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A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844–2000)

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Introduction

Seventh-day Adventists form a modern eschatological movement born out of the study of the Holy Scriptures, with the specific mission of proclaiming the Word of God “to every nation and tribe and tongue and people” (Rev 14:6, RSV). In many places around the world Seventh-day Adventists have actually been known as the “people of the Book.” As a people Adventists have always held—and presently hold—high respect for the authority of the Bible. However, at times in the denomination’s history different views on the nature of the Bible’s inspiration have been discussed within its ranks.

The present study provides a general chronological overview of those major trends and challenges that have impacted on the development of the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of inspiration between 1844 and 2000. An “annotated bibliography” type of approach is followed to provide an overall idea of the subject and to facilitate further investigations of a more thematic nature.

The Adventist understanding of inspiration as related to both the Bible and the writings of Ellen White is considered for two evident reasons: (1) While their basic function differs, Adventists have generally assumed that both sets of writings were produced by the same *modus operandi* of inspiration, and (2) there is an organic overlapping of the views on each in the development of an understanding of the Bible’s inspiration.

Terminology employed in discussing the nature of biblical inspiration is often confusing. Such technical expressions as *mechanical* inspiration, *verbal* inspiration, *plenary* inspiration, and *thought* inspiration have at times carried

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different meanings. Because of the various shades of meaning, it is important to be aware of the basic understanding of those terms.

Thus, *mechanical* inspiration is usually associated with the theory that all the words of Scripture, even down to the Hebrew vowel points, were actually dictated by the Holy Spirit. This theory virtually negates the human element of Scripture.

Verbal inspiration normally is understood by its advocates to mean the Holy Spirit guided the writers not only in receiving a divine message but also in communicating it, without completely eliminating the personality and the style of the writers. The emphasis, however, is on the end-product of the whole inspiration process, namely, on the words of Scripture.

The term *plenary* inspiration points out that Scripture in its entirety is inspired, making no distinction between alleged inspired and non-inspired words. Some authors prefer this term in order to distinguish their position from any mechanical understanding of inspiration, which may at times be associated with the term verbal inspiration.

Lastly, *thought* inspiration is proposed by others to indicate that it is the writer who is inspired, the Holy Spirit thereby transmitting God's thoughts to the writer, who then chooses the proper words to express those thoughts under the continued guidance of the Spirit.

It will become obvious from the following discussion that there are instances where some authors use terms without clearly defining them, taking for granted that their meaning is common knowledge. This, however, can lead to different interpretations.

The Millerite Legacy

Seventh-day Adventists inherited their early views of Scripture from their former denominations and the Millerites. William Miller,¹ the founder and main leader of Millerism, had accepted the views of Deism as a young man in his twenties. Miller at that time actually gave up his faith in "the Scriptures as a revelation from God to man" because of "some inconsistencies and contradictions in the Bible" which he was "unable to harmonize."² Thus, his questioning of the Bible's inspiration was occasioned by alleged discrepancies in the Bible.

After twelve years (1803-1816) in deistic circles, Miller had a conversion experience, after which he began a two-year period (1816-1818) of intensive study of Scripture. His basic assumption was that "if the Bible was the word of God, every thing contained therein might be understood, and all its parts be

¹For a more detailed study of Miller's view of Scriptures, see Steen R. Rasmussen, "Roots of the Prophetic Hermeneutic of William Miller" (M.A. thesis, Andrews University extension course at Newbold College, England, 1983), 16-36.

²William Miller, *Apology and Defence* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1845), 2-3. Cf. J. V. H[imes], "Memoir of William Miller," *Midnight Cry*, Nov. 17, 1842, [1].

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made to harmonize.”³ Miller stated that at the end of his intensive Bible study “all the contradictions and inconsistencies” he “had before found in the Word were gone,” and he “felt a delight in studying the Scriptures which” he “had not before supposed could be derived from its teachings.”⁴

In his 1822 Statement of Faith, Miller expressed his conviction that “the Bible is given by God to man” as “a revelation of God to man.”⁵ In 1836 Miller asserted that “there never was a book written that has a better connection and harmony than the Bible,” which has “a general connection through the whole.”⁶

While dealing with some difficulties in the Bible, Miller even preferred to blame its translators rather than to admit obscurities and inconsistencies in the original text.⁷ In other words, Miller came to accept the full authority and inspiration of the Bible because he became convinced that there was harmony and unity in its content. For him, inspiration affected the actual text of Scripture and not just the general ideas.

According to Steen Rasmussen, “Miller’s basic attitude towards the Bible—that in order to be the word of God it must be wholly clear, consistent, and without contradictions—never changed from his childhood till his death.”⁸ When he finally concluded that Scripture was clear and consistent, he accepted its ultimate authority.

Early Seventh-day Adventist View (1844-1883)

Sabbatarian Adventists kept William Miller’s high view of Scripture. James White, for instance, stated in *A Word to the “Little Flock”* (1847) that “the [B]ible is a perfect, and complete revelation” and “our only rule of faith and practice.”⁹ The third article of the 1872 statement of Seventh-day Adventist fundamental beliefs composed by Uriah Smith asserted similarly that “the Holy Scriptures, of the Old and New Testaments, were given by inspiration of God, contain a full revelation of his will to man, and are the only infallible rule of faith and practice.”¹⁰

³Miller, *Apology and Defence*, 5-6.

⁴Ibid., 12. Cf. [Josiah Litch], “Rise and Progress of Adventism,” *Advent Shield and Review*, May 1844, 49-50.

⁵William Miller, [“Statement of Faith”], Sept. 5, 1822, ASC; Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1853), 77.

⁶William Miller, *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ, about the Year 1843* (Troy, [NY]: Kemble & Hooper, 1836), 5.

⁷See e.g., Miller’s lecture on Ezekiel 39:1, 11, in [William Miller], *Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology*, ed. Joshua V. Himes (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1842), 67.

⁸Rasmussen, “Roots of the Prophetic Hermeneutic,” 20.

⁹[James White], in idem, ed., *A Word to the “Little Flock,”* (Brunswick, ME: [James White], 1847), 13.

¹⁰[Uriah Smith], *A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1872), 5, art. III. See also “Fundamental Principles,” *Signs of the Times* (hereafter *ST*), June 4, 1874, 3; *Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists*, Words of Truth Series, no. 5

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Apart from such concise statements about the authority of Scripture, not much was penned by Seventh-day Adventists on the nature of its inspiration up to the early 1880s. The major Seventh-day Adventist concern on the subject of the Bible during this early period was to defend its divine origin from infidel (deist) attacks.¹¹ Such defenses of the Bible provide, however, insightful evidences of the early Adventist views on the infallibility and trustworthiness of Scripture.

Moses Hull, a Seventh-day Adventist minister, made the first significant Seventh-day Adventist response to infidel attacks on Scripture in his 1863 book, *The Bible from Heaven*.¹² Hull advocated the authenticity, integrity, and credibility of the Bible,¹³ insisting that nothing in the Bible contradicts any of the sciences of “physiology, anatomy, hygiene, materia medica, chemistry, astronomy, or geology.”¹⁴

In 1867 the *Review* came out with a series of twenty-two responses to the so-called “self contradictions” of the Bible raised by infidels against the Christian religion.¹⁵ Those responses dealt, for example, with such issues as whether one woman or two went to Christ’s sepulcher (John 20:1; Matt 28:1);¹⁶ whether Christ ascended from Mount Olivet or from Bethany (Acts 1:9, 12; Luke 24:50, 51);¹⁷ and whether 24,000 or 23,000 Israelites died by the plague in Shittim (Num 25:9; 1 Cor 10:8).¹⁸

Another significant defense of the Bible was penned by A. T. Jones, a Seventh-day Adventist minister working in Oregon (who would become one of the major protagonists of the 1888 General Conference session), through a series,

(Battle Creek, MI: [Review and Herald], 1897), 3-4; Uriah Smith, “Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (hereafter *RH*), Aug. 22, 1912, 4; F. M. W[ilcox], “A Conference on Christian Fundamentalism,” *RH*, June 19, 1919, 6.

¹¹One of the most influential deistic books of that time was still Thomas Paine’s *The Age of Reason. Being an Investigation of True and of Fabulous Theology* (Boston: Thomas Hall, 1794).

¹²Moses Hull, *The Bible from Heaven: Or A Dissertation on the Evidences of Christianity* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1863). This book was later on revised, expanded, and republished (in 1878) under the authorship of D. M. Canright. See D. M. Canright, *The Bible from Heaven: A Summary of Plain Arguments for the Bible and Christianity* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1878).

¹³Hull, *Bible from Heaven*, 79.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 168-69.

¹⁵Editorial, W. C. G[rainger], and J. M. A[ldrich]. “The Infidel’s Objection to the Bible, Answered,” 22-part series in *RH*, June 18, 1867, 4; June 25, 1867, 20; July 2, 1867, 36; July 9, 1867, 52; July 23, 1867, 84; July 30, 1867, 100; Aug. 6, 1867, 116; Aug. 13, 1867, 132; Aug. 20, 1867, 148; Aug. 27, 1867, 164; Sept. 3, 1867, 180; Sept. 10, 1867, 196; Sept. 17, 1867, 212; Sept. 24, 1867, 228; Oct. 1, 1867, 244; Oct. 8, 1867, 260; Oct. 15, 1867, 276; Oct. 29, 1867, 300; Nov. 12, 1867, 332; Nov. 26, 1867, 372.

¹⁶Editorial, “Infidel Objections to the Bible Answered. No. 7,” *RH*, Aug. 6, 1867, 116.

¹⁷Editorial, “Infidel Objections to the Bible Answered. No. 15,” *RH*, Sept. 24, 1867, 228.

¹⁸J. M. A[ldrich], “Infidel Objections to the Bible Answered. No. 22,” *RH*, Nov. 26, 1867, 372.

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“A Review of Paine’s ‘Age of Reason,’” which appeared in the *Review* in 1880.¹⁹

That early Seventh-day Adventists regarded the Scriptures as infallible and inerrant is evident from the uncritical reprint in the *Review* of several portions from non-Adventist authors that fostered such a view. In 1859, for example, the *Review* reprinted a large paragraph from Louis Gaussen’s *Theopneustia*,²⁰ stating that not “one single error” could ever be found in the more than 31,000 verses of the Bible.²¹ Some paragraphs of John H. Pratt’s *Scripture and Science Not at Variance*²² came out in the *Review* in 1880, declaring that the Holy Spirit preserved the writers of the Holy Scriptures “from errors of every kind in the records they made.”²³ An entire lecture of H. L. Hastings on inspiration appeared in the *Review* in 1883,²⁴ referring to the Scriptures as “the transcript of the Divine Mind.”²⁵

Sparse statements on inspiration can be found also in the articles and books penned during that period (1844-1883) about the prophetic gift of Ellen White.²⁶ Those statements, however, were more concerned about proving the inspiration of her writings than in discussing the actual nature of inspiration.

Up to the early 1800s no clear discussion of the doctrine of inspiration is found in Seventh-day Adventist literature. While responding to “infidel” attacks against the trustworthiness of the Bible, Seventh-day Adventists demonstrated their commitment to a view of Scripture similar to Miller’s. Such responses to infidelity clearly show that early Seventh-day Adventists were convinced that the process of inspiration preserved the actual text of the Scriptures from factual errors and contradictions.

¹⁹A. T. Jones, “A Review of Paine’s ‘Age of Reason,’” 4-part series in *RH*, March 25, 1880, 195-96; April 1, 1880, 211-12; April 8, 1880, 226-27; April 15, 1880, 244-45.

²⁰[Louis] Gaussen, *Theopneustia. The Bible: Its Divine Origin and Inspiration, Deduced from Internal Evidence, and the Testimonies of Nature, History and Science*, new and rev. ed. (Cincinnati: Cranston and Stowe, n.d.), 257-59.

²¹[Louis] Gaus[s]en, “Perfection of the Bible,” *RH*, Sept. 15, 1859, 134.

²²John H. Pratt, *Scripture and Science Not at Variance; With Remarks on the Historical Character, Plenary Inspiration, and Surpassing Importance, of the Earlier Chapters of Genesis*, 7th ed., rev. and corr. (London: Hatchards, Piccadilly, 1872), 286-88, 302.

²³[John H.] Pratt, “Inspiration,” *RH*, Feb. 26, 1880, 139.

²⁴H. L. Hastings, “The Inspiration of the Bible,” 2-part series in *RH*, Nov. 13, 1883, 714-16; Nov. 27, 1883, 746-48.

²⁵H. L. Hastings, “Inspiration of the Bible,” *RH*, Nov. 27, 1883, 748.

²⁶See *Witness of the Pioneers concerning the Spirit of Prophecy: A Facsimile Reprint of Periodical and Pamphlet Articles Written by the Contemporaries of Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1961); [Uriah Smith], *The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White, A Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts according to the Scriptures* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1868).

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Focus on the Nature of Inspiration (1883-1915)

By 1883, Seventh-day Adventists had for about four decades been mainly concerned with defending the divine inspiration of the Bible from *outside* infidel challenges. However, some *internal* crises regarding the nature and authority of Ellen White's writings pushed Seventh-day Adventists in the 1800s into a more thoughtful discussion of the doctrine. During that period two major questions were raised: (1) Are there *degrees* of inspiration? and (2) did the Holy Spirit dictate the actual *words* of the inspired writings?

Are There Degrees of Inspiration? Administrative problems and conflicts of personality at Battle Creek College led Ellen White to send a few testimonies to Uriah Smith, editor of the *Review* and president of the college board, reproving him for some unwise decisions.²⁷ Resentment against such reproofs was one factor that led Smith to the assumption that not all Ellen White writings were equally inspired. By the Spring of 1883 Smith was convinced that while Mrs. White's "visions" were truly inspired, her "testimonies" were not.²⁸

It seems that to harmonize such quarrels about the trustworthiness of Ellen White's testimonies, George I. Butler, General Conference president, wrote for the *Review* a series of ten articles on "Inspiration,"²⁹ in which he sought to provide a biblical rationale for the theory of "degrees of inspiration."³⁰ According to E. K. Vande Vere, if Butler "could show that the Bible contained human elements, then by implication, the Testimonies contained many more human elements" and could not be regarded as absolutely perfect.³¹

Assuming that inspiration varies according to the various forms of revelation, Butler argued that the Scriptures "are inspired just in the degree that the person is inspired who writes them."³² Since Scripture resulted from different forms of revelation,³³ according to Butler, there likewise had to be distinct degrees of inspiration, of authority, and of imperfection. For him the Scriptures "are authoritative in proportion to the degrees of inspiration,"³⁴ and are perfect

²⁷For a more detailed discussion of the subject, see Eugene F. Durand, *Yours in the Blessed Hope, Uriah Smith* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 229-246; Allan G. Lindsay, "Goodloe Harper Bell: Pioneer Seventh-day Adventist Christian Educator" (Ed.D. diss., Andrews University, 1982), 192-231.

²⁸U[riah] Smith to [D. M.] Canright, March 22, 1883, ASC.

²⁹G. I. B[utler], "Inspiration," 10-part series in the *RH*, Jan. 8, 1884, 24; Jan. 15, 1884, 41; Jan. 22, 1884, 57-58; Jan. 29, 1884, 73-74; Feb. 5, 1884, 89-90; Apr. 15, 1884, 249-50; Apr. 22, 1884, 265-67; May 6, 1884, 296-97; May 27, 1884, 344-46; June 3, 1884, 361-62.

³⁰For a more detailed discussion of the subject, see Peter M. van Bemmelen, "The Mystery of Inspiration: (An Historical Study About the Development of the Doctrine of Inspiration in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with Special Emphasis on the Decade 1884-1893)" (Term paper, Andrews University, 1971).

³¹Emmett K. Vande Vere, *Rugged Heart: The Story of George I. Butler* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1979), 66.

³²G. I. B[utler], "Inspiration[.—No. 1]," *RH*, Jan. 8, 1884, 24.

³³See G. I. B[utler], "Inspiration[.—No. 2]," *RH*, Jan. 15, 1884, 41.

³⁴G. I. B[utler], "Inspiration[.—No. 1]," *RH*, Jan. 8, 1884, 24.

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only as they are necessary for achieving the purpose for which they were given—"to make us wise unto salvation" (2 Tim 3:15).³⁵

Such a theory of inspiration led Butler to suggest a hierarchy within the biblical canon, in which "the books of Moses and the words of Christ" appeared in the first and highest level; "the writings of the prophets and apostles and a portion, at least, of the Psalms" in the second level; "the historical books" in the third level; and "the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, and the book of Job" in the last and lowest level.³⁶ Beyond those levels, Butler pointed out some specific passages (Rom 15:24; 1 Cor 1:16; 4:19; 7:7-40; 16:5-9; 2 Cor 11:21; Phil 2:19, 23; 2 Tim 4:9ff) which he "could hardly call inspired."³⁷

Thus, under the assumption that different forms of revelation implied distinct degrees of inspiration, Butler ended with a hierarchy within the biblical canon, and in fact even rejected some texts as uninspired.

Although the theory of degrees of inspiration was advocated outside Adventist circles,³⁸ this was the first time such theory was advanced in an official Seventh-day Adventist publication. There are indications that it was so influential that some people were prompted to almost completely disregard Ellen White's testimony at the 1888 General Conference session in Minneapolis.³⁹

By the late 1880s the theory of degrees of inspiration continued to be fostered in some Seventh-day Adventist circles.⁴⁰ In response to this, Ellen White penned in a letter to R. A. Underwood, president of the Ohio Conference, that it was shown to her that "the Lord did not inspire the articles on inspiration published in the *Review*." Since "to criticize the Word of God" is to "venture on sacred, holy ground," no human being should ever "pronounce judgment" on God's Word, "selecting some things as inspired and discrediting others as uninspired." She explained also that "the testimonies have been treated in the same way; but God is not in this."⁴¹

In a similar manner, the Senior Sabbath School lesson for January 7, 1893, also denied the possibility of "different degrees of inspiration," for the reason

³⁵G. I. B[utler], "Inspiration.—No. 9," *RH*, May 27, 1884, 344.

³⁶G. I. B[utler], "Inspiration.—No. 7," *RH*, April 22, 1884, 265-66.

³⁷G. I. B[utler], "Inspiration.—No. 10," *RH*, June 3, 1884, 361.

³⁸See e.g., Daniel Wilson, *The Evidences of Christianity*, 5th ed. (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1845), 1:278-89; Samuel Davidson, *An Introduction to the Study of the New Testament, Critical, Exegetical, and Theological* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1868), ix-x; Thomas H. Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1846), 1:474ff.; [F. W.] Farrar et al., *Inspiration: A Clerical Symposium on "In What Sense, and Within What Limits, Is the Bible the Word of God?"* 2d ed. (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1885), 137-54, 202-42.

³⁹See George R. Knight, *Angry Saints: Tensions and Possibilities in the Adventist Struggle over Righteousness by Faith* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1989), 85-91.

⁴⁰See e.g., M. H. Brown's motion in "General Conference Proceedings," *RH*, Nov. 25, 1884, 745; Ellen G. White to R. A. Underwood, Jan. 18, 1889, EGWRC-AU.

⁴¹E. G. White to R. A. Underwood, Jan. 18, 1889, EGWRC-AU.

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that “such a view destroys the authority of God’s word and gives to each one a Bible made by himself.”⁴²

Did the Holy Spirit Dictate the Actual Words? Another discussion that engaged Seventh-day Adventists during the period under consideration (1883-1915) concerned whether the Holy Spirit dictated the actual words of inspired writings.

A partial response to this issue came from the 1883 General Conference Session, which suggested a grammatical revision of Ellen White’s *Testimonies for the Church*.⁴³ At that time the General Conference appointed a committee of five individuals—W. C. White (chair), Uriah Smith, J. H. Waggoner, S. N. Haskell, and George I. Butler—to supervise that revision. The rationale for such a revision was stated as follows:

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 republication of these volumes such verbal changes be made as to remove the above-named imperfections, as far as possible, without in any measure changing the thought.⁴⁴

While opposing the theory of mechanical inspiration, the motion did not mention any factual error in the content of the *Testimonies*. Only grammatical “imperfections” should be corrected, without changing the thought “in any measure.”

