot do it, and I think you
know why I cannot do it.

You have been closely associated with Mother and her work, and you
know that many times there comes a message to us without any intimation that
it is revelation or that it is a direct message from heaven, regarding duty. It
comes to us as counsel from God’s messenger, and we accept it as such, and
we lay beside it such data as we have regarding the proposition under
consideration, and then, giving due weight to the counsel and remembering that
it comes through one who has clearer views than we regarding the needs of the
cause and the possibility of Christian experience, we make our decisions as to
what we will endeavor to do. Then it often happens that afterward we are told
that the Lord has instructed Mother to speak to us, saying that such and such
matters ought to be done, and in the light of this instruction we feel free to give
less regard to our own opinions and to give greater regard to the counsel that
was formerly given. And you know that if we had undertaken at any time in
the past to draw a line between counsel based on revelation and definite
testimony regarding duty, that we should have been obliged to revise our
opinion many times. It was with these facts in mind that I refused, at the
Council, to express any opinion regarding the classification of the Watson
letter.¹

"It seems to me," White explained further, "that there was much confusion
in the minds of our brethren during the Council because some used the words
‘revelation’ and ‘testimony’ as synonyms." "It has always seemed to me," he
reasoned,

that in Mother’s writings, as in the writings of Paul and other Bible writers,
that there was a simple statement of history, a statement regarding Christian
experience, arguments regarding Bible doctrine, and counsel to individuals and
churches; also the relation of revelations from God, and all these united
constituted Paul’s testimony to the church.²

Thus W. C. White affirmed that many different types of a prophet’s
writing could be "testimony" even though not all were based on direct "revelations
from God."

This statement, though not detailed or couched in technical theological

¹Ibid., emphasis added.

²Ibid.
language, is nevertheless significant in light of previous and future arguments over inspiration in the denomination. As noted in chapter 2 above, W. C. White had thirty years earlier in 1883 placed himself on record as rejecting a dictational or verbal concept of inspiration. In the present instance he further rejected any attempt to "classify" some documents as less inspired or "not inspired" in comparison to others. In a later statement "regarding what was said" at the 1913 council, he qualified this point.

Mother never made the claim, as some have said, that everything she ever wrote at any time was inspired. I told them that Mother, like every other prophet of God, had her own private life, and she spoke and wrote about matters of finance, about her household, her farm, her chickens, her horses, and her dairy, and that there was no claim that she was speaking regarding these matters with the voice of inspiration.1

In this statement he echoed his mother's insistence that there must be no confusion of the "sacred and the common." She once wrote that a comment she had made about the number of rooms in the Paradise Valley Sanitarium was "not testimony," i.e., not an inspired comment.2

Thus, while W. C. White believed, on the one hand, that not everything a prophet wrote about houses, livestock, and private business matters was necessarily inspired, his emphasis seems to have been that inspiration functions in a holistic way, so that the entire work of a prophet, whether in thought, speech, or writing, is affected and informed by the experience of inspiration.3 At the same time, he denied that this inspiration controlled the prophet in such a way as to give infallibility. He would have more to say on this topic when he addressed the

---
1W. C. White to J. W. Watt, Mar. 7, 1915, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
3Cf. E. G. White, Testimonies, 5:686.
specific issues of his mother's theological and historical authority.

**W. C. White as Interpreter of Ellen White's Theological and Historical Authority**

One of the questions that surfaced repeatedly during Ellen White's career was the question of the relative authority of her writings as compared to Scripture and history. As she neared the close of her life, it became more urgent for the church to have clearly defined principles for the interpretation of her writings in these areas. To W. C. White, who would be a leading expositor of her writings after her death, it was especially urgent that principles of interpretation be articulated while she was still available to guide and critique the process.

W. C. White's work as interpreter of his mother's writings is illuminated by his actions as well as his writings. To sketch even briefly his role in some of these issues requires somewhat extensive narrative. The extended consideration seems justified, however, in view of the importance of his later position as the leading interpreter of his mother's writings. A major controversy in which the central question concerned the nature and use of Ellen White's writings as theological and exegetical authority was the debate over the "daily."

**The Conflict over the "Daily"**

It was noted in chapter 2 above that a pivotal issue in the 1888 controversy was the contention by some that Ellen White had previously written an authoritative pronouncement regarding the meaning of "law" in the Book of Galatians, which those partisans claimed settled the issue and precluded further debate, even though neither they nor Ellen White and her staff could locate it. Ellen White disagreed,
insisting that the issue be decided on the basis of Scripture. A dispute twenty
years later that W. C. White saw as parallel in some respects to the debate over the
law in Galatians was the conflict over the "daily." In both cases, defenders of the
established view appealed largely to a single Ellen White reference as proving their
position.

The debate over the "daily" became a major exegetical battle from 1908
through 1910 and continued at lower intensity for many years thereafter. A number
of sources have traced aspects of the history of this conflict. The full story has
yet to be told and cannot be told here. Nor is it the purpose of the present study to
argue the relative merits of the old or the new views. The theological issues are

1For an analysis of the appeals to human authority, Ellen White's authority, and
biblical authority in the 1888 debate, see Knight, Angry Saints, 100-115.

27, 1910, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

3See, e.g., SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 ed., s.v., "Daily, The"; SDA Bible
Commentary, 4:60-64; Schwarz, Light Bearers, 397-99; Valentine, "William Warren
Prescott," 389-426; idem, Shaping of Adventism, 185-203; A. L. White, Ellen G. White,
6:246-61; Bert Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily': Background and Aftermath of the
1919 Bible and History Teachers' Conference," 1979, 53-57; idem, "Sligo Series, Oct. 22
and 29, 1980," 23-29, GCAr.

4For expositions of the old view, see, e.g., SDA Bible Commentary, 4:842-43; Uriah
Assn., 1944), 159-61, 270-78, 323-33; L. A. Smith and F. C. Gilbert, "The Daily" in the
Prophecy of Daniel ([Nashville: Southern Publishing Assn., 1910]); Robert J. Wieland,
"Have We Followed 'Cunningly Devised Fables'? An Outline of a Proposed Thought Paper

5For expositions of the new view, see, e.g., L. R. Conradi, "Whoso Readeth, Let
Him Understand": A Short Key to Dan. 7-12 (Hamburg, Germany: International Tract
Society, [1910]); W. W. Prescott, "The Daily": A Brief Reply to Two Leaflets on This
Subject (n.p., [ca. 1910]); [W. A. Colcord, ed.] Bible Readings for the Home Circle
(Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1914), 228-29, 236-37; C. Mervyn Maxwell, God
Cares, vol. 1, The Message of Daniel for You and Your Family (Mountain View, CA:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
introduced only so far as is necessary in order to trace the role of W. C. White in the conflict and to compare his views of the matter with those of his mother. Even in a sharply abbreviated form, the story is somewhat involved, but in order to substantiate the conclusions it has seemed necessary to trace at least the outlines of the conflict and W. C. White's part in it.

The term "daily" is the English word which is used to translate the Hebrew *tamid* in the King James Version of Dan 8:11-13; 11:31; and 12:11. *Tamid* is elsewhere in the Old Testament translated "continual(ly)," "perpetual(ly)," and "regular(ly)." The King James consistently renders *tamid* in Daniel as "daily [sacrifice]," while the Revised Standard Version uses the phrase "continual [burnt offering]"—the words "sacrifice" and "burnt offering" being supplied by the translators.  

Two main interpretations of these passages developed among Seventh-day Adventists. The view which predominated during most of the nineteenth century was originated by William Miller and came to be known among Adventist expositors as the old view. The old view taught that the substantive adjective *tamid* should be understood as modifying the word "abomination." Thus the "daily [abomination]" represented the ancient pagan religion of the Roman Empire which was "taken away" by the rising papacy. What came to be known as the new view held that the "daily" or "continual" referred to the heavenly priestly ministry of Christ, which was "taken away" in the sense of being supplanted by the usurpations of a human

---

priesthood, auricular confession, human priestly absolution, etc.  

Expositors of both views held that the papacy had been the active agent in "taking away" the "daily." Furthermore, both views held that the "taking away" of the daily occurred in the sixth century, linking the rise of the papacy with the rise of Clovis the Frank, who in 508 was named the "first Catholic majesty." The honors given to Clovis could be seen from either view as marking the beginning of a 1290-year alliance between France and the papacy, a relationship which would endure until 1798. Major expositors of both views saw 538 as the beginning of the 1260-year prophetic period which would also terminate in 1798. The 1335 day-years of Dan 12:11 were believed to extend from 508-1843.

