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ABSTRACT

TRUST AND DOUBT: PERCEPTIONS OF
DIVINE INSPIRATION IN SEVENTH-
DAY ADVENTIST HISTORY
(1880 – 1930)

by

Denis Kaiser

Adviser: Merlin D. Burt

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: TRUST AND DOUBT: PERCEPTIONS OF DIVINE INSPIRATION IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST HISTORY (1880 – 1930)

Name of researcher: Denis Kaiser

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Date completed: December 2016

The Topic

The belief in the divine inspiration of Scripture has come under scrutiny in North America from the 1850s to the 1920s as critical scholars questioned traditional hermeneutical presuppositions and conservative Protestant theologians retreated into more strict theories of inspiration. In that context various Seventh-day Adventist leaders formulated their individual understandings of the nature, manner, and result of the inspiration of the Bible writers and Adventist visionary Ellen G. White.

The Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe the views that selected influential Seventh-day Adventist thinkers held concerning the divine inspiration of the Bible

writers and Ellen G. White from 1880 to 1930. In order to outline such a history of Adventist perceptions of divine inspiration, based on a study of selected individuals, it was necessary to describe each thinker's affirmations and objections, underlying sources and influences, and the historical context in which they made their statements.

The Sources

This was a documentary study based primarily on published and unpublished primary sources produced by selected Seventh-day Adventists between 1845 and 1930. Both primary and secondary sources were used for background, historical context, and perspective. The most heavily used primary sources were periodicals, the correspondence collections of the Ellen G. White Estate, and other archives containing Adventist resources.

Conclusions

The study identified five general stages in the development of Seventh-day Adventist perceptions of divine inspiration. (1) From 1845 to 1883 they believed in the divine inspiration of both Scripture and Ellen White's writings without clarifying the particulars. Scripture was nevertheless seen as having supreme authority, being the only basis for faith and practice. (2) From 1883 to 1888 the theory of degrees of inspiration gained some influence within the denomination in the attempt to vindicate White's writings against critics. (3) That theory experienced its demise after 1888 when various people connected to the *Signs of the Times* advocated the verbal inspiration of Scripture and, in some cases, of White's writings. (4) Her return to the United States in 1900 and the subsequent Kellogg crisis urged several advocates of verbal inspiration either to

modify their view or to reject her inspiration altogether. (5) After the controversy over the correct interpretation of the *tāmīd* (continual, daily) in Daniel 8 and the revision of the *Great Controversy* in 1911, relations of the proponents of verbal and thought inspiration swayed between severe tensions and collegial cooperation. Adventist discussions about inspiration revolved primarily around perceptions of Ellen White's inspiration.

Throughout her life, Ellen White maintained, however, a dynamic view that allowed for diverse non-dominating operations of the Holy Spirit, which did not fit any particular theory of inspiration.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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DIVINE INSPIRATION IN SEVENTH-
DAY ADVENTIST HISTORY
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A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
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Doctor of Philosophy

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Denis Kaiser

2016

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Harvard Divinity School

Date approved

To my parents

Peter and Rosmarie Kaiser

For exciting in me curiosity and interest in history.

ὅσα γὰρ προεγράφη,
εἰς τὴν ἡμετέραν διδασκαλίαν ἐγράφη,
ἵνα διὰ τῆς ὑπομονῆς καὶ διὰ τῆς παρακλήσεως τῶν γραφῶν
τὴν ἐλπίδα ἔχωμεν.

(Rom 15:4)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAE	Historical Archive of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Europe, Friedensau Adventist University, Friedensau, Germany
ACL	Archives and Special Collections, Albion College Library, Albion College, Albion, Michigan
CAR	Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan
DF	Document File
EGWE	Ellen G. White Estate, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland
EGWCF	Ellen G. White Correspondence File
fld	folder
JWCF	James White Correspondence File
JWL	James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan
LLU	Heritage Research Center, Del E. Webb Memorial Library, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California
Lt	Letter
GCA	Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland
GHMR	General Historic Miscellaneous Records
Ms	Manuscript
PIC	Presidential Incoming Correspondence
PGF	Presidential General Files
PL	Presidential Letterbooks

SC	Secretariat Correspondence
SGF	Secretariat General Files
WCWCF	W. C. White Correspondence File
WDF	White Estate Document File

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The importance of the divine origin of the biblical scriptures has been recognized by Christians since the very inception of the Christian church (2 Timothy 3:16). They acknowledged that the biblical scriptures were written by human writers who were inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21; Hebrews 1:1), and perceived these writings therefore as a divine-human product.¹ The reception of the biblical message and statements was nevertheless influenced by the particular assumptions that a person had of the nature and manner of divine inspiration.

The divine inspiration of the Bible became a subject of grave tensions in American Protestant Christianity from the 1830s to the 1920s. New scientific theories and biblical criticism were gaining influence in scholarly circles and were raising questions concerning the historical reliability of the biblical text. As the teaching of Scripture's inspiration was questioned or accommodated to the new theories, conservative scholars, primarily of Presbyterian persuasion, defended its reliability by stressing its verbal-plenary inspiration. These opposing trends in American Protestantism

¹ Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 59–61.

led to increased tensions between modernist and conservative scholars, erupting in the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy in the 1910s and 1920s.²

Emerging as the major surviving branch of William Miller’s Advent movement—based on the biblical apocalyptic prophecies he and his followers preached the imminent second advent of Christ in 1843/1844—at the latter end of the Second Great Awakening, Seventh-day Adventists³ continued to cherish Miller’s emphasis on the Bible and Christ. Like other Christian denominations, they professed to believe that the biblical scriptures were “given by inspiration of God.”⁴ Unlike other Christians, they perceived prophecy not merely as a spiritual gift that ended with the early Christian church. They accepted the prophetic visions and dreams that Ellen G. White (née Harmon) (1827-1915) experienced as a manifestation of the genuine spiritual gift of prophecy.⁵ This prophetic gift was manifested throughout the remainder of her life, giving guidance to the Seventh-

² Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America*, Society of Biblical Literature Confessional Perspectives Series (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1986), 11–56; Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education, 1870-1970* (Grand Rapids, MI, Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2007), 63–112; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 69–76; Christopher H. Evans, *Histories of American Christianity: An Introduction* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 207–68.

³ The term “Seventh-day Adventists” was first mentioned in print by S. T. Cranson in the spring of 1853 (S. T. Cranson, "Letter from Bro. Cranson," *Review and Herald*, 14 April 1853, 191), yet it was not until 1860 that it was officially used as a name for that group of believers. See William S. Ingraham, "Note from Bro. Ingraham," *Review and Herald*, 19 March 1861, 144. In this study the term “Adventists” refers to Sabbatarian Adventists / Seventh-day Adventists.

⁴ *A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1872), 5.

⁵ Theodore N. Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, American University Studies, Series 7: Theology and Religion, vol. 347 (Frankfurt am Main, et al.: Lang, 2015).

day Adventist Church.⁶ Since they perceived her as a living, visible example of the Holy Spirit's work of inspiration, they ascribed divine inspiration to both the Bible and White's writings, a circumstance that nevertheless raised questions concerning the relationship between these two sets of documents as well as the nature and manner of inspiration.⁷

Scholars recognize that various theories of inspiration have attracted the attention of Adventist clergy and lay people throughout the history of the denomination. In 1883, the church's General Conference stated, for example, that God gave his servants light "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."⁸ Twenty years later, scholars suggest, Adventism saw a strong Fundamentalist influence and the theory of verbal inspiration being advocated by vocal proponents within the church. Occasional denials of Ellen White's claim to divine inspiration and the singular appearance of the theory of degrees of inspiration in the 1880s were usually interpreted as deviations from the norm.⁹

⁶ Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 6 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981-1986); Jerry Moon and Denis Kaiser, "For Jesus and Scripture: The Life of Ellen G. White," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 30-84.

⁷ Merlin D. Burt, "Bibliographic Essay on Publications About Ellen G. White," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 148-191.

⁸ George I. Butler and A. B. Oyen, "General Conference Proceedings," *Review and Herald*, 27 November 1883, 741.

⁹ Alden L. Thompson, *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1991), 268, 269, 273-276; Alberto R. Timm, "Understanding Inspiration: The Symphonic and Wholistic Nature of Scripture," *Ministry*, August 1999, 12-15; Alberto R. Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 10, nos. 1-2 (1999): 486-542; George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs*, Adventist Heritage Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 133-38; Alberto R. Timm, "Adventist Views on Inspiration [No. 1]," *Perspective Digest* 13, no. 3 (2008): 24-39.

The existence of diverse views of inspiration within Adventism raises numerous questions. Different models could be invoked and various scenarios be envisioned to explain the origin, rise, and demise of these views. With different views claiming to be the original position of the denomination, it is even conceivable that several views coexisted from its very beginning. A majority view may have been occasionally disturbed by discordant voices. There may have been a unity in diversity, a friendly coexistence and agreement on central aspects of the belief in divine inspiration. The influence of Ellen White's understanding of inspiration and its operation based on her personal experience may have informed other Adventist writers as they reflected on the subject of inspiration. Adventists were more or less exposed to what they perceived as a living example of divine inspiration. Their individual perception of inspiration may have been influenced by the nature of their personal interaction with Ellen White. Broader developments in American Christianity, such as the Fundamentalist movement or the accommodation to new scientific insights, may have influenced Adventists in their considerations or prompted their opposition. These factors suggest that the assumptions and perception of inspiration are probably a deeply personal matter. This background demonstrates the importance of examining the progression of Adventist perceptions of divine inspiration on an individual representative level.

Statement of the Problem

Scholars have taken systematic, historical, and biographical approaches to determine how early Seventh-day Adventists viewed the divine inspiration of the Bible writers and Ellen G. White, yet these approaches all carry certain limitations. While biographical approaches synthesize numerous statements of one individual from his/her

life and systematic approaches focus on the statements of an individual on one particular aspect, they usually ignore the historical and literary contexts of such statements as well as possible developments or changes in that individual's view. Historical approaches limit their studies to short periods, one particular aspect, or seemingly representative statements at the expense of a comprehensive in-depth treatment of the historical data. A study of the affirmations, objections, and reasons for the views of major Adventist thinkers within their historical contexts as well as of the interaction between several of these thinkers over a period of time is still wanting, yet such a study is necessary to get a glimpse of the history of Seventh-day Adventist perceptions of divine inspiration.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe the views that selected influential Seventh-day Adventist thinkers held concerning the divine inspiration of the Bible writers and Ellen G. White from 1880 to 1930. Outlining their concepts of inspiration, objections to other views, sources and influences, and the historical contexts in which they made their statements will be necessary to detect the interaction of their views and to outline a history of Adventist perceptions of divine inspiration.

Review of Prior Research

The study of how early Seventh-day Adventist writers understood the nature, manner, and result of divine inspiration was generally approached in one of two ways—systematic-theologically or historical-theologically.