George W. Morse likewise opposed the theory of mechanical inspiration when he stated in the *Review* of March 7, 1888, that “by the inspiration of the Scriptures is not meant the inspiration of the words and phrases, but the general purpose and use of the same.”⁴⁵

Uriah Smith, who had been a member of the committee for revising the *Testimonies*, proposed, however, a week later (March 13), a *via-media* solution to the tensions between the theories of mechanical inspiration and thought inspiration. In an article in the *Review* he suggested that if the words were “spoken directly by the Lord,” then “the words are inspired.” If the words did not come directly from the Lord, then “the words may not be inspired,” but only “the

⁴²*Sabbath School Lessons for Senior Classes*, no. 98 (1st quarter, 1893), 9.

⁴³For further study of the revision of Ellen White’s *Testimonies*, see Jerry Allen Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White: The Relationship between the Prophet and Her Son*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, Vol. 19 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews UP, 1993), 122-29.

⁴⁴“General Conference Proceedings,” *RH*, Nov. 27, 1883, 741-42.

⁴⁵G. W. Morse, “Scripture Questions,” *RH*, March 6, 1888, 155.

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ideas, the facts, the truth, which those words convey.”⁴⁶ I have not been able to locate any specific reaction to this article.

Leaning evidently towards a more mechanical view of inspiration, D. M. Canright, ex-Seventh-day Adventist minister and writer, began to attack the inspiration of Ellen White’s writings after he left the Seventh-day Adventists in early 1887. Already in the 1888 edition of his book, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*,⁴⁷ Canright stated that Ellen White was “not inspired” because, among other things, (1) she herself changed the wording of previous drafts of her own writings; (2) she incorporated suggestions from her husband and secretaries in the process of correcting the grammar and improving the style of her writings; and (3) she often copied “without credit or sign of quotation” from other non-inspired authors.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, several Seventh-day Adventist authors stressed that the process of inspiration had actually exercised a controlling influence on the whole writing of Scripture. In 1890, for instance, it was stated in the *Signs of the Times* that

the New Testament does not speak of inspiration as being given to men, or of men being inspired. It was the writings which were inspired, or, literally, “God-breathed.” The New Testament declares this repeatedly of the Old Testament. See 2 Tim 3:15, 16; Acts 1:16; Heb 3:7; 1 Peter 1:11. Peter classes Paul’s writings with the Scriptures, and Paul declares that his words were given by the Spirit of God. 2 Peter 3:16; 1 Cor 2:13.⁴⁹

In 1905 *The Beacon Light*, by Robert Hare, a Seventh-day Adventist minister and writer working in Melbourne, Australia, came off the press with a quotation from James Hamilton,⁵⁰ stating that “in theopneustic Scripture we have a book, every sentence of which is truly human, and yet every sentence of which is truly divine.”⁵¹

While denying the “verbal inspiration of translations,” the *Signs of the Times* in 1909 emphasized the verbal inspiration of the words of Scripture in the original Hebrew, Chaldaic [Aramaic], and Greek languages. “These words,” it was stated, “were the words inspired by the Spirit of God.”⁵²

⁴⁶[Uriah Smith], “Which Are Revealed, Words or Ideas?,” *RH*, March 13, 1888, 168-69.

⁴⁷D. M. Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced: After an Experience of Twenty-eight Years by a Prominent Minister and Writer of that Faith* (Kalamazoo, [MI]: Kalamazoo Publishing Co., 1888). Some historians, unaware of this edition, mention 1889 as the year when this book was first published.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 44-45.

⁴⁹Editorial, “Questions on Inspiration,” *ST*, Oct. 27, 1890, 531.

⁵⁰James Hamilton, *The Lamp and the Lantern: or, Light for the Tent and the Traveller* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1866), 85.

⁵¹Robert Hare, *The Beacon Light[,] or Book of the Ages* (Melbourne, Australia: Signs Publishing Company, 1905), 19.

⁵²Editorial, “2976.—Versions and Verbal Inspiration,” Question Corner, *ST*, Nov. 17, 1909, 2 (italics in the original).

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A more mechanical view of inspiration was stressed by Dr. David Paulson, founding-president of Hinsdale Sanitarium, in a letter to Ellen White (1906). Paulson stated in that letter: “I was led to conclude and most firmly believe that *every* word that you ever spoke in public or private, that every letter you wrote under *any* and *all* circumstances, was as inspired as the ten commandments.”⁵³

That Ellen White did not endorse such a mechanical view of inspiration is evident from her response to Paulson on June 14, 1906. In that response she clearly stated that neither she nor the other Seventh-day Adventist pioneers “ever made such claims.”⁵⁴

Further evidence that Ellen White did not endorse such a view of inspiration was provided in the revisions of her book *The Great Controversy* for its 1911 edition.⁵⁵ While grammatical revisions of her manuscripts had been previously done, in 1910 she asked the help of W. W. Prescott in checking the historical sections of this book. As an advocate of Gaussen’s views of verbal inspiration,⁵⁶ Prescott felt very uneasy about having to suggest revisions to the writings of an inspired prophet.⁵⁷

This experience certainly became a decisive factor in leading Prescott to the assumption that the Scriptures were *verbally* inspired but not Ellen White’s writings.⁵⁸ Also in the same context, W. C. White stated in 1911 that his mother (Ellen White) “never claimed to be authority on history” and “never laid claim to verbal inspiration.”⁵⁹

By contrast, in the same year (1911) Milton C. Wilcox, editor of the *Signs of the Times*, gave evidence of his agreement with Prescott on a verbal concept of inspiration. In his book, *Questions and Answers*, Wilcox stated that “the

⁵³Quoted in Ellen G. White to David Paulson, June 14, 1906, EGWRC-AU. (The words “every,” “any,” and “all” are underlined in the original.) This letter was published in idem, *Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 1:24-31.

⁵⁴E. G. White to David Paulson, June 14, 1906, EGWRC-AU.

⁵⁵Compare Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1911) with idem, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan during the Christian Dispensation*, rev. and enl. ed. (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1888).

⁵⁶W. C. White letter to L. E. Froom, January 8, 1928,” in Appendix C of E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3:454.

⁵⁷See Appendixes A-C of E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3:433-65; Arthur L. White, “W. W. Prescott and the 1911 Edition of Great Controversy” (Ellen G. White Estate shelf document, 1981); idem, “The Prescott Letter to W. C. White, April 6, 1915” (Ellen G. White Estate shelf document, n.d.); idem, *Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 6:302-37.

⁵⁸W. W. Prescott, in “The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in Our Teaching of Bible and History,” 29-30, in 1919 Bible Conference transcripts, July 30, 1919, fld. 5, EGWRC-AU; idem, in “Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy as Related to the Inspiration of the Bible,” 21-28, in 1919 Bible Conference transcripts, Aug. 1, 1919, fld. 5, EGWRC-AU. Cf. Gilbert M. Valentine, “William Warren Prescott: Seventh-day Adventist Educator” (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 1982), 515, fn. 2.

⁵⁹Appendix A, in E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3:437. For a more detailed discussion on W. C. White’s statement on Ellen White’s historical authority, see Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 427-36.

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original words” “by which prophet and apostle spoke” were inspired. “It was not the person,” according to Wilcox, “who was inspired; it was the God-breathed Word.”⁶⁰

Ellen G. White’s View of Inspiration. It was also during the period under consideration (1883-1915) that Ellen White penned some of her more significant statements on inspiration.⁶¹

For Ellen White the inspiration of Scripture is a mystery that parallels the incarnation of Christ. She declares that as Christ was at the same time divine and human (John 1:14), so “the Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine with the human.”⁶² So organically merged are the two elements throughout Scripture (cf. 2 Tim 3:16) that “the utterances of the man are the word of God,”⁶³ and no one should ever attempt to tell “what is inspired and what is not”⁶⁴ or to point out “degrees of inspiration.”⁶⁵

In opposition to the theory of *mechanical* inspiration, Ellen White asserted in 1886 that “the writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen.” She explained it further by saying the following:

It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man’s words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind.⁶⁶

In opposition to the theory of *seminal thought* inspiration, i.e. that only general thoughts were inspired, Ellen White explained that “the scribes of God wrote as they were dictated by the Holy Spirit, having no control of the work

⁶⁰Milton C. Wilcox, *Questions and Answers Gathered from the Question Corner Department of the Signs of the Times* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 12.

⁶¹See e.g., E. G. White, *Great Controversy* (1888), a-h; idem, *Selected Messages*, 1:15-76; 3:28-124. For further study of Ellen White’s doctrine of inspiration, see also Leslie Hardinge, “An Exploration of the Philosophy of Inspiration in the Writings of Mrs. Ellen G. White” (Unpubl. ms., n.d.), AHC; Raoul Dederen, “Ellen White’s Doctrine of Scripture,” supplement to *Ministry* (hereafter *Min*), July 1977, 24F-24J; Steven G. Daily, “*How Readest Thou*: The Higher Criticism Debate in Protestant America and Its Relationship to Seventh-day Adventism and the Writings of Ellen White, 1885-1925” (M.A. thesis, Loma Linda University, 1982), 122-39; Roy E. Graham, *Ellen G. White: Co-Founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (New York: Peter Lang, 1985), 140-84; James H. Burry, “An Investigation to Determine Ellen White’s Concepts of Revelation, Inspiration, ‘The Spirit of Prophecy,’ and Her Claims about the Origin, Production and Authority of Her Writings” (M.A. thesis, Andrews University, 1991); Gerard Damsteegt, “The Inspiration of Scripture in the Writings of Ellen G. White,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* (hereafter *JATS*) 5 (Spring 1994): 155-79.

⁶²E. G. White, *Great Controversy* (1888), vi.

⁶³Ellen G. White, “Objections to the Bible,” Ms. 24, 1886, EGWRC-AU.

⁶⁴E. G. White, “The Guide Book,” Ms. 16, 1888, EGWRC-AU.

⁶⁵E. G. White to R. A. Underwood, Jan. 18, 1889, EGWRC-AU.

⁶⁶E. G. White, “Objections to the Bible,” Ms. 24, 1886, EGWRC-AU.

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themselves,⁶⁷ and that she herself was “just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing a vision, as in having the vision.”⁶⁸

The tension between those statements is harmonized in the following quotation from Ellen White:

Although I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, yet the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own, unless they be those spoken to me by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation.⁶⁹

Although Ellen White recognized the existence of *transmission errors* and *difficulties* in Scripture,⁷⁰ I have been unable to find any instance in which she mentioned specific factual errors in Scripture. As silent as the writers of the New Testament had been in pointing out factual errors in the Old Testament, so was Ellen White in regard to the total canon of Scripture.

The difficulties of Scripture were regarded by her not as “an argument against the Bible” but as “a strong evidence of its divine inspiration.” While “the way of salvation” is discernable even to “the humble and uncultured,” there are in Scripture mysteries that challenge “the most highly cultivated minds.”⁷¹ Speaking about such mysteries Ellen White warned that

men of ability have devoted a lifetime of study and prayer to the searching of the Scriptures, and yet there are many portions of the Bible that have not been fully explored. Some passages of Scripture will never be perfectly comprehended until in the future life Christ shall explain them. There are mysteries to be unraveled, statements that human minds cannot harmonize. And the enemy will seek to arouse argument upon these points, which might better remain undiscussed.⁷²

While admitting that the human language of Scripture is “imperfect,” she still held that God’s Word “is infallible” and should be accepted “as it reads.”⁷³ She stated, for instance, that in Scripture the history of Israel was traced by “the

⁶⁷E[llen] G. White, *Testimony for the Church*, no. 26 (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1876), 5. Cf. idem, *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views* (Rochester, NY: James White, 1854), 8.

⁶⁸Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts [vol. 2]: My Christian Experience, Views and Labors* (Battle Creek, MI: James White, 1860), 293.

⁶⁹Ellen G. White, “Questions and Answers,” *RH*, Oct. 8, 1867, 260. See also idem, *Selected Messages*, 1:37.

⁷⁰See e.g., Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts [vol. 1]: The Great Controversy, between Christ and His Angels, and Satan and His Angels* (Battle Creek, MI: James White, 1858), 117 (reprinted in idem, *Early Writings of Mrs. White* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1906], 220-21); idem, *Selected Messages*, 1:16-17.

⁷¹Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1892), 126.

⁷²E[llen] G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1915), 312.

⁷³E. G. White, “The Tasmanian Camp-meeting,” *RH*, Feb. 11, 1896, 81.

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unerring pen of inspiration” “with exact fidelity.”⁷⁴ She regarded the Bible also as the “unerring standard” by which “men’s ideas of science” should be tested.”⁷⁵ Therefore, “the Holy Scriptures are to be accepted,” according to Ellen White, “as an authoritative, infallible revelation of his will.”⁷⁶

The fact that “the finite mind is inadequate to grasp the infinite” should in no way discourage human beings from a thoughtful, reverent study of Scripture.⁷⁷ She even pointed out that

as several writers present a subject under varied aspects and relations, there may appear, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clear insight, discerns the underlying harmony.⁷⁸

Noteworthy also is the fact that Ellen White made use of different versions of the Bible in her writings.⁷⁹ The use of different versions was also supported by other contemporary Seventh-day Adventists.⁸⁰ This is a significant point because later on the issue of the reliability of certain English translations of the Bible would be raised in Seventh-day Adventist circles.⁸¹

⁷⁴Ellen G. White, *Testimony to the Church*, no. 28 (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1879), 171.

⁷⁵E. G. White, “Science and Revelation,” *ST*, March 13, 1884, 161; idem, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1904), 8:325.

⁷⁶E. G. White, *Great Controversy* (1888), d; ibid. (1911), vii.

⁷⁷E. G. White, *Steps to Christ*, 123-35.

⁷⁸E. G. White to David Paulson, June 14, 1906, EGWRC-AU; idem, *Selected Messages*, 1:25.

⁷⁹For a more detailed study of Ellen G. White’s use of Bible versions, see “Instances of the Use of Various Versions in the Spirit of Prophecy Writings,” DF 391-b, EGWRC-AU; Arthur L. White, “Mrs. Ellen G. White and the Revised Version of 1881-1885 and 1901” (Ellen G. White Estate shelf document, 1953); Arlyn D. Stewart, “An Analysis of Ellen Gould White’s Use of the English Versions in the Light of the Greek New Testament” (M.A. thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1954); D[on] F. N[eufeld], “Bible Translation Methods Examined—5: Ellen G. White’s Use of Various Versions,” *RH*, Dec. 21, 1967, 12-13; William Larry Richards, “Ellen G. White and Her Use of Versions” (Term paper, Andrews University, 1968); Frank W. Hardy, “Ellen White’s Use of Bible Versions Other than King James,” supplement to *Historicism*, no. 23 (July 1990); Arthur L. White, “The E. G. White Counsel on Versions of the Bible” (Ellen G. White Estate shelf document, 1953, rev. 1991).

⁸⁰See e.g., Editorial, “The Revised Version,” *ST*, July 21, 1881, 318-19; W. H. Littlejohn, “Scripture Questions: 82.—The New Version vs. the Old,” *RH*, March 20, 1883, 186.

⁸¹See e.g., Benjamin G. Wilkinson, *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated* (Washington, DC: n.p., 1930); “A Review of ‘Our Authorized Bible Vindicated,’ by B. G. Wilkinson” (N.p., [1931]), AHC; Benjamin G. Wilkinson, “A Reply to the ‘Review’ of My Book, ‘Our Authorized Bible Vindicated’” (N.p., n.d.), AHC; Committee on Problems in Bible Translation, *Problems in Bible Translation* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1954); D. F. N[eufeld], “Bible Translation Methods Examined,” 5-part series in *RH*, Nov. 16, 1967, 13; Nov. 30, 1967, 11-12; Dec. 7, 1967, 13-14; Dec. 14, 1967, 13; Dec. 21, 1967, 12-13; Ranulfo L. Raposo, “History of Preservation of the New Testament Manuscripts, the Development of Corrupted Texts and Its Impact Today upon the Sabbath” (Term paper, Andrews University, 1994).

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That by the late 19th and early 20th centuries Seventh-day Adventists still regarded the Scriptures as the infallible and trustworthy Word of God is evident from their responses to higher criticism.⁸² For example, Charles M. Snow, editor of *Liberty* magazine and associate editor of the *Review*, stated in 1912 that the assumption that

the Word of God is “inspired, but not infallible,” is the reiteration on earth of Satan’s challenge to God in heaven. When man sets himself up as a judge of the words and works of God, the rebellion in heaven is reproduced in the earth.⁸³

As previously seen, it was during the period under consideration (1883-1915) that Seventh-day Adventists began to face an internal crisis on the nature of inspiration. Significantly, it was during that period that Ellen White penned some of her most deliberate statements on the subject. These would be studied again and again by Seventh-day Adventists as they continued the study of the biblical teaching of inspiration after her passing on July 16, 1915.

Seventh-day Adventists and the Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy (1915-1950)

Since its very inception in 1844 Seventh-day Adventism had developed under the stabilizing influence of Ellen White. From 1915 on, however, her influence was largely confined to the legacy of her writings. This transition contributed to the development of an identity crisis about the nature and authority of those writings that had been obviously nourished by the revision of the *Testimonies* in the mid-1880s and of the *Great Controversy* in the early 1910s. That crisis reached its climactic expression in the Summer of 1919 in the context of the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy that challenged a large number of North American denominations. While Modernists, under the influence of Darwinian evolutionism, challenged the historicity of the biblical accounts of creation and of other supernatural divine interventions, Fundamentalists were de-

⁸²See e.g., L. A. S[mith], “The True Basis for a Genuine Revival,” *RH*, Jan. 5, 1905, 5-6; idem, “Modern Criticism of the Decalogue,” *RH*, Jan. 26, 1905, 6; C. M. S[now], “The Higher Critic and God’s Word,” *RH*, Nov. 28, 1907, 4-5; idem, “The New Salvation,” *RH*, Nov. 28, 1907, 5; R. “The Age of Apostasy,” *ST*, Oct. 6, 1909, 9-10; Editorial, “The Drift in Christendom,” *ST*, Feb. 8, 1910, 10; Earle Albert Rowell, “Higher Criticism,” 16-part series in *ST*, May 10, 1910, 6-7; May 17, 1910, 6-7; May 24, 1910, 6-7; May 31, 1910, 6; June 7, 1910, 3-4; June 14, 1910, 6-7; June 21, 1910, 6-7; June 28, 1910, 5, 9; July 5, 1910, 4-5; July 12, 1910, 6-7; July 19, 1910, 5-6; July 26, 1910, 5-6; Aug. 9, 1910, 7-8; Aug. 16, 1910, 7-8; Aug. 30, 1910, 5, 8; Sept. 6, 1910, 7-8; C. H. Edwards, “Facing the Crisis,” *RH*, May 18, 1911, 3-5; Earle Albert Rowell, “Higher Criticism the Enemy of Seventh-day Adventists,” *RH*, Nov. 9, 1911, 7.

For a more detailed study of Ellen White’s rebuttal to higher criticism, see also Peter Maarten van Bemmelen, “The Authenticity and Christo-centricity of the Pentateuch according to the Writings of Ellen G. White” (Term paper, Andrews University, 1978); Daily, “How Readest Thou.”

⁸³C. M. S[now], “An Attack upon God,” *RH*, Oct. 24, 1912, 11.

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fending the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture in response to those challenges.⁸⁴

Three significant events took place in mid-1919 in the development of the Seventh-day Adventist doctrine of inspiration. Firstly, Francis M. Wilcox, editor of the *Review*, published in the June 19 issue of that periodical a large report on the “Christian Fundamentals” Conference, which he had attended in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in late May.⁸⁵ Secondly, a Bible Conference for denominational editors, college teachers of Bible and history, and members of the General Conference Committee was held in Washington, DC, from July 1 to 21, 1919. Thirdly, D. M. Canright’s *Life of Mrs. E. G. White*⁸⁶ came off the press also in July 1919,⁸⁷ as the author’s final criticism of Ellen White.