Ignoring some minor details of exposition between different individuals, the new view offered two basic changes from the old one. First, the new view simplified the exposition of Dan 8 by identifying the three occurrences of the English word "sanctuary" in vss. 11, 13, and 14 as the same sanctuary (although two different Hebrew terms stand behind the English word "sanctuary" in these verses). Second, the new view changed the focus of attention to the ministry of Christ, thus highlighting "the true sanctuary service" as the context of Dan 8:14. Also, the new view claimed to correct some of the historical argumentation set forth by supporters of the old view, although the historical conclusions of the two sides were so similar that it is questionable whether the historical differences could truly be called "basic."
Thus the two views had a great deal in common. In fact, both sides agreed on the historical and theological conclusions. Both sides believed that the capital of Imperial Rome had become the seat of papal Rome and both sides believed that the papacy had obscured from many people a true understanding of the heavenly priesthood of Christ. The disagreement was largely a debate over which view represented the best exegesis of the passages in Daniel. Haskell said he believed the issue would not "amount to a hill of beans" had not Ellen White made a statement about it.¹

W. C. White's "first acquaintance" with the new view came through the correspondence of L. R. Conradi with Ellen White in 1900. Later he heard the subject preached by Prescott in 1902 and "felt impressed that he was presenting the truth." White seems to have held the new view privately and somewhat tentatively for several years.²

As late as December 1907 Ellen White had not yet expressed her opinion. She had received letters and articles from leading advocates on both sides, but had declined to read any of the material until she had "the strength to read the other side as well."³

Evidently the next month still did not find her strong enough to enter into the issues, for when a council meeting was held at Elmshaven in January 1908, she was not listed among those present. The story of that meeting has been told in the

¹ S. N. Haskell to W. C. White, Dec. 6, 1909, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
² W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, Dec. 9, 1909; W. C. White to J. S. Washburn, Oct. 27, 1910; W. C. White to J. E. White, June 1, 1910, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
chronological overview. Prescott dominated the discussion so thoroughly that the Haskells felt steamrollered.¹

By 1908 it became evident that the most significant point of disagreement concerned what use should be made of Ellen White's single reference to the "daily" in Early Writings.

"I have seen," she had written concerning a vision in 1850,

that the 1843 chart was directed by the hand of the Lord, and that it should not be altered; that the figures were as He wanted them; that His hand was over and hid a mistake in some of the figures, so that none could see it, until His hand was removed.

Then I saw in relation to the "daily" (Dan. 8:12) that the word "sacrifice" was supplied by man's wisdom, and does not belong to the text, and that the Lord gave the correct view of it to those who gave the judgment hour cry.

When union existed, before 1844, nearly all were united on the correct view of the "daily"; but in the confusion since 1844, other views have been embraced, and darkness and confusion have followed. Time has not been a test since 1844, and it never will again be a test.

The Lord has shown me that the message of the third angel [see Revelation 14:6-12] must go, and be proclaimed . . . but it must not be hung on time. I saw that some were getting a false excitement, arising from preaching time, but the third angel's message . . . can stand on its own foundation and needs not time to strengthen it.²

The supporters of the old view believed that the Early Writings statement forever settled the issue of the "daily." Their opponents argued that the issue that Ellen White was addressing in 1850 was a then-current attempt to reinterpret "the daily" as a basis for recalculating the 2300 days in an attempt to predict the "time" of the second coming. The proponents of the new view believed that since their view led neither to time-setting nor to unsettling faith in the 2300-day prophecy, the

¹[C. C. Crisler], "An Introductory Statement," RG 58, L. E. Froom Reference Files, 1920s-30s, The Daily Fld 3; Mrs. S. N. Haskell to A. G. Daniells, Jan. 26, 1908, RG 11, 1908-H, GCAr.

²E. G. White, Early Writings (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1906), 74-75.
Early Writings statement did not oppose their view.¹

While W. C. White, by December 1909, believed that the new view was "the stronger and more correct position," he deplored the open publishing of their disagreement by persons on both sides. Closely reflecting his mother's view in this aspect of the problem, he "regretted that our brethren can not devise some way of getting together and studying the matter in a brotherly, considerate way until light comes in." He believed that "more is at stake in the way our brethren treat one another" than in "the decision that shall be made by and by as to which is the correct view." Regarding the use of the Early Writings quotation to settle the matter, he argued that "the truest friends of the Testimonies" would be those who would bring forth tangible historical evidence in support of their view, rather than setting forth "their view of the teaching of the Testimony as a barrier to the free and faithful investigation of the historical evidences for our old position."²

In May 1910 Ellen White and W. C. White issued a joint call to "a meeting for prayer and Bible study" between the two sides. However, the adherents of the old view declined to participate. In declining Ellen White's invitation, Haskell told her that further dialogue would be fruitless. "There is no hope of these old people who lived back in the early days of the Message being converted to this new light," he assured Ellen White, "even if they [the new view men] bring volumes of histories to prove it. Because they [the old-view supporters] give more for one


²W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, Dec. 9, 1909; W. C. White to Clarence Santee, Jan. 5, 1910, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
expression in your testimony than for all the histories you could stack between here and Calcutta.

When it became clear that the old-view adherents refused to have any further conference on the issue, Ellen White addressed a manuscript to the major advocates of the old view. "It has been presented to me," she declared in words typical of those she often used to denote direct revelation, "that this is not a subject of vital importance." "I am instructed," she said in another obvious reference to revelation,

that our brethren are making a mistake in magnifying the importance of the difference in the views that are held. I can not consent that any of my writings shall be taken as settling this matter. The true meaning of "the daily" is not to be made a test question.

I now ask that my ministering brethren shall not make use of my writings in their arguments regarding this question; for I have had no instruction on the point under discussion, and I see no need for the controversy. Regarding this matter, under present conditions, silence is eloquence.

Four times in this manuscript she asked that her writings not be used to settle the debate over the "daily." Twice she said the "daily" was not a "test question." Regarding the concern of the new-view men to make corrections in older Adventist publications, she advised care and restraint, but did not oppose changes. "In some of our important books," she said, "there may be matters of minor importance that call for careful study and correction. Let such matters be considered by those regularly appointed to have oversight of our publications." She cautioned, however, that no one should "magnify these matters in such a way as to lessen the influence of these good, soul-saving books." Finally, she called for all on both sides of the controversy to "follow out the light given us at our last General

---

1S. N. Haskell to E. G. White, May 30, 1910, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

2E. G. White, "Our Attitude toward Doctrinal Controversy," July 31, 1910, MS 11, 1910, EGWRC-GC.
Conference," namely, that the message be given in "our cities." The "great blessing that might have come to some" was "not received, because they had other plans which they wished to follow."1

In another communication four days later, she reproved a leading old-view proponent, Leon Smith, for "publishing a tract containing condemnation of his brethren and of their belief." She was also "pained" that Daniells, "knowing that there was a difference of opinion regarding this matter among our leading brethren, should urge the matter to the front." "While the present condition of difference of opinion regarding this subject exists," she concluded, "let it not be made prominent. Let all contention cease. . . . The duty of God's servants at this time is to preach the Word in the cities."2

In summary, Ellen White repeatedly disclaimed having any specific light on the "daily" as a doctrinal or exegetical issue. She did, however, make a later statement about the Early Writings passage during an interview with Daniells, W. C. White, and C. C. Crisler. Discussing the "confusion" in 1850, she said that "the Lord revealed to her," through the vision reported in Early Writings, that "the view that had been held and presented regarding the dates was correct and that there must never be another time set, nor another time message." When Daniells asked her "to tell what had been revealed to her about the rest of the 'daily,'--the Prince, the host, the taking away of the daily and the casting down of the sanctuary"--she told the group that "these features were not placed before her in vision as the time part was." Her statement convinced them that lacking any specific revelation on the

1Ibid.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
question, her personal opinion was that her *Early Writings* statement pertained to the
time period connected with the "daily," not to the historical identity of the "daily."\(^1\)

W. C. White later described to G. B. Starr his own recollection and
interpretation of the above interview. "You will observe," he noted,
by reading her article in "Early Writings" that *time* was the great question [in
1850]. The great prophetic period [that] ended in October 22, 1844 was being
misrepresented and counted as 2,300 literal days [evidently based on the phrase
"daily sacrifice," which was why she made the point that the word "sacrifice"
was not in the original]. . . . I am fully persuaded that it was with reference to
this time controversy that Sister White made this utterance regarding the Daily.
Some day when you and I and Elder Daniells can meet together and prayerfully
review the experiences which we entered into at the Long Beach camp meeting,
we may be able to impart to you information that will lead you to believe . . .
that this statement in "Early Writings" does not apply to the controversy now
going forward regarding the Daily. Elder Daniells and Elder Crisler and I
were together in these interviews and from what Sister White then told us, we
can readily understand why she has forbidden the use of her writings as a
means of settling the controversy over the Daily, and you will see clearly why
she instructed Elder Haskell to remove the [*Early Writings*] statement from his
charts. . . . Sister White . . . was exceedingly sorry and sad when Elder
Haskell and Irwin refused to respond to her appeal [in May 1908] that they
should come here and . . . enter into a prayerful study of the differences over
this question. . . . If they had responded to her appeal there is no doubt in my
mind but what she would have opened up to them just as she did to Elders
Daniells, Crisler, and I the reasons why it was contrary to her wish . . . that
the statement in "Early Writings" . . . be used in an effort to settle the
differences of opinion.\(^2\)

If W. C. White's memory and interpretation of the Long Beach interview
is accurate (and it does agree with Daniells's independent account), it lends further
support to the view that her main opposition was directed toward the disunity, the

---

\(^{1}\) A. G. Daniells, "Interview with Mrs. E. G. White Regarding the Daily," Sept. 25,
1931, DF 201b, EGWRC-GC. Regarding the date of this interview, W. C. White twice
identified it with "the Long Beach camp meeting" (W. C. White to G. B. Starr, Sept. 22,
1930; W. C. White to L. E. Froom, May 1, 1931, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC). The only
Long Beach camp meeting which Ellen White is recorded as having attended was held Aug.
10-20, 1911 (E. G. White to J. E. White, Aug. [2 or 3], 1911; E. G. White to S. N.
Haskell, Aug. 28, 1911, EGWRC-AU; E. E. Andross, "Long Beach Camp Meeting," PUR,
July 27, 1911, 5).