A systematic study of the early Adventist writers' positions on the nature of inspiration is complicated by the fact that these writers may have differed in their views and may have grown or changed in their understanding. Such studies have therefore

generally been limited to the examination of a specific individual or a few individuals. During the 1970s and 1980s quite a number of studies were thus conducted on various aspects related to the question of the validity of Ellen White's claim of inspiration:¹⁰ her affirmation of a literal recent creation and the biblical chronologies,¹¹ as well as her use of sources and her literary indebtedness.¹² Other researchers dealt with Ellen White's

¹⁰ See the overview of studies on Ellen G. White's inspiration in the 1970s provided by Donald R. McAdams, "Shifting Views of Inspiration: Ellen G. White Studies in the 1970s," *Spectrum* 10, no. 4 (1980): 27–41.

¹¹ Carl G. Tuland, "Six Thousand Years?," *Spectrum* 6, nos. 3-4 (1974): 65–70; Warren H. Johns, "Ellen G. White and Biblical Chronology," *Ministry*, April 1984, 20–23; Gerhard Pfandl, "Ellen G. White and Earth Science," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 14, no. 1 (2003): 176–94; Frank M. Hasel, "Ellen White and Creation," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 12, no. 1 (2007): 40–49.

¹² William S. Peterson, "A Textual and Historical Study of Ellen G. White's Account of the French Revolution," *Spectrum* 2, no. 4 (1970): 57–68; John W. Wood, "The Bible and the French Revolution: An Answer," *Spectrum* 3, no. 4 (1971): 55–72; William S. Peterson, "Ellen White's Literary Indebtedness," *Spectrum* 3, no. 4 (1971): 73–84; Ronald D. Graybill, "How Did Ellen White Choose and Use Historical Sources?," *Spectrum*, Summer 1972, 49–53; Donald R. McAdams, "Ellen G. White and the Protestant Historians: A Study of the Treatment of John Huss in Great Controversy, Chapter Six 'Huss and Jerome,'" unpublished manuscript, Berrien Springs, MI, 1974, CAR; Donald R. McAdams, "Ellen G. White and the Protestant Historians: The Evidence from an Unpublished Manuscript on John Huss," unpublished manuscript, Berrien Springs, MI, 1974, CAR; Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); *A Critique of the Book Prophetess of Health* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1976); Warren H. Johns, "Ellen G. White and Subterranean Fires, Part I: Does Borrowing of Literary Passages and Terms Constitute Borrowing of Concepts?," *Ministry*, August 1977, 9–12; Warren H. Johns, "Ellen G. White and Subterranean Fires, Part II: Does Borrowing of Literary Passages and Terms Constitute Borrowing of Concepts?," *Ministry*, October 1977, 19–22; Eric Anderson, "Ellen White and Reformation Historians," *Spectrum*, July 1979, 23–26; 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); Robert Spangler, Robert W. Olson, and Ronald D. Graybill, "Ellen White and Literary Dependency," *Ministry*, June 1980, 4–7; Donald Casebolt, "Ellen White, the Waldenses, and Historical Interpretation," *Spectrum*, February 1981, 37–43; "Ellen G. White—Plagiarist?," *Ministry*, March 1981, 20, 21, 29; Walter T. Rea, *The White Lie* (Turlock, CA: M. & R. Publications, 1982); Jean R. Zurcher, "E. G. White – die Waldenser und die Albigenser," *Aller Diener*, nos. 3-4 (1982): 75–100; Walter T. Rea, "Sketches from the Life of Paul: Forerunner of Acts of the Apostles," unpublished manuscript, n.p., 1982, CAR; Walter T. Rea, "Desire of Ages," unpublished manuscript, n.p., 1983, CAR; Walter T. Rea, "The Great Controversy," unpublished manuscript, n.p., 1983, CAR; Walter T. Rea, "The Pirates of Privilege," unpublished manuscript, n.p., 1984, CAR; Robert W. Olson, "Ellen G. White's Use of Historical Sources in The Great Controversy," *Adventist Review*, 23 February 1984, 3–5; Jean R. Zurcher, "A Vindication of Ellen White as Historian," *Spectrum* 16, no. 3 (1985): 21–31; Walter T. Rea, "The Makings of a Prophet," unpublished manuscript, n.p., 1986, CAR; Walter T. Rea, "Did the Prophet See Kings?" unpublished manuscript, n.p., 1988, CAR; Fred Veltman, "Full Report of the Life of Christ Research Project," unpublished manuscript, Angwin, CA, 1988; Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: Ellen G. White and the Origins of Seventh-day Adventist Health Reform*, rev. and enl. ed.

own concept of inspiration.¹³ Aage Rendalen presents an exception with his examination of John Harvey Kellogg's view of Ellen White's inspiration, yet his study is limited to a

(Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1992); Rolando Rizzo, *L'Eredità di un profeta* (Falciani, Italy: Edizioni ADV, 2001); William A. Fagal, "Ellen G. White: Prophet or Plagiarist?," *Adventists Affirm*, Spring 2001, 16–24; Denis Fortin, "Ellen G. White as Messenger of the Lord: What Else Could Dr. Smithurst Say?," *Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium* 1 (2005): 10–29; Leonard Brand and Don S. McMahon, *The Prophet and Her Critics* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005); Jan Voerman, "Ellen White and the French Revolution," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 45, no. 2 (2007): 247–59; Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White*, 3rd ed., Library of Religious Biography, ed. Mark A. Noll, Nathan O. Hatch, and Allen C. Guelzo (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008); Don S. McMahon, "The Nature of Inspiration in the Health Writings of Ellen White," *Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium* 4 (2008): 5–37; Jan Voerman, "The Reign of Terror," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 47, no. 1 (2009): 117–34; Denis Fortin, "Plagiarism," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 1028–1035; Jud Lake, "Ellen White Criticism and D. M. Canright," in *Understanding Ellen White: The Life and Work of the Most Influential Voice in Adventist History*, ed. Merlin D. Burt (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 133–144; Jud Lake, "Ellen G. White's Use of Extrabiblical Sources," in *The Gift of Prophecy in Scripture and History*, eds. Alberto R. Timm and Dwain N. Esmond (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 2015), 316–332; Timothy L. Poirier, "Ellen White and Sources: The Plagiarism Debate," in *Understanding Ellen White: The Life and Work of the Most Influential Voice in Adventist History*, ed. Merlin D. Burt (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 145–165.

¹³ Frederick E. J. Harder, "Revelation, a Source of Knowledge, As Conceived by Ellen G. White" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1960), 234–236, 240–243, 403–413; Frederick E. J. Harder, "Divine Revelation: A Review of Some of Ellen White's Concepts," *Spectrum* 2, no. 4 (1970): 35–56; Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1973); Roy E. Graham, "Ellen G. White: An Examination of Her Position and Role in the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Birmingham, 1977), 144–56; Arthur L. White, *Inspiration and the Ellen G. White Writings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1979); Roger W. Coon, "Inspiration/Revelation: What It Is and How It Works, Part I," *Journal of Adventist Education* 44, no. 1 (1981): 17–32; Roger W. Coon, "Inspiration/Revelation: What It Is and How It Works, Part II," *Journal of Adventist Education* 44, no. 2 (1981): 17–31; Roger W. Coon, "Inspiration/Revelation, What It Is and How It Works: Part III—The Relationship Between the Ellen G. White Writings and the Bible," *Journal of Adventist Education* 44, no. 3 (1982): 18–33; Arthur L. White, "Common or Uninspired Writings," 6 April 1982, White Estate shelf document, EGWE; Heinz Schaidinger, "Ellen G. White, la prophétie extra-biblique et le principe sola scriptura" (M.Th. thesis, Séminaire Adventiste du Saleve, 1984); 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), 40–54, 70–82, 86–94; P. Gerard Damsteegt, "The Inspiration of Scripture in the Writings of Ellen G. White," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 5, no. 1 (1994): 155–79; George R. Knight, *Reading Ellen White: How to Understand and Apply Her Writings* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1997), 105–12; Juan Carlos Viera, *The Voice of the Spirit: How God Has Led His People Through the Gift of Prophecy* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998); Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998), 375–381, 386–388, 410–414, 421, 422; Gerhard Pfandl, *The Gift of Prophecy: The Role of Ellen White in God's Remnant Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2008), 49–57, 84–87; Frank M. Hasel, "Revelation and Inspiration," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 1087–1093; Merlin D. Burt, "Revelation and Inspiration: Ellen White's Understanding," in *Understanding Ellen White: The Life and Work of the Most Influential Voice in Adventist History*, ed. Merlin D. Burt (Nampa, ID, Silver Spring, MD: Pacific Press; Ellen G. White Estate, 2015), 30–44; Alberto R. Timm, "The Authority of Ellen White's Writings," in *Understanding Ellen White: The Life and Work of the Most Influential Voice in Adventist*

few statements from 1899 to 1908. He nevertheless neglected to critically analyze Kellogg's recollections.¹⁴ Frank M. Hasel wrote an entry in the *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* that dealt with the theory of degrees of inspiration within Adventism and focused on George I. Butler, Uriah Smith, and Ellen White. His remarks on the proponents of that theory rely heavily on Alberto Timm's historical survey.¹⁵ Most researchers focused primarily on the issue of her understanding of inspiration, or how they understood her inspiration.

Historical-theological studies of the views that early Adventist writers had of the operation of inspiration usually focus on a certain aspect of the topic or a specific period. Research has nevertheless been fairly limited. Peter M. van Bemmelen studied the development of the doctrine of inspiration in the Adventist Church within the brief period from 1884 to 1893. His examination was limited primarily to statements by Butler, White, and David Paulson.¹⁶ Jerry Hoyle's master's thesis on the development of Adventist thought on inspiration covered the period from 1860 to 1966, but he limited his

History, ed. Merlin D. Burt (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 55–65; Herbert E. Douglass, "Ellen White as God's Spokesperson," in *Understanding Ellen White: The Life and Work of the Most Influential Voice in Adventist History*, ed. Merlin D. Burt (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 83–94; Alberto R. Timm, "Humanity of the Prophets," in *Understanding Ellen White: The Life and Work of the Most Influential Voice in Adventist History*, ed. Merlin D. Burt (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 95–106.

¹⁴ Aage Rendalen, "Mrs. White vs. the Facts: John Harvey Kellogg's Concept of Inspiration in Ellen White" (Term paper, Andrews University, 1979).

¹⁵ Frank M. Hasel, "Inspiration, Degrees of," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 895–897. See also Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," 491–92.