Of special significance were the sections of July 30 and August 1 of the Bible and History Teachers’ Council that followed immediately after the 1919 Bible Conference.⁸⁸ Dealing respectively with “The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in Our Teaching of Bible and History”⁸⁹ and “Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy as Related to the Inspiration of the Bible,”⁹⁰ those sessions were generally question-answer discussions chaired by Arthur G. Daniells, president of

⁸⁴For a representative exposition of the early Fundamentalist view of Scriptures, see *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, 12 vols. (Chicago, IL: Testimony Publishing Company, [1910-15]). Cf. J. Schoneberg Setzer, “A Critique of the Fundamentalist Doctrine of the Inerrancy of the Biblical Autographs in Historical, Philosophical, Exegetical and Hermeneutical Perspective” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1964); Michael H. Blanco, “The Hermeneutic of *The Fundamentals*” (Ph.D. diss., The Pennsylvania State University, 1990).

An insightful study of the broader early twentieth-century controversy between Fundamentalism and Modernism has been provided by George M. Marsden in his *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford UP, 1980).

⁸⁵F. M. W[ilcox], “A Conference on Christian Fundamentals,” *RH*, June 19, 1919, 2, 5-8. See also Calvin Bollman, “Christian Fundamentals,” *RH*, July 3, 1919, 5-7.

⁸⁶D. M. Canright, *Life of Mrs. E. G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Prophet: Her False Claims Refuted* (Cincinnati, [OH]: The Standard Publishing Company, 1919).

⁸⁷Carrie Johnson, *I Was Canright’s Secretary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1971), 165.

⁸⁸For further study of the 1919 Bible Conference and Bible and History Teachers’ Council, see Mollerus Couperus, “The Bible Conference of 1919,” *Sp* 10 (May 1979): 24-57; Robert W. Olson, “The 1919 Bible Conference and Bible and History Teachers’ Council” (Ellen G. White Estate shelf document, 1979); Bert Haloviak, “In the Shadow of the ‘Daily’: Background and Aftermath of the 1919 Bible and History Teachers’ Conference” (A paper presented at the meeting of Seventh-day Adventist Bible Scholars in New York City, November 14, 1979); Bert Haloviak and Gary Land, “Ellen White & Doctrinal Conflict: Context of the 1919 Bible Conference,” *Sp* 12 (June 1982): 19-34; Valentine, “William Warren Prescott,” 504-19.

⁸⁹“The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in Our Teaching of Bible and History,” in 1919 Bible Conference transcripts, July 30, 1919, fld. 5, EGWRC-AU.

⁹⁰“Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy as Related to the Inspiration of the Bible,” in 1919 Bible Conference transcripts, Aug. 1, 1919, fld. 5, EGWRC-AU.

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the General Conference. The focal points of these discussions were the issues of “verbal inspiration” and “infallibility” of prophetic writings.⁹¹

Regarding the subject of verbal inspiration⁹² of Ellen White’s testimonies, A. G. Daniells stated that neither Ellen White, nor James White, nor W. C. White, nor anyone of “the persons who helped to prepare those Testimonies” ever claimed it.⁹³ Reactions to this position can be found in F. M. Wilcox’s question to W. W. Prescott, “Do you believe that a man who doesn’t believe in verbal inspiration of the Bible believes the Bible?”⁹⁴ Clifton L. Taylor, head of the Bible Department of Canadian Junior College, remarked:

With regard to the verbal inspiration of the Testimonies, I would say that I have heard more about it here in one day than ever before in my life. I think we have made a great big mountain of difficulty to go out and fight against. I do not believe that our people generally believe in the verbal inspiration of the Testimonies. I think that the general idea of our people is that the Testimonies are the writings of a sister who received light from God. As to verbal inspiration, I think they have a very ill-defined idea. I think they believe that in some way God gave her light, and she wrote it down, and they do not know what verbal inspiration means.⁹⁵

As far as infallibility is concerned, A. G. Daniells stated that it is not right to regard the Spirit of Prophecy as “the only safe interpreter of the Bible.”⁹⁶ He argued also that Ellen White “never claimed to be an authority on history” or “a dogmatic teacher on theology”⁹⁷ and that she never regarded her “historical quotations” as infallible.⁹⁸ C. L. Benson, professor of History at Union College, reacted to this position, inquiring:

If there are such uncertainties with reference to our historical position, and if the Testimonies are not to be relied on to throw a great deal of light upon our historical positions, and if the same is true with reference to our theological interpretation of texts, then how can we consistently place implicit confidence in the direction that is given with reference to our educational problems, and our medical school, and even our denominational organization? If there is a definite spiritual leadership in these things, then how can we consistently lay

⁹¹A. G. Daniells, in *ibid.*, 14-15.

⁹²For a more detailed study of the 1919 Seventh-day Adventist discussion on “verbal inspiration,” see Valentine, “William Warren Prescott,” 515, fn. 2.

⁹³A. G. Daniells, in “Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy as Related to the Inspiration of the Bible,” 17, in 1919 Bible Conference transcripts, Aug. 1, 1919, fld. 5, EGWRC-AU.

⁹⁴F. M. Wilcox, in “Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in Our Teaching of Bible and History,” 30, in 1919 Bible Conference transcripts, July 30, 1919, fld. 5, EGWRC-AU.

⁹⁵C. L. Taylor, in “Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy as Related to the Inspiration of the Bible,” 6, in 1919 Bible Conference transcripts, Aug. 1, 1919, fld. 5, EGWRC-AU.

⁹⁶A. G. Daniells, in “Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in Our Teaching of Bible and History,” 9, in 1919 Bible Conference transcripts, July 30, 1919, fld. 5, EGWRC-AU.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 16.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 26.

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aside the Testimonies or particularly lay them aside when it comes to the prophetic and historic side of the message? and place these things on the basis of research work?⁹⁹

The same issue was also raised by C. L. Taylor in the following words:

If we must lay aside what Sister White has said interpreting history, or what we might call the philosophy of history, as unreliable, and also lay aside as unreliable expositions of [S]cripture, the only natural conclusion for me, and probably for a great many others, would be that the same authorship is unreliable regarding organization, regarding pantheism, and every other subject that she ever treated on;—that she may have told the truth, but we had better get all the historical data we can to see whether she told the truth or not.¹⁰⁰

That the church leadership at large did not follow Daniells' views of inspiration is evident not only from the fact that the records of the 1919 Bible Conference and Bible and History Teachers' Council were not brought to public attention during the years that followed that conference,¹⁰¹ but also from the fact that his views were not reflected in the content of the several books and pamphlets¹⁰² and of the Sabbath School quarterly¹⁰³ published during the 1920s and 1930s in defense of the Bible as the Word of God.

During the 1920s and 1930s Seventh-day Adventists supported Fundamentalism in uplifting the trustworthiness of the Bible in the context of the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy. That Seventh-day Adventists had historically held to a view of Scripture that had much in common with Fundamentalism is evident from their former responses to "infidels" and to higher criticism.¹⁰⁴ Thus, William G. Wirth clearly stated that there could be "no neutral ground" in

⁹⁹C. L. Benson, in "Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy as Related to the Inspiration of the Bible," 4-5, in 1919 Bible Conference transcripts, Aug. 1, 1919, fld. 5, EGWRC-AU.

¹⁰⁰C. L. Taylor, in *ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰¹The records of the 1919 Bible Conference and Bible and History Teachers' Council were misplaced until December 1974, when F. Donald Yost found them. M. Couperus, "The Bible Conference of 1919," *Sp* 10 (May 1979): 26.

¹⁰²See e.g., H. L. Hastings, *Will the Old Book Stand? A Compilation from the Anti-Infidel Library and Other Writings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, [1923]); Carlyle B. Haynes, *Christianity at the Crossroads* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1924); William G. Wirth, *The Battle of the Churches: Modernism or Fundamentalism, Which?* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1924); Milton C. Wilcox, *The Surety of the Bible[.] God's Multiplied Witness* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1925); Frederick C. Gilbert, *The Bible[.] a Twentieth-Century Book* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1927); Carlyle B. Haynes, *The Bible: Is It a True Book? An Inquiry into the Origin, Authenticity, History, and Character of the Sacred Writings of Christianity* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1927); Fannie D. Chase, *The Bible—Book Divine* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1933); Carlyle B. Haynes, *God's Book* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1935).

¹⁰³*Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly*, no. 152 (2nd quarter, 1933).

¹⁰⁴For a comparative study between Seventh-day Adventism and Fundamentalism, see Carl Walter Daggy, "A Comparative Study of Certain Aspects of Fundamentalism with Seventh-day Adventism" (M.A. thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1955).

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the battle between Modernism and Fundamentalism.¹⁰⁵ And F. M. Wilcox added that “Seventh-day Adventists, with their historical belief in the Divine Word, should count themselves the chief of Fundamentalists today.”¹⁰⁶

On July 15, 1920, the *Review* published a report on the second Conference of Christian Fundamentals, held in Chicago, Illinois. Leon A. Smith, literary editor of the Press Bureau of the General Conference, reported that “the conference affirmed its belief in the verbal inspiration of the Old and New Testaments as first penned by the Bible writers.” For Smith, “all this was good.”¹⁰⁷

In 1919 S. N. Haskell, a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist and administrator, had already defined inspiration as “God’s breath, using the vocal organs of the prophet” (cf. Dan 10:17, 19).¹⁰⁸

In 1926 Benjamin L. House, professor of Bible and Homiletics at Pacific Union College, devoted a special section of his *Analytical Studies in Bible Doctrines for Seventh-day Adventist Colleges* to the topic of “The Inspiration of the Bible.”¹⁰⁹ One of the first paragraphs of that section was a quotation from the non-Adventist author William Evans,¹¹⁰ stating that since inspiration is “*God speaking through men,*” the Old Testament is “*just as much the Word of God as though God spake every single word of it with His own lips.*”¹¹¹

Later on in the book, House defined more clearly his own concept of inspiration. He distinguished inspiration from revelation by postulating that while revelation is the “act of God by which He directly communicates truth to man,” inspiration “refers to the divine superintendence which has been given in speaking or writing all of the records found in the Bible.” Therefore, “all ‘revelation’ is ‘inspired,’ but all that is ‘inspired’ did not come by ‘revelation.’”¹¹²

Holding the view of “Verbal or Plenary Inspiration,” House rejected the theories (1) of *partial* inspiration, for implying that “the Bible contains much that is not inspired”; (2) of *concept* or *thought* inspiration, for leaving the Bible writers “absolutely to themselves in the choice of words they should use”; (3) of *mechanical* or *dynamic* inspiration, for not accounting for “the different style of the various writers” and for “the material secured from historical records”; (4) of

¹⁰⁵Wirth, *Battle of the Churches*, 7.

¹⁰⁶F. M. Wilcox, “Forsaking the Foundations of Faith,” *RH*, Nov. 28, 1929, 14. See also George McCready Price, “The Significance of Fundamentalism,” *RH*, May 12, 1927, 13-14.

¹⁰⁷Leon A. Smith, “The Chicago Conference of Christian Fundamentals,” *RH*, July 15, 1920, 20.

¹⁰⁸S. N. Haskell, *Bible Handbook* (South Lancaster, MA: Bible Training School, 1919), 9.

¹⁰⁹Benjamin L. House, *Analytical Studies in Bible Doctrines for Seventh-day Adventist Colleges: A Course in Biblical Theology*, tentative ed. ([Washington, DC]: General Conference Department of Education, 1926), 60-69.

¹¹⁰William Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible* (Chicago: The Moody Press, 1912), 194-45.

¹¹¹House, *Analytical Studies*, 60 (italics supplied in replacement to the original emphasis). This quotation was still preserved in the 1928 edition of House’s book.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 62.

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natural inspiration, for denying “the supernatural and the mysterious in the Bible”; and (5) of *illumination* or *universal Christian* inspiration, for holding that “the Christians of every age have been inspired just the same as the Bible writers.”¹¹³

According to House, the theory of “Verbal or Plenary Inspiration” holds that

all Scripture is inspired, 2 Tim. 3:16, that the selection of the very words of Scripture in the original languages was overruled by the Holy Spirit in some [way] . . . , and that the writers did experience the guiding and controlling influence of the divine Spirit in the choice of material. He guided the writer even in the choice of what imperial decrees, genealogies, official letters, state papers, or historical matters he might find necessary for recording the divine message of salvation.¹¹⁴

Also in 1926, F. M. Wilcox penned that since it was “the Spirit of Christ in the prophets” who “testified through them” (cf. 1 Pet 1:10, 11),

it was not David who spoke, not Isaiah, not Daniel, but Christ speaking through them. *Nor was it the instrument through whom the message came that was inspired; it was the message itself.* Indeed, the prophets oftentimes failed to understand their own prophecies, and with others had to search what God had revealed through them, to find that salvation of which they prophesied.¹¹⁵

In 1927 Carlyle B. Haynes, president of the South American Division, penned an insightful chapter on “The Inspiration of the Book” in his *The Bible: Is It a True Book?* Haynes stated in this chapter that

the Bible is a divine *revelation* embodied in an *inspired* Book. By revelation God makes known to man that which he could never know or discover for himself. By inspiration God so guides and controls man that his writing even of things not revealed is precise and accurate.¹¹⁶

According to Haynes, “the Bible declares that God *did* inspire its writers and writings.” Since “it does not tell us *how* He did this,” “we have nothing to do with the *method* of inspiration,” but “we have everything to do with the *fact* of inspiration.”¹¹⁷ Haynes declared that although “the words of the Bible were not dictated to the inspired writers as a man would dictate to a stenographer,”

¹¹³Ibid., 66-68.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 66.

¹¹⁵Francis M. Wilcox, *What the Bible Teaches: A Synopsis of Leading Bible Doctrines Setting Forth the Everlasting Gospel as Revealed in Jesus Christ Our Divine Lord and Only Saviour* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1926), 8 (italics supplied).

¹¹⁶Haynes, *The Bible: Is It a True Book?*, 67 (italics in the original).

¹¹⁷Ibid. 70 (italics in the original).

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the Holy Spirit mysteriously controlled the whole process by which the Holy Scriptures were produced. Haynes explained that

when God inspired men to write, the personality of the writer was not effaced, his style was not set aside. The Spirit of God infallibly guided in the communication of divine truth from the writer's own vocabulary, and in his own particular style. Inspiration means that the Spirit, by a mysterious control beyond our comprehension, but in which we may and should believe, acted in such a way upon chosen men while they were writing the books of the Bible, that they were supernaturally guided in communicating the will of God. Their individual human personalities, their peculiar mental traits, and even their forms and styles of literary expression were apparently given full sway and liberty, and were used by the Spirit, and yet the product was so controlled that it became "the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." 1 Peter 1:23.¹¹⁸

Although Ellen White and other Seventh-day Adventist authors had endorsed the use of different English versions of the Bible, in 1930 Benjamin G. Wilkinson, dean of the School of Theology and professor of Biblical Exegesis at Washington Missionary College, published his *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated*, advocating the reliability of the King James Version and blaming other modern versions for being distorted by Modernist influence.¹¹⁹ Such blames were responded to by a committee from the General Conference,¹²⁰ to which Wilkinson, in turn, replied.¹²¹

In June 1931 the *Ministry* reprinted several paragraphs from the non-Adventist E. Kretzmann's article "Modern Views about Inspiration."¹²² This reprint stated, under the title "Valuable Quotations from Reliable Sources," that "all the thoughts" and "all the words of Scriptures" were inspired by the Holy Spirit. "Not only is every word of doctrine true, but there is also no mistake in the historical data offered, nor in any other point of divine or human knowledge." Since "the Holy Scripture consists of words," "if we do not accept verbal inspiration, then it is senseless, nonsensical, to speak of an inspiration of the Bible."¹²³

The contemporary emphasis on the trustworthiness of the Bible was also reflected in the wording of the 1931 "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists." Instead of speaking of the Holy Scriptures as "the only *infallible* rule of faith and practice," as both the 1872¹²⁴ and 1889¹²⁵ statements of beliefs did,

¹¹⁸Ibid., 76-77.

¹¹⁹Wilkinson, *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated*.

¹²⁰"A Review of 'Our Authorized Bible Vindicated,' by B. G. Wilkinson" (N.p., [1931]), AHC.

¹²¹Wilkinson, "Reply to the 'Review' of My Book, 'Our Authorized Bible Vindicated,'" AHC.

¹²²P. E. Kretzmann, "Modern Views about Inspiration—and the Truth of Scriptures," *Princeton Theological Review* 27 (April 1929): 227-44.

¹²³"Valuable Quotations from Reliable Sources," *Min*, June 1931, 20-21.

¹²⁴[U. Smith], *Declaration of the Fundamental Principles*, 5, art. III (italics supplied).

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the 1931 statement came out referring to Scripture as “the only *unerring* rule of faith and practice.”¹²⁶ The Sabbath School lesson for April 8, 1933, referred to Numbers 22:38 and Ezekiel 1:3; 2:7 in support of the idea that “inspiration does not leave a man to speak his own words.”¹²⁷

Also in 1933, an eighteen-part series by F. M. Wilcox came out in the *Review*, under the general title “Testimony of Jesus,”¹²⁸ which appeared the next year (1934) in book form.¹²⁹ In this series Wilcox moved perceptibly away from his previous understanding of verbal inspiration. He argued that inspired writers did not claim infallibility for themselves,¹³⁰ and that Ellen White was not “verbally inspired” in the sense that she received “the exact words in which her thoughts” were expressed.¹³¹

In 1935 C. B. Haynes, then president of the Michigan Conference, came out with his 222-page book, *God’s Book*,¹³² expanding considerably the author’s previous arguments on inspiration.¹³³ In this new book Haynes spoke of revelation as “the *informing* process” and inspiration as “the *imparting* process.” He argued that as the information recorded by inspired writers not always comes from supernatural revelation, so individuals who sometimes receive divine revelations do not necessarily become inspired prophets (cf. Exod 19ff).¹³⁴

Haynes stated that in Scripture “there is no mechanical dictation, but *inspiration*,” which “means more than an *uninspired* account of *inspired* thoughts.” For him, inspiration was *plenary*, by which he suggested that “God’s inspiration includes the form as well as the substance,” and that it “extends to the words as well as the thoughts.” Haynes justified his position saying that “we cannot know God’s thoughts unless we know His words.”¹³⁵

¹²⁵*Seventh-Day Adventist Year Book of Statistics for 1889* (Battle Creek, MI: Review & Herald, 1889), 148, art. III (italics supplied).

¹²⁶*1931 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, [1931]), 377, art. 1 (italics supplied).

¹²⁷*Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly*, no. 152 (2nd quarter 1933), 7.

¹²⁸[Francis M. Wilcox], “The Testimony of Jesus,” 18-part series in *RH*, July 6, 1933, 6-7; July 13, 1933, 9-10; July 20, 1933, 8-9; July 27, 1933, 8, 20; Aug. 3, 1933, 5-6; Aug. 10, 1933, 5-6; Aug. 17, 1933, 5-6; Aug. 31, 1933, 10-11; Sept. 7, 1933, 5-6; Oct. 5, 1933, 8-10; Oct. 12, 1933, 9-10; Oct. 19, 1933, 6-7; Oct. 26, 1933, 8-9; Nov. 2, 1933, 7-9; Nov. 16, 1933, 2, 7; Nov. 23, 1933, 4-5, 11; Nov. 30, 1933, 10-11; Dec. 7, 1933, 5-7, 17.

¹²⁹Francis M. Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1934).

¹³⁰F. M. Wilcox, “Testimony of Jesus,” *RH*, Oct. 5, 1933, 8-10.

¹³¹F. M. Wilcox, “Testimony of Jesus,” *RH*, Oct. 19, 1933, 6-7.

¹³²Haynes, *God’s Book*. In 1950 a 420-page revised and enlarged edition of this book was published under the title *The Books of All Nations*. No revisions were made in the main chapter on inspiration (chapter 18), except to the addition of some new paragraphs, which only expanded the author’s previous views of inspiration. See Carlyle B. Haynes, *The Book of All Nations*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1950), 232, 250-54.

¹³³See Haynes, *The Bible: Is It a True Book?*, 67-77.

¹³⁴Haynes, *God’s Book*, 136 (italics in the original).

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, 138 (italics in the original).