\(^{2}\) W. C. White to G. B. Starr, Sept. 22, 1930, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC, emphasis his.
rancor, the time spent in debate, and the distraction from evangelism. The Long Beach interview does not constitute a direct Ellen White endorsement of the new view. It does constitute additional reinforcement of the position that she had taken earlier, that the matter should be settled by exegesis rather than by appeal to her writings.¹

The case of the "daily" illuminates W. C. White's approach to interpreting his mother's exegetical authority. First, in the absence of contrary evidence, he assumed the authority of her statements. He was, however, open to consider additional information or viewpoints.

Second, he candidly examined the available evidence. He examined the 1843 prophetic chart mentioned in the Early Writings statement and compared it with other Millerite charts, seeking to understand as fully as possible the context of that statement. Crisler, his assistant, spent probably hundreds of hours researching the issue in early Adventist and sixth-century history.²

Third, White was willing to surrender the personal opinions thus formed if Ellen White should condemn them. In a contrasting case, that of J. H. Kellogg and the Living Temple, her statements exposing the danger of his teaching were unequivocal. She declared that Kellogg's teaching about the nature of God was not an insignificant difference of opinion regarding an irrelevant detail but concerned a foundational doctrine that could not be altered without destabilizing the entire Adventist theological system. Kellogg's theology, she said, was "stealing away the

¹Ibid.; cf. A. G. Daniells, "Interview with Mrs. E. G. White Regarding the Daily," Sept. 25, 1931, DF 201b, EGWRC-GC.

²See C. C. Crisler to A. G. Daniells, May 31, 1910, RG 11, 1910-C, GCAr; W. C. White to J. E. White, June 1, 1910, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
landmarks and undermining the pillars of our faith."¹ Further, she condemned as unsound its use of Scripture. "All through the book [Living Temple]," she observed, "passages of Scripture are used, but in many instances these passages are used in such a way that the right interpretation is not given to them."²

Regarding the exegesis of the passages about the "daily," however, she said that she had no light on the specific interpretations involved except that the issue was not of salvational importance, not a test of orthodoxy, and not worth the division it was causing. Because she had no revelation on the disputed points, she insisted that the dispute must not be settled on the basis of her writings.³

Fourth, since Ellen White refused to have her writings used to settle the issue, W. C. White felt compelled to weigh the question on the basis of exegesis and historical research. Even then he was reluctant to lightl surrender a long-held belief. "I cherished for a long time the hope and expectation that some one of my brethren holding the old view, would give me such clear historical evidence as would lead me to cling to it," he wrote in retrospect. Had the old-view proponents of his day been able to produce stronger arguments, W. C. White would apparently have preferred to hold to that view. But, "failing to receive from [its supporters] that [information] which would help me to stand by the old view, and seeing many reasons why I should adopt the new view, I could not do otherwise."⁴

Finally, while he based his own position on extensive research and rather

¹E. G. White, "Our Duty to Leave Battle Creek," GCB, 1903, 87.
²E. G. White to The Teachers in Emmanuel Missionary College, Sept. 22, 1903, EGWRC-AU.
³E. G. White, "Our Attitude toward Doctrinal Controversy," July 31, 1910, MS 11, 1910, EGWRC-GC.
⁴W. C. White to G. B. Starr, Sept. 22, 1930, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
long deliberation, he did not condemn those who believed otherwise. "Elder Bollman is wrong when he counts me as being 'hand in glove with the proponents of the new view,'" White concluded. "I have tried to stand aside from this controversy, but when I am challenged over the statement in "Early Writings" I must either keep silence, or state what I earnestly believe."¹ A similar balance characterized W. C. White's approach to the interpretation of his mother's authority in matters of history.

W. C. White on Ellen White's Historical Authority

In interpreting Ellen White's writings on history, W. C. White had the initial advantage of having been closely associated with her during times in which she had done much of her historical writing, so that he was well acquainted with her methods. Furthermore, he sought by consultation with her to verify that his interpretations were in harmony with her wishes. His understanding of her attitude, however, included an openness to the examination of other evidence, even if it was potentially disturbing to previously held positions. A primary exhibit regarding her use of historical sources is the 1911 edition of Great Controversy.

The 1911 Great Controversy

The publication of a reset edition of her Great Controversy in 1911 was preceded by a thoroughgoing process of verification and, where necessary, correction of historical citations. This editorial work on a book considered by Seventh-day Adventists to have been inspired, raised questions about the relative authority of Ellen White's writings for history.

¹Ibid.
The story of the 1911 edition of *Great Controversy* has been briefly sketched in the chronological overview, above. When W. C. White solicited recommendations from W. W. Prescott for the improvement of the volume, Prescott submitted a thirty-nine-page letter including some 105 specific suggestions. In a paper dealing with this issue, Arthur L. White has reproduced the letter, numbered the suggestions, and recorded the specific response of the Elmshaven staff to each of them. The main interest for the present study is the attitude taken by W. C. White toward historical evidence which differed from certain details of the previous edition of the *Great Controversy*.¹

Ellen White’s response to Prescott’s 105 suggestions was mixed. On the one hand, when W. C. White asked her what she would like done “regarding the quotations from historians and the references to these historians, she was prompt and clear in her opinion that we ought to give proper credit wherever we can.”²

On the other hand, when rumors began to fly in California that Daniells and Prescott wanted to revise *Great Controversy* to “agree with the new light on the ‘daily,’” even Ellen White wondered if it might be true. W. C. White reported to Daniells that she had asked him whether Brother Prescott and you [Daniells] have been criticizing and picking flaws in her books, and wish them to have a general revision so as to agree with new theories or new opinions. In answer to this I have maintained that as far as I can discern, you and Brother [H. R.] Salisbury and Elder [F. M.] Wilcox are in hearty sympathy with us and are doing what you can to help us find clear and substantial evidence for the positions taken in *Great Controversy.*³

---


²W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, June 20, 1910, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

³Ibid.
As the work progressed and W. C. White could show Ellen White the specific changes proposed, her anxiety was relieved. When on August 1 he began "to present to Mother in detail the changes called for in our effort to correct the quotations from D'Aubigne," she "examined a few of these and approved of them; then told me plainly that she wished us to go forward with the whole lot without asking her to examine them one by one."¹

W. C. White denied that Ellen White's staff were making any "important changes" in the book. "Some passages have been pointed out by various persons as difficult to sustain by historical evidence," he said, "and it has seemed to us a wise thing to study into the matter and to gather together for use at our principal publishing houses a good comprehensive statement as to where the historical evidence could be found for the disputed passages."² Some of the material thus gathered would be included in an appendix to the new edition.

By November 1910, the main body of the work was nearly done. In February 1911 Crisler was working on the historical notes for the appendix. The first copies of the new book came off the press in July, and in October W. C. White presented to the autumn council a rather comprehensive description of "the latest English edition of Great Controversy."³

Pertinent to the present study are his words about Ellen White as an


²W. C. White to J. E. White, June 17, 1910, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

authority on history. "Mother has never claimed to be an authority on history," he asserted.

The things which she has written out, are descriptions of flashlight pictures and other representations given her. . . . In . . . writing out . . . these views, she has made use of good and clear historical statements to help make plain to the reader the things which she is endeavoring to present. When I was a mere boy, I heard her read D'Aubigne's History of the Reformation to my father. She . . . has read other histories of the Reformation. This has helped her to locate and describe many of the events and the movements presented to her in vision.

In a letter to F. M. Wilcox, Ellen White specifically endorsed the W. C. White exposition in which this statement is found. W. C. White at other times cited similar experiences of his own in support of his belief that her descriptions of many specific historical events were based on pictorial visions, but that dates, geographical relationships, and other details were often derived from standard works on history and chronology.

One such experience occurred during the Whites' years in Europe between 1885 and 1887. "One Sabbath, at Basle," W. C. White recalled,

as I was reading Wylie's History of Protestantism . . . to Mother, she interrupted me and told me a lot of things in the pages ahead, and told me many things not in the book at all. She said, "I have never read about it, but that scene has been presented to me over and over again."

When he asked her, "Why did you not put it into your book [Great Controversy]?" she replied, "I did not know where to put it."3

By these statements W. C. White showed his understanding that while the controlling content of her historical writings was derived from visions, she was often

---

1W. C. White to Our General Missionary Agents, July 24, 1911, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
2E. G. White to F. M. Wilcox, July 27, 1911, EGWRC-AU.
3W. C. White, "The Visions of Ellen G. White," Dec. 17, 1905, 5, SD, EGWRC-GC.
dependent on standard histories for geographical and chronological connections. A year after this presentation, W. C. White reiterated somewhat more fully his understanding about the use of his mother’s writings as authority for the details of history.