¹⁶ 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" (Research paper, Andrews University, 1971). Van Bemmelen gave an extremely brief summary in Peter M. van Bemmelen, "Revelation and Inspiration," in *Commentary Reference Series*, ed. George W. Reid, vol. 12, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 52, 53.

research to statements on the inspiration of the biblical writers, thereby excluding statements on the inspiration of Ellen White. Writing in 1973, Hoyle was unaware of the discussions about inspiration during the 1919 Bible Conference, which led him to the wrong conclusion that the subject was only discussed controversially in the 1880s and that the Adventist Church “has always closely approximated the idea of thought inspiration.”¹⁷ Alden Thompson pointed out, in various publications that touch the issue of inspiration, that this subject arose at three different times in the history of the Adventist denomination—the 1880s, 1920s, and 1970s. He provided a concise overview of those decades, yet his presentation is far from being comprehensive, contains various historical inaccuracies, and tends to oversimplify developments, especially between the 1920s and the 1950s.¹⁸ George R. Knight, in his series of books on Ellen White, discussed her view and experience of inspiration. He also briefly addressed the views held by several early Adventist writers such as W. C. White, S. N. Haskell, W. W. Prescott, and F. M. Wilcox.¹⁹ In his classic book about the development of Seventh-day Adventist theology, he devoted a couple of pages to how the Fundamentalist controversy on the issue of inspiration impacted the Adventist denomination between the 1920s and 1950s. However, the book primarily examines the fundamentalist position within the

¹⁷ Jerry Hoyle, "An Historical Study of the Development of the Doctrine of Inspiration in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1860-1966" (M.A. thesis, Loma Linda University, 1973).

¹⁸ Alden L. Thompson, "Improving the Testimonies Through Revisions," *Adventist Review*, 12 September 1985, 13–15; Alden L. Thompson, "Questions and Perplexities Without End," *Adventist Review*, 19 September 1985, 7–9; Thompson, *Inspiration*, 268, 269, 273-276; Alden L. Thompson, *Escape from the Flames: How Ellen White grew from fear to joy—and helped me do it too* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 25, 33, 100.

¹⁹ George R. Knight, *Meeting Ellen White: A Fresh Look at Her Life, Writings, and Major Themes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996), 38-45, 74-77; Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 16-29, 34, 105-118.

denomination.²⁰ To date, Alberto R. Timm has been the most prolific writer on the subject of inspiration from a historical perspective. He gave a better overview of the larger time frame than any other researcher on the topic—except for Van Bemmelen in regard to the late 1880s and early 1890s—yet Timm’s studies focused only on a small selection of primary sources, did not go deep enough, and seemed to miss various nuances, especially in the 1880s and 1920s.²¹ Jud Lake has endeavored to show Dudley M. Canright’s concept of inspiration, yet his study has limitations given its size, scope, and approach.²² Theodore N. Levterov’s doctoral dissertation on the development of the Seventh-day understanding of Ellen White’s prophetic gift focused on the period from 1844 to 1889. The study mentions discussions on the subject of inspiration here and there, but an examination of that specific subject was not the focus of the study. It is nevertheless a significant secondary source for the present study.²³ Various other brief studies of early Adventist views on the subject of inspiration were done by Herbert E. Douglass,²⁴ Denis Fortin,²⁵ and Jud Lake.²⁶

²⁰ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 128–41.

²¹ Alberto R. Timm, "History of Inspiration in the Adventist Church (1844-1915)," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 5, no. 1 (1994): 180–95; Timm, "Understanding Inspiration," 12–15; Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," 486-505.

²² Jud Lake, "D. M. Canright, Ellen G. White, and Inspiration: A Crisis in the Making," *Ellen White Issues Symposium* 8 (2012): 35–69; Lake, "Ellen White Criticism and D. M. Canright," 133–144.

²³ Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*. The book was reviewed in Denis Kaiser, review of *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, by Theodore N. Levterov, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 54, no. 1 (2016): 163–67.

²⁴ Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 434–41.

²⁵ Fortin, "Ellen G. White as Messenger of the Lord," 26–29.

²⁶ Jud Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire: Identifying the Mistakes of Her Critics* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2010).

Methodology

This research is a study in historical theology based on both published and unpublished primary sources found in various archives, libraries, and databases. Unlike many established Christian denominations, the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the parameters of this study did not generally have a trained clergy. As its ministers and leaders came from the general membership, there was no great theological divide between leaders and regular believers. The views of Adventist thought leaders were therefore generally representative of the views of the believers. An examination of the primary sources will provide the necessary information on how selected influential Adventist thinkers understood the nature of inspiration and how they reached their concepts of inspiration. The results of that examination will form the basis for a framework of various views of inspiration and of the perspective of the writers. Secondary sources will be used where appropriate to furnish information concerning historical context and theological background. Among other aspects of the research, special attention will be given to the sources used by Adventist writers and the impact of theological debates in wider Christianity on the Adventist understanding of inspiration.

Much of the historical background and the development of Seventh-day Adventist views on inspiration can be traced in early Seventh-day Adventist periodicals. Between 1850 and 1880 the most important Seventh-day Adventist periodicals were the *Present Truth*, *Review and Herald*, and *Signs of the Times*. Later a great number of other periodicals were added, many of them regional papers. Through the years, Adventist authors also wrote and published many tracts and books that touched on the issue of inspiration. Personal correspondence and unpublished documents add even more material that may provide insight on how people understood the nature and particulars of

inspiration. The majority of these materials are found in the Center for Adventist Research at Andrews University (Berrien Springs, Mich.), the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Silver Spring, Md.), the Ellen G. White Estate (Silver Spring, Md.), the Heritage Research Center at Loma Linda University (Loma Linda, Calif.), the church archive of the General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day) (Denver, Colo.), and the archives and special collections at Stockwell-Mudd Library at Albion College (Albion, Mich.).

Design of the Study

The results of this investigation are presented in chronological order and according to selected influential Adventist thinkers. Whereas chapter 1 presents a study of the several background issues leading up to the year 1880, chapters 2 to 4 each deal with four thinkers in a particular period. The study of the views of each of these thinkers focuses on the concept of inspiration as held by that individual, objections raised against other views, sources and influences that may have influenced the adoption of the concept of inspiration, and the historical context in which the respective individual made his/her statements. In some cases, the study of one individual was divided into two parts because the person changed his/her views so drastically that a separate treatment of the views and objections became necessary.

Chapter 1 deals with the period from the early nineteenth century to 1880. First, various theories of inspiration are outlined as they were defined by American Protestant theologians in the nineteenth century. Second, three distinct religious antecedents of Seventh-day Adventism are discussed as they relate to the subject of inspiration. Third, perceptions of the divine inspiration of Scripture and Ellen G. White are described as

they existed among Seventh-day Adventists from the late 1840s to the late 1870s. Fourth, a description is provided of how traditional views of the inspiration of Scripture was challenged by scientific, theological, and socio-cultural influences in North America in the late nineteenth century.

Chapter 2 focuses on Uriah Smith, G. I. Butler, D. M. Canright, and Ellen G. White from 1880 to 1895. Whereas the beginning of the period is marked by the first explicit statements on the nature and manner of inspiration among Seventh-day Adventists, the end of the period more or less coincides with Canright's separation from the church, Butler's temporary retreat into ministerial inactivity, and Smith's ceasing to engage in discussions about inspiration. All these individuals were highly influential Adventist thinkers who interacted with one another concerning their views on inspiration.

Chapter 3 focuses on A. T. Jones, W. W. Prescott, S. N. Haskell, and Ellen G. White from 1895 to 1915. The beginning of the period coincides with the first explicit statements of the first three individuals in the early 1890s. While Prescott and Haskell continued to discuss the subject after 1915, Jones' separation from the church in the late 1900s and White's death in 1915 are significant events to justify the end of that period at that time. All four people influenced how Adventist church workers and lay members thought about inspiration. Their interaction with each other further highlights the dynamics within the denomination during that period.

Chapter 4 focuses on J. S. Washburn, A. G. Daniells, F. M. Wilcox, and W. C. White from 1915 to 1930. In the absence of denominational cofounder Ellen G. White, tensions arose over the understanding of her inspiration and role. As Washburn, Daniells, and W. C. White gradually retired from active ministry around 1930 and new questions

regarding Ellen White's inspiration arose with the apostasy of the former European leader Ludwig Richard Conradi²⁷ in 1931, it was decided to conclude the study with the year 1930. Finally, the last chapter contains a summary of the research, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.

An Overview of Terms and Their Definitions

Three terms are of special significance for this study—revelation, inspiration, and illumination. The use of these terms may vary and even overlap in the sources. In this study they are used as far as possible in a technical sense. The term “revelation” refers therefore to the supernatural conveyance of propositional information and visual scenes, although it is recognized that it entails even more facets.²⁸ The term “inspiration” is understood as the Holy Spirit's influence upon the prophet or human agent in the communication of the revealed message. The particular definition of the different theories of inspiration have to be defined by the proponents of these theories (see below) because their understanding may differ from the definitions found in modern reference works. The term “illumination” is used to describe the assistance that the Holy Spirit commonly grants to every believer in understanding inspired truths. These definitions cannot settle

²⁷ Daniel Heinz, *Ludwig Richard Conradi: Missionar der Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten in Europa*, Archives of International Adventist History, vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1986), 102–13; Johannes Hartlapp, *Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten im Nationalsozialismus: Unter Berücksichtigung der geschichtlichen und theologischen Entwicklung in Deutschland von 1875 bis 1950*, Kirche, Konfession, Religion, vol. 53 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 221–46.

²⁸ The term “revelation” refers to (a) God's general revelation through nature, his providential workings, and the appeals of the Holy Spirit, as well as to (b) God's special revelation through the person and life of Jesus Christ as well as to and through his canonical and non-canonical prophets. See, e.g., Ellen G. White, *Education* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 99–101; Ellen G. White, *Medical Ministry* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1932), 94, 95; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 5:512. See also Bemmelen, “Revelation and Inspiration,” 23–33.

questions concerning the infallibility of the message or the inerrancy of the factual content. Such questions can only be answered by a study of the statements of the selected Adventist thinkers.

Scope and Delimitations

This study is centered on the writings of Sabbatarian Adventists and Seventh-day Adventists between 1845 and 1930. It will generally not analyze documents written before or after this period. The publications of other Christian writers are consulted only insofar as they were used by or had an impact on Adventist writers. Although many Christian and Adventist writers employ the term “inspiration” frequently for the entire revelation-inspiration process, the present study deals only with that one aspect of the larger process that is technically referred to as “inspiration.” This study does not intend to prove or disprove the validity of any view of inspiration as it is a descriptive historical study with theological implications rather than a systematic theological study.

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CHAPTER 1
THE HISTORICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND SOCIO-CULTURAL
BACKGROUND TO ADVENTIST PERCEPTIONS
OF DIVINE INSPIRATION

Introduction

New religious, scientific, and socio-cultural developments challenged American Christians in the late nineteenth century to reassess their beliefs in the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture. Emerging from the Millerite movement in the late 1840s, Seventh-day Adventism developed within the context of these challenges. When Adventists disentangled themselves from the chaotic aftermath of the post-disappointment years, integrated theological elements, and found an identity, a message, and a mission, they experienced particular guidance through the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White (née Harmon) (1827-1915). Like many other Christians in North America they pointed to the Bible as their rule of faith and practice, yet unlike others they also believed divine inspiration was still active in the modern era.