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Haynes argued also that the Bible writers “required *inspiration*” to produce a record “infallibly preserved” from “all error and mistake.”¹³⁶ He regarded the Bible as infallibly accurate and precise not only in its historical accounts but also in its “predictions of the future.”¹³⁷ For him “the *facts* of science and the teachings of the Bible are in complete agreement.”¹³⁸

In 1940 Haynes even stated that Seventh-day Adventists “are Fundamentalists in their understanding and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.”¹³⁹ In 1944 Walter E. Straw argued that “no authenticated scientific fact has been revealed that was contrary to the teaching of the Bible” and that “no archeological discovery has revealed truths contrary to the Bible.”¹⁴⁰

Also in 1944, a new edition of F. M. Wilcox’s *Testimony of Jesus*, with an additional chapter on “The Inspiration of the Bible Writers,” came off the press.¹⁴¹ It was in this chapter that probably for the first time Ellen White’s Manuscript 16, 1888 (“The Inspiration of the Word of God”)¹⁴² and Manuscript 24, 1886 (“Objections to the Bible”) appeared in print.¹⁴³ The second of these manuscripts would be quoted frequently in later discussions of the Seventh-day Adventist teaching of biblical inspiration.

Noteworthy, it was also during the period under consideration (1915-1950) that some of the most significant Seventh-day Adventist studies in geology, biblical archeology, and biblical chronology appeared in support of the trustworthiness of the Bible. George M. Price,¹⁴⁴ for instance, penned several books in which he used geological data to support the biblical accounts of creation and the flood.¹⁴⁵ W. W. Prescott,¹⁴⁶ Lynn H. Wood,¹⁴⁷ and several others¹⁴⁸ used

¹³⁶Ibid., 136-37 (italics in the original).

¹³⁷Ibid., 92.

¹³⁸Ibid., 150 (italics in the original).

¹³⁹Carlyle B. Haynes, *Seventh-day Adventists—Their Work and Teachings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1940), 9.

¹⁴⁰W. E. Straw, *Bible Doctrines for College Students* (Berrien Springs, MI: Emmanuel Missionary College, 1944), 43.

¹⁴¹Francis M. Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus: A Review of the Work and Teachings of Mrs. Ellen Gould White*, [enl. ed.] (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1944), 11-18.

¹⁴²In Ms. 16, 1888, Ellen White criticized the attempts to solve “the supposed difficulties of Scripture” by distinguishing between “that which is inspired and that which is not inspired.”

¹⁴³In Ms. 24, 1886, appear Ellen White’s often quoted statements that “the Bible is written by inspired men” and that “it is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired.”

¹⁴⁴Harold W. Clark, *Crusader for Creation: The Life and Writings of George McCready Price* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1966); Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 72-101.

¹⁴⁵See e.g., George McCready Price, *The Fundamentals of Geology and Their Bearing on the Doctrine of a Literal Creation* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913); idem, *The New Geology* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1923); idem, *Evolutionary Geology and the New Catastrophism* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1926); idem, *A History of Some Scientific Blunders* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1930); idem, *The Geological-Ages Hoax: A Plea for Logic in Theoretical Geology* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1931); idem, *Modern Discoveries which Help Us to Believe*

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archeology in furthering the historicity of Bible accounts. Edwin R. Thiele demonstrated in his Ph.D. dissertation, "The Chronology of the Kings of Judah and Israel" (1943),¹⁴⁹ that many of the so-called historical discrepancies of the Bible could actually be synchronized.¹⁵⁰

Despite the seeds of disbelief in Ellen White's prophetic ministry that Ludwig R. Conradi sowed in Europe during the 1930s,¹⁵¹ several new books came of the press in both the United States and Europe (between 1915 and 1950) advocating the genuineness of her prophetic gift.¹⁵² Those books, however, were more concerned with proving the prophetic gift of Ellen White than in discussing the actual nature of her inspiration.

Up to the 1950s Seventh-day Adventists were much concerned about defending the trustworthiness of Scripture from Modernist attacks. The inspiration of the Scriptures was largely defined during that period in terms of infallibility and verbal inspiration. However, from the 1950s Seventh-day Adventists would

(New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1934); idem, *The Modern Flood Theory of Geology* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1935); idem, *Genesis Vindicated* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1941); idem, *Common-Sense Geology* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1946).

¹⁴⁶W. W. Prescott, *The Spade and the Bible: Archeological Discoveries Support the Old Book* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1933).

¹⁴⁷See e.g., Lynn H. Wood, "Archeology's Contribution to Faith," 2-part series in *Min*, Jan. 1938, 18-19, 46; Feb. 1938, 13-14, 41-42; idem, "The Bible and Archeology," 3-part series in *Min*, April 1940, 23-26; May 1940, 16-18, 46; June 1940, 8-10; idem, "Archeology and the Bible," 5-part series in *RH*, Sept. 3, 1942, 3-4; Sept. 10, 1942, 5-7; Sept. 17, 1942, 5-7; Sept. 24, 1942, 4-6; Oct. 1, 1942, 3-5.

¹⁴⁸For a more detailed study of Seventh-day Adventist interest in biblical archeology, see Lloyd A. Willis, *Archaeology in Adventist Literature, 1937-1980*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 7 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1982).

¹⁴⁹Edwin R. Thiele, "The Chronology of the Kings of Judah and Israel" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1943). See also Edwin R. Thiele, "The Chronology of the Kings of Judah and Israel," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 3 (July 1944): 137-86; idem, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings: A Reconstruction of the Chronology of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1951).

¹⁵⁰See Siegfried H. Horn, "From Bishop Ussher to Edwin R. Thiele," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* (hereafter *AUSS*) 18 (Spring 1980): 37-49; Edwin R. Thiele, "The Chronology of the Hebrew Kings," *Adventist Review* (hereafter *AtR*), May 17, 1984, 3-5.

¹⁵¹See Johann H. Gerhardt, "L. R. Conradi, the Development of a Tragedy" (Term paper, Andrews University, 1970); Daniel Heinz, *Ludwig Richard Conradi: Missionar der Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten in Europa* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1987), 107-13.

¹⁵²See e.g., F. C. Gilbert, comp., *Divine Predictions of Mrs. Ellen G. White Fulfilled* (South Lancaster, MA: Good Tidings Press, 1922); W. Mueller, *Die geistlichen Gaben unter Berücksichtigung der Schriften von E. G. White* (Hamburg: Advent-Verlag, n.d.); Carlyle B. Haynes, *The Gift of Prophecy* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1931); Arthur G. Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1936); William A. Spicer, *The Spirit of Prophecy in the Advent Movement* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1937); Lewis H. Christian, *The Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1947); George K. Abbott, *The Witness of Science to the Testimony of the Spirit of Prophecy*, rev. ed. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948).

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see the rise of new trends that would multiply during the 1970s and early 1980s. Among those trends would be an increasing tendency to define inspiration from factual studies on the person and writings of Ellen White.

The Emergence of New Trends (1950-1970)

A significant number of publications came out during the 1950s uplifting the reliability of the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White. Of the books dealing with Ellen White,¹⁵³ Francis D. Nichol's *Ellen G. White and Her Critics* (1951)¹⁵⁴ was the most outstanding one. In this 702-page volume, Nichol responded to almost all charges raised against Ellen White since the days of Can-right.

It was also during the 1950s that a group of Seventh-day Adventist scholars combined their efforts to produce a *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (1953-1957).¹⁵⁵ With the help of such groups as the Committee on Bible Chronology¹⁵⁶ and the Committee on Problems in Bible Translations,¹⁵⁷ the commentary integrated in a single project the views of its different contributors. It was stated that while rejecting the position that "the writers of Scripture wrote under verbal dictation by the Holy Spirit," the commentary was carried out under the assumption that the writers of Scripture "spoke and wrote according to their own individualities and characteristics, as is indicated by the varied styles of writing that they display, but free of the errors found in other writings."¹⁵⁸

In the mid-1950s Carl W. Daggy completed his M.A. thesis, "A Comparative Study of Certain Aspects of Fundamentalism with Seventh-day Adventism" (1955), in which he explicitly suggested that Seventh-day Adventists were not in

¹⁵³See e.g., Francis D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1951); W. E. Read, *The Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the Church* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1952); Arthur W. Spalding, *There Shines a Light: The Life and Work of Ellen G. White* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1953); Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: Messenger to the Remnant* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Publications, 1954); T. Housel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1955); Denton E. Rebok, *Believe His Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1956).

¹⁵⁴Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*.

¹⁵⁵Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953-57). Cf. Raymond F. Cottrell, "The Untold Story of the Bible Conference," *Sp* 16 (Aug. 1985): 35-51.

¹⁵⁶See "Committee on Bible Chronology" minutes, GCA; Siegfried H. Horn to Alberto R. Timm, Sept. 2, 1992.

¹⁵⁷See Committee on Problems in Bible Translation, *Problems in Bible Translation: A Study of Certain Principles of Bible Translation and Interpretation, together with an Examination of Several Bible texts in the Light of these Principles* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1954).

¹⁵⁸[Siegfried H. Horn and Earle Hilgert], "'Lower' and 'Higher' Biblical Criticism," in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 5:177.

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full agreement with the Fundamentalist view of inspiration.¹⁵⁹ According to Daggy,

Fundamentalists and Seventh-day Adventists are in agreement that the Bible is the Christian's sole unerring rule of faith and practice. They sharply disagree, however, on the question of verbal inspiration. The Fundamentalists generally take the position that the words of Scriptures, as such, were inspired by God. Seventh-day Adventists, on the other hand, believe that inspiration functioned in the minds of the Bible writers, but that their choice of words was their own. At the same time, they insist that this choice was guarded so that the writers did not express error.¹⁶⁰

Also in 1955, Roy F. Cottrell (not to be confused with Raymond F. Cottrell), a Seventh-day Adventist minister working in Escondido, California, argued that while "inspiration did not impart a precise identity of expression or memory," "careful study reveals no discord in the records."¹⁶¹

In 1957 the book *Questions on Doctrine* came out affirming that Seventh-day Adventists believed that the Bible "not merely *contains* the word of God, but *is* the word of God."¹⁶²

In the following year (1958) Ellen White's *Selected Messages*, book 1, came off the press with an insightful section compiled from the author's writings on inspiration.¹⁶³

Although Seventh-day Adventists had traditionally held the *propositional* view of revelation, a perceivable move towards the *encounter* view of revelation was taken by Frederick E. J. Harder in his 506-page Ph.D. dissertation, "Revelation, a Source of Knowledge as Conceived by Ellen G. White," defended in 1960 at New York University.¹⁶⁴ In this dissertation Harder studied Ellen G. White's concept of revelation in the light of Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Augustus Strong, and Emil Brunner.

In interpreting Ellen White's concept of revelation, Harder suggested that

White agreed with Brunner's emphasis on the personal content of revelation—that it consists in an "I-Thou" relationship in which God communicates Himself to man. She did not share Brunner's hesitancy to accept the revelation of specific truths, for these, she believed, contribute to the ultimate reconciliation between man and God.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹Daggy, "Comparative Study of Certain Aspects of Fundamentalism with Seventh-day Adventism."

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁶¹Roy F. Cottrell, "How the Bible Came to Us—1: God's Chosen Penmen," *RH*, March 3, 1955, 5.

¹⁶²*Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 27 (italics in the original).

¹⁶³E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:13-76.

¹⁶⁴Frederick E. J. Harder, "Revelation, a Source of Knowledge, as Conceived by Ellen G. White" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1960).

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 485.

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While acknowledging that Ellen White recognized the communication of specific truths in the process of revelation, Harder did not emphasize her understanding of that communication as an actual impartation of propositional truths. Although “the line between the natural and the supernatural is almost nonexistent so far as the attainment of knowledge is concerned,” there is still a need for the Word of God because that Word was “communicated by methods less subject to the distortions of sin” than in natural revelation.¹⁶⁶

In regard to the inspiration of Scripture, Harder stated that for Ellen White “inspiration reveals thought, but it does not set the mold for its form of expression.”¹⁶⁷ Harder recognizes, however, that for Ellen White the Bible is “a correct record” of biography and history because (1) “the scribes wrote under direction of the Holy Spirit,” and (2) “this influence counteracted the human biases which cause biographers to gloss over many derogatory facts about their heroes and thus present only a partial truth.”¹⁶⁸ “Inasmuch as both science and the Bible have the same author, there can be no conflict between them when they are rightly understood.”¹⁶⁹ Varieties of “styles and subject matters” are seen by Ellen White as “a strength rather than weakness,” because they provide “varying emphases” to the many aspects of truth “which would not be presented in a toughly uniform work.”¹⁷⁰

Also in 1960, H. W. Lowe, general field secretary of the General Conference, responded to some of Walter Martin’s (a non-Adventist) charges against Ellen White,¹⁷¹ saying that “a God-chosen instrument may be inspired in writing, teaching, preaching, exhorting, but humanly fallible in the exercise of private judgment.”¹⁷²

Another slight move towards *encounter* revelation was taken by Jack W. Provonsha, professor of Christian Ethics at Loma Linda University, in his article “Revelation and Inspiration,” published in 1964 in the *Andrews University Seminary Studies*.¹⁷³ In this article, Provonsha spoke of encounter revelation in a much friendlier way than traditional Seventh-day Adventists used to speak. The overall tenor of the article seemed even to suggest a certain *via-media* position

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 3 (of the abstract), 486.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., 235. Cf. E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:21-22.

¹⁶⁸Harder, “Revelation, a Source of Knowledge,” 150-51. Cf. E. G. White, “Bible Biographies,” *RH*, Jan. 22, 1880, 49; idem, *Steps to Christ*, 89.

¹⁶⁹Harder, “Revelation, a Source of Knowledge,” 405. Cf. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 462; idem, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1952), 130.

¹⁷⁰Harder, “Revelation, a Source of Knowledge,” 234-35. Cf. E. G. White, *Great Controversy* (1888), vi-vii.

¹⁷¹See Walter R. Martin, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1960), 90-114.

¹⁷²H. W. Lowe, “Alleged Outside Influence on Ellen G. White,” *Min*, Oct. 1960, 16.

¹⁷³Jack W. Provonsha, “Revelation and History,” *AUSS* 2 (1964): 109-19.

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between the propositional concept of revelation and the encounter revelation theory.

The first edition of the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1966) came off the press with a specific entry on the “Inspiration of Scripture.”¹⁷⁴ After quoting the statement on the “Holy Scriptures” of the Fundamental Beliefs that was officially accepted since 1931,¹⁷⁵ the entry stated that Seventh-day Adventists “do not believe in verbal inspiration, according to the usual meaning of the term, but in what may properly be called thought inspiration.”¹⁷⁶ This statement was followed by some quotations from Ellen White’s writings.¹⁷⁷

Also in 1966, Arthur L. White, secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate and grandson of Ellen White, presented a lecture at Andrews University under the title “Toward a Factual Concept of Inspiration” (published in 1973).¹⁷⁸ In that lecture A. L. White actually stated that

Seventh-day Adventists are uniquely fortunate in approaching the question of the inspiration of the prophets. We are not left to find our way, drawing all our conclusions from writings of two thousand years or more ago that have come down to us through varied transcriptions and translations. With us it is an almost contemporary matter, for we have had a prophet in our midst. It is generally granted by the careful student of her works that the experience of Ellen G. White was not different from that of the prophets of old.¹⁷⁹

The same author mentioned that “Ellen G. White’s statements concerning the Bible and her work indicate that the concept of verbal inspiration is without support in either the Bible writers’ or her own word.”¹⁸⁰ He declared also that while “the Scriptures provide an infallible revelation,” “the language used in imparting it to mankind is not infallible.”¹⁸¹ Following the non-Adventist Henry Alford,¹⁸² A. L. White admitted the existence of factual discrepancies in “details of minor consequence.”¹⁸³

The Sabbath School Lesson for October 11, 1969, stated, however, that not only “the actual impartation of the divine revelation of truth came to the prophet

¹⁷⁴See Don F. Neufeld, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1966), 585-86.

¹⁷⁵See General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Church Manual* ([Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists], 1963), 29.

¹⁷⁶Neufeld, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 585.

¹⁷⁷E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:21; idem, *Great Controversy* (1911), vi.

¹⁷⁸Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1973), 13-48. See also idem, “Toward a Factual Concept of Inspiration II” (Ellen G. White Estate shelf document, 1978).

¹⁷⁹A. L. White, *Ellen G. White Writings*, 15.

¹⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁸¹*Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁸²Henry Alford, *The New Testament for English Readers* (London: Rivingtons, 1863), vol. 1, pt. I, chap. I, 20-27.

¹⁸³A. L. White, *Ellen G. White Writings*, 26-48.

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under the Spirit's guidance and control" (cf. Num 12:6; Hos 12:10; Rev 1:10), but also that "the communication to the people of the light received by the prophet, was also directed by the Holy Spirit" (cf. 2 Pet 1:21; Rev 1:2, 11).¹⁸⁴

George Burnside, Ministerial Association secretary of the Australasian Division, suggested in the *Ministry* magazine for January 1970 (1) that "the very nature of our God demands an infallible Bible" (Titus 1:2); (2) that "the Bible claims infallibility" (Prov 30:5); and (3) that "Jesus, heaven's glorious Commander, accepted the Scriptures as unerring" (John 8:12; 17:17; 10:35; Matt 24:35).¹⁸⁵

Aware of the new critical trends that were slowly leading Seventh-day Adventism into a crisis on inspiration, Edward Heppenstall, professor of Systematic Theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, pointed out in *Ministry* magazine for July 1970 that Seventh-day Adventists had simply aligned themselves "with the evangelical or traditional position," without having a "clearly defined and developed doctrine of revelation and inspiration."¹⁸⁶

After blaming the encounter theory of revelation for confusing revelation "with regeneration,"¹⁸⁷ Heppenstall affirmed that "God's communication is addressed to the mind of man in rational concepts and verbal propositions." "By inspiration," according to Heppenstall, "God kept the Bible writers within the conceptual truths of His revelation," so that "both the writers and the message were God directed" (cf. 2 Tim 3:16-17). Heppenstall affirmed also that Scripture is "without error in what it teaches, in the historical facts basic to the truths they are intended to unfold," but not necessarily in "the accuracy of words per se."¹⁸⁸

Thus, the two decades under consideration (1950-1970) saw the emergence of some moves toward encounter revelation and a thought view of inspiration that was largely informed by a particular understanding of Ellen White's phenomena. Not until the 1970s and early 1980s, however, did these trends reach their climactic expression.

Challenges of the Historicization of Inspired Writings (1970-1991)

While conflicting views of inspiration had been previously nurtured within Seventh-day Adventism, it was in the early 1970s that Seventh-day Adventist scholars became more controversially divided on this particular doctrine. The main forums to foster those discussions were the Association of Adventist Fo-

¹⁸⁴*Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly*, Senior Division, no. 298 (4th quarter 1969), 9.

¹⁸⁵G[eorge] Burnside, "Our Infallible Bible," *Min*, Jan. 1970, 6.

¹⁸⁶Edward Heppenstall, "Doctrine of Revelation and Inspiration—Part 1," *Min*, July 1970, 16. See also idem, "The Nature of Revelation" (Unpubl. ms., n.d.), AHC.

¹⁸⁷E. Heppenstall, "Doctrine of Revelation and Inspiration—Part 1," *Min*, July 1970, 17.

¹⁸⁸H. Heppenstall, "Doctrine of Revelation and Inspiration"—Part 2, *Min*, Aug. 1970, 28-29.

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rum (officially established in the Fall of 1967)¹⁸⁹ and its *Spectrum* magazine (first issued in the Winter of 1969).¹⁹⁰

As a non-official church publication, *Spectrum* assumed a revisionist-critical stand, which would eventually be rebuked by Neal C. Wilson, General Conference president, at the 1984 Annual Council of the General Conference.¹⁹¹ Several articles advocating encounter revelation and the use of the historical-critical method came out in *Spectrum*, setting the agenda for many discussions on inspiration during the period under consideration (1970-1991).

Encounter Revelation. The theory of encounter revelation¹⁹² was a neo-orthodox reaction to the traditional concept of propositional revelation. It perceives revelation as a subjective personal divine-human encounter rather than as an objective communication of propositional truth. The Bible is, therefore, reduced to a mere human testimony of that encounter.

The Autumn-1970 issue of *Spectrum* came out with several articles dealing with Ellen White. Among those articles was one by F. E. J. Harder,¹⁹³ dean of the School of Graduate Studies of Andrews University, in which he further elaborated some basic concepts of his Ph.D. dissertation (1960).¹⁹⁴ Seventh-day Adventists were challenged by Harder's article to move beyond the nineteenth century Protestant view of special revelation "as propositionally embedded within an ancient book." For Harder, special revelation was a "continuing conversation and communion between God and living people" in personal and communal bases.¹⁹⁵

In 1975 Herold Weiss, chairman of the Department of Religious Studies of St. Mary's College, Indiana, and former assistant professor of New Testament at

¹⁸⁹See Alvin L. Kwiram, "Introduction," *Sp* 1 (Winter 1969): 4-5.