Further questions on history

In addition to the still-smoldering conflict over the “daily” and the concern some had felt over the new edition of *Great Controversy*, by 1912 W. W. Prescott was suggesting that early Adventist prophetic interpretation needed correction in another area. Letters came to W. C. White from W. W. Eastman (a publishing director at Southern Publishing Association in Nashville), S. N. Haskell, and others, asking White’s response to suggestions originating with Prescott, that the dates given in *Great Controversy* for the fall of the Ottoman Empire might be in error. The raising of this issue led W. C. White, in conference with his mother, to set forth some basic principles regarding the use of her writings as historical authority.

W. C. White first prepared a reply to Haskell on October 31 and submitted it to Ellen White for her criticism. At the end of the letter appears a note in her own unmistakable handwriting, “I approve of the remarks made in this letter[.]” Ellen G[.] White.²

This letter to Haskell contains a rather detailed statement of W. C. White’s understanding of the use of Ellen White as an authority on history. "Regarding Mother’s writings," he began,

she has never wished our brethren to treat them as authority on history. When

---


²W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, Oct. 31, 1912, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
"Great Controversy," was first written, she often times gave a partial description of some scene presented to her, and when Sister Davis made inquiry regarding time and place, Mother referred her to what was already written in the books [Thoughts on Daniel and Thoughts on Revelation] of Elder [Uriah] Smith and in secular histories. When "Controversy" was written, Mother never thought that the readers would take it as authority on historical dates and use it to settle controversies, and she does not now feel that it ought to be used in that way. Mother regards with the greatest respect those faithful historians who have given their life to the study of the working out in this world's history of God's great plan, and who have found in this study a correspondence of the history with prophecy. . . .

It seems to me that there is a danger of placing altogether too much stress upon chronology. If it had been essential to the salvation of men that he [i.e., man] should have a clear and harmonious understanding of the chronology of the world, the Lord would not have permitted the disagreements and discrepancies which we find in the writings of the Bible historians, and it seems to me that in these last days there ought not to be so much controversy regarding dates. . . .

I believe, Brother Haskell, that there is danger of our injuring Mother's work by claiming for it more than she claims for it, more than Father ever claimed for it, more than Elder [J. N.] Andrews, [J. H.] Waggoner, or [Uriah] Smith ever claimed for it. I cannot see consistency in our putting forth a claim of verbal inspiration when Mother does not make any such claim, and I certainly think we will make a great mistake if we lay aside historical research and endeavor to settle historical questions by the use of Mother's books as an authority when she herself does not wish them to be used in any such way.

I am not making copies of this letter. I am sending it only to you. I value more than words can express your faithful work in teaching the people to have confidence in the messages which God has sent to them through His humble servant, and it is my intense desire that the great good which you have accomplished throughout the world shall not be marred by any error [on your part] that has caused me to write the foregoing.1

As noted above, W. C. White submitted this letter to Ellen White for her approval. Probably on the basis of conversation with her at the same time, W. C. White prepared a second draft in which he refined his statement somewhat. The thematic sentence from the first letter was, "Regarding Mother's writings, she has never wished our brethren to treat them as authority on history." In the second draft, W. C. White rephrased this to the more careful construction, "... she has never wished our brethren to treat them as authority on the dates or details of

1Ibid.
history." This second draft of the letter to Haskell became the prototype for a letter to W. W. Eastman of the same date in which White continued to develop his exposition.¹

"Regarding Mother's writings and their use as authority on points of history and chronology," he wrote to Eastman,

Mother has never wished our brethren to treat them as an authority regarding the details of history or historical dates. . . . When writing out the chapters for "Great Controversy," she sometimes gave a partial description of an important historical event, and when her copyist who was preparing the manuscripts for the printer, made inquiry regarding time and place, Mother would say . . . those things are recorded by conscientious historians. Let the dates used by those historians be inserted. . . . When "Controversy" was written, Mother never thought that the readers would take it as authority on historical dates or use it to settle controversy regarding details of history, and she does not now feel that it should be used in that way. Mother regards with great respect the work of those faithful historians who have devoted years of time to the study of God's great plan as presented in the prophecy, and the outworking of that plan as recorded in history.²

Much of the letter follows the general outline of the Haskell letters. In concluding his exposition, however, White went beyond the previous letters to Haskell. "Regarding Mother's writings," he summarized,

I have overwhelming evidence and conviction that they are the description and delineation of what God has revealed to her in vision, and where she has followed the description[s] of historians or the expositions of Adventist writers, I believe that God has given her discernment to use that which is correct and in harmony with truth regarding all matters essential to salvation. If it should be found by faithful study that she has followed some exposition of prophecy which in some detail regarding dates we cannot harmonize with our understanding of secular history, it does not influence my confidence in her writings as a whole any more than my confidence in the Bible is influenced by the fact that I cannot harmonize many of the [biblical] statements regarding chronology.³

¹Ibid., W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, Nov. 4, 1912, emphasis added; W. C. White to W. W. Eastman, Nov. 4, 1912, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
²W. C. White to W. W. Eastman, Nov. 4, 1912, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.
³Ibid.
Thus White claimed to have "overwhelming evidence and conviction" that God had given his mother "discernment" to avoid error "regarding all matters essential to salvation." At the same time, knowing that in many instances she had derived dates, quotations, and chronological information from standard historians, he could not agree that those details were ultimately authoritative. If they were, there would be no room for the kind of historical investigation, verification, and correction of quotations that went into the 1911 edition of Great Controversy.

On the other hand, W. C. White also refused to go to the other extreme of denying that her writings had any degree of authority in history and theology. In the spring of 1915, F. M. Wilcox, editor of the Review and Herald, prepared an article on the gift of prophecy which he asked W. C. White to critique. In the manuscript Wilcox had made the statement, "Sister White has not been set in this church as a historian or as a theologian." W. C. White commented that "in the technical sense in which historians and theologians are regarded, this is undoubtedly true." But in the broader sense in which a historian is defined as "one who writes, compiles, or relates history" he believed Ellen White was a historian. He thought it would be "more nearly correct" to say that,

Sister White, as a teacher of sacred truth, has not been led to a technical treatment of theological questions, but has given such views of the love of God and the plan of salvation, and of man's duty to God and to his fellow men, that when presented to the people, arouse the conscience, and impress upon the hearer the saving truths of the Word of God. She says, "The written testimonies are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed."

In the technical sense of the word, Sister White is not a historian. She has not been a systematic student of history and chronology, and she has never intended that her works should be used to settle controversies over historical dates. But as one who relates history, one "in whose work the character and spirit of an age is exhibited in miniature," she is a historian whose works teach valuable lessons from the past for the present and the future.1

---

1 W. C. White to F. M. Wilcox, Apr. 27, 1915, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC; the last
It may be summarized that W. C. White, as an interpreter of his mother's theological and historical authority, was first of all a defender of the validity of her claims to inspiration. In areas for which he had no external confirmation, he defended her authority on the basis of his confidence that she had been informed by direct revelations. Moreover, he believed that she had been inspired by God even in the selection of the historical sources from which she obtained details not given her in vision.

Second, while he believed she was thus inspired and made that belief the basic a priori for all his dealings with her writings, he did not hold that she was infallible. He did not believe that God had shown her in vision every detail needed to make a connected historical narrative. He showed himself open to the evaluation of both her theological statements (as in the "daily" controversy) and her historical narratives (as in his 1912 letters to Haskell and Eastman). Therefore, against those who wanted to attribute to inspiration every detail included by Ellen White in historical narratives, W. C. White argued (in a letter which his mother approved) that she had not derived every detail from revelation and did not intend her writings to be used to prove historical details.

Finally, while W. C. White refused to attach infallibility to his mother's writings, he also rejected the opposite extreme. Against the flat statement that she was neither a theologian nor a historian, he argued that in the broader sense of those terms, she wrote much practical theology and practical history. His conviction that in her theological concepts and broad historical themes she was both inspired and

quotation is from Macaulay's Essays, quoted earlier in the same letter.
authoritative would undergird his work as the custodian and primary expositor of her writings during the rest of his lifetime.¹

Conclusions, 1900-1915

On the basis of the evidence presented in this chapter, several conclusions can be drawn regarding W. C. White and his relationship to his mother during the years 1900 to 1915.

The first group of conclusions clusters around the fact that W. C. White stood during this period at the peak of his personal influence in the denomination and that his influence was due to a great extent to his position as his mother's representative. His situation as communications link between A. G. Daniells and Ellen White along with his well-established working relationship with Daniells made him arguably the president's most influential adviser—a relationship that was the more significant during a time of schism and transition. White was highly respected by other top administrators such as W. W. Prescott and I. H. Evans, even though he did not always see eye to eye with them. He also had rather close (though sometimes strained) relations with such old-timers as S. N. Haskell and G. I. Butler.