The purpose of this chapter is fourfold. First, it outlines theories of inspiration as described in theological writings in circulation in mid-nineteenth century North America. Second, it surveys concepts of inspiration found in the publications of the religious antecedents of Seventh-day Adventism. Third, it delineates Seventh-day Adventist conceptions of the nature, mode, and result of the inspiration of the Bible writers and Ellen G. White between 1846 and 1879. Fourth, it examines the influence that particular

nineteenth-century scientific, theological, and socio-cultural challenges had on the perception of inspiration in American Christianity and Seventh-day Adventism. The chapter provides an introductory background to and a reference point for the primary focus of this study—the development of Seventh-day Adventist conceptions of divine inspiration from 1880 to 1930.

Theories of Inspiration in Nineteenth-Century America

The publications of nineteenth-century American religious writers reveal the existence of various theories such as verbal-plenary inspiration, thought inspiration, the inspiration of the person, degrees of inspiration, and partial inspiration. They had already been advocated by British writers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but were adopted by theologians in America when confronted with new scientific and scholarly developments in the second half of the nineteenth century. To avoid reading modern understandings into the description of those theories in these publications, it is necessary to allow these writers themselves to define their theories. This will provide reference points for subsequent chapters to locate Seventh-day Adventist perceptions of inspiration within the spectrum of these theories.

While these theories of inspiration are often presented as mutually exclusive, because they generally differ in their description of the object, manner, and extent of inspiration, it will be demonstrated that proponents of different theories sometimes displayed common features. They may have been appealing to Seventh-day Adventists as

almost all theories retained a belief in the Holy Spirit's supernatural assistance in the inspiration process.¹

This section will delineate the object, manner, and extent of inspiration of each of the above five theories as described in the writings of their nineteenth-century proponents.

Verbal-Plenary Inspiration

The concept of a verbal-plenary inspiration can be backtraced to the time of the church fathers.² Its proponents believed inspiration generated everything in Scripture up to the level of the words. In the nineteenth century it was widespread among those who opposed both higher biblical criticism and theories that accommodated minor inaccuracies. Its adherents claimed it was the only orthodox view.

The Scottish theologian Robert Haldane (1764-1842) seemed to suggest a mechanical process because he frequently used the word "dictate" and its derivatives to describe the Holy Spirit's influence.³ He nevertheless saw some flexibility in the biblical writers' involvement in the inspiration process. In his view, the Spirit sanctioned and dictated, for instance, variety for the biblical writers' modes of thought, expression, and

¹ Ronald F. Satta, *The Sacred Text: Biblical Authority in Nineteenth-Century America*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, vol. 73 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2007), 43–73. For contemporary definitions of these theories see "Theories of the Inspiration of the Scriptures," *American Presbyterian and Theological Review*, new series 2, no. 6 (1864): 313–19.

² Allison, *Historical Theology*, 59–69.

³ Robert Haldane, *The Books of the Old and New Testaments Proved to be Canonical, and Their Verbal Inspiration Maintained and Established; with an Account of the Introduction of the Apocrypha*, 4th enl. ed. (Edinburgh, UK: Whyte & Co., 1832), 1:83, 117, 118, 120, 124, 129, 131, 135, 140, 142, 152, 155, 156, 159, 163, 166, 167, 173, 182, 197–199, 201, 206.

style to bring out aspects absent from the works of merely a single writer.⁴ Quoting the English Nonconformist theologian John Owen (1616-1683), he emphasized that the biblical writers “used their own abilities of mind and understanding in the choice of words and expressions” so that the words of Scripture were indeed the writers’ own words. The Holy Spirit guided their minds, however, such that “the words they fixed upon were as directly and certainly from him, as if they had been spoken to them by an audible voice.”⁵

François Samuel Robert Louis Gaussen (1790-1863), professor of systematic theology at the Oratoire in Switzerland, was probably one of “the most influential advocates of the verbal plenary view of inspiration during the nineteenth century.”⁶ He nevertheless acknowledged his indebtedness to Haldane who strongly influenced him during the *Réveil* in French-speaking Switzerland in 1814.⁷ Gaussen’s *Theopneustia* also enjoyed great popularity in the English-speaking world.⁸ His frequent use of dictation

⁴ Ibid., 1:118, 119.

⁵ Ibid., 1:115, 116. Cf. John Owen, *The Works of John Owen, D.D.*, ed. Thomas Russell, vol. 2 (London: Baynes, 1826), 159.

⁶ Dewey M. Beegle, *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), 145; Ian S. Rennie, "Verbal Inspiration," in *Baker Reference Library, Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 1243; David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 89.

⁷ Louis Gaussen, *Theopneustia: The Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures Deduced from Internal Evidence, and the Testimonies of Nature, History and Science*, transl. by David Scott, rev. ed. (Chicago, IL: Bible Institute Colportage Assn., n.d), 311; John Robbins, review of *God-Breathed: The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, by Louis Gaussen, *Western Reformed Seminary Journal* 10, no. 2 (2003): 31. Interestingly, another person who was influenced by Haldane during this time was Gaussen’s later colleague Jean-Henri Merle d’Aubigné (1794-1872), who became known to Millerites and Seventh-day Adventists through his multi-volume works on the Protestant Reformation.

⁸ Louis Gaussen, *Théopneustie ou, pleine inspiration des Saintes Écritures* (Paris: Delay, 1840); Gaussen, S. R. L., *Theopneusty: Or, the Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*, 4th American ed. from the 2nd French ed. (New York: John S. Taylor, 1853); Louis Gaussen, *Theopneustia. The Bible: Its Divine*

language coupled with the denial of a mechanical understanding reminds one of Haldane's position,⁹ yet his description of the manner and extent of inspiration differs significantly from the view of the Scottish theologian. Gaussen thought "an inspiration of the thoughts without the inspiration of the language" was inconsistent.¹⁰ He believed God spoke to the prophet as to a secretary,¹¹ always inerrantly giving the very language.¹² Talking about the biblical writers, proponents of this form of verbal inspiration equated the terms "penmen" and "pen."¹³

Charles Hodge (1797-1878) and his son Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-1886), well-known theologians at Princeton Theological Seminary, were among the most influential opponents of higher criticism and modernistic trends in theology in the mid-nineteenth century. In their defense of Scripture's verbal-plenary inspiration they frequently employed two "sources of evidence"—the self-testimony of Scripture and its

Origin and Inspiration, Deduced from Internal Evidence, and the Testimonies of Nature, History and Science (Cincinnati, OH: Blanchard, 1859).

⁹ Confronted with criticism against his use of the term "dictation," Gaussen promised to "avoid the employment of the word dictate" should he ever publish a new edition of his book "since kindly-disposed and capable men have mistaken my use of it." Quoted in Jacob Tomlin, *Improved Renderings and Explanations of Many Important and Difficult Passages in the Authorised Translation of the Scriptures from the Hebrew and Greek: with Dissertations on Various Religious Topics of the Present Times* (Liverpool: Arthur Newling, 1865), 78, 79.

¹⁰ Louis Gaussen, *It Is Written: or, The Scriptures the Word of God*, 4th ed. (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1856), 131.

¹¹ William J. Abraham, *The Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 33, 34.

¹² Gaussen, *Theopneustia. The Bible*, 24, 34, 42, 45-47, 49, 54, 57, 65-67, 72, 81, 111, 121, 127, 128, 139, 146, 158, 160, 163, 165, 167, 280, 302, 317, 349, 351.

¹³ See, e.g., Matthew Henry, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, preface by Archibald Alexander, 3 vols., vol. 2 (New York: Henry C. Sleight, 1833), 426; Nathanael Emmons, *The Works of Nathanael Emmons, D.D.: Late Pastor of the Church in Franklin, Mass., with A Memoir of His Life*, ed. Jacob Ide, vol. 4 (Boston, MA: Crocker & Brewster, 1842), 77; Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Modern Whitfield: The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, of London, His Sermons* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman & Co., 1856), 26.

phenomena—to determine the nature and extent of inspiration.¹⁴ They limited infallibility, however, only to the original autographs and not their later copies.¹⁵

The Reformed faith of the above theologians possibly prompted them to view God as being in supreme control of the inspiration process. While a few of them allowed for some human involvement in the process, all affirmed the perfect harmony between God's own plan and the final words of the Bible. This theory became influential especially in the later Fundamentalist movement.

Thought Inspiration

The term “thought inspiration” was apparently not employed as a technical term before the early twentieth century, but its absence does not necessarily negate the concept. Gaussen, for instance, opposed the idea that inspiration extended only to the thoughts and not to the words of the prophets. He suggested that this idea proposes a revelation of “thoughts,” “ideas,” “truths,” and “some very highly coloured pictures” to the biblical writers, leaving them to express and formulate these in their own language. Gaussen thought that it granted the fallible human participants nevertheless too much liberty in the inspiration process.¹⁶

¹⁴ A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, rev. and enl. ed. (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1878), 69; Rennie, “Verbal Inspiration,” 1243.

¹⁵ Ernest R. Sandeen argues that the so-called original autograph theory arose with the second edition of A. A. Hodge's *Outlines of Theology* (1878), implying that this theory was an entirely new argument in the discussion of biblical inspiration. See Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 127, 128. Cf. A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, reprint (New York: Carter & Brothers, 1866), 67–77; Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, [1878 ed.], 66, 67. While Sandeen's observation may be correct for Hodge's own writings, he seems to overlook the fact that other scholars had previously utilized the original autograph theory. See, e.g., Charles Hodge, *Biblical Repertory: A Collection of Tracts in Biblical Literature*, vol. 3 (New York: Carvill, 1827), 590–93; Satta, *The Sacred Text*, 1-5, 12-15.

¹⁶ Gaussen, *Theopneustia. The Bible*, 275-286, esp. 275, 276.

The Anglican bishop Charles John Ellicott (1819-1905) emphasized, however, that the theory did not necessarily imply the possibility of discrepancies and mistakes. As a proponent of that theory he concluded that the Holy Spirit “illuminated” the spirit and “pervaded” the thoughts of the biblical writers without overruling or limiting their individuality. Hence the Spirit assisted the writers in communicating the divine plans and truths in the most appropriate and reliable manner by suggesting “expressions, modes of speech, and perhaps occasionally even of words.” Scripture was therefore a divine-human product, revealing “through human media” the “infinite mind of God to the finite mind of man.”¹⁷

Thus while the theory laid the focus of inspiration generally on the prophet’s thoughts, Ellicott’s dynamic view demonstrates the existence of a version of the theory that extended the influence of inspiration to all of Scripture and ensured the reliable transmission of the revealed truths.

Inspiration of the Person

Proponents of this concept rejected the idea of a general dictation of the very words of Scripture and suggested that inspiration focused on the person, not just on the person’s thoughts. They nevertheless differed in regard to the intensity of the divine assistance and the reliability of the final product.