¹⁹⁰D. R. McAdams, "Shifting Views of Inspiration," *Sp* 10 (March 1980): 27-41. See also Richard C. Osborn, "The Establishment of The Adventist Forum," *Sp* 10 (March 1980): 42-58.

¹⁹¹See "Association of Adventist Forums and *Spectrum*—Neal C. Wilson Statement," in *1984 Annual Council of the General Conference Committee: General Actions* (Washington, DC: [General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists], 1984), 27-31; Myron K. Widmer, "1984 Annual Council—Part III," *ATR*, Nov. 15, 1984, 4-5; "Annual Council—1984," *Min*, Dec. 1984, 23-24.

A response to Neal Wilson's statement was published by the Association of Adventist Forum Board in *Sp* 15 (Dec. 1984): 28-30.

¹⁹²Classical expositions of the encounter revelation theory are found in Emil Brunner, *Revelation and Reason* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1946); and idem, *Truth as Encounter* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963).

For non-Seventh-day Adventist critical responses to encounter revelation, see e.g., Carl F. H. Henry, ed., *Revelation and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958); Clark H. Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation—The Foundation of Christian Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1971); Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 vols. (Waco, TX: Word, 1976-83).

¹⁹³Frederick E. J. Harder, "Divine Revelation: A Review of Some of Ellen White's Concepts," *Sp* 2 (Autumn 1970): 35-56. Cf. W. Paul Bradley, "Ellen G. White and Her Writings," *Sp* 3 (Spring 1971): 51-52.

¹⁹⁴See Harder, "Revelation, a Source of Knowledge."

¹⁹⁵F. E. J. Harder, "Divine Revelation: A Review of Some of Ellen White's Concepts," *Sp* 2 (Autumn 1970): 53-54.

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Andrews University, moved even more explicitly toward the encounter theology of neo-orthodoxy in his *Spectrum* article entitled “Revelation and the Bible: Beyond Verbal Inspiration.”¹⁹⁶ Under the assumption that “both revelation and inspiration take place outside and prior to the Bible,” Weiss argued that

to equate God’s Word with a book is the work of a corrupted faith that sets up for itself an idol. The words of the book are the words of the prophets which only tangentially reflect the Word of God. Nothing on earth is the ultimate expression of God. To make the Bible such is bibliolatry, just another form of idolatry.¹⁹⁷

Weiss rejected the “verbal inspiration” idea that “the Bible has one Author” because “historical, grammatical and literary” studies have shown that “it is impossible to lump all the books of the Bible under one author.” Based on such an assumption Weiss argued that “the Bible as a book can and must be studied as any other book.”¹⁹⁸

Meanwhile, the most significant Seventh-day Adventist critical responses to the encounter revelation theory were penned by Raoul Dederen during the 1970s. In a paper entitled “Revelation, Inspiration, and Hermeneutics,” which came out in the *Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics* (1974),¹⁹⁹ Dederen qualified the idea of setting “revelation-encounter over against revelation-doctrine” as a false dichotomy. While admitting that revelation is indeed “an event, an encounter,” Dederen also explained that

one’s encounter with Christ is effected only through hearing the prophetic and apostolic proclamation consigned to Scriptures. These fragile words of Scripture passed down to us from the OT and the NT writers are intrinsic to the revelational process. They are as true as the Christ event they explicate, and they share in the “once-for-all” character of the divine revelation.²⁰⁰

After describing how “the age of enlightenment” questioned the Christian traditional view of Scripture as “a divine communication to man cast in written form under the express inflow of the Holy Spirit,” Dederen qualified any attempt to reject “the testimony of Scripture regarding itself” as “unscientific.”²⁰¹

Also in 1974, Dederen read a paper entitled “Toward a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Revelation-Inspiration” at the 1974 Bible Conference. In this paper Dederen again pointed out that revelation “is more than a mere meet-

¹⁹⁶Herold Weiss, “Revelation and the Bible: Beyond Verbal Inspiration,” *Sp* 7, no. 3 (1975): 49-54. Cf. Frederick E. J. Harder, “A Reply to Dr. Weiss,” *Sp* 7, no. 3 (1975): 54-57.

¹⁹⁷H. Weiss, “Revelation and the Bible,” *Sp* 7, no. 3 (1975): 53.

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 49-50.

¹⁹⁹Raoul Dederen, “Revelation, Inspiration, and Hermeneutics,” in Gordon M. Hyde, ed., *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics* ([Washington, DC]: Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1974), 1-15.

²⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 7-8.

²⁰¹*Ibid.*, 8-11.

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ing or encounter, it is also a knowing, it implies a knowledge of the Lord and of His will.”²⁰²

The Historical-Critical Method. The historical-critical method²⁰³ is a method of literary analysis used to study documents from the perspective of their indebtedness to the particular socio-cultural milieu in which they were produced. The method grew out of the Enlightenment assumption (or basic presupposition) that history can be understood without taking into consideration supernatural intervention.

The question whether the method is adequate for the study of “inspired” writings divided Seventh-day Adventist scholars eventually into three major groups: (1) Those who accept the method with its basic presupposition; (2) those who believe that a modified version of the method can be used apart from its basic presupposition; and (3) those who hold that the method is unacceptable because it cannot be isolated from its basic presupposition.

The existence of so-called “modified” versions of the classical historical-critical method would require a much more detailed study to identify particular understandings of the method by different Seventh-day Adventist scholars. However, no classification of such variant understandings are provided in the present article beyond the endeavor of pointing out a few Seventh-day Adventist studies that attempt to foster the use of the method and criticisms of those attempts.

Historical-critical studies of Ellen White’s writings were encouraged by the Autumn-1970 *Spectrum* article “Ellen White: A Subject for Adventist Scholarship,” written by Roy Branson, then assistant professor of Christian Ethics at Andrews University, and Herold D. Weiss, then assistant professor of New Testament at the same university. In that article Branson and Weiss challenged Seventh-day Adventist scholars to study Ellen White’s writings with a four-step historical-critical hermeneutics, intended (1) “to discover the nature of Mrs. White’s relationship to other authors,” (2) “to recover the social and intellectual milieu in which she lived and wrote,” (3) “to give close attention to the development of Ellen White’s writings within her own lifetime, and also to the devel-

²⁰²Raoul Dederen, “Toward a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Revelation-Inspiration,” 8, in *North American Bible Conference, 1974* ([Washington, DC: Bible Research Committee], 1974).

²⁰³Classical expositions of the historical-critical method are found in Johann S. Semler, *Treatise on the Free Investigation of the Canon*, 4 vols. (Halle: n.p., 1771-75); Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1994); Ernst Troeltsch, “Ueber historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie,” in idem, *Gesammelten Schriften* (Aalen: Scientia, 1962), 2:729-53; Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975).

For non-Seventh-day Adventist criticisms to the historical-critical method, see e.g., Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* (St. Louis, [MO]: Concordia, 1977); idem, *Biblical Hermeneutics*; Vern S. Poythress, *Science and Hermeneutics: Implications of Scientific Method for Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988); Thomas C. Oden, *After Modernit . . . What? Agenda for Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990); Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990).

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opment of the church,” and (4) “to apply in our day the words she spoke in her day.”²⁰⁴

Such hermeneutics set the trend for several historical-critical studies that came out during this period (1970-1991)²⁰⁵ charging Ellen White of historical errors,²⁰⁶ plagiarism,²⁰⁷ psychological trances,²⁰⁸ and theological pitfalls.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴Roy Branson and Herold D. Weiss, “Ellen White: A Subject for Adventist Scholarship,” *Sp* 2 (Autumn 1970): 30-33. Cf. W. Bradley, “Ellen G. White and Her Writings,” *Sp* 3 (Spring 1971): 43-51.

²⁰⁵For further study on the development of such revisionist studies, see e.g., Benjamin McArthur, “Where Are Historians Taking the Church?” *Sp* 10 (Nov. 1979): 9-14; D. R. McAdams, “Shifting Views of Inspiration,” *Sp* 10 (March 1980): 27-41; Gary Land, “From Apologetics to History: The Professionalization of Adventist Historians,” *Sp* 10 (March 1980): 89-100; Jonathan M. Butler, “Introduction: The Historian as Heretic,” in Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: Ellen G. White and the Origins of Seventh-day Adventist Health Reform*, rev. and enl. ed. (Knoxville, [TN]: U of Tennessee P, 1992), xxv-lxviii.

²⁰⁶See e.g., William S. Peterson, “A Textual and Historical Study of Ellen G. White’s Account of the French Revolution,” *Sp* 2 (Autumn 1970): 57-69; idem, “An Imaginary Conversation on Ellen G. White: A One-Act Play for Seventh-day Adventists,” *Sp* 3 (Summer 1971): 84-91; idem, “Ellen White’s Literary Indebtedness,” *Sp* 3 (Autumn 1971): 73-84; Ingemar Lindén, *Biblicism, apokalyptik, utopi. Adventismens historiska utforming: USA samt dess svenska utveckling till o. 1939* (Uppsala: [U of Uppsala], 1971), 154-64; Carl G. Tuland, “Six Thousand Years?,” *Sp* 6, nos. 3/4 (1974): 65-70; Donald R. McAdams, “Ellen G. White and the Protestant Historians: The Evidence from an Unpublished Manuscript on John Huss” (Unpubl. ms., Andrews University, 1974), EGWRC-AU; idem, “Ellen G. White and the Protestant Historians: A Study of the Treatment of John Huss in *Great Controversy*, Chapter Six ‘Huss and Jerome,’” rev. (Unpubl. ms., Southwestern Adventist College, 1977), EGWRC-AU; Ingemar Lindén, *The Last Trump: An Historico-Genetical Study of Some Important Chapters in the Making and Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1978), 211-39; Eric Anderson, “Ellen White and Reformation Historians,” *Sp* 9 (July 1979): 23-26; Donald Casebolt, “Ellen White, the Waldenses, and Historical Interpretation,” *Sp* 11 (Feb. 1981): 37-43; Frank A. Knittel, “The Great Billboard Controversy,” *Sp* 23 (May 1993): 56.

Responses to the charges of historical errors in Ellen White’s writings are found, for instance, in W. Bradley, “Ellen G. White and Her Writings,” *Sp* 3 (Spring 1971): 52-60; John W. Wood, “The Bible and the French Revolution: An Answer,” *Sp* 3 (Autumn 1971): 55-72; Ronald Graybill, “How Did Ellen White Choose and Use Historical Sources? The French Revolution Chapter of *The Great Controversy*,” *Sp* 4 (Summer 1972): 49-53; idem, *Analysis of E. G. White’s Luther Manuscript* ([Washington, DC]: Review and Herald, [1977]); Jean Rouillard, “Connaissance du catharisme,” 6-part series in *Revue adventiste*, April 1977, 8-9; May 1977, 8-9; June 1977, 8-9; Sept. 1977, 6-7; Oct. 1977, 7-8, 13; Nov. 1977, 6-7; Dec. 1977, 7-8; Gerhard F. Hasel, “A Review of the White Estate Paper ‘The Role of Visions and the Use of Historical Sources in the Writing of the Great Controversy,’ Third Draft, Revised Oct. 24, 1977” (Unpubl. ms., Andrews University, [1977]), EGWRC-AU; White Estate Staff, “The Role of Visions and the Use of Historical Sources in the E. G. White Writings,” 5th draft (Unpubl. ms., Ellen G. White Estate, 1978), EGWRC-AU; Eric Anderson, “Ellen White and Reformation Historians,” *Sp* 9 (July 1979): 23-26; Arthur L. White, “The E. G. White Historical Writings,” 7-part series in *AtR*, July 12, 1979, 4-7; July 19, 1979, 7-9; July 26, 1979, 5-10; Aug. 2, 1979, 7-11; Aug. 9, 1979, 7-10; Aug. 16, 1979, 6-9; Aug. 23, 1979, 6-9; Jean Zurcher, “Ellen G. White, the Waldenses and the Albingenses” (1982), DF 2200-a, EGWRC-AU; Milan Hlouch, “John Huss in the Writings of Ellen G. White” (Unpubl. ms., Prague, 1982), EGWRC-AU; Warren H. Johns, “Ellen G. White and Chronology” (Unpubl. ms., [1983]), AHC;

idem, "Ellen G. White and Biblical Chronology," *Min*, April 1984, 20-23; Jean Zurcher, "A Vindication of Ellen White as Historian," *Sp* 16 (Aug. 1985): 21-31.

²⁰⁷See e.g., [Walter T. Rea], "A Comparison of the Writings of Mrs. E. G. White and John Harris - 1842, Daniel March - 1867, William Hanna - 1863, Alfred Edersheim - 1886" (N.p.: n.p., [1979]); idem, *The White Lie* (Turlock, CA: M & R Publications, 1982); idem, "Sketches from the Life of Paul: Forerunner of Acts of the Apostles" (Unpubl. ms., 1982), AHC; idem, "The Great Controversy" (Unpubl. ms., 1983), AHC; idem, "Desire of Ages" (Unpubl. ms., 1983), AHC; idem, "The Pirates of Privilege" (Unpubl. ms., 1984), AHC; idem, "The Makings of a Prophet" (Unpubl. ms., 1986), AHC; idem, "Did the Prophet See Kings?" (Unpubl. ms., 1988), AHC.

Responses to charges of plagiarism in Ellen White's writings are found, for example, in Ellen G. White Estate, "*The Desire of Ages*" (Ellen G. White Estate shelf document, 1979); Raymond F. Cottrell, "The Literary Relationship between *The Desire of Ages*, by Ellen G. White and *The Life of Christ*, by William Hanna" (Ellen G. White Estate shelf document, 1979); Walter F. Specht, "The Literary Relationship between *The Desire of Ages*, by Ellen G. White and *The Life of Christ*, by William Hanna—Part II" (Ellen G. White Estate shelf document, n.d.); Robert W. Olson, "Ellen G. White's Use of Uninspired Sources" (Ellen G. White Estate shelf document, 1980); Neal C. Wilson, "This I Believe About Ellen G. White," *AtR*, March 20, 1980, 8-10; Keith S. Parmenter, "The Ellen G. White 'Borrowings'—What Are the Facts?," *Australasian Record*, July 28, 1980, 4; Shirley Burton, "Applications of Inspiration: What the Media Overlooked," *Pacific Union Recorder*, Nov. 10, 1980, 2, 4; Arthur L. White, "Ellen G. White and Her Writings," *AtR*, Nov. 27, 1980, 7-9; W[illiam] G. J[onhsson], "Reflections on Ellen White's Inspiration," *ibid.*, 12-13; Robert W. Olson, *One Hundred and One Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981), 64-111; John J. Robertson, *The White Truth* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1981); Ron Graybill, "Did Mrs. White 'Borrow' in Reporting a Vision?," *AtR*, April 2, 1981, 7; Vincent L. Ramik, "Memorandum of Law Literary Property Rights, 1790-1915" (Washington, DC, Diller, Ramik & Wight, Ltd., Aug. 14, 1981); Editorial, "Ellen White's Use of Sources," *AtR*, Sept. 17, 1981, 3; Editorial, "'There Simply Is No Case'" (interview with Vincent L. Ramik), *ibid.*, 4-6; Editorial, "The Story Behind This Research" (interview with Warren L. Johns), *ibid.*, 7; Ron Graybill, "E. G. White's Literary Work: An Update" (An edited and annotated transcript of a tape recording of presentations made in the morning worship services at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Nov. 15-19, 1981); Warren H. Johns, "Ellen White Prophet of Plagiarist?," *Min*, June 1982, 5-19; Ellen G. White Estate, "The Truth About *The White Lie*," supplement to *Min*, Aug. 1982; George Rice, *Luke, a Plagiarist?* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1983); Fred Veltman, "Full Report of the Life of Christ Research Project," 4 vols. ([Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate], 1988); idem, "The *Desire of Ages* Project," 2-part series in *Min*, Oct. 1990, 4-7; Dec. 1990, 11-15; "Olson Discusses the Veltman Study" (David C. Jarnes's interview with Robert W. Olson), *Min*, Dec. 1990, 16-18.

²⁰⁸See e.g., Lindén, *Biblicism, apokaliptik, utopi*, 103; Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Lindén, *Last Trump*, 148; Ronald D. Graybill, "The Power of Prophecy: Ellen G. White and the Women Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. diss., John Hopkins University, 1983); Bernadine L. Irwin, "A Psychohistory of the Young Ellen White: A Founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (Ph.D. diss., United States International University, 1984); Molleurus Couperus, "The Significance of Ellen White's Head Injury," *Adventist Currents*, June 1985, 16-33; Dennis E. Waite, "A Psychoanalytic and Archetypal Examination of Two Seminal Dreams and Visions of Ellen G. White" (Ed.D. diss., Western Michigan University, 1993).

Responses to charges of psychological trances in Ellen White's writings are found, for instance, in Ron Graybill, "Prophetess of Health: A Review" (Ellen G. White Estate shelf document, 1976); Ellen G. White Estate, *A Discussion and Review of Prophetess of Health* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1976); idem, *A Critique of the Book Prophetess of Health* (Washington, DC:

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In the Fall of 1979, Benjamin McArthur, professor of American History at Southern Missionary College, pointed out in his *Spectrum* article, “Where Are Historians Taking the Church?” that Seventh-day Adventism was “witnessing the first great age of Adventist historical revisionism.” McArthur explained that the new generation of Seventh-day Adventist revisionists worked under the common presupposition that “the cultural milieu in which Ellen White lived and worked to a large degree shaped her writings on history, prophecy, health and, by implication, every other topic she discussed.” As a result, “the nature of her inspiration” and “her authority in the church” were at issue.²¹⁰

McArthur explained that since “orthodox belief and critical historical judgment are incompatible,” “the problem is not that the Adventist historian lacks faith in God’s providential leading, but that there is no way for them to include it in historical explanation.”²¹¹ Thus, the use of the historical-critical method led

Ellen G. White Estate, 1976); Robert W. Olson, “Physicians Say Ellen White’s Visions Not Result of Epilepsy,” *ATR*, Aug. 16, 1984, 4; Donald I. Peterson, *Visions or Seizures: Was Ellen White the Victim of Epilepsy?* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1988).

²⁰⁹See e.g., Lindén, *Biblicism, apokalyptik, utopi*, 68-84; idem, *Last Trump*, 92-105; Rolf J. Poehler, “... and the Door Was Shut’: Seventh-day Adventists and the Shut-Door Doctrine in the Decade after the Great Disappointment” (Term paper, Andrews University, 1978); Desmond Ford, *Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment* (Casselberry, FL: Euangelion Press, 1980), 333-425, A170-A245, A256-A261; Ingemar Lindén, *1844 and the Shut Door Problem* (Uppsala: Distributed by Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1982); Ingemar Lindén, *Adventismen vid Skiljevägen* ([Sweden]: n.p., 1983), 59; Thomas R. Steininger, *Konfession und Sozialisation: Adventistische Identität zwischen Fundamentalismus und Postmoderne* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), passim.

Some of the charges of theological pitfalls in Ellen White’s writings are responded to in Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), passim; Robert W. Olson, “The ‘Shut Door’ Documents” (Ellen G. White Estate shelf document, 1982); Arthur L. White, “Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Question: A Review of the *The Experience of Early Seventh-day Adventists Believers in Its Historical Context*,” rev. ed. (Ellen G. White Estate shelf document, 1982); idem, *Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1985), 1:256-70; “Christ and His High Priestly Ministry,” special issue of *Min*, Oct. 1980; Olson, *One Hundred and One Questions*, 8-31; Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner, eds., *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies* (Washington, DC: [Biblical Research Institute], 1981); William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series*, vol. 1 ([Washington, MD: Biblical Research Institute], 1982); Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Daniel*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1986); idem, ed., *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 3 (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1986); idem, ed., *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 4 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1989); idem, ed., *Doctrine of the Sanctuary: A Historical Survey*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 5 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1989); idem, ed., *Symposium on Revelation—Book 1*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992); idem, ed., *Symposium on Revelation—Book 2*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 7 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992).