A related group of his denominational relationships that deserves further study is his relationships to people who were perceived as marginal or as alienated from denominational leadership. These included some of the physicians associated with Kellogg, such as David Paulson, W. S. Sadler, and others, whose ties with W. C. White contributed to their later reconciliation to the main body of the denomination. Others whom W. C. White took a special interest in were the independent educators and ministers, such as E. A. Sutherland and P. T. Magan at

¹See also Bert Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the Daily," 50-53; idem, "Sligo Series," 34-39, GCAr.
the Madison school, and Edson White. While W. C. White distanced himself from
some of Edson's plans and projects, he was sufficiently sympathetic to his brother's
work to incur the disapproval of union conference presidents in the South who
tended to see both Edson's Southern Missionary Society and the schools affiliated
with Madison not so much as colleagues in denominational mission as unwelcome
competitors.

Ironically, while White enjoyed cordial reciprocity with many of the
highest level administrators, and cultivated connections with many who were
perceived as administrative outsiders, he had significant clashes with middle-level
administrators such as union conference presidents G. F. Watson, S. E. Wight, and
others. Such clashes were often precipitated by W. C. White's authoritative
application of his mother's writings to administrative issues such as the use of tithe,
the attitude of conferences toward semi-independent workers, and the financing of
the Loma Linda institutions.

Another major conclusion concerns the changes in Ellen White's posture as
a denominational leader during this period. Before 1891 she had maintained a rather
high-profile approach to her leadership role, characterized by long, strenuous
itineraries of speaking engagements at camp meetings and other convocations.
During the Australian years and continuing into the early 1900s, she gradually but
drastically reduced the frequency of her public appearances and the quantity of her
personal correspondence. In her latest years she wrote less and less new material of
any kind and concentrated her waning strength on revising and arranging for
publication the materials she had previously written.

Furthermore, as Ellen White aged and became physically feeble, the
reductions in her speaking appointments and literary production were matched by an
increasing dependence on W. C. White to convey her oral instructions through his correspondence. She also depended on him to reinforce her memory, in addition to the various counselor functions he had carried on for years. Her obvious physical decline, accompanied by gradual loss of hearing and short-term memory, lent plausibility to the arguments of her critics that she was depending on W. C. White to do her thinking as well. This was the perceptual environment in which charges of manipulation could flourish. Investigation of the most prominent instances in which W. C. White was alleged to have manipulated his mother reveals no conclusive evidence that he ever acted with conscious intent to deceive or manipulate her. While he obviously made mistakes, he appears to have consistently acted within the parameters of what she expected of him as her counselor.

Finally, as noted at the beginning of the chapter, the trials through which W. C. White passed during the tumultuous fifteen years of this period prepared him as nothing else could for his role as the chief spokesman and interpreter of his mother's writings during the remaining twenty-two years of his life. The story of those years cannot be told here; it belongs to a full biography of W. C. White or to the first chapter of a history of the White Estate. Chapter 5 presents general conclusions.
CHAPTER 5

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Based on a reconstruction of the relationship between W. C. White and his mother during sixty-one years of their personal association, conclusions can be drawn regarding four major aspects of their relationship: Ellen G. White’s influence on her son, and W. C. White’s roles as his mother’s counselor, editor, and spokesman.

Ellen White’s Influence on Her Son

The relationship between Ellen G. White and W. C. White was a reciprocal partnership in which her influence on him was prior and predominant. The preparation of W. C. White for participation in his mother’s work began with the earliest days of their relationship. It may be said that almost everything she received from him in later years was an extension and development of the ideals, values, and principles that she, his mother, had earlier built into him.

In his earliest childhood she had instructed him in obedience, self-control, courtesy, and general good behavior, holding before him the motivation of his need for the approval of God. This theme of his personal accountability to God had profound ramifications in his relationship to his mother and her work.

She early taught him to pray and by age thirteen was urging on him the necessity of taking personal responsibility for his discipleship to Christ. When she had evidence that habits of personal piety were becoming well established, she began
training him specifically for leadership, with emphasis on his deportment, influence, and appearance.

He was so similar in personality to his mother that her companionship with him was closer than her rapport with either of her older sons. In contrast to their independence, Willie was compliant and loved to please his mother. As he matured, he emulated her frugality and work ethic so completely that it is no exaggeration to call them kindred spirits. Thus by the time of his marriage at age twenty-one it was evident that his mother had instilled in him, and he had accepted, her worldview, religious beliefs, and social and ethical values.

When they went to Europe together, she continued to be his mentor, tutoring him in administrative principles and methods. This experience bore fruit in expanded leadership roles for him at the 1887 and 1888 General Conference sessions.

As had been the case in Europe, the relative isolation of the Whites in Australia during the 1890s contributed to their close reliance on each other. Again, however, she relied on him for supporting roles, while he sought her guidance on a full range of administrative and organizational issues that he faced as Australasian Union Conference president. Thus it is evident that as late in his life as his mid-forties, she still exerted a profound influence on him.

It appears highly probable that W. C. White's lifelong willingness to be taught and molded by her counsels was a weighty reason why she dared to lean so heavily on his counsel during her last years. The mental and spiritual compatibility that were the foundation of their working relationship resulted from her intentional efforts and his receptive spirit since his earliest days. Hence the observation that most of the counsel that Ellen White drew out from her son's mind in later years
was the direct or indirect product of what she herself had so carefully built into him.

There was, however, an important limit to the pervasive influence Ellen White exerted on her son. That limit was the principle she inculcated in him at five years of age, the principle of his personal accountability to God. Her lifelong practice of that principle is seen in her consistent refusal to in any way coerce or override his conscience. In the 1880s she repeatedly wished that he could give her his full-time assistance, but she balanced her requests with the insistence that he must act in accordance with his own convictions of his "duty" before God.

During the Australian years, the acute sense of her advancing age burdened her with a great urgency to hasten the publication of her writings. She repeatedly begged and pleaded for more of W. C. White's time. Yet with her strongest appeals are found the counterbalancing acknowledgements that his decision must ultimately be based on what he himself believed to be the will of God. This was confirmed by a vision in which she was shown that his conference work was definitely a part of the vocation to which he was called by God. But the urgency she felt for the progress of her own work finally led her to demand of him a choice: either help her or she would get others to do so. Yet still she left him free to make that choice. She carefully avoided setting herself in any degree as conscience for him.

Thus it may be said that the defining elements in their relationship were her leadership, coupled with their mutual recognition that his followership must be ultimately directed not to her, but to God. The balance between these two principles not only kept the relationship healthy, but was an indispensable prerequisite for his role as her advisor. It was absolutely essential that he not be a yes-man but be free to express his convictions, and this was her expectation for him as her counselor.
W. C. White's role as his mother's counselor was a growing one, in which he increasingly approximated her expectations for him. Ellen White began to seek advice from Willie when he was barely twenty, during the years of his father's illness. After she was widowed in 1881, she depended on W. C. White as an understanding listener with whom she could discuss whatever concerned her, from personal business matters to the timing and delivery of testimonies.

In W. C. White's initial experience as his mother's counselor, he was almost self-consciously deferential about making suggestions to her. By 1890, however, he had developed enough confidence in the role of advisor to give his first extant examples of strong persuasion. The initial examples of his disagreeing with her seem almost out of character with his lifelong compliance with her wishes. But careful examination of several examples demonstrates that he was not rebelling, nor does he appear to have been testing the limits of her authority. Rather, he was doing just as she wished him to do. He was thinking for himself in the context of his personal accountability to God, and, in the process, exhibiting normal adult individuation in relation to her.

Some might think it remarkable that Ellen White, who claimed the prophetic gift of inspiration, should be so open to alternate viewpoints and even persuasion. Part of the reason for her openness lies in the fact that insights came to her in many ways. Besides unequivocal visions, she also had impressions, "burdens," and convictions based on past experience, as well as information that came through conventional means. Like others, she too had to think and pray over decisions. Therefore, a sympathetic partner who shared not only her worldview, religious beliefs, and confidence in her prophetic calling, but also her entire value
system, was well equipped to help her think through the evidence surrounding any given decision.

The cognitive steps W. C. White took in evaluating and applying his mother's counsels were revealed most clearly in correspondence he had with Prescott in 1900 and Daniells in 1913. The reason he needed to carefully study her counsel and its potential application was explained by White's remark to Daniells that "many times there comes a message to us without any intimation that it is revelation or that it is a direct message from heaven, regarding duty." Not knowing definitively whether a specific message from his mother was based directly on revelation, or on her experienced interpretation of information drawn from conventional sources, White found it necessary to study the message with both possibilities in mind. As she was open to counsel, so he followed her example in being open to considering alternative perspectives on an issue.