¹⁷ Charles John Ellicott, "Scripture, and Its Interpretation," in *Aids to Faith: A Series of Theological Essays by Several Writers*, ed. William Thomson, 2nd ed. (London: John Murray, 1862), 411, 412; Edward Harold Browne and Charles John Ellicott, *The Inspiration of Holy Scripture* (New York: Whittaker, 1878), 156, 157, quoted in Isaac Brown, "Dr. Colenso's Work," *British Friend*, 1 December 1862, 307-308 fn., and Francis Fulford, *Sermons, Addresses, and Statistics of the Diocese of Montreal* (Montreal, Quebec, Canada: Dawson Brothers, 1865), 270.

Moses Stuart (1780-1852), professor of sacred literature at Andover Theological Seminary for almost forty years, considered the Bible as the unerring divine revelation and only source of Christian doctrine.¹⁸ He believed that God inspired people to convey his message intelligently. Taking Jesus' authentication of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch at face value, he suggested that Moses either received direct revelations from God or was assisted by the Holy Spirit in the selection of the most reliable sources. Stuart assumed God permitted textual corruptions in the later transcription process as he was primarily concerned with the message.¹⁹ He believed apparent contradictions and inconsistencies in the Bible could be harmonized by means of the *anologia fidei*.²⁰ He further urged fellow scholars to exemplify humility and acknowledge their inadequacy when feeling unable to find a satisfactory solution to an apparent irreconcilable inconsistency.²¹

Similarly, Calvin E. Stowe (1802-1886), Bible scholar and husband of Harriet Beecher Stowe, stressed that "inspiration acts not on the man's words [or] . . . thoughts, but on the man himself." Unlike proponents of the theory of verbal inspiration, he argued that the prophets were "God's penmen and not God's pen." His view of the inspiration of

¹⁸ Moses Stuart, "Have the Sacred Writers Anywhere Asserted That the Sin or Righteousness of One is Imputed to Another?," *American Biblical Repository* 7 (1836): 247.

¹⁹ Moses Stuart, *A Critical History and Defence of the Old Testament Canon* (Andover, MA: Allen, Morrill, and Wardwell, 1845), 54, 55, 98, 99, 110, 111, 162–177; Jerry Wayne Brown, *The Rise of Biblical Criticism in America, 1800-1870: The New England Scholars* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), 98, 103–108.

²⁰ Moses Stuart, *Elements of Interpretation: Translated from the Latin of J. A. Ernesti, and Accompanied by Notes and an Appendix Containing Extracts from Morus, Beck and Keil* (Andover, MA: Newman, 1827), 16–18; Brown, *The Rise of Biblical Criticism in America, 1800-1870*, 98.

²¹ Moses Stuart, "Hints Respecting Commentaries upon the Scriptures," *American Biblical Repository* 3 (1833): 140, 141.

the person differed nevertheless significantly from Stuart's concept. Thus he considered the divine-human union only as a momentary subjective intensification of the human intellect. Negating any "objective suggestion and communication" in that process, he viewed the words of Scripture merely as a product of the human writers' "thoughts and words" that allowed for factual errors and internal contradictions.²² Several Seventh-day Adventist writers have utilized Stowe's statements in the 1880s as will be discussed in chapter 2.

Degrees of Inspiration

The main features of the theory of degrees of inspiration were outlined by a number of British scholars between the early eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries. American scholars subsequently espoused and modified their ideas. They all sought to define the varying extent of the Holy Spirit's influence in the inspiration process, yet they differed in the particulars of the Spirit's operation.

The basic concept gained a widespread influence through the writings of the non-conformist pastor and educator Philip Doddridge (1702-1751) who defined a spectrum of four intensifying degrees of inspiration: (a) "superintendence" enabled the prophet to communicate more accurately without eliminating potential errors in content; (b) "plenary superintendence" protected the writer from errors in content without eliminating possible stylistic and methodical imperfections; (c) "elevation" raised the writer's natural faculties to an extraordinary degree; and (d) "suggestion" directly and inerrantly dictated

²² Calvin E. Stowe, *Origin and History of the Books of the Bible: Both the Canonical and the Apocryphal, Designed to Show What the Bible Is Not, What It Is, and How to Use It* (Hartford, CT: Hartford Pub. Co., 1867), 18–20; Calvin E. Stowe, "What the Bible Is, and What It Is Not," *British Harbinger*, 1 April 1869, 117.

the very words by impressions, sounds, or visible appearances to the mind of the writer.²³ Daniel Wilson (1778-1858), Anglican bishop of Kolkata, India, followed the same basic pattern, yet he omitted plenary superintendence and inserted the degree of “direction” between the third and fourth degree, as a divine assistance to the writers’ mind in freely describing matters in their own language.²⁴ Unsatisfied with the terminology employed by Doddridge and Wilson, John Dick (1764-1833), a minister and professor of theology in Glasgow, Scotland, outlined three modes of the Holy Spirit’s working. The lowest degree was the infallible preservation from error in the communication of matter already known to the biblical writers by ordinary means. The second degree was a supernatural enlightening and invigoration of the writers’ minds. The highest degree was a direct revelation of truth. As a result God ensured the most accurate and impeccable communication of matter, preventing any mistakes in narration or reasoning.²⁵ Like others, the Congregationalist theologian John Pye Smith (1774-1851) rejected the idea of a dictation of all words and expressions in the Bible. He believed that the Holy Spirit safeguarded the truthfulness of all propositions on ethical and theological matters, yet he also allowed for inconsistencies in other minor matters.²⁶

²³ Philip Doddridge, *The Works of the Rev. P. Doddridge*, 10 vols. (Leeds: Baines, 1802-1805), 4:169-174, 5:93-95; Philip Doddridge, *A Course of Lectures on the Principle Subjects in Pneumatology, Ethics, and Divinity*, 2nd corr. ed. (London: Author’s Widow, 1776), 322–24.

²⁴ Daniel Wilson, *The Evidences of Christianity: Stated in a Popular and Practical Manner, in a Course of Lectures on the Authenticity, Credibility, Divine Authority, and Inspiration of the New Testament, Delivered in the Parish Church of St. Mary, Islington*, 2 vols. (Boston, MA: Crocker & Brewster, 1829-1830), 1:323.

²⁵ John Dick, *An Essay on the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament* (Edinburgh: Ritchie, 1800), 8-10, 16, 17, 24.

²⁶ John Pye Smith, *The Scripture Testimony to the Messiah: An Inquiry with a View to a Satisfactory Determination of the Doctrine Taught in the Holy Scriptures Concerning the Person of Christ*, 5th ed., 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Oliphant & Co., 1859), 1:30, 57, 62, 63.

Drawing from the basic concepts of Doddridge and Wilson, Archibald Alexander (1772-1851), first professor and principal of Princeton Theological Seminary, and Samuel Wakefield (1799-1895), Methodist Episcopal minister and state legislator in Pennsylvania, suggested only three degrees of inspiration—superintendence, elevation, suggestion. They believed in the infallible inspiration of the entire Bible, yet they asserted the Spirit gave both thoughts and words only at the level of suggestion.²⁷ Alexander criticized Dick for blurring the difference between revelation and inspiration, and he assumed God had used elevation to produce the wisdom writings and many poetic parts in the prophetic writings.²⁸

All of these theologians suggested the Holy Spirit operated in diverse ways as deemed necessary such as boosting the memory, enhancing language proficiency, giving thoughts, providing words, and safeguarding from error. Some of these scholars employed the theory of degrees to accommodate different levels of accuracy. Others, however, merely used it to explain different phenomena in Scripture without allowing for inaccuracies.

²⁷ Archibald Alexander, *Evidences of the Authenticity, Inspiration and Canonical Authority of the Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1836), 224–27; Samuel Wakefield, *A Complete System of Christian Theology, or, A Concise, Comprehensive, and Systematic View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals and Institutions of Christianity* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1862), 71, 72, 78–82. For other Methodist writers who held the same position see Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1883), 140, 145, 149; Randolph S. Foster, *Evidences of Christianity: The Supernatural Book*, *Studies in Theology*, vol. 3 (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1890), 2-4, 41, 42, 44, 248, 333-336.

²⁸ Alexander, *Evidences of the Authenticity, Inspiration and Canonical Authority of the Holy Scriptures*, 224, 225.

Partial Inspiration

Proponents of the theory of partial inspiration extended the private realm in the life of the Bible writers to certain biblical passages, arguing that these were not divinely inspired but constituted their personal opinion or recollection. Hence, some parts of Scripture were considered inspired while others were regarded as uninspired.

William Parry (1754-1819), a Welsh Nonconformist minister, argued that the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit extended only to “matters of a religious and moral nature,” but was unnecessary when the biblical writers spoke about common occurrences, incidental details, and civil affairs. He did not think these common, uninspired matters were necessarily wrong, yet modern readers were not to apply the highest standard as regards to historical and scientific accuracy. They were therefore to distinguish between such common matters and “divine infallible truth.”²⁹ Parry’s explanations were extensively quoted in Thomas Hartwell Horne’s (1780-1862) *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scripture* which went through numerous editions and was utilized as a textbook for theology students on both sides of the Atlantic.³⁰ Seventh-day Adventist writers also made use of Horne’s *Introduction* as will be demonstrated below.

William Carpenter (1797-1874), a British writer, editor, and journalist on theological and political subjects, objected to pure forms of the theories of verbal, partial,

²⁹ William Parry, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Extent of the Inspiration of the Apostles, and Other Writers of the New Testament: Conducted with a View to Some Late Opinions on the Subject* (London: Author, 1797), 26–28.

³⁰ Thomas Hartwell Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scripture*, new ed. from the 7th corr. and enl. London ed., 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Desilver, Thomas & Co., 1836), 1:444–446.

and degrees of inspiration and instead proposed a mixed form, suggesting inspiration operates only in the transmission of truths, teachings, and principles rather than on the minute details of the text. He thought the prophetic and didactic writings in the Bible were “written under the immediate direction and superintendence of the Holy Spirit,” yet Carpenter saw “no indication of divine superintendence or suggestion” in the New Testament writings as they were apparently characterized by multiple discrepancies. Nevertheless, he did not view that circumstance as a threat to the divine origin of the Christian faith.³¹

In North America, Unitarians and liberal Protestant scholars went beyond Parry’s and Horne’s original ideas by contending that scientific discoveries, the personality of the biblical writers, the vagaries of human language, inconsistent matter and contradictions in the Bible required a concept of inspiration that allowed for a division between passages expressing the divine intellect and portions manifesting fallible human expressions and opinions (partial inspiration), leaving human reason to decide which is which.³²

Summary

American religious writers held different assumptions about the divine inspiration of the Bible writers, manifesting themselves in several theories that varied in the intensity of divine assistance and the resulting extent of human choice and degrees of accuracy. They generally agreed on the basic contours, but they often differed on fine details about human freedom in the inspiration process and resulting potential imperfections in the

³¹ William Carpenter, *A Guide to the Reading and Study of the Bible: Being a Comprehensive Digest of the Principles and Details of Biblical Criticism, Interpretation, Theology, History, Natural Science, Usages, etc.* (Brattleboro, VT: Typographic Co., 1838), 114, 115.