²¹⁰B. McArthur, “Where Are Historians Taking the Church?” *Sp* 10 (Nov. 1979): 9.

²¹¹*Ibid.*, 11.

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Seventh-day Adventist revisionists not only to deal with Ellen White's writings as "historically conditioned"²¹² but also to a large extent to give up the great controversy theme as a philosophy of history.²¹³

In March 1980 Donald McAdams, president of Southwestern Adventist College, published an article in *Spectrum* under the explanatory title "Shifting Views of Inspiration: Ellen G. White Studies in the 1970s." In that article McAdams explained how critical studies of Ellen White during the 1970s tried to show that Ellen White's works were "not entirely original" (because she "copied from other sources") and were "not infallible" (because she "made statements that were not correct").²¹⁴

The use of the historical-critical method was also encouraged in regard to the study of Scripture. Of special significance was the section entitled "Ways to Read the Bible" of the December 1982 issue of *Spectrum* magazine.²¹⁵ There John C. Brunt, professor of New Testament at Walla Walla College, argued that the use of the historical-critical method does not necessarily lead to "liberal conclusions." Brunt further suggested that

virtually all Adventist exegetes [*sic*] of Scripture do use historical-critical methodology, even if they are not willing to use the term. The historical-critical method deserves a place in the armamentarium of Adventists who are serious about understanding their Bibles.²¹⁶

Larry G. Herr, then professor of Old Testament in the seminary of the Far Eastern Division in the Philippines, argued in the same line that "the 'historical-critical' method of Bible study, used properly, can be a valid and powerful tool for Seventh-day Adventists."²¹⁷

Meanwhile, some of the most significant Seventh-day Adventist criticisms of the historical-critical method were penned by E. Edward Zinke and Gerhard F. Hasel. During the 1970s E. E. Zinke, then research assistant and assistant secretary of the Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference, came out with several articles on the subject.²¹⁸ Of special significance was his supplement to the *Ministry* of October 1977, entitled "A Conservative Approach to Theology." After surveying different approaches to theology from a historical perspective, Zinke stated that

²¹²Ibid., 12-13.

²¹³For further study of Ellen White's philosophy of history, see Gil G. Fernandez, "Ellen G. White's Philosophy of History" (M.A. thesis, Philippine Union College, 1968); Joseph Battistone, *The Great Controversy Theme in E. G. White[s] Writings* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978).

²¹⁴D. R. McAdams, "Shifting Views of Inspiration," *Sp* 10 (March 1980): 27-41.

²¹⁵See special section "Ways to Read the Bible," *Sp* 13 (Dec. 1982): 30-62.

²¹⁶John C. Brunt, "A Parable of Jesus as a Clue to Biblical Interpretation," *ibid.*, 42.

²¹⁷Larry G. Herr, "Genesis One in Historical-Critical Perspective," *ibid.*, 51.

²¹⁸See e.g., E. Edward Zinke, "Postreformation Critical Biblical Studies," in Hyde, ed., *Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, 67-87; *idem*, "A Conservative Approach to Theology," supplement to *Min*, Oct. 1977, 24A-24P; *idem*, "Guiding the Ship of Truth," *Min*, Dec. 1978, 14-15.

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method in theology must not be determined by an *a priori* consideration of the nature of man, of the universe, or of any aspect of these two. Rather, method must be determined totally by Scripture itself. The method by which Scripture is studied must not be the same as that applied to human literature. Since God's revelation is distinct from that which takes place within the human sphere, the method applied to its interpretation is not the same as that which is applied to what is produced within the human sphere. Thus the nature of revelation itself must be considered within the context of the method for its interpretation.²¹⁹

In 1980 Gerhard F. Hasel, professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology at Andrews University, published his book *Understanding the Living Word of God*, in which he criticized the historical-critical method for its "totally immanent view of history on the horizontal level without any vertical, transcendent dimension."²²⁰ Hasel not only charged that method for undermining the authority of the Scriptures, but also argued in favor of an approach to Scripture that could recognize its divine, supernatural element.

In 1985 the Biblical Research Institute published G. F. Hasel's book, *Biblical Interpretation Today*, in which the author strongly criticized the historical-critical method for "disallowing divine, supernatural intervention in history."²²¹ Under the assumption that "the Bible must remain the master and the method the servant," Hasel argued that in the study of Scripture the "method must always be subject to the judgment of Scripture." Thus "the study of Scripture must follow a method that derives its philosophical conceptuality, its norms and procedures from Scripture itself."²²²

Concerns about the use of the historical-critical method by Seventh-day Adventist scholars also led the 1986 Annual Council of the General Conference, which convened in Rio de Janeiro, to vote a document on "Methods of Bible Study."²²³ In this official document Adventist Bible students were urged "to avoid relying on the use of the presuppositions and the resultant deductions associated with the historical-critical method." Under the assumption that "human reason is subject to the Bible, not equal to or above it," the document stated that "even a modified use" of the historical-critical method "that retains the principle

²¹⁹E. E. Zinke, "A Conservative Approach to Theology," supplement to *Min*, Oct. 1977, 24A-24P.

²²⁰Gerhard F. Hasel, *Understanding the Living Word of God* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1980), 24-25.

²²¹Gerhard F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today: An Analysis of Modern Methods of Biblical Interpretation and Proposals for the Interpretation of the Bible as the Word of God* ([Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute], 1985), 97.

²²²*Ibid.*, 99.

²²³See "Methods of Bible Study Committee (GCC-A)—Report," *AtR*, Jan. 22, 1987, 18-20; "Methods of Bible Study," *Min*, April 1987, 22-24. Cf. Raymond F. Cottrell, "Blame It on Rio: The Annual Council Statement on Methods of Bible Study," *Adventist Currents*, March 1987, 32-33.

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of criticism which subordinates the Bible to human reason is unacceptable to Adventists.²²⁴

The use of the historical-critical method was also criticized in several articles by Gerhard F. Hasel,²²⁵ Leon I. Mashchak,²²⁶ Richard M. Davidson,²²⁷ and Mario Veloso.²²⁸

Further Developments. A significant variety of definitions of inspiration have been proposed in Seventh-day Adventist circles since 1970. Those definitions oscillated between attempts to accommodate apparent “discrepancies” of inspired writings and concerns of uplifting the infallibility of those writings against the challenges imposed by revisionist studies.

In 1972 Rene Noorbergen’s *Ellen G. White: Prophet of Destiny* described the prophetic ministry in strong terms. According to Noorbergen,

true prophet is not a psychic who performs with the aid of a mental or “spiritual” crutch, but is someone who has no degree of freedom either in turning in or controlling the prophetic impulses or prophetic recall. These impulses are superimposed over the prophet’s conscious mind by a supernatural personal being, having absolute knowledge of both past and future, making no allowance for error or human miscalculation.²²⁹

Also in 1972, Hans Heinz’ *Glaubenslehren der Heiligen Schrift* came out with a special chapter on “The Holy Scripture.”²³⁰ After rejecting the theory of verbal inspiration, Heinz defined inspiration as “a positive divine impact on the mind, will, and imagination of the author, who uses his means in order to write as God desires, whereby the author is under the guidance of God, which prevents error.”²³¹

Of special significance was the 1974 Bible Conference, which was summoned “to focus on the Bible as the foundation of Adventist faith and doctrine,

²²⁴“Methods of Bible Study Committee,” *ATR*, Jan. 22, 1987, 18.

²²⁵Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Rise and Wane of Biblical Authority,” *Adventist Perspectives* (hereafter *AP*) 1 (Nov. 1987): 8-16; idem, “The Crisis of the Authority of the Bible as the Word of God,” *JATS* 1 (Spring 1990): 16-38; idem, “The Origin of the Biblical Sabbath and the Historical-Critical Method: A Methodological Test Case,” *JATS* 4 (Spring 1993): 17-46.

²²⁶Leon I. Mashchak, “The Historical-Critical Method of Bible Study,” *AP* 1 (Nov. 1987): 32-35; idem, “Canonical Criticism—an Olive Branch or a Trojan Horse?,” *AP* 2 (Summer 1988): 61-67.

²²⁷Richard M. Davidson, “The Authority of Scripture: A Personal Pilgrimage,” *JATS* 1 (Spring 1990): 39-56.

²²⁸Mario Veloso, “Modern Scientific-Critical Method—A Testimony,” *AP* 6, no. 2 (1992): 29-35.

²²⁹Rene Noorbergen, *Ellen G. White: Prophet of Destiny* (New Canaan, CT: Keats, 1972), 21 (italics in the original).

²³⁰Hans Heinz, *Glaubenslehren der Heiligen Schrift* (Bern: Europaeisches Institut fuer Fernstudium, 1972), 25-45.

²³¹*Ibid.*, 30. (Translated by Winfried Vogel.) Cf. idem, *Leben aus der Zukunft: Wende der Zeit—Wandlung der Welt* (Hamburg: Saatkorn-Verlag, 1989), 159-60.

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and to study sound principles of hermeneutics.”²³² The doctrine of inspiration was addressed in Raoul Dederen’s two papers, “Revelation, Inspiration, and Hermeneutics”²³³ and “Toward a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Revelation-Inspiration.”²³⁴

In the latter Dederen defined inspiration as

the controlling influence that God exerts over the human instrument by whom His revelation is communicated. It has to do with the *reception*, by the prophet, of the divine revelation and the accuracy with which it is *transmitted*, whether in an oral or a written form. At the same time it gives the record of revelation its authority and validity for us.²³⁵

To this he added,

We can hardly believe that God, having performed the mighty acts and revealed their true meaning and import to the minds of prophets and apostles would leave the prophetic and apostolic ministry to take care of itself. The same Holy Spirit, we hold, who called them to share God’s knowledge and plans, also aided their efforts to convey such a revelation to those to whom they ministered.²³⁶

Dederen also pointed out the existence of a tendency in certain circles “to caricature” as “some sort of a dictation theory” the position of those who believed that the Bible was “fully inspired” “in all its parts.” While recognizing that on “some occasions” God actually spoke and man just recorded the words (Gen 22:15-18; Exod 20:1-17), Dederen stated that “in the main” inspiration functioned in such a flexible way as to allow for “human personalities.”²³⁷

After quoting Ellen White’s classic statement, “It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired,” Dederen raised the crucial question, “Since the thoughts rather than the words are inspired, shall we conclude that we are at liberty to treat the text of Scripture as being of little importance?” Answering the question, he explained that

some, in fact, do maintain that God suggested the thoughts and the general trend of His revelation, leaving the prophet free to express them in his own language, as he liked. Quite apart from the fact that ideas are not most usually transferred by means other than words, this scheme ignores the fact that if the thought communicated to a prophet is of the essence of a revelation, the form in which it is expressed is

²³²K[enneth] H. W[ood], “The 1974 Bible Conference,” *RH*, Aug. 1, 1974, 2. See also Gordon M. Hyde, “Church Holds Historic Bible Conference,” *RH*, Aug. 15, 1974, 4-6.

²³³Dederen, “Revelation, Inspiration, and Hermeneutics,” in Hyde, ed., *Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, 1-15.

²³⁴Dederen, “Toward a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Revelation-Inspiration,” in *North American Bible Conference, 1974*.

²³⁵*Ibid.*, 9 (italics supplied).

²³⁶*Ibid.*, 9-10.

²³⁷*Ibid.*, 11.

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of prime significance. The exegetical study of the Scriptures in their original language would lose much of its meaning if God has not guided the prophet in the writing of his message.²³⁸

In regard to Ellen White's position on the matter, Dederen asserted that

Ellen White herself, who so clearly emphasizes that the thoughts rather than the words of a prophet are inspired, stipulates: "While I am writing out important matters, He is beside me helping me . . . and when I am puzzled for a fit word to express my thoughts, He brings it clearly and distinctly to my mind." "I tremble for fear," adds the servant of the Lord, "lest I shall belittle the great plan of salvation by cheap words . . . Who is sufficient for these things?" Everything points to the fact that God who imbued the prophets' minds with thoughts and inspired them in the fulfillment of their task also watched over them in their attempts to express "infinite ideas" and embody them in "finite vehicles" of human language.²³⁹

Such a view of inspiration "does not nullify," according to Dederen, "the significant human authorship of the biblical writings. It simply affirms that the prophetic message as we find it in Scripture is the testimony of God."²⁴⁰

In 1977, Dederen came out with an insert in *Ministry*, under the title "Ellen White's Doctrine of Scripture."²⁴¹ While declaring that Ellen White did not support the views of verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the original autographs, Dederen explained that Ellen White's concept of inspiration is that "the whole man is inspired, not just his words."²⁴²

Meanwhile, Arthur White prepared two series of articles for the *Review*, trying to counteract some of the tensions unleashed by revisionist studies of Ellen White. The first series came out in early 1978, under the general title "Toward an Adventist Concept of Inspiration."²⁴³ In this series Arthur White suggested again that Seventh-day Adventists were in a better position to understand the *modus operandi* of inspiration, because they still had the autographs of a modern prophet (Ellen White), while those of the Bible were no longer available.²⁴⁴

White admitted that while "the revelation of God's will is authoritative and infallible," "the language used in imparting it to mankind is human and hence is imperfect."²⁴⁵ He saw the prophet as under the influence of the Spirit of God not

²³⁸Ibid., 12.

²³⁹Ibid., 13.

²⁴⁰Ibid.

²⁴¹R. Dederen, "Ellen White's Doctrine of Scripture," supplement to *Min*, July 1977, 24F-24J.

²⁴²Ibid., 24G-24H.

²⁴³Arthur L. White, "Toward an Adventist Concept of Inspiration," 4-part series in *AtR*, Jan. 12, 1978, 4-6; Jan. 19, 1978, 7-9; Jan. 26, 1978, 6-8; Feb. 2, 1978, 6-8.

²⁴⁴A. L. White, "Toward an Adventist Concept of Inspiration—3," *RH*, Jan. 26, 1978, 6. Cf. idem, *Ellen G. White Writings*, 15.

²⁴⁵A. L. White, "Toward an Adventist Concept of Inspiration—3," *RH*, Jan. 26, 1978, 6.

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only in receiving “his message through the visions” but also in bearing testimony. Despite certain occasions in which “the very words to be used are impressed upon his mind by the Spirit of God,” the influence of the Spirit does not lead the prophet to “the point of being mechanically controlled, or of being forced into a mold.”²⁴⁶

Arthur White began his second series, “The E. G. White Historical Writings” (Summer of 1979),²⁴⁷ explaining in a euphemistic way that probably never before, since the death of Ellen White in 1915, had Seventh-day Adventists been so interested in the questions of “inspiration in general and the inspiration of Ellen White in particular,” as well as “Ellen White’s ‘sources’ for the Conflict of the Ages books in general, and *The Great Controversy* and *The Desire of Ages* in particular.” He promised that this series of articles would lead the readers “some distance from the narrow concepts held by some of a mechanical, verbal inspiration according to which Ellen White wrote only what was revealed to her in vision or dictated to her by the Holy Spirit.”²⁴⁸

In recommending this series, Kenneth Wood, editor of the *Review*, suggested the readers to keep in mind “four facts”: (1) “*Inspired writings do not come to us ‘untouched by human hands’*”; (2) “*in communicating with the human family, God inspired persons, not writings*”; (3) “*inspiration involves a variety of methods in communicating truth and God’s will*”; and (4) “*the message of an inspired writer does not depend for its authority on whether it is accompanied by the label, ‘This is God’s Word.’*” Wood also pointed out that “because Satan is today making supreme efforts to undermine confidence in the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy, we feel convinced that the end of all things is near.”²⁴⁹

Within the context of the contemporary revisionist challenges, Seventh-day Adventists published, in 1980, two major consensus documents in order to confirm their faith in the trustworthiness of the inspired writings. The first one, titled “Revelation and Inspiration of the Bible,” was produced “over a period of several years, involving scientists, theologians, administrators, teachers, and others throughout the world church.” Although “numerous revisions” in its text had been made taking into consideration the suggestions received, the document appeared in the *Adventist Review* of January 17 with a special note asking for additional “comments and suggestions” to be addressed to W. Duncan Eva, a vice-president of the General Conference.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶A. L. White, “Toward an Adventist Concept of Inspiration—2,” *RH*, Jan. 19, 1978, 8.

²⁴⁷Arthur L. White, “The E. G. White Historical Writings,” 7-part series in *AtR*, July 12, 1979, 4-7; July 19, 1979, 7-9; July 26, 1979, 5-10; Aug. 2, 1979, 7-11; Aug. 9, 1979, 7-10; Aug. 16, 1979, 6-9; Aug. 23, 1979, 6-9.

²⁴⁸A. L. White, “E. G. White Historical Writings—1,” *AtR*, July 12, 1979, 4.

²⁴⁹K[enneth] H. W[ood], “An Important Series about Ellen G. White,” *AtR*, July 12, 1979, 11-12 (italics in the original).

²⁵⁰General Conference Officers, “About These Documents,” *AtR*, Jan. 17, 1980, 8

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The document under consideration recognized that “the writers of the Holy Scripture were inspired by God with ideas and concepts,” but “He did not dictate His message to them word by word, except in certain instances in which God or an angel spoke or voices were heard by the prophet.” In regard to the difficulties of the Bible, the same document warned that

it is well to remember that such difficulties in Scripture may be the result of imperfections of human understanding, or lack of knowledge of the circumstances involved. Some difficulties may be resolved by further research and discovery. Others may not be understood or resolved until the future life. However, we must guard against sitting in judgment on the Scriptures. “No man can improve the Bible by suggesting what the Lord meant to say or ought to have said.”²⁵¹

The second document (far more influential than the first one) was the new 1980 Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, officially accepted by the delegates of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church at the 1980 General Conference session in Dallas, Texas. The new statement on the Scriptures (statement 1) of that document reads as follows:

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history.²⁵²

The new statement on the gift of prophecy (statement 17) affirmed the following:

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord’s messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.²⁵³

²⁵¹“Study Documents on Inspiration and Creation,” *AtR*, Jan. 17, 1980, 9, 10.

²⁵²“Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists—*Church Manual* Revision,” *AtR*, May 1, 1980, 23.

²⁵³*Ibid.*, 25-26. The original English wording of this particular statement has been slightly changed in some translations. The expression “as the Lord’s messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth” was translated, for instance, into German (*Adventecho*, June 1, 1981, 8) as “*die Schriften dieser Botin des Herrn sind eine fortwirkende, bevollmächtigte Stimme der Wahrheit*” (the writings of this messenger of the Lord are a continuing, authorized voice of truth) and into French (*Revue adventiste* [France], April 1981, 4) as “*les écrits de cette messagère du Seigneur sont une source constante de vérité qui fait autorité*” (the writings of this messenger of the Lord are a constant source of truth which is authoritative). The word “authoritative” was translated

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Also published in 1980, Gerhard F. Hasel's book *Understanding the Living Word of God* had a whole chapter on the inspiration of Scripture.²⁵⁴ In that chapter Hasel argued that the witnesses of Peter (2 Pet 1:19-21) and Paul (2 Tim 3:16) attest that "all Scripture is inspired by God." "Having received the divine revelation, the human penman was inspired," according to Hasel, "by the Holy Spirit to communicate these divine ideas and thoughts accurately and authoritatively in the language of men." The divine authorship of Scripture was seen as the source for both "the unity of Scripture" and "the supreme authority of Scripture."²⁵⁵

In 1981 William G. Johnsson, associate editor of the *Adventist Review*, stated in his *Ministry* article, "How Does God Speak?," that "defining inspiration is like catching a rainbow. When we have put forth our best efforts, there will remain an elusive factor, an element of mystery."²⁵⁶

Also in 1981, Roger W. Coon, associate secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate, began a three-part series on "Inspiration/Revelation" in the *Journal of Adventist Education*.²⁵⁷ In this series Coon advocated "plenary (thought) inspiration," in exclusion to both "verbal inspiration" and "encounter inspiration."²⁵⁸

In addressing the subject of infallibility, Coon mentioned two theories: (1) The "strait-jacket" theory, in which true prophetic writings are regarded as "prevented from making any type of error," and (2) the "intervention" theory, which holds that

if in his humanity a prophet of God errs, *and* the nature of that error is sufficiently serious to materially affect (a) the direction of God's church, (b) the eternal destiny of one person, or (c) the purity of a doctrine, *then* (and only then) the Holy Spirit immediately moves the prophet to correct the error, so that no permanent damage is done.²⁵⁹

Taking his stand on the side of the "intervention" theory, Coon stated that "in inspired writings, ancient [the Bible] and modern [the writings of Ellen White], there are inconsequential errors of minor, insignificant detail." He then lists a few examples of "errors" in the Bible and in the writings of Ellen White.

into both Spanish (*Manual de la Iglesia*, rev. ed. [Montemorelos, Mexico: Asociación Editorial Interamericana, 1984], 38) and Portuguese (*Manual da Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia* [Santo André, SP, Brazil: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 1981], 35) as "*autorizada*" (authorized).