The starting point for such a consideration was his conviction that his mother's inspiration affected everything she did. First, therefore, he "took it for granted" that her counsels consistently embodied wisdom superior to his own. Second, however, he also believed that God expected him to use his own abilities to think and pray about an issue, considering all the related factors that might have a bearing on the meaning of a statement or on the probable outcome of a proposed action. Evidently in most cases this broader study reinforced his confidence in her counsel. If, however, his study and investigation suggested some potentially negative outcomes, his third step was to share with her the problems he had thought of and possibly some alternative actions. This is the point where as her counselor he would bring to her additional information, opinion, recommendation, or even persuasion. Meanwhile she also may have acquired additional information or "light"
on the issue. The ensuing discussion would usually lead to a fuller understanding of the situation and the complete harmonizing of their views. If, however, she remained unconvinced of his alternatives and confident of her own view, he would (fourth) accept her perspective as expressing higher wisdom than his own and would act on it accordingly, whether or not he could fully explain or defend it to others.

In this way he held in balance his freedom to respectfully disagree with her (as his mother) and his submission to her judgment (in harmony with his convictions that she was a spokesperson for God). Thus Ellen White’s comprehensive training of W. C. White from infancy to middle age, balanced by her insistence that he assume full responsibility before God for his decisions, made him a counselor on whom she could lean as her own strength and vigor declined.

Despite Ellen White’s desire for her son’s counsel, she adamantly maintained final responsibility for her own decisions. Her lifelong habits of prayerful introspection and post-decision analysis led her in at least three cases to reverse herself. These instances (the October 19, 1902, interview withDaniells, W. C. White, and others; and the undelivered letters of 1904 and 1905, to Prescott and Daniells, respectively) were embarrassing to her and to W. C. White. These experiences showed, however, that when she realized that she had made mistakes in judgment she was willing to acknowledge them and amend them as far as possible.

Her admission of error in these cases was cited by critics as proof that she had been manipulated by W. C. White, but examination of the available evidence does not support the charges. Despite the mistakes made, W. C. White appears to have acted in these and similar cases within the boundaries of what his mother regularly expected of him as her counselor.

His work as editor was another area in which his mother’s expectations for
W. C. White differed significantly from the expectations that others had for him.

**W. C. White as His Mother's Editor**

Like W. C. White's role as counselor, his function as an editor of her writings began very early in his life, expanded continuously for almost forty years until her death, and afterwards culminated in his role as custodian and compiler of her unpublished manuscripts.

His first editorial experience with her came as early as his nineteenth year, and by age twenty-five (1879) he had been given the main editorial responsibility for *Testimonies* 28 and 29. This assignment involved the selection of manuscripts, their abridgment, and the deletion of identifying personal references.

During the 1880s he performed all the varied editorial functions that he would do during his lifetime, including supervising other members of Ellen White's editorial staff, editing letters and periodical articles, planning books, and compiling books from existing manuscripts. Except for an increase in scope and responsibility, his editorial role was virtually unchanged during the 1890s and the early twentieth century.

An experience that doubtless shaped all his future editing was the project of revising the *Testimonies* in the early 1880s. One lesson established through this experience was his mother's goal to make her writings as perfect as possible so that educated readers might not be repelled by deficiencies of grammar and syntax. When the long project had reached its final stages, W. C. White learned another lesson that conflicted with the first—the need to be sensitive to the denomination's reaction to obvious editing. The opposition to the revised *Testimonies* was so strong that Ellen White herself could not convince leaders such as Uriah Smith that the value of the improvements outweighed the risk of potential criticism by persons who
had their own preconceived ideas about her inspiration. Consequently, the revision was reversed to more nearly approximate the original.

One editorial standard that had been implicit from the beginning was made explicit in the 1890s. Mary Kelsey White and Marian Davis were so conscientious about the most minute editorial changes that Ellen White had to encourage them at times to assume more responsibility and not burden her with every relocated comma. Their self-distrust and reverence for the writings they were editing gave them an inherent sense of propriety. However, with the employment of Fannie Bolton, who considered herself a competent journalist in her own right, it became necessary to make explicit the limits of editorial authority on Ellen White's staff. W. C. White explained the standard: Her most experienced workers were authorized to rearrange the sequence of words and sentences and even incorporate clarifying passages from other Ellen White manuscripts in order to improve clarity and readability. But there were to be no changes in Ellen White's thought and as little as possible alteration of her distinctive style and vocabulary.

The freedom in editing that W. C. White displayed during the final fifteen years of Ellen White's life was the result of judgment honed by three decades of editorial experience under his mother's supervision. In his editing, as in some of his other roles, he was given broader authority and discretion during Ellen White's last years than some, such as Haskell, approved of. The issue, however, is not what others thought but what his mother thought, and she seems to have been quite satisfied with his performance as editor.

An aspect of his work that became more pronounced later in his life was his work as his mother's spokesman.
W. C. White as Spokesman and Interpreter

W. C. White's role as a communication link between his mother and others was one of the most complex features of his work. It included responsibilities in at least four areas: receiving and often screening incoming information and correspondence, communicating his mother's views through his own correspondence, speaking for his mother as her personal delegate, and expounding and interpreting her writings.

First, from the beginning of W. C. White's denominational employment, it was natural for him to keep his mother informed about general goings-on in the church. He early realized that because much of her incoming correspondence requested counsel on either denominational or personal problems, her mail tended to be heavily problem-oriented. Consequently he made a personal decision to encourage her with good news whenever possible and to screen out disheartening information whenever it did not require her attention.

As early as 1882 he had begun to be selective in what he shared with her from his conference contacts and from his own mail, primarily it seems, to protect himself from the "surmisings" that he was her informer in the worst sense of the word. As she grew older he found further reasons for withholding information—to spare her the emotional distress that often accompanied the reception of bad news, and to obtain for himself greater certainty that her counsels to him came from revelatory visions and insights and not as her simply human response to information he had given her.

The earliest noted example of the second aspect of his spokesman role—spokesman through correspondence—came in 1886 during his term in Europe. During the 1890s this function developed very significantly as W. C. White became
a communication conduit between his mother and A. G. Daniells. Toward the end of the Australian years, after his resignation from the union conference presidency, he handled virtually all of his mother's business correspondence, and she occasionally asked him, as her delegate, to write letters of counsel regarding institutional and administrative matters.

After the turn of the century his role as her delegated correspondent expanded further. During her very last years her staff would sort her mail and give her those letters that required her personal attention. These she would read and discuss with W. C. White if he were home. Then he would write replies over his own signature. In this way he carried on for her a voluminous correspondence, articulating and explaining her views to A. G. Daniells, W. W. Prescott, S. N. Haskell, J. A. Burden, and many others.

A third aspect of his spokesman role—his mother's personal representative—developed later than his other roles because through the end of the 1880s she was usually her own spokesperson. She personally attended General Conference sessions and preached at scores of camp meetings and other gatherings every year. No doubt the development of W. C. White's role as her personal representative also awaited his own attainment of relative maturity. Visible indicators of the beginning of W. C. White's work as his mother's delegated representative appeared in the 1880s when he articulated her views orally on denominational committees and was occasionally commissioned by his mother to make personal deliveries of private testimonies. During the Australasian years he transmitted her counsel orally to the Avondale school board and other administrative committees, but her residing nearby enabled her to attend and speak for herself on important issues.

After 1900 Ellen White's aging became more marked and her travels more
limited. W. C. White's function as her personal representative expanded proportionately. As her delegate he read her testimonies at camp meetings and councils. Beyond this, he gave addresses about her work and his relationship to it at General Conference sessions and other large convocations.

The culmination of his spokesman role during his mother’s life, and a transitional phase to the responsibilities he would carry after 1915, was his role as expositor and interpreter of her writings. During her life he functioned as a communicative conduit between his mother and other individuals and groups. After her death he became, in a sense, a conduit for the exposition of her principles to all her future readers. It was important for the denomination and for W. C. White as the one commissioned to care for and publish his mother’s writings, that the guiding principles for the interpretation of those writings be articulated while she still lived to guide and critique that articulation.

Against those who wanted to classify certain of Ellen White’s letters as uninspired, W. C. White argued for a holistic concept of her inspiration. He believed that the phenomenon of inspiration was broader than merely the transmission of information directly revealed through visions. He believed that inspiration operated in her life in a pervasive, holistic way, although he denied that this made her infallible.

Regarding the use of her writings as theological or exegetical authority, W. C. White’s role in the “daily” debate indicates his belief that the writings themselves should determine the degree of their authority for a given issue. For example, on the theology expressed in Kellogg’s Living Temple, Ellen White had stated unequivocally that it was false theology not supported by valid exegesis. On the other hand, regarding the “daily,” she disclaimed having any light on the
exegetical issue and directed that her writings not be used as authority to settle it.

As to the use of his mother's writings as authority on history, W. C. White repeatedly submitted his expositions to his mother for her review and critique. At least three of his most comprehensive statements were specifically approved by her in writing, giving evidence that his understanding closely approximated hers. White held that the thematic content of his mother's historical writings was received from visions. While he acknowledged her dependence on conventional sources for supporting information, he believed that in her theological concepts and in her broad historical themes she was both inspired and authoritative.

One's final evaluation of W. C. White's relationship to his mother and her work will depend more or less on one's presuppositions. The present study purposed to evaluate the relationship within the context of the Whites' own belief system. The evidence regarding W. C. White's character indicates that he possessed a consistent integrity, a basic humility, a concern for the needs of those around him, and, undergirding all these, a sense of his accountability to God. Though he sometimes erred in judgment, his conscientious commitment did not waver. The preponderance of evidence is that in his relationship to his mother and her work during her lifetime he was consistently loyal and trustworthy.