³² Satta, *The Sacred Text*, 17–20.

final text. The different theories may therefore be classed along a spectrum from strict divine control to more human involvement, but there are aspects in which they more or less overlap.

First, the theory of verbal-plenary inspiration generally affirmed the assistance of the Holy Spirit in the production of the entire Bible, yet whereas Haldane assumed a certain extent of human freedom in the choice of words albeit guided by the Spirit, Gausson denied such a freedom and claimed the direct giving of words and sentences by the Spirit. Second, in contrast to this emphasis on the inspiration of words, the theory of thought inspiration suggested the inspiration of the thoughts of the biblical writers who then expressed these thoughts in their own language. Some employed that concept to allow for discrepancies and mistakes in Scripture. Others such as Ellicott rejected the possibility of errors. His denial of the Spirit's overruling of human individuality and his emphasis on the reliable transmission of the revealed truths is somewhat similar to Haldane's view. Yet his suggestion of the occasional divine assistance in the choice of words tends towards degrees of inspiration. Third, while some writers employed the latter theory to affirm that the Holy Spirit always extended only so much influence as needed to ensure a reliable transmission of the revealed truths, others utilized it to assert different degrees of accuracy and the possibility of mistakes. Fourth, similarly, Stuart and Stowe agreed on the basic idea of an inspiration of the person rather than merely the thoughts or words. Stuart was concerned with the reliable transmission of the revealed truths by the biblical writers, yet Stowe viewed Scripture as a subjective account of human words and thoughts that allowed for contradictions and errors. Fifth, the theory of partial inspiration differs from the previous theories in its distinction between inspired matters and

common, uninspired matters in the Bible. Most other theologians would have conceded such a distinction in the lives of inspired writers, yet advocates of this theory extended it to some biblical passages.

Proponents of the first four theories generally maintained the inspiration of the entire Bible, affirming the idea of a plenary inspiration of Scripture. As some of their assumptions overlapped, these theories may not necessarily be mutually exclusive. The next two sections and chapters 2-4 will show how the views outlined in this section relate to the ones held by Adventism's religious antecedents and Seventh-day Adventists.

Religious Antecedents of Seventh-day Adventism

Seventh-day Adventists were directly influenced by three very distinct religious and theological currents—Wesleyan Methodism, the Restorationist movement, and the Millerite Movement. Previous writers have pointed out the lasting impact these movements had on the philosophical, hermeneutical, theological, and organizational ideas of early Sabbatarian Adventists.³³ The following three sections will outline the conceptions of the nature, manner, and extent of divine inspiration as held in each of these three religious currents and movements. The views outlined here will serve as reference points for the subsequent sections and chapters that deal specifically with Seventh-day Adventist views.

³³ Rolf J. Pöhler, *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching: A Case Study in Doctrinal Development*, Friedensauer Schriftenreihe, Reihe A, Theologie, vol. 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2000), 21–31; Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 28–37; Woodrow W. Whidden, *The Judgment and Assurance: The Dynamics of Personal Salvation*, Library of Adventist Theology, vol. 4 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2012), 13-16, 42, 43; Denis Fortin, "The Theology of Ellen G. White," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 246-258, 262-265.

Wesleyan Methodism and Divine Inspiration

Methodism started as a revival movement in the Church of England through the efforts of John Wesley (1703-1791), Charles Wesley (1707-1788), and George Whitefield (1714-1770). After the American Revolution, the Methodist movement in North America broke away from the Church of England and began to exhibit a unique Wesleyan version of Arminianism. John Wesley's concept of inspiration will be described given his paramount theological impact on the Methodist church in the United States, followed by an explanation of the views of Adam Clarke whose writings were widely used by conservative Protestants and early Seventh-day Adventists.

John Wesley, founder of the Wesleyan-Arminian strand of the Methodist movement, believed that all of Scripture was the product of a divine-human collaboration, but he specifically underlined the predominant divine influence in this process.³⁴ His frequent employment of dictation imagery and affirmation of the complete reliability and flawlessness of Scripture could be interpreted in a mechanical sense if it were not for Wesley's descriptions of human deliberation and participation in the communication of the revealed message. Thus he believed the Holy Spirit left regular human thought processes intact and suggested, for example, that Paul was impressed by the Spirit to write an epistle to a church even though it was the apostle who framed the message with his own words and reasoning. Wesley conceded that the Jewish records used by Matthew and Luke to outline Jesus' ancestry may have contained contingent

³⁴ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* (London: Epworth, 1948), 794; Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity: A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 56; Scott J. Jones, *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1995), 18.

difficulties and inaccuracies, yet he stated these could not be held against the inspired writers or the inspiration process and explicitly denied errors in Scripture.³⁵ Words employed by the biblical writers “accurately answered the impression made upon their minds.”³⁶ Haldane’s version of verbal-plenary inspiration seems to resemble Wesley’s view to some extent in its use of dictation language, the affirmation of the conscious and free human involvement in the process, the Holy Spirit’s relative guidance/dictation in the process without giving exact words, and the final reliable and flawless product. Nevertheless, Wesley did not yet have to respond to the methodological doubt of scholarly higher criticism but was more concerned with practical questions of interpretation and salvation.³⁷

Adam Clarke (1760/2-1832), a British Wesleyan-Arminian theologian and Bible commentator, suggested the Holy Spirit operated not merely in “one particular form” but “in diverse manners” in the inspiration of the biblical writers. In discussing the mode of divine communication, he copied and affirmed large sections from the Anglican scholar Daniel Whitby (1638-1726). Beyond speaking of different ways of revelation, Whitby had distinguished between “inspiration by suggestion, and inspiration of direction,” a possible precursor to the later theory of degrees of inspiration. The first type operated when the biblical writers had no antecedent knowledge of the things, yet the Spirit

³⁵ John Wesley, *Wesley’s Notes on the Bible*, ed. G. Roger Schoenhals (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1987), 402-405, 469, 484, 514, 515, 520, 541, 542, 595; Jones, *John Wesley’s Conception and Use of Scripture*, 18-21, 24, 231 en. 8; Oden, *John Wesley’s Scriptural Christianity*, 56, 60; Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood, 1994), 38, 269 en. 96.

³⁶ Wesley, *Wesley’s Notes on the Bible*, 403.

³⁷ Sarah Heaner Lancaster, "Scripture and Revelation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, eds. William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 490, 491; Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 32.

generally suggested only the true intent and meaning. It was only in rare cases that the very words were suggested; the writers usually employed their own language. The second mode operated when such an antecedent knowledge existed by natural reason, education, or previous revelation such as in the historical parts of the New Testament and matters of fact relating to the writers themselves or other persons. The Spirit merely reminded them of these things. Whitby stated that either way the Spirit guarded the writer from making errors in the transmission. In a few cases, however, when biblical writers manifested ignorance, doubt, and personal opinion such as in Romans 15:24, 28, they had not been divinely assisted.³⁸

Thus these two Methodist theologians advocated different types of verbal-plenary inspiration and degrees of inspiration. While Wesley employed dictation imagery, he left room for human freedom assisted by the Holy Spirit without fixing the very words. Clarke suggested that the Spirit vouchsafed the accuracy of the delivered truths by modes of inspiration that varied in intensity depending on the existence or non-existence of previous knowledge. Both concepts maintained the reliability of the biblical message and text through divine guiding assistance while denying an overruling control of the Spirit in the inspiration process.

The Restorationist Movement and Divine Inspiration

Restorationism was a religious current that developed in various denominations in North America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, resulting in the

³⁸ Adam Clarke, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: The Text Carefully Printed from the Most Correct Copies of the Present Authorized Version, Including the Marginal Readings and Parallel Texts, with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, new improved ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Thomas, Cowperthwait & Co., 1838), 4–6.

formation of the Christian Churches. A number of significant Millerite and Sabbatarian Adventist leaders came from their New England branch, also referred to as the Christian Connexion, which had been founded mainly by Elias Smith (1769-1846).³⁹ That loose fellowship of like-minded believers was characterized by a desire to restore the teachings of the New Testament and to complete the work of the Protestant Reformation. Opposing creeds, traditions, and philosophical language, they generally rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, the full divinity and eternal existence of Christ, and the personality of the Holy Spirit because they felt unable to support these teachings by a plain and literal reading of Scripture.⁴⁰ Christian writers frequently emphasized the Bible as their only and all-sufficient rule of faith and practice.⁴¹ Beyond affirmations of that ultimate authority of Scripture, they made only a few statements about inspiration, and such were usually merely incidental remarks lacking final unambiguity. The following paragraphs describe

³⁹ Milo T. Morrill, *A History of the Christian Denomination in America, 1794-1911* (Dayton, OH: Christian Pub. Assn., 1912), 174–76; Thomas H. Olbricht, "Christian Connexion and Unitarian Relations, 1800-1844," *Restoration Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1966): 184, 185; Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 145. Notable members of the Christian Connexion who joined the Millerite movement were Joshua V. Himes, Lorenzo D. Fleming, and Joseph Marsh. The later Sabbatarian Adventist leaders Joseph Bates and James White were also members of the Christian Connexion.

⁴⁰ Michael G. Kenny, *The Perfect Law of Liberty: Elias Smith and the Providential History of America* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 26, 27, 129; Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 42, 69, 73, 76, 78, 81; E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 292, 295, 296, 300, 301, 305; George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993), 68.

⁴¹ See, e.g., G. H. Sweet, "Dr. Clark's Opinion," *Christian Palladium*, 1 August 1836, 100; J. H. Siewers, "Auto da Fe (Act of Faith)," *Christian Palladium*, 15 September 1836, 145; David Smith, "More Light—No. 11," *Christian Palladium*, 15 May 1837, 23; Henry Grew, "Jesus Christ," *Christian Palladium*, 15 November 1837, 209; Abner Jones, "Divine Influence," *Christian Palladium*, 15 March 1839, 339; I. R. Gates, "Principles of Union," *Christian Palladium*, 1 October 1839, 166.

their employment of dictation language, their remarks on the focus and mode of inspiration, and their emphasis on the nature of its final product.

Some writers employed dictation language, but its use does not qualify as conclusive evidence for a mechanical view of inspiration. For example, Lorenzo D. Fleming (1808-1867), a Christian minister and later Millerite lecturer, recommended every Christian church to maintain the order “dictated by the Holy Spirit.”⁴² Similarly, Jabez Chadwick argued that the visions were inserted in Scripture by divine direction.⁴³ Both statements suggest that God prescribed a specific action or principle, but not necessarily the exact wording of the principle or vision.