²⁵⁴Hasel, *Understanding the Living Word of God*, 66-82.

²⁵⁵*Ibid.*

²⁵⁶William G. Johnsson, "How Does God Speak?" *Min*, Oct. 1981, 4.

²⁵⁷Roger W. Coon, "Inspiration/Revelation: What It Is and How It Works," 3-part series in *Journal of Adventist Education* (hereafter *JAE*) 44 (Oct.-Nov. 1981): 17-32; (Dec. 1981-Jan. 1982): 17-31; (Feb.-March 1982): 17-33.

²⁵⁸R. W. Coon, "Inspiration/Revelation: What It Is and How It Works—Part I," *JAE* 44 (Oct.-Nov. 1981): 24-30.

²⁵⁹R. W. Coon, "Inspiration/Revelation: What It Is and How It Works—Part II," *JAE* 44 (Dec. 1981-Jan. 1982): 18-19 (italics in the original).

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Among the “errors” in Scripture are mentioned (1) the allusion to Jeremiah (instead of Zechariah) as the author of the quotation found in Matthew 27:9, 10 (cf. Zech 11:12, 13); and (2) the different wordings of the inscription placed at the top of the cross (cf. Matt 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19). The “errors” of Ellen White are seen as including (1) a reference to the Paradise Valley Sanitarium as having forty rooms (instead of thirty-eight); and (2) a mentioning of the apostle Peter (instead of Paul) as the author of the saying, “the love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor 5:14).²⁶⁰

Rejecting the theory of “degrees of inspiration (or revelation)” and “degrees of authority,” Coon stated that “Ellen G. White is best understood in the role of the literary but noncanonical prophets of the Bible.” Thus, though the writings of Ellen White have the same level of inspiration and authority as the Bible, they are not “an addition to the sacred canon of Scripture.”²⁶¹

In response to the charges of plagiarism raised against Ellen White, George E. Rice, then associate professor of New Testament at Andrews University, in 1983 published his book *Luke, a Plagiarist?* In this book the author suggested that the inspiration of Scripture can only be fully understood from the perspective of two distinctive models of inspiration.

The first of those models was termed “prophetic model,” by which Rice referred to “divine revelation coming to the prophet through dreams, visions, thought illumination as seen in the psalms and the wisdom literature, and the recording of these theophanies (divine manifestations) under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”²⁶²

While recognizing that Seventh-day Adventists tended to see the prophetic model as “a big umbrella under which we gather all of the books of the Bible,” Rice pointed out that this model “is inadequate to explain the variations in the gospel portrait,” as well as the content of “1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, and other Old Testament books.” Room was, therefore, left for a second model of inspiration that would function as “the complement to and companion of the prophetic model.”²⁶³

That second model of inspiration is called the “Lucan model” (cf. Luke 1:1-4), which Rice saw as “based on research—reading and oral interviews.”²⁶⁴ Rice explained that

the Bible writer who operated under this model was an author and a theologian in his own right. As an author he shaped and arranged the

²⁶⁰See *ibid.*, 19, 24-26.

²⁶¹R. W. Coon, “Inspiration/Revelation: What It Is and How It Works—Part III,” *JAE* 44 (Feb.-March 1982): 20-21.

²⁶²G. E. Rice, *Luke, a Plagiarist?*, 11-12. George Rice borrowed and redefined the term “prophetic model” from Paul Achtemeier. See Paul J. Achtemeier, *The Inspiration of Scripture: Problems and Proposals* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 30-32.

²⁶³G. E. Rice, *Luke, a Plagiarist?*, 11, 19.

²⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 25.

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material he researched so that the end product expressed his interests. As a theologian he worked with the material so that the end product expressed his theological understanding. Yet the Spirit guided throughout the whole process.²⁶⁵

In 1985 Richard Rice, professor of Theology at Loma Linda University, included a whole chapter on “The Doctrine of Revelation” in his book *The Reign of God*.²⁶⁶ Regarding inspiration as “one aspect” of “the larger dynamic of God’s communication to human beings,” the author pointed out that “the doctrine of revelation” should not be reduced “to the phenomenon of inspiration.”²⁶⁷

Richard Rice saw the biblical doctrine of inspiration as containing two important ideas: (1) “The divine authority of Scripture,” and (2) “the divine-human character of Scripture.” “The Bible,” according to Rice, “is not a combination of the words of God *and* the words of men” but rather “the word of God *in* the words of men.”²⁶⁸

The same author regarded the doctrine of inerrancy as “unbiblical” because: (1) “It seems to overlook the human dimension of Scripture”; (2) “it sometimes leads to distorted and unconvincing interpretations of the Bible”; and (3) “it miscasts the fundamental purpose of Scripture.” He then stated that “Seventh-day Adventists have never advocated biblical inerrancy, although they supported the divine authority and complete reliability of the Scriptures.”²⁶⁹

In 1988 the Ministerial Association of the General Conference came out with a representative exposition of the 27 Fundamental Beliefs, entitled *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...*²⁷⁰ About inspiration of the Scriptures, this book emphasized (1) that “God inspired men—not words”²⁷¹; (2) that “the Bible is the written Word of God”; (3) that “the Bible does not teach partial inspiration or degrees of inspiration”²⁷²; and (4) that the guidance of the Holy Spirit “guarantees the Bible’s trustworthiness.”²⁷³ While the Bible is regarded as “the supreme standard,” the writings of Ellen White are seen as (1) “a guide to the Bible,” (2) “a guide in understanding the Bible,” and (3) “a guide to apply Bible principles.”²⁷⁴

²⁶⁵Ibid., 27.

²⁶⁶Richard Rice, *The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews UP, 1985), 20-46. Cf. Norman R. Gulley’s review, *AUSS* 27 (Autumn 1987): 312-14.

²⁶⁷R. Rice, *Reign of God*, 30-31.

²⁶⁸Ibid., 25-26 (italics in the original).

²⁶⁹Ibid., 33.

²⁷⁰*Seventh-day Adventist Believe... A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, DC: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of SDAs, 1988).

²⁷¹Ibid., 8.

²⁷²Ibid., 11.

²⁷³Ibid., 10.

²⁷⁴Ibid., 227-28.

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Noteworthy also are a few theses and dissertations defended at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Among them are Peter van Bemmelen's "Issues in Biblical Inspiration: Sanday and Warfield" (1987),²⁷⁵ Ray C. W. Roennfeldt's "Clark H. Pinnock's Shift in His Doctrine of Biblical Authority and Reliability: An Analysis and Critique" (1990),²⁷⁶ Joseph Karanja's "Inerrancy and Sovereignty: A Case Study on Carl F. H. Henry" (1990),²⁷⁷ James H. Burry's "An Investigation to Determine Ellen White's Concepts of Revelation, Inspiration, 'The Spirit of Prophecy,' and Her Claims about the Origin, Production and Authority of Her Writings" (1991),²⁷⁸ as well as Jerry A. Moon's "William Clarence (W. C.) White: His Relationship to Ellen G. White and Her Work" (1993),²⁷⁹ and Frank M. Hasel's "Scripture in the Theologies of W. Pannenberg and D. G. Bloesch: An Investigation and Assessment of Its Origin, Nature, and Use" (1994).²⁸⁰

Peter van Bemmelen provided some insights on the relationship between the claims and the phenomena of Scripture in the following paragraph:

Once Scripture is accepted as the only legitimate starting-point and source of reference in our quest, we must face up to the question whether the effort to establish the doctrine of inspiration by letting the Bible speak for itself should proceed primarily from the multifarious phenomena of the content and structure of Scripture or whether it should start from the explicit assertions of the Biblical writers or whether both should receive equal standing. It is evident that the decision we take at this junction is crucial. We suggest in view of considerations presented earlier that the inherent logic of the principle to let Scripture speak for itself requires that the teachings (or assertions, claims, or whatever other terms may be used) should be given priority over the phenomena. We use advisedly the word priority, for the phenomena cannot and should not be ignored. Whatever conclusions may be reached from a thorough study of the assertions must be examined and evaluated in the light of the phenomena, but just as surely, the phenomena must be examined and evaluated in the light of the conclusions derived from the assertions.²⁸¹

²⁷⁵Peter M. Van Bemmelen, "Issues in Biblical Inspiration: Sanday and Warfield" (Th.D. diss., Andrews University, 1987); idem, *Issues in Biblical Inspiration: Sanday and Warfield*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 13 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews UP, 1987).

²⁷⁶Ray C. W. Roennfeldt, "Clark H. Pinnock's Shift in His Doctrine of Biblical Authority and Reliability: An Analysis and Critique" (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 1990); idem, *Clark H. Pinnock on Biblical Authority: An Evolving Position*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 16 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews UP, 1993).

²⁷⁷Joseph Karanja, "Inerrancy and Sovereignty: A Case Study on Carl F. H. Henry" (M.Th. thesis, Andrews University, 1990).

²⁷⁸Burry, "Investigation to Determine Ellen White's Concepts of Revelation, Inspiration . . ."

²⁷⁹Jerry Allen Moon, "William Clarence (W. C.) White: His Relationship to Ellen G. White and Her Work" (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 1993); idem, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*.

²⁸⁰Frank M. Hasel, "Scripture in the Theologies of W. Pannenberg and D. G. Bloesch: An Investigation and Assessment of Its Origin, Nature, and Use" (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 1994).

²⁸¹Van Bemmelen, *Issues in Biblical Inspiration*, 377-78.

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But all those discussions previously mentioned have proved themselves unable to bring general agreement to the Seventh-day Adventist scholarly circles on the matter of inspiration. Those debates would actually continue through the 1990s.

Conflicting Views of Inspiration (1991-2000)

Influential in bringing the debate on inspiration down from the scholarly realm into the church level was Alden Thompson's *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* (1991).²⁸² The author, a professor of Biblical Studies at Walla Walla College, regarded revelation in this book as "some kind of special input from God, a message from Him to His creatures on earth" and as "a visible or audible intervention by God." He defined inspiration as "the Spirit's special urging of a messenger to speak or write" and "a means to indicate that the Holy Spirit has been active in a special way." While acknowledging that "all Scripture is given by inspiration" (cf. 2 Tim 3:16), Thompson suggested that "the most crucial point" of his book was perhaps the idea that "*the Bible does not say that all Scripture was given by revelation.*"²⁸³

Thompson evidently intended to come up with a model of inspiration that could provide enough room for both *difficulties* and *cultural accommodations*. Room for errors, mistakes, and "fatal contradictions" in the Bible (although Thompson tried to avoid such words)²⁸⁴ was provided by the human side of his "incarnational model." Cultural accommodations found special space in his "casebook" (as opposed to "codebook") approach to Scripture.

For Thompson, "the *one* great law of love," the *two* commandments to love God and to love man, and the *ten* commandments "form a pyramid of law that embodies the eternal principles of God's kingdom," which are normative "to all mankind at all times everywhere." "All other biblical laws are applications of those principles in time and place."²⁸⁵

His *casebook* approach to Scripture also provided for a high position for human reason. According to him,

²⁸²Alden Thompson, *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1991). Cf. Fernando Canale's review, *AUSS* 29 (Autumn 1991): 278-79; Peter van Bemmelen's review, *College and University Dialogue* (hereafter *CUD*) 3, no. 3 (1991): 27-28; Gonnell L. O. R. Yorke's review, *Min*, Dec. 1991, 28; Norman R. Gulley's review, *Min*, Dec. 1991, 28-30; Clark H. Pinnock, "Alden Thompson's *Inspiration*: Why Is It a Cause Célèbre?" *Sp* 23 (Jan. 1994): 51-52; Charles Bradford, "Bradford on Thompson's *Inspiration*," *ibid.*, 53-54.

See also Alden Thompson, "Adventists and Inspiration," 4-part series in *ATR*, Sept. 5, 1985, 5-7; Sept. 12, 1985, 13-15; Sept. 19, 1985, 7-9; Sept. 26, 1985, 12-15. Cf. Fannie E. Diller, Bertrand Young, and Myron J. Houghton, in "Adventists and Inspiration," *ATR*, Nov. 7, 1985, 4.

²⁸³Thompson, *Inspiration*, 47-48 (italics in the original).

²⁸⁴Cf. *ibid.*, 144, 249, 263-64.

²⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 114-15.

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*the casebook approach allows us—indeed, forces us—to recognize that revelation and reason must work together. Revelation always deals with specific cases. Reason, in dialogue with the Spirit, determines which of those cases are most helpful in informing the decisions we make day by day.*²⁸⁶

Thompson's book was controversial from the very beginning. While some endorsed the book,²⁸⁷ others strongly opposed it.²⁸⁸ The most significant response to it was the Adventist Theological Society's *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration* (1992),²⁸⁹ with articles by Raoul Dederen (two),²⁹⁰ Samuel Koranteng-Pipim,²⁹¹ Norman R. Gulley,²⁹² Richard A. Davidson,²⁹³ Gerhard F. Hasel,²⁹⁴ Randall W. Younker,²⁹⁵ Frank M. Hasel,²⁹⁶ and Miroslav M. Kis.²⁹⁷

The basic consensus of those authors was that Alden Thompson's model of inspiration was based on a partial reading of the Bible and of the writings of Ellen White. Frank Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson even pointed out in the *Issues* Preface that Thompson's study illustrated "the fruits of the historical-critical method," which had been regarded by the 1986 Annual Council as "unacceptable" for Adventists.²⁹⁸

While the previous developments of the Seventh-day Adventist doctrine of inspiration have been largely confined to the phenomena of Scripture and the writings of Ellen White, Fernando Canale, professor of Systematic Theology at Andrews University, in the Summer of 1993 began a five-part series in the *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, proposing a "new approach" to the doctrine

²⁸⁶Ibid., 109 (italics in the original).

²⁸⁷See e.g., G. L. O. R. Yorke's review, *Min*, Dec. 1991, 28.

²⁸⁸See e.g., N. R. Gulley's review, *Min*, Dec. 1991, 28-30.

²⁸⁹Frank Holbrook and Leo van Dolson, eds., *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*, Adventist Theological Society Occasional Papers, vol. 1 (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992).

²⁹⁰Raoul Dederen, "The Revelation-Inspiration Phenomenon according to the Bible Writers," in *ibid.*, 9-29; *idem*, "On Inspiration and Biblical Authority," in *ibid.*, 91-103.

²⁹¹Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, "An Analysis and Evaluation of Alden Thompson's Casebook/Codebook Approach to the Bible," in *ibid.*, 31-67.

²⁹²Norman R. Gulley, "An Evaluation of Alden Thompson's 'Incarnational' Method in the Light of His View of Scripture and Use of Ellen White," in *ibid.*, 69-90.

²⁹³Richard M. Davidson, "Revelation/Inspiration in the Old Testament: A Critique of Alden Thompson's 'Incarnational' Model," in *ibid.*, 105-35.

²⁹⁴Gerhard F. Hasel, "Reflections on Alden Thompson's 'Law Pyramid' within a Casebook/Codebook Dichotomy," in *ibid.*, 137-71.

²⁹⁵Randall W. Younker, "A Few Thoughts on Alden Thompson's Chapter: Numbers, Genealogies, Dates," in *ibid.*, 173-99.

²⁹⁶Frank M. Hasel, "Reflections on the Authority and Trustworthiness of Scripture," in *ibid.*, 201-20.

²⁹⁷Miroslav M. Kis, "Revelation and Ethics: Question of Distance," in *ibid.*, 221-36.

²⁹⁸Frank B. Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson, "Preface," in *ibid.*, 7.

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of revelation and inspiration.²⁹⁹ Canale suggested that “a new theological model about the origin of Scripture” could be developed on the basis of an understanding of God and of human nature derived from Scripture rather than from Greek philosophical concepts.

Canale criticized conventional Roman Catholic and Protestant models of revelation-inspiration for their indebtedness to a *timeless* view of God and to an *immortalist* concept of human soul. He explained, in regard to the concept of God, that

when God is conceived to act within a timeless realm, the theological content of Scripture (which is brought into being by God) will also pertain to the timeless realm. In this case, the historical side of Scripture is considered to belong, not to its divine cause, but rather to the human condition necessary for the expression of its divinely (timelessly) originated content. Thus, the Scriptures are said to be “historically conditioned.” On the contrary, the concept that God is capable of acting genuinely in history (that is, “historically”) leads to a conception of the biblical writings as being “historically constituted.” According to the former view, the historical side of Scripture is external and incidental to its religious and theological contents; according to the latter view, the historical side of Scripture belongs to the very essence of its divinely revealed and inspired contents.³⁰⁰

The development of a new model of revelation-inspiration based on the *sola Scriptura* principle would require, according to Canale, the paradigmatic shift to a “temporal-historical conception of God’s being and actions” that allows Him to act “historically in history.” The multiform “divine revelatory activity” in history was viewed as comprising “theophanic, direct writing, prophetic, historical, and existential” patterns,³⁰¹ supporting the notion that “the whole Bible is revealed and the whole Bible is inspired.”³⁰² For Canale, this change of paradigm would require also “a new exegetical methodology” (different from both the *classic* historical-grammatical method and the *liberal* historical-critical method).³⁰³ But Canale has not yet demonstrated what this new methodology

²⁹⁹Fernando Canale, “Revelation and Inspiration,” 5-part series in *AUSS* “The Ground for a New Approach,” 31/2 (Summer 1993): 91-104; “Method for a New Approach,” 31/3 (Autumn 1993): 171-94; “The Classical Model,” 32/1-2 (Spring/Summer 1994): 7-28; “The Liberal Model,” 32/3 (Autumn 1994): 169-95; “The Historical-Cognitive Model,” 33/3 (Spring 1995): 5-38.

³⁰⁰F. Canale, “Revelation and Inspiration: The Ground for a New Approach,” *AUSS* 31/2 (Summer 1993): 98.

³⁰¹F. Canale, “Revelation and Inspiration: The Historical-Cognitive Model,” *AUSS* 33/1 (Spring 1995): 9, 16.

³⁰²F. Canale, “Revelation and Inspiration: Method for a New Approach,” *AUSS* 31/3 (Autumn 1993): 189. See also idem, “Revelation and Inspiration: The Historical-Cognitive Model,” *AUSS* 33/1 (Spring 1995): 27, 31, 33.

³⁰³F. Canale, “Revelation and Inspiration: The Historical-Cognitive Model,” *AUSS* 33/1 (Spring 1995): 34.

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would be or shown how his new “historical-cognitive model” handles the issue of alleged factual errors in Scripture.

Equally noteworthy is the Spring 1994 issue of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, which came out with several papers on inspiration presented at the 1993 Scholars’ Convention of the Adventist Theological Society, which convened in Washington, D.C., on November 18, and Silver Spring, MD, on November 19-20, 1993. Those papers were the following: “By What Authority?” by C. Raymond Holmes;³⁰⁴ “New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” by Richard M. Davidson;³⁰⁵ “Inspiration and the Imprecatory Psalms,” by Angel M. Rodriguez;³⁰⁶ “Divine Inspiration and the Canon of the Bible,” by Gerhard F. Hasel;³⁰⁷ “Revelation/Inspiration, Church, and Culture,” by Jack J. Blanco;³⁰⁸ “Inspiration, the Natural Sciences, and a Window of Opportunity,” by John T. Baldwin;³⁰⁹ “The Inspiration of Scripture in the Writings of Ellen G. White,” by Gerard Damsteegt;³¹⁰ and “History of Inspiration in the Adventist Church (1844-1915),” by Alberto R. Timm.³¹¹ The overall tenor of those papers is the emphasis on the infallibility of Scripture, with specific responses to some charges raised against the trustworthiness of the Bible.