W. C. White's functions as editor, correspondent, and interpreter of his mother's writings continued to be important aspects of his work as a trustee of her estate after her death. To investigate in detail his career as administrator of the Ellen G. White Estate is beyond the scope of the present study. However, a brief sketch of his remaining years is given in the epilogue.
The death of Ellen G. White was a cataclysmic event for W. C. White. Despite the fact that for twenty-two years, until his own death in 1937, he would serve as the custodian of her writings, his life had been so intertwined with hers for so long that without her things would never be the same.

An immediate priority in the summer of 1915 was the executing of Ellen G. White's will and the formation of a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees for the continuation of her work. The original five trustees were W. C. White and C. C. Crisler of the Elmshaven staff; A. G. Daniells, General Conference president; F. M. Wilcox, editor of the Review; and C. H. Jones, manager of the Pacific Press.¹

Changes came rapidly to Elmshaven. Sara McEnterfer found employment at the Pacific Press. Dores E. Robinson, W. C. White's son-in-law, became employed as a minister in California. Maggie Hare Bree returned to New Zealand. Mary Steward accepted an invitation to work for the Review and Herald publishing house in Washington, D.C. Of the editorial staff, only Clarence and Minnie Hawkins Crisler remained in the fall of 1915. A year later they too would leave— for mission service in China.²

The result of the shrinking of the staff was an obvious slowing up of the work. Simultaneous with the loss of the staff, W. C. White realized another loss—a

¹E. G. White, "Last Will and Testament of Mrs. E. G. White," 2, SD, EGWRC-GC.
²W. C. White to Dear Friend, Oct. 20, 1915, WCWCF; W. C. White to Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Bree, DF 262, EGWRC-GC.
drastic diminution of his influence in denominational affairs. He continued to be appointed to the General Conference Committee and remained on the boards of Pacific Union College and the St. Helena Sanitarium, but he was not re-elected to the board of the College of Medical Evangelists or to the many other boards on which he had previously held membership.\footnote{A. L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White, April 6, 1915: A Statement," rev. ed., June 15, 1981, 26, SD, EGWRC-GC.}

Despite very clear directives in his mother's will and in other statements regarding W. C. White's "commission" to have charge of her writings and their publication after her death, there were leading individuals, including Daniells, who strongly opposed the release of any new materials not already in print. This division of opinion on the Board of Trustees virtually crippled the White Estate in its early years. This was especially true after the departure of Crisler, who with W. C. White was well acquainted with Ellen White's specific directions for the publication of several named book projects.\footnote{Ibid., 25; E. G. White, "Last Will and Testament," 1; E. G. White to [F. M.] Wilcox, Oct. 23, 1907, EGWRC-GC; W. C. White to The Executive Committee of the S. D. A. General Conference, Oct. 3, 1921, RG 261, F. M. Wilcox Ref. Files, EGW Testimonies of Special Interest Fld, GCAr.}

In the months following Ellen White's death there was "no vision or clearly-defined policy" regarding the "custody and use" of the unpublished letters and manuscripts. "In this milieu," Arthur White has observed, "W. C. White and the contribution" he might have continued to make were "largely overlooked." After Crisler left for China in the fall of 1916, "the staff at Elmshaven was reduced to W. C. White, working alone, mostly in preparing E. G. White books for [translation and] publication overseas. Only occasionally did he have the help of a part-time secretary. It was thought best that the office have no letterhead. For a
time most of his correspondence was carried on in longhand.\footnote{A. L. White, "The Prescott Letter," 26.}

This was the general context for W. C. White’s absence from the 1919 Bible Conference, which convened from July 1 through July 19, followed by the Bible and History Teachers’ Council from July 20 to August 1, 1919. The two meetings are often referred to as one event.\footnote{See, e.g., ibid., 27-31; Molleurus Couperus, "The Bible Conference of 1919: Introduction"; "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in Our Teaching of Bible and History: July 30, 1919"; "Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy as Related to the Inspiration of the Bible: Aug. 1, 1919"; Spectrum 10 (May 1979): 23-57; Robert W. Olson, "The 1919 Bible Conference and Bible and History Teachers’ Council," 1979, SD, EGWRC-GC; Bert Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily': Background and Aftermath of the 1919 Bible and History Teachers’ Conference"; Valentine, The Shaping of Adventism, 239-44.} White was invited and initially “felt a great desire to attend,” but under the pressure of trying to finish the compilation of Counsels on Health, he eventually decided against making the journey. Had White known that two full days of heavy discussion of Ellen White’s inspiration would eventually be added to the agenda, he doubtless would have made a greater effort to attend.\footnote{W. E. Howell to Dear Brother [W. C. White], May 13, June 3, 1919; W. C. White to W. E. Howell, May 21, 1919; W. E. Howell to W. C. White, May 28, 1919; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, June 6, 1919, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC; Robert W. Olson, "The 1919 Bible Conference and Bible and History Teachers’ Council," 8, 10.}

The 1920s were marked by a long struggle to gain the authority to publish Ellen G. White materials not placed in print during her life. Daniells and others on the General Conference Committee opposed any release of previously unpublished manuscripts. When W. C. White proposed in 1921 to include some previously unpublished material in Counsels on Health, Daniells insisted that no such material be incorporated without the “consent” of the General Conference Committee at the spring council. He invited White to bring the specific manuscripts to the council for
examination by the committee. White complied, but the reaction of the committee was apparently negative, for the book was eventually published without any new material.¹

Over the next four years W. C. White wrote repeatedly to the General Conference Committee, quoting extensively from E. G. White, arguing that she had invested the trustees of her estate with authority to publish new material at their discretion. Finally, in November 1925, the General Conference Committee reluctantly conceded to let the White Estate trustees exercise the prerogatives specifically accorded them in Ellen White's will. After an extended stay in Washington, White reported to his daughter that "best of all," he saw the members of the committee "‘come across' and declare (without record) that the question of printing testimony MSS. belonged to the Trustees." On Friday, November 20, the committee gave the letter "that set free the Trustees."² Eventually he was given a budget to again obtain some stenographic and editorial helpers.

In 1929 Arthur Lacey White, then twenty-two, joined the office as secretary to his father, W. C. White. Arthur eventually succeeded his father as the leading member of the White Estate Board of Trustees.³

Despite all obstacles, W. C. White succeeded in preparing for publication ten posthumous compilations of Ellen White's writings between 1920 and 1933. A

¹A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, Mar. 4, 1921; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, Mar. 8, 1921, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC; E. G. White, Counsels on Health, title page.

²W. C. White to The Executive Committee of the S. D. A. General Conference, Oct. 3, 1921, July 5, 1922, Oct. 6, 1924; W. C. White to Ella May Robinson, Dec. 8, 1925, WCWCF, EGWRC-GC.

landmark work published in 1926 was the first 865-page *Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*.¹

By the late 1920s and early 1930s it appears that denominational leaders had begun to realize anew the value of the knowledge and experience possessed by W. C. White. As he approached his eightieth year he again received some of the respect and consideration that had been withheld in the years immediately following his mother's death. L. E. Froom, editor of *Ministry*, carried on an extensive correspondence with him on a wide range of questions, and invited Arthur White to write articles for his magazine.² W. C. White was repeatedly invited to address the students at the newly formed Seventh-day Adventist Advanced Bible School (forerunner of the theological seminary), when it was located at Pacific Union College.³

Also in the 1930s, A. G. Daniells in semi-retirement moved to California where he could be more accessible to chair the boards of the College of Medical Evangelists and the Pacific Press. Monthly meetings of the three California members of the White Estate trustees led to a larger vision on Daniells' part and

---


³W. C. White, "How Ellen White's Books Were Written: Addresses to Faculty and Students at the 1935 Advanced Bible School, Angwin, California (Part I - June 18, 1935; Part II - July 27, 1935)" SD, EGWRC-AU; idem, "The Spirit of Prophecy: Six Lectures Delivered at the General Conference Advanced Bible School—1936 Term," RG 58, Ref. Files of L. E. Froom, 1940s-50s, Unfiled Fld 4, GCAr.
renewed cooperation between him and W. C. White. ¹

W. C. White's final written legacy was a series of sixty-four articles in the *Review and Herald*. Under the general title, "Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White," the series ran sometimes weekly from February 1935 through February 1938.²

White remained active to the day of his death. On August 31, 1937, two days after his eighty-third birthday, he retired early following a full day's work, but awoke before midnight complaining that he could "hardly breathe." A physician was summoned, who diagnosed an embolism of the heart. White was taken to the St. Helena Sanitarium where he died two hours later, about 1:30 A.M., September 1, 1937. Funerals were held in the Pacific Union College auditorium and in the church at Battle Creek, Michigan. He was buried beside his parents, brothers, and first wife (Mary Kelsey White) in the Oak Hill Cemetery in Battle Creek.³


Unpublished Materials

Essay on Manuscript Collections

This essay describes the unpublished sources used from various archival collections. Published materials both primary and secondary are listed in the regular way following the essay.