Such remarks are not necessarily indicative of a word-focused view of inspiration, yet a number of statements do suggest such a view. Thus some Christian ministers wrote that the biblical writers conveyed the message and truths in “the language of the Holy Spirit” and “in God’s own words,” which is why Christians therefore were to employ only these words to express biblical truths.⁴⁴ Similarly, believers were to accept only teachings framed in “the language of inspiration” and in the “definite expression” employed by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵ These statements sound forthright although one could still

⁴² Lorenzo D. Fleming, "Scripture Order—No. 11," *Christian Palladium*, 1 July 1836, 69.

⁴³ Jabez Chadwick, "The Spirit," *Christian Palladium*, 15 April 1840, 371.

⁴⁴ David Millard, Jasper Hazen, and Oliver Barr, "Circular Letter, of the Christian General Book Association, to their Brethren and Friends Scattered Abroad," *Christian Palladium*, 1 December 1838, 234; Ira Allen, "Is a Creed Necessary," *Christian Palladium*, 1 August 1840, 98.

⁴⁵ David Millard, "Christian Connexion," *Christian Palladium*, 1 November 1837, 195. Allen, "Is a Creed Necessary," 97, 98; David Millard, "History of the Christians, or Christian Connexion," in *History of All the Religious Denominations in the United States: Containing Authentic Accounts of the Rise and Progress, Faith and Practice, Localities and Statistics, of the Different Persuasions*, 3rd ed. (Harrisburg, PA: Winebrenner, 1853), 166.

argue that they were meant to be figures of speech. Thus one quotation from Thomas Hartwell Horne states that the descriptions of sin and salvation in Scripture were “drawn by the pencil of the spirit [*sic*].”⁴⁶ Another writer figuratively outlined the way the Bible reached humanity: “Here is a Book inscribed by the pen of inspiration, direct from the eternal throne of God, sealed and made sure by heaven’s great Messenger to earth.”⁴⁷ When talking about a biblical prophet, Fleming spoke of the “inspired penman,” yet the phrase remains ambiguous as he failed to qualify it either by equating it with or distinguishing it from God’s pen.⁴⁸ Some of these statements sound poetic and might be interpreted as figurative language.

That these phrases were not merely figures of speech to emphasize Scripture’s divine origin and authority is suggested, however, by statements about God’s direct communication of words. For example, it was argued that it was God who had written, dictated, and uttered the truths in the Bible.⁴⁹ The Holy Spirit had, in fact, given the biblical writers the words they were to speak and to write.⁵⁰ One writer argued that the writings of the prophets and apostles were “written by the finger of God” and they were therefore “only the amanuenses of the Holy Ghost” who spoke to and by them.⁵¹ These

⁴⁶ Thomas Hartwell Horne, "Sinner Sleeping," *Christian Palladium*, 2 July 1838, 71.

⁴⁷ S. Marvin, "The Two Volumes," *Christian Palladium*, 2 January 1837, 260.

⁴⁸ Lorenzo D. Fleming, "A Short Sermon," *Christian Palladium*, 1 April 1837, 353.

⁴⁹ E. G. Holland, "Spiritual Influence," *Christian Palladium*, 2 December 1839, 228; Jabez Chadwick, "Illustrations of Scripture," *Christian Palladium*, 15 February 1839, 306.

⁵⁰ Jones, "Divine Influence," 339. Cf. Holland, "Spiritual Influence," 228.

⁵¹ J. H. Siewers, "The Reciprocity of the Gospel," *Christian Palladium*, 15 July 1836, 81.

statements emphasize the divine dominance in the inspiration process at the expense of the human participant's freedom of choice.

Since they assumed that Scripture was written “under the unerring and infallible influence of the Holy Ghost”⁵² and was produced “by infallible inspiration,”⁵³ they believed that Scripture as the final product of inspiration “contains nothing but truth.”⁵⁴ The Bible was therefore “infallibly true”⁵⁵ and an “unerring book.”⁵⁶ One writer concluded that “the Bible is as perfect as its author.”⁵⁷ To stress the need of a creed and argue that Scripture was not explicit and clear enough would therefore accuse the Holy Spirit of incompetence.⁵⁸

Given the non-confessional and non-creedal nature of the Christian Connexion, the above statements may not have been representative of all members and ministers. Since the statements were generally incidental remarks in the context of other topics, they also do not necessarily present systematic comprehensive deliberations. Nevertheless, all these incidental remarks reflect the tendency to favor a word-focused, divinely-dominated inspiration process. Their remarks on inspiration usually focused on the

⁵² Sweet, "Dr. Clark's Opinion," 100.

⁵³ Grew, "Jesus Christ," 209. Cf. Alpha, "The Spirit," *Christian Palladium*, 15 April 1840, 373. Henry Grew was not a member of the Christian Church, yet he was favorable towards them and shared some of their sentiments. The *Christian Palladium* occasionally published letters and articles from his pen.

⁵⁴ Isaac N. Walter, "On Creeds," *Christian Palladium*, 2 May 1836, 8.

⁵⁵ E. G. Holland, "Elder Marvin's Queries," *Christian Palladium*, 1 October 1841, 161. See also Abner Jones, "Divine Influence," *Christian Palladium*, 1 December 1838, 227.

⁵⁶ S. C. Sweet, "Prescience," *Christian Palladium*, 1 June 1841, 37.

⁵⁷ Gates, "Principles of Union," 166.

⁵⁸ Hawley, "Union Convention," *Christian Palladium*, 1 November 1838, 193, 194.

impact of the divine participant on the inspiration process. James Gardner seems to be correct in his estimation that they held a “‘fundamentalist’ view of the Bible as the all-sufficient, verbally inspired word of God.”⁵⁹ An examination of Millerite publications will determine to what extent this sentiment resurfaced in the Millerite movement when influential Christian ministers joined it in the late 1830s and early 1840s.

The Millerite Movement and Divine Inspiration

The Millerite Movement arose through the efforts of the Baptist farmer-preacher William Miller (1782-1849) during a period of revived interest in the eschatological prophecies of the Bible.⁶⁰ His consistent argumentation and emphasis on facts appealed to the general public which was highly influenced by eighteenth-century rationalism, Scottish common-sense philosophy, and Jacksonianism.⁶¹ The interdenominational movement generally attracted common people and lay preachers, yet Everett N. Dick notes that it was also joined by some graduates and students of several famous educational institutions. While about seventy-one percent of the movement’s lecturers and members were Methodists and Baptists, Dick suggests that, considering the

⁵⁹ James Gardner, "The Christians of New England," n.p., [1970s], Special Collections, Brown Library, Abilene Christian University, Abilene, TX, chap. 7.

⁶⁰ Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 5, 42; James West Davidson, *The Logic of Millennial Thought: Eighteenth-Century New England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977); John F. C. Harrison, *The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism, 1780-1850* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1979), 5, 57; David L. Rowe, *God’s Strange Work: William Miller and the End of the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 76–81; George R. Knight, *William Miller and the Rise of Adventism* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2010), 13, 14.

⁶¹ Rowe, *God’s Strange Work*, 90; Knight, *William Miller and the Rise of Adventism*, 31, 32, 46; William G. McLoughlin, "Introduction to Charles G. Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion," in *Essays on Jacksonian America*, ed. Frank Otto Gatell (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 255; Nathan O. Hatch, "The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People," in *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An International Religious Tradition*, eds. Michael W. Casey and Douglas A. Foster (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 121–139.

comparatively small size of the Christian Connexion, a disproportionately large number of Christians joined the movement (about eight percent).⁶² This responsiveness of Christians to Miller's interpretations may have fostered the already strong restorationist undercurrent among the Millerites.⁶³ The present section will describe the Millerite view of prophecy as proof of the divine inspiration of Scripture, their general use of dictation language, and the reception of and objection to the views advocated by Louis Gaussen and Moses Stuart respectively.

Millerite writers seemed to generally assume that the Bible was the divinely inspired word of God, without elucidating the nature, focus, and mode of inspiration. Scripture played a central role in the movement, yet the believers' common purpose lay in the explanation and promotion of the eschatological prophecies and their past and future fulfillment. They believed God had revealed information about the timing of specific historical events and developments. While some of their leading writers were aware of the problematic nature of German higher criticism, they generally suggested that the historical fulfillment of prophecy was sufficient proof of the Bible's authenticity, inspiration, reliability, and authority.⁶⁴ They conceded that some biblical passages

⁶² Everett N. Dick, *William Miller and the Advent Crisis, 1831-1844* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1994), 165–67. He mentions such colleges as Harvard, Yale, Bowdoin, Oberlin, and Andover.

⁶³ Rowe, *God's Strange Work*, 158, 159; Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World*, 38–40, 68, 84–86, 115, 119, 269, 298–300.

⁶⁴ Ruth Alden Doan, *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1987), 86, 87; Rowe, *God's Strange Work*, 74, 75, 81, 106, 107, 176, 177, 197; Jeff Crocombe, "A Feast of Reason: The Roots of William Miller's Biblical Interpretation and Its Influence on the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Queensland, 2011), 62, 83, 178. An exception was, for example, the Millerite minister Nathaniel N. Whiting (1794–1872), a Greek and Hebrew scholar, who addressed the destructive influence of German critical scholarship in a stand-alone

presented inconsistencies, problems, and unresolved questions, yet they tended to blame the translators for obscuring the original and plain meaning of the text. Like many other Protestants, they suggested that using Scripture as its own interpreter, a practical application of the *analogia fidei*, could harmonize most alleged inconsistencies and determine the meaning of prophetic symbols and periods.⁶⁵ Thus, in their view, considerations about the original time, culture, language, and context of a given biblical passage were superfluous.⁶⁶

The few remarks on inspiration appearing in their publications were usually incidental phrases in the context of other topics. While these remarks frequently contain dictation language, there may have been slight differences in nuance. Sometimes Millerite writers referred to the words of the Bible as the “language of inspiration,”⁶⁷ “the

pamphlet. See Nathaniel N. Whiting, *Origin, Nature, and Influence of Neology* (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1844).

⁶⁵ James H. Moorhead, "Prophecy, Millennialism, and Biblical Interpretation in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective: Studies in Honor of Karlfried Froehlich on His Sixtieth Birthday*, eds. Mark S. Burrows and Paul Rorem (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 295; Timm, "Adventist Views on Inspiration [No. 1]," 25, 26; Steen R. Rasmussen, "Roots of the Prophetic Hermeneutic of William Miller" (M.A. thesis, Newbold College, 1983), 28; Rowe, *God's Strange Work*, 73-75, 90; Crocombe, "A Feast of Reason," 79, 80.

⁶⁶ Zoltán Szalos-Farkas, *The Rise and Development of Seventh-day Adventist Spirituality: The Impact of the Charismatic Guidance of Ellen G. White*, Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 1 (Cernica, Romania: Editura Institutului Teologic Adventist, 2005), 106, 107; Crocombe, "A Feast of Reason," 84, 84.