In 1995, Robert S. Folkenberg, then president of the General Conference, stated in the *Adventist Review* that the Adventist historic position on inspiration strengthens the church. According to his own words,

Our unequivocal, historic emphasis upon the divine inspiration and trustworthiness of Scripture has strengthened our church. It has helped us resist the error of treating some parts of Scripture as God’s Word, while ignoring or rejecting other parts. If we accept it as God’s Word, we must accept it all, whether or not we like what it says. To us the Scriptures should be the ultimate revelation of God’s will for our lives.³¹²

Several other publications helped to keep alive the ongoing debate on inspiration during the second half of the 1990s. One of the most influential landmarks in that debate was Samuel Koranteng-Pipim’s conservative-provocative book

³⁰⁴C. Raymond Holmes, “By What Authority?,” *JATS* 5/1 (Spring 1994): 1-13.

³⁰⁵Richard M. Davidson, “New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” *ibid.*, 14-39.

³⁰⁶Angel M. Rodriguez, “Inspiration and the Imprecatory Psalms,” *ibid.*, 40-67.

³⁰⁷Gerhard F. Hasel, “Divine Inspiration and the Canon of the Bible,” *ibid.*, 68-105.

³⁰⁸Jack J. Blanco, “Revelation/Inspiration, Church, and Culture,” *ibid.*, 106-30.

³⁰⁹John T. Baldwin, “Inspiration, the Natural Sciences, and a Window of Opportunity,” *ibid.*, 131-54.

³¹⁰P. Gerard Damsteegt, “The Inspiration of Scripture in the Writings of Ellen G. White,” *ibid.*, 155-79.

³¹¹Alberto R. Timm, “History of Inspiration in the Adventist Church (1844-1915),” *ibid.*, 180-95.

³¹²Robert S. Folkenberg, “Standing on Solid Ground—The Bible,” *Adventist Review*, Aug. 3, 1995, 22.

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Receiving the Word (1996).³¹³ Pipim, from Ghana, West Africa, who was at that time a Ph.D. candidate in Systematic Theology at Andrews University, called the attention of his readers to a significant variety of historical-critical attempts to undermine the authority of the Scriptures within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He also tried to uplift the trustworthiness of the Bible by demonstrating that many of its alleged “errors” are either distortions added in the transmission process of its original text, or shortcuts in our present understanding of its true meaning.³¹⁴

That not everybody fully agreed with Pipim’s approach is evident from George R. Knight’s response to it. Knight, a professor of Church History at the Theological Seminary of Andrews University, criticized Pipim (1) for still believing in “inerrancy and verbalism”³¹⁵ and (2) for using the “well-known debater’s technique” in which “at one extreme it sets up the ‘right’ position, which is very, very right, while at the other extreme is the ‘wrong’ position, which is very, very wrong.”³¹⁶ Knight’s own view of inspiration was more clearly exposed in his book *Reading Ellen White* (1997), in which he argued (1) that “inspiration is not infallible, inerrant, or verbal”;³¹⁷ (2) that several factual “mistakes” can be found in the inspired writings;³¹⁸ and (3) that those writings are infallible only “as a guide to salvation.”³¹⁹ The views of Pipim, on one side, and of Knight, on the other, are representative of the two main conflicting poles around which gravitate the contemporary discussions on inspiration.

Meanwhile, the concept of models of inspiration was much further developed in 1996 by Juan Carlos Viera, director of the Ellen G. White Estate, in his *Adventist Review* article entitled “The Dynamics of Inspiration.” While George Rice had spoken only of two models, Viera suggested the following six: (1) the *visionary* model, in which God speaks “through prophetic visions and dreams”; (2) the *witness* model, in which God inspires “the prophet to give his or her own account of things seen and heard”; (3) the *historian* model, in which the message “did not come through visions and dreams, but through research”; (4) the *counselor* model, in which “the prophet acts as an adviser to God’s people”; (5) the

³¹³Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Receiving the Word: How New Approaches to the Bible Impact Our Biblical Faith and Lifestyle* (Berrien Springs, MI: Berean Books, 1996). This book was also published in Spanish under the title *Recibiendo la Palabra: Cómo afectan a nuestra fe los nuevos enfoques bíblicos?* trad. David Gullón (Buenos Aires: Asociación Casa Editora Sudamerica, 1997). Cf. George R. Knight’s and George W. Reid’s reviews in *Min*, Dec. 1997, 30-31; Aecio E. Cairus’s review in *Espigas* (Argentina) 1, nos. 1-21, 8-10.

³¹⁴See Pipim, *Receiving the Word*, 279-304.

³¹⁵George R. Knight, “The Case of the Overlooked Postscript: A Footnote on Inspiration,” *Min*, Aug. 1997, 11.

³¹⁶George R. Knight’s review in *Min*, Dec. 1997, 30.

³¹⁷George R. Knight, *Reading Ellen White: How to Understand and Apply Her Writings* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1997), 105.

³¹⁸*Ibid.*, 111, 113-18.

³¹⁹*Ibid.*, 110.

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epistolary model, in which “the prophet writes greetings, names, circumstances or even common things that do not require a special revelation; and (6) the *literary* model, in which “the Holy Spirit inspires the prophet to express his or her intimate feelings and emotions through the means of poetry and prose, as in the psalms.” According to Viera, “the prophet can make orthographical or grammatical mistakes, as well as other kinds of language imperfections such as *lappus linguae* (a slip of the tongue) or *lappus memoriae* (a slip of the memory),” but the Holy Spirit “is in control of the inspired message” and “always corrected His messengers in matters important to the church.”³²⁰ Viera’s models reflect more the sources of the inspired content than its actual transmission process.

Two years later (1998), Viera’s book on inspiration, *The Voice of the Spirit*, tried to explain the “relationship between a divine message, perfect and infallible, and a human messenger, imperfect and fallible,” in the process of prophetic inspiration.³²¹ Commenting on Ellen White’s classic statement, “It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired . . . ,”³²² Viera suggested that,

taken with all the seriousness that this declaration deserves, it means that expressions such as “the pen of inspiration,” and “the inspired writings” are only symbolic expressions that refer to the message the writings communicate and not to the text itself of the prophetic declarations. Expressions such as these will continue to be used—and there is nothing wrong with that—because we all understand what they mean: that what we may be reading at the moment comes from a mind inspired by the Spirit of God. Therefore, we speak of “inspired paragraphs” or “inspired books” or “inspired letters.” Nevertheless, those expressions, taken literally, would contradict the prophetic thought that tells us that it is not the text, the words, or the language of a declaration that is inspired, but the message these communicate—and that message comes from heaven.³²³

Support for the notion of a non-inspired prophetic text was found in the fact that Ellen White herself allowed C. C. Crisler and H. H. Hall’s chapter on “The Awakening of Spain” to be added to the Spanish version of her book *The Great Controversy*.³²⁴ Under the assumption that this chapter shares the same nature of the book itself, Viera was not afraid of stating that the chapter “ended up being

³²⁰Juan Carlos Viera, “The Dynamics of Inspiration,” *ATR*, special edition, 30 May 1996, 22-28 (italics within quotation marks in the original).

³²¹Juan Carlos Viera, *The Voice of the Spirit: How God Has Led His People Through the Gift of Prophecy* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998), [7]. This book was also published in Spanish under the title *La Voz del Espíritu: Cómo Dios ha guiado a su pueblo a través del don de profecía* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998). Cf. Alberto R. Timm’s review, *CUD* 11/1 (1999): 33.

³²²See note 66, above.

³²³Viera, *The Voice of the Spirit*, 81-82.

³²⁴See C. C. Crisler and H. H. Hall, “El despertar de España,” in Elena G. de White, *El Conflicto de los Siglos durante la Era Cristiana*, 10th ed. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1977), 252-77.

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part of the text (not inspired) of a book that contains the message (inspired) of God.”³²⁵ This might be easily seen as a significant move toward the liberal position that the Bible *is not* the Word of God but only *contains* that Word.

Also in 1998 came Herbert E. Douglass’s 586-page textbook titled *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White*. Rejecting “verbal, inerrant inspiration” for implying that the prophet would have to function simply as a “recording machine” or as a “court stenographer,” Douglass argued for “thought inspiration” because “God inspires the prophet, not his or her words.” But the “divinely revealed message, or content,” can still be regarded as “infallible and authoritative.”³²⁶

Of special significance in the late 1990s were Leo R. van Dolson’s Adult Sabbath School Lessons for the first quarter of 1999, dealing specifically with the subjects of “revelation and inspiration,”³²⁷ and its companion book titled *Show and Tell* (1998).³²⁸ Van Dolson, who had been one of the editors of the book *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration* (1992),³²⁹ defined inspiration in his lessons as “the means by which God safeguarded the production and preservation of the Bible in order for it to become an infallible and sufficient guide to salvation.”³³⁰ But these widespread Bible lessons, as balanced in their content as they could be, were unable to downplay the Adventist academic tensions about inspiration.

Noteworthy also are some articles on inspiration published in *Ministry* magazine between 1999 and 2000. The September 1999 issue of that magazine came out with a slightly edited version of Alberto R. Timm’s paper presented at a plenary session of the First Jerusalem International Bible Conference, in June 1998.³³¹ Timm, director of the Brazilian Ellen G. White Research Center and professor of Church History and Historical Theology at Brazil Adventist University - Campus 2, suggested that further Adventist studies on “the nature and authority of the Bible” should take into consideration (1) “the symphonic nature of inspiration,” avoiding the “classical polarization under the labels of verbal inspiration on one side and thought inspiration on the other”; (2) “the wholistic scope of inspiration,” recognizing that the “overall thematic interrelationship” of the Scriptures “makes it almost impossible for someone to speak of the Bible in

³²⁵Viera, *The Voice of the Spirit*, 94 (parentheses in the original).

³²⁶Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998), 16.

³²⁷Leo R. Van Dolson, “Studies on Revelation and Inspiration: God Shows and Tells,” *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, no. 415 (Jan.-March 1999).

³²⁸Leo R. Van Dolson, *Show and Tell: How God Reveals Truth to Us* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998).

³²⁹See note 289, above.

³³⁰Van Dolson, “Studies on Revelation and Inspiration,” 23 (lesson for January 10).

³³¹Alberto R. Timm, “Toward a Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Inspiration” (Paper presented at the First International Jerusalem Bible Conference, Jerusalem, Israel, June 10, 1998), AHC.

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dichotomous terms as being reliable in some topics and not in others”; and (3) “a respectful approach to the inspired writings,” that allows us to emphasize “more the content of the divine messages than their human containers” and “more the core of these messages than their side issues.”³³²

A new appeal for a cultural-conditioned understanding of inspiration was made by Richard W. Coffen in his 2-part series “A Fresh Look at the Dynamics of Inspiration,” published in *Ministry* magazine of December 1999 and February 2000.³³³ Coffen, vice-president of editorial services at the Review and Herald Publishing Association, was the editor of Alden Thompson’s *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* (1991),³³⁴ and showed himself very close to Thompson’s theory of inspiration. Besides pointing out several factual errors in the Scriptures,³³⁵ Coffen also argued for a divine-human dichotomous reading of the Scriptures. He says,

So, contrary to what some suggest, it is not heretical to deal with merely the human aspect of the Bible in isolation from its divine side, or vice versa. That’s not heresy but simple necessity. The heresy occurs when we deny the unity, wholeness, and complementarity principle in relation to inspiration.³³⁶

At the end of the second part of Coffen’s article appeared an editor’s note saying that “a response to Richard Coffen’s two part series,” by Ekkehardt Mueller, associate director of the Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, would appear in the April 2000 issue of *Ministry*.³³⁷ In that response, Mueller explained that “an inductive approach” to Scripture, as used by some scholars,

looks for discrepancies and takes notice of these phenomena. Oftentimes, it does not allow for harmonization even where it seems to be possible and advisable. It is preoccupied with finding differences rather than agreement and unity. And it always has only parts of the entire puzzle.³³⁸

³³²Alberto R. Timm, “Understanding Inspiration: The Symphonic and Wholistic Nature of Scripture,” *Min*, Sept. 1999, 12-15. The basic content of this article was published also in Portuguese as “O Adventismo e a Inspiração” (*Ministério* [Brazil], March-April 1999, 9-12) and in Spanish as “Hacia un entendimiento adventista de la inspiración” (*Logos* [Argentina] 3 [April 1999]: 8-13).

³³³Richard W. Coffen, “A Fresh Look at the Dynamics of Inspiration,” 2-part series in *Min*, Dec. 1999, 9-14, 29; Feb. 2000, 20-23.

³³⁴See note 282, above.

³³⁵Coffen, “[A Fresh Look at the Dynamics of Inspiration] - Part 2,” *Min*, Feb. 2000, 20-22.

³³⁶*Ibid.*, 22.

³³⁷“Editor’s note,” in *ibid.*, 23.

³³⁸Ekkehardt Mueller, “The Revelation, Inspiration, and Authority of Scripture,” *Min*, April 2000, 22.

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Thus, instead of an “inductive versus deductive” approach, one should proceed inductively *and* deductively, taking into consideration not only “the phenomena of the biblical texts” but also “the self-testimony of Scripture.”³³⁹

Mueller argued also that

the human and the divine in Scripture are not complementary. They are integrated. Consequently, different sets of tools in order to study the human side and the divine side of the Bible cannot do justice to the unified nature, the truly incarnational character of Scripture.³⁴⁰

Another major appeal for a historically conditioned understanding of inspiration can be found in Raymond F. Cottrell’s paper, “Inspiration and Authority of the Bible in Relation to Phenomena of the Natural World.” Presented originally at the revisionist 1985 Conference on Geology and the Biblical Record sponsored by the Association of Adventist Forums (publisher of *Spectrum* magazine), in West Yellowstone, Montana, this paper appeared in print only in 2000, as a chapter of that conference’s symposium, titled *Creation Reconsidered*.³⁴¹ Cottrell, a former editor of the Review and Herald Publishing Association and more recently an editor of *Adventist Today*, tried to solve some of the basic tensions between faith and reason, and between the Bible and natural sciences and secular history, by suggesting a clear distinction between the “inspired message” of the Bible and the “uninspired form in which it comes to us.” Yet “the inspired message on record in the Bible” is viewed by Cottrell as “culturally conditioned” and “historically conditioned.” For him, “historical conditioning permeates the entire Bible. It is not incidental, nor is it exceptional and unusual; it is the invariable rule.”³⁴²

Under the assumption that “in matters of science, the Bible writers were on a level with their contemporaries,” Cottrell could suggest that on these matters our understanding should be informed by the more reliable data provided by modern science. His attempt to harmonize the Bible account of Creation with modern science led him to the conclusion that “at an unspecified time in the remote past, the Creator transmuted a finite portion of his infinite power into the primordial substance of the universe—perhaps in an event such as the Big Bang.”³⁴³

The notion that “the words and forms of expression in the Bible were historically conditioned to their time and perspective” led the same author, elsewhere, to the conclusion that the Genesis Flood did not extend beyond the known “lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea.” He even stated that “only by

³³⁹Ibid., 22, 24.

³⁴⁰Ibid., 24.

³⁴¹ Raymond F. Cottrell, “Inspiration and Authority of the Bible in Relation to Phenomena of the Natural World,” in James L. Hayward, ed., *Creation Reconsidered: Scientific, Biblical, and Theological Perspectives* (Roseville, CA: Association of Adventist Forums, 2000) 195–221.

³⁴² Ibid., 195–96, 199, 200, 205, 218.

³⁴³ Ibid., 199, 219.

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reading our modern worldview of ‘all the earth’ [Gen 7:3] back into the Hebrew text can the idea of a world-wide flood be established.”³⁴⁴ This represents, indeed, a major departure from the traditional Adventist understanding of a universal flood, as described in the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*,³⁴⁵ of which Cottrell himself was an associate editor.

But also published in the year 2000 was the most comprehensive official exposition of the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of inspiration. That exposition, titled “Revelation and Inspiration,” was prepared by Peter M. van Bemmelen, professor of Theology at Andrews University, and submitted to the criticisms of the Biblical Research Institute Committee (BRICOM), sponsored by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, prior to its publication as a chapter of the major *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (2000).³⁴⁶ The subject of inspiration is addressed in that chapter from the perspective of (1) its biblical interpretation, (2) its main historical expositions throughout the Christian era, and (3) Ellen G. White comments on the topic.

Van Bemmelen defines “inspiration” as the supernatural process by which the prophets were “moved and directed by the Spirit of God, in putting the words of the Lord in written form.” While recognizing that “the locus of inspiration is in the inspired author,” the same author argues that “there is little doubt that thoughts as well as words are involved in this process,” in such a way that those words are “words from God,” “fully human and fully divine.”³⁴⁷ Furthermore, “because all of Scripture is God’s word and every word that comes from God is true, it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that all of Scripture is truth.”³⁴⁸

In regard to the so-called “factual errors” of the Bible, van Bemmelen recognizes that “no serious student of the Bible will deny that there are difficulties in Scripture,” but he adds that “these difficulties do not affect the clarity of Scripture.” He warns his readers that the claims and allegations “that there are numerous errors, contradictions, historical inaccuracies, anachronisms, and other flaws in the Scriptures” constitute “a serious indictment against the truthfulness of Holy Scripture.” He also alerts his readers that “through exalting the authority of human reason, tradition, and science, many have come to deny or to limit the

³⁴⁴ Raymond F. Cottrell, “Extent of the Genesis Flood,” in Hayward, ed., *Creation Reconsidered*, 275.

³⁴⁵ Cf. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 1:257: “This description [of Gen 7] renders utterly foolish and impossible the view set forth by some that the Flood was a local affair in the Mesopotamian valley.”

³⁴⁶ Peter M. van Bemmelen, “Revelation and Inspiration,” in Raoul Dederen, ed., *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 12 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 22–57.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 38–40.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

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authority of Scripture.” But the Bible itself “warns repeatedly against anything or anybody that would undermine or usurp the authority of the Word of God.”³⁴⁹

Such conflicting views of inspiration as the ones mentioned above demonstrate that Seventh-day Adventist scholars are still divided in their personal understanding of inspiration.

Summary and Conclusion

Different views on the nature of inspiration have been advocated within the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the 150 years of its history.

Sabbatarian Adventists inherited William Miller’s high view of Scripture as the infallible and unerring Word of God. That Seventh-day Adventists kept that view of Scripture during the first four decades of their history (1844-1883) is evident from both their responses to *infidel* challenges against the Bible and their uncritical reprint in the *Review* of several articles by non-Seventh-day Adventist authors who fostered an inerrant view of Scripture.

From the early 1800s up to the time of Ellen White’s death (1915) traditional views of inspiration were challenged by individuals who either had been personally reproved by Ellen White or had been shocked by the idea that an inspired writing could be improved by its author. During that same period Ellen White wrote some of her most significant statements on inspiration. Responses to higher criticism show that Seventh-day Adventists continued to regard the Scriptures as the infallible and trustworthy Word of God.

The first five years after the death of Ellen White saw the development of an identity crisis about the nature of Ellen White’s inspiration. That crisis reached its climax at the 1919 Bible and History Teachers’ Council. The years following that council viewed Seventh-day Adventists on the side of Fundamentalism in uplifting the trustworthiness of the Bible in the context of the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy. Responses to Modernism demonstrate that Seventh-day Adventists still kept their view of Scripture as the infallible and unerring Word of God.

In the early 1950s new trends began to develop within Seventh-day Adventism that assumed an increasingly radical tone in the early 1970s. Such issues as encounter revelation and the use of the historical-critical method influenced the Seventh-day Adventist discussions about inspiration. The main forum to foster discussions of those issues was *Spectrum* magazine.

Despite the emergence of new trends, no significant changes were made in Seventh-day Adventist official statements on inspiration. One has to avoid, therefore, the generalizing tendency of superimposing individual views or segment trends from the scholarly world upon the whole church.

Noticeably, the last few decades have seen the development of a factual and apologetic doctrine of inspiration largely shaped by revisionist studies of Ellen

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 42-44.

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White. As insightful as such developments can be, the time has come for Seventh-day Adventists to move beyond apologetic concerns into the task of developing a more constructive *theology* of inspiration.

Holding to the Protestant principle of *sola Scriptura*, Seventh-day Adventists should seriously take more into consideration what the Bible and the writings of Ellen White have to say about themselves. As the end-time remnant, Seventh-day Adventists should not give up their identity as a people that lives “by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4, RSV).

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