Adventist Heritage Center,
Janes White Library,
Andrews University,
Berrien Springs,
Michigan

Duplicate and microfilm copies of the Minutes of the General Conference (Executive) Committee and the General Conference Presidential Outgoing Letter Books from the Archives of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists are preserved in the Adventist Heritage Center.

Another important collection is that of J. H. Kellogg’s correspondence with Seventh-day Adventists, from the John Harvey Kellogg Papers in the Archives and Historical Collections of Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

Other materials used included the Australasian Union Conference Session Minutes, 1894-1899; the Avondale School Board Minutes, Oct. 22, 1897 through Jan. 3, 1899; Sidney Brownsberger, "Notes and Incidents"; the W. W. Prescott Correspondence File; and the 1924 Emmanuel Missionary College Founders’ Day speech, "From City to Vineyard, 1901," by P. T. Magan.
The holdings of the General Conference Archives that concern W. C. White overlap considerably with those of the White Estate. For instance, when W. C. White wrote to A. G. Daniells, White would keep the duplicate in his file of outgoing correspondence and the original would be preserved in Daniells's files of incoming correspondence. Furthermore, since the originals were usually typed on heavier paper than the onionskin duplicates, they are often found in a better state of preservation. Consequently, copies were made from whichever source was found first or was most convenient for photocopying. The following record groups were helpful.

Record Group 1: Minutes of the General Conference (Executive) Committee from 1887 to 1913 contains many references to W. C. White.

Record Group 9: Miscellaneous Records contains some correspondence from A. G. Daniells and O. A. Olsen not found in Record Group 11.

Record Group 11: Presidential correspondence is a rich source of materials. The letter books of O. A. Olsen, G. A. Irwin, and A. G. Daniells in "Outgoing Letters 1887-1914" contain hundreds of letters to W. C. White, especially from the years 1892-1897 and 1901-1914. After 1914 the outgoing letters and incoming letters were filed together under "General Records 1914-1973." The "Incoming Letters" to the presidents (1889-1914) contain many letters from W. C. White and from contemporaries who mentioned him. The "J. H. Kellogg Case File" in the A. G. Daniells section of Record Group 11 contains valuable background materials related to the Kellogg crisis.

Record Group 25: Minutes of the General Conference Book Committee of...
1887-1898 records the activities of a committee of which W. C. White was the first chairman.

Record Group 48: Foreign Mission Board Minutes contains many references to W. C. White from 1889 to 1903.

Record Group 58: Ministerial Association includes the Reference Files of L. E. Froom. The section "1920s-1950s" contains an extensive accumulation of materials related to the conflict over the "daily." In the section "1940s-50s" are found materials on W. C. White and his mother.

Record Group 261: F. M. Wilcox Reference Files holds the personal collection of one of the original five White Estate trustees. The folder "Ellen G. White Testimonies of Special Interest" contains many helpful materials.

Unpublished papers available at the General Conference Archives include Bert Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily': Background and Aftermath of the 1919 Bible and History Teachers' Conference," 1979; and idem, "Sligo Series, Oct. 22 and 29, 1980." Both papers have extensive sections on W. C. White's interpretation of his mother's writings.

Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan

The Andrews University Branch Office of the White Estate, referred to on campus as the Ellen G. White Research Center, was the primary location for the research of this study. In fact, all of the E. G. White and W. C. White historical materials and primary sources available at Andrews University are also available at the main office in Silver Spring, Maryland. The Andrews University office document files, which are constantly being added to, contain some recent research papers and publications which may not be found in the main office files.
The basic primary sources at the Andrews University office are the E. G. White letter and manuscript files. The letter file of E. G. White contains hundreds of her letters to and about W. C. White. The manuscript file contains her diaries, sermons, and other documents, many of which deal with W. C. White or with background issues related to him.

The letter books of W. C. White on microfilm contain most of his outgoing correspondence from 1879 to 1908. Incoming correspondence to both E. G. White and W. C. White is represented by copies of partial collections of the letters of A. G. Daniells, S. N. Haskell and Hetty H. Haskell, W. W. Prescott, James White, and a few others.


Ellen G. White Estate, Main Office, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland

In addition to the outgoing E. G. White letter and manuscript files and the W. C. White letter books mentioned above, the White Estate main office also has the outgoing correspondence file of W. C. White, the originals of his letter books, and his diaries.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
The incoming letters of E. G. White and W. C. White are filed together in one combined incoming correspondence file, designated for purposes of this study as the W. C. White Correspondence File. It contains letters from family members James White, Edson White, Mary Kelsey White, Ethel May Lacey White, and others. In addition, letters from virtually every person of any prominence in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination from the 1850s to the 1930s are included in the incoming correspondence file. This is a very rich resource for historical and biographical study.


Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office / Department of Archives and Special Collections, Loma Linda University Library, Loma Linda, California

The Loma Linda Branch Office of the Ellen G. White Estate has similar basic collections to the branch office at Andrews University. In addition, it has more detailed materials relating to the history of the Loma Linda institutions, including W. C. White, "A Series of Surprises: Speech by W. C. White in a Symposium on [the] Loma Linda College of Medical Evangelists, Mar. 31, 1911."

Also of interest for the present study was the extensive correspondence of Percy T. Magan and the David Paulson correspondence filed in the Kellogg Materials Folder. The archive also has some rare biographical materials and pictures of W. C. White, including a home movie from his eightieth birthday in 1934.

Ellen G. White Research Center / Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Collection, Pacific Union College, Angwin, California

Materials from the Heritage Room at Pacific Union College which were of particular usefulness for the present study were early historical records of Healdsburg College and Pacific Union College. Those utilized included W. C. White, "Beginnings of Healdsburg College," 1932; and idem, "Founding of Healdsburg College," n.d.

Contributing much to the larger scope of the study was a very extensive bibliography compiled by Special Collections Librarian Gary W. Shearer, "Ellen G. White, Her Life and Teachings, and the Gift of Prophecy in the Seventh-day Adventist Church," 1991.
During 1989 and 1991 some twenty persons were interviewed, most of whom knew W. C. White in his later years. All but one of these interviews were tape recorded and copies are in the author's personal collection. Relatives of W. C. White who were interviewed included Grace White Jacques (b. 1900), daughter of W. C. White; Daphne Odell (b. 1924), granddaughter of W. C. White; Alta E. Robinson (b. 1912), granddaughter-in-law of W. C. White (widow of Virgil Robinson, W. C. White's grandson, but contemporary with the children of W. C. White's second marriage); Margaret Rossiter White Thiele (b. 1901), daughter-in-law of W. C. White (widow of James Henry White); Arthur L. White (b. 1907) and Frieda White, son and daughter-in-law of W. C. White; Francis E. White (b. 1913) and Rachel White, son and daughter-in-law of W. C. White; and Ruth E. Jacobs, grand-niece of Mary Kelsey White.

Other contemporaries of W. C. White who were interviewed included Florence L. Alsberge (b. 1893), Ella Morrison Coffey (b. 1897), Elsie Hoatson Elbon (b. 1907), Ruth Miller Gibson (b. 1904), J. Lee Neil (b. 1908), Adam Ratzlaff (b. 1893), J. Alfred Simonsen (b. 1898), Marvin Walter (b. 1913), Chester Westphal (b. 1907), Hershel Dennis Wheeler (b. 1895), Ruth Carr Wheeler (b. 1899), and Hazel Wheeler Yates (b. 1904).

Theses and Dissertations


Published Materials

Periodicals

[Australasian] Union Conference Record, 1898-1900, 1928.

Bible Echo and Signs of the Times, 1886-1900.


Insight, 1980.


Ministry, 1928, 1983.


Signs of the Times, 1874-1915.

Books and Pamphlets


Conradi, L. R. "Whoso Readeth, Let Him Understand": *A Short Key to Dan. 7-12.* Hamburg, Germany: International Tract Society, [1910].


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


________. The Final Word and a Confession. [Battle Creek, MI]: n.p., [1906].

________. Religious Liberty. [Battle Creek, MI]: n.p., [1906].


Prescott, W. W. "The Daily": *A Brief Reply to Two Leaflets on This Subject*. N.p.: [ca. 1910].


*Seventh-day Adventist Year Book.* Battle Creek: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1889, 1892.


Smith, Uriah, and others. *In Memoriam: A Sketch of the Last Sickness and Death of Elder James White, Who Died at Battle Creek, Michigan, August 6, 1881, together with the Discourse Preached at His Funeral.* Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Press, 1881.


[Stewart, Charles E.] *A Response to an Urgent Testimony from Mrs. Ellen G. White Concerning Contradictions, Inconsistencies and Other Errors in Her Writings.* Battle Creek, MI: Liberty Missionary Society, 1907.


________. Life Sketches of Ellen G. White: Being a Narrative of Her Experience to 1881 as Written by Herself; with a Sketch of Her Subsequent Labors and of Her Last Sickness Compiled from Original Sources. Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1915.


________. Spiritual Gifts. 4 vols. Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1858-64.

________. Steps to Christ. Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1892.