⁶⁷ Lorenzo D. Fleming, "Correspondence," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, 2 August 1841, 67; A. D. Low, "Essays on the Judgment," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, 20 April 1842, 17; G. F. Cox, et al., "Portland Conference and Lectures," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, 22 June 1842, 96; J. B. Cook, "For the Western Midnight Cry," *Western Midnight Cry*, 16 March 1844, 13; J. D. Dow, "Essay on the Judgment," *Western Midnight Cry*, 13 April 1844, 38.

expressive language of inspiration,⁶⁸ and “the words of inspiration.”⁶⁹ Alluding to the Holy Spirit’s work on the prophets in the writing of Scripture, some spoke of the prophecies as being sketched by “the finger of inspiration”⁷⁰ and being revealed by “the pen of inspiration.”⁷¹ Such phrases could refer to a mechanical and word-focused view of inspiration, yet that they may merely be figurative references to the Holy Spirit is suggested by one writer who intimated that “the unerring pen of inspiration” was not the writer in the hand of the Spirit but the Holy Spirit himself.⁷² When talking about the biblical writers, they sometimes employed the term “the inspired penmen.”⁷³ Its use remains nevertheless ambiguous because they failed to equate it with or distinguish it

⁶⁸ Josiah Litch, *An Address to the Public, and Especially the Clergy: On the Near Approach of the Glorious, Everlasting Kingdom of God on Earth, As Indicated by the Word of God, the History of the World, and Signs of the Present Times* (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1841), 13.

⁶⁹ S. W. Coggeshall quoted in Litch, *An Address to the Public, and Especially the Clergy*, 1; J. B. E., "Thoughts," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, 1 February 1842, 162; L[ewis] H[ersey], "Messrs. Himes and Litch," *Western Midnight Cry*, 9 December 1843, 1; Emily C. Clemons, "Redemption Nigh: Or Reasons for Believing the Savior Will Soon Return," *Advent Herald, and Signs of the Times Reporter*, 14 February 1844, 5.

⁷⁰ H. Eastman, "Letter from Bro. Eastman," *Western Midnight Cry*, 3 February 1844, 59; D. Bartholomew, "Letter from Bro. Bartholomew," *Western Midnight Cry*, 23 January 1845, 44.

⁷¹ Josiah Litch, *The Probability of the Second Coming of Christ About A.D. 1843: Shown by a Comparison of Prophecy with History, Up to the Present Time, and an Explanantion of Those Prophecies Which are Yet to be Fulfilled* (Boston, MA: David H. Ela, 1838), 103; "Fundamental Principles on Which the Second Advent Cause Is Based," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, 24 January 1844, 185.

⁷² C. Morley, "Arguments of Opponents,—No. IV," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, 23 November 1842, 74.

⁷³ Josiah Litch, "The Judgment in 1843: Reply to Rev. J. D. Bridge," *Signs of the Times, Relating to the Second Coming of Christ*, 15 May 1840, 29; Josiah Litch and Henry Jones, "Discussion between Litch and Jones: Christ's Kingdom at Hand," *Signs of the Times of the Second Coming of Christ*, 15 July 1840, 59; Lorenzo D. Fleming, "A Synopsis of the Evidences of the Second Coming of Christ about the Year 1843," *Signs of the Times of the Second Coming of Christ*, 1 August 1840, 66; [Josiah] L[it]ch, "The Battle of Armageddon," *Signs of the Times of the Second Coming of Christ*, 1 September 1840, 85; James A. Begg, "Mr. James A. Begg's Letters," *Signs of the Times of the Second Coming of Christ*, 1 December 1840, 136; William Miller, *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ, about the Year 1843, Exhibited in a Course of Lectures* (Sandy Hill, NY: G. & E. Howland, 1842), 169; Enoch Jacobs, "Chronological Prophecies: Letter to L. L. Hamline, Editor of the Ladies' Repository," *Western Midnight Cry*, 9 March 1844, 1.

from the writers as God's "pen." A similar ambiguous statement was made by William Miller who wrote that the Spirit commanded John by inspiration to write about a given subject.⁷⁴ Miller did not qualify the content of the command, if it provided precise words to be written or if it ordered John to describe in his own language what he saw and heard. Regardless of the exact mode of inspiration, they believed that since God is truth and cannot lie, Scripture as a product of inspiration had to be true.⁷⁵ Thus they frequently referred to 2 Timothy 3:16, affirming that every part of the Bible was inspired.⁷⁶

The Millerite reception of Gausson's book *Theopneusty* and their response to Stuart's reviews of the prophetic interpretation of Miller may nevertheless be indicative of their theological and hermeneutical leanings. When *Theopneusty*, probably the most significant exposition of the theory of plenary-verbal inspiration, was published in America it attracted the interest of Millerite writers who saw it as an invaluable defense against German higher criticism. They advertised the book and reprinted parts of it in their periodicals, illustrating their agreement with the belief that inspiration prevented the imperfection of the biblical writers' humanity and language to mar the final product.⁷⁷ They also appreciated other subjects found in the writings of Gausson, an avowed

⁷⁴ Miller, *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ, about the Year 1843, Exhibited in a Course of Lectures*, 86.

⁷⁵ John G. Butt, "Letter from Bro. Butt," *Western Midnight Cry*, 7 February 1845, 49.

⁷⁶ See, e.g., "Malachi," *Signs of the Times of the Second Coming of Christ*, 15 July 1840, 63; Unus Populi, "Course of the *Boston Recorder* Rebuked," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, 22 March 1843, 17; Lewis Hersey, "Prepare to Meet Thy God!!," *Western Midnight Cry*, 9 March 1844, 4; "Scriptural Test of Saving Faith," *Western Midnight Cry*, 23 March 1844, 22.

⁷⁷ "New Publications," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, 6 April 1842, 8; Louis Gausson and Edward N. Kirk, "Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, 20 April 1842, 19, 20.

expositor of biblical prophecy.⁷⁸ Stuart, on the other hand, fell out of favor with the Millerites as a result of his critique of Miller's interpretation of the prophecies and the dating of Christ's second coming. They thought Stuart denied the plenary inspiration of Scripture and the authority of the Old Testament because he agreed with some aspects of German critical scholarship and objected to several premises of Millerite prophetic interpretation.⁷⁹ Since Millerite writers frequently affirmed their faith in the inspiration of Scripture in response to the critical scholarly scrutinizing of the credibility and historicity of biblical miracle stories,⁸⁰ they probably felt more closely allied to Gausson's affirmation of a plenary word-focused view of inspiration than to Stuart's objection to predictive prophecy and use of critical methodologies.

Lacking explicit definitions of the nature, mode, and process of inspiration, their basic concept was apparently somewhat diffused. Incidental remarks do not present a

⁷⁸ Louis Gausson, "Popery, an Argument for the Truth, by Its Fulfilment of Scripture Prophecies," *Advent Herald, and Signs of the Times Reporter*, 3 July 1844, 169–73; "What Does It Mean!," *Advent Herald, and Signs of the Times Reporter*, 3 July 1844, 174; Louis Gausson, "Popery, an Argument for the Truth, by Its Fulfilment of Scripture Prophecies," *Advent Herald, and Signs of the Times Reporter*, 10 July 1844, 177, 178; "Prof. Gausson's Discourse," *Advent Herald, and Signs of the Times Reporter*, 10 July 1844, 184; Edward Bickersteth, "Prof. Gausson [sic] on Papacy," *Advent Herald, and Signs of the Times Reporter*, 24 July 1844, 194; "New Works," *Advent Herald, and Signs of the Times Reporter*, 31 July 1844, 204; "Religious Intelligence," *Advent Herald, and Signs of the Times Reporter*, 13 November 1844, 107; "Fundamental Principles: On Which the Second Advent Cause Is Based," *Advent Herald, and Signs of the Times Reporter*, 13 November 1844, 112.

⁷⁹ See, e.g., William Miller, *Miller's Reply to Stuart's "Hints on the Interpretation of Prophecy" in Three Letters, Addressed to Joshua V. Himes* (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1842); "Literary Notices: American Views of Christ's Second Advent," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, 17 August 1842, 157; Charles Fitch, "Letter to Moses Stuart," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, 24 August 1842, 164; "The Tendency to German Neology," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, 21 June 1843, 121; "The Prophecies," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, 5 July 1843, 143; Whiting, *Origin, Nature, and Influence of Neology*, 14-20, 33-39, 46-48; Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller: Generally Known as a Lecturer on the Prophecies, and the Second Coming of Christ* (Boston, MA: Himes, 1853), 180, 203.

⁸⁰ W. Burgh, "The Right Use of Prophecy, and the Duty of Attending to It," *Signs of the Times of the Second Coming of Christ*, 1 March 1841, 177; "The Right Spirit," *Advent Herald, and Signs of the Times Reporter*, 28 August 1844, 28; "The Tenth Day of the Seventh Month," *Advent Herald, and Signs of the Times Reporter*, 18 September 1844, 52.

comprehensive perspective of a given theological concept, yet they help to make visible its general contours. Thus the above Millerite remarks on inspiration seem to depict a concept of inspiration akin to the plenary word-focused view found in the Christian Connexion.

Summary

All three traditions—Wesleyan Methodism, Restorationism, and Millerism—were characterized by a strong belief in the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture. Their occasional use of dictation language and frequent emphases on the divine origin and absolute reliability of Scripture may betray a plenary word-focused view of inspiration, yet at least Methodist writers seemed to differ from such a strict view as they allowed for more active involvement of the human participant in the inspiration process. Clarke's concept of inspiration appears to differ somewhat from Wesley's view and specifically from the notions found in Christian Connexion and Millerite publications. He suggested the Holy Spirit operated in diverse manners, adapting the intensity of inspiration to ensure a reliable result. In a few instances the Spirit may have given words, yet often he only revived the memory. Restorationist and Millerite writers seemed to have a somewhat diffused understanding of inspiration, as unambiguous and explicit statements on its nature and *modus operandi* are almost absent from their publications. Yet Gausson's strict verbal-plenary view may have appealed to them because like them he affirmed the reliability of Scripture and biblical prophecy against critical scholarly challenges. The next section will examine to what extent these notions of inspiration and aspects of the different theories surfaced in the writings of Seventh-day Adventists.

Seventh-day Adventist Perceptions of Inspiration

Sabbatarian Adventism emerged in the aftermath of the Millerite movement that gradually disintegrated after the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844. Its three principal founders—Joseph Bates, James White, and Ellen G. White (née Harmon)—came from the Restorationist and the Wesleyan-Methodist tradition respectively. The previous section has shown that beyond a strong belief in the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture, Restorationist and Millerite writers seemed to have a somewhat diffused understanding of inspiration. The study of Methodist publications has further shown that researchers should beware of interpreting the use of dictation language, which was quite prevalent in publications of all three traditions, too quickly as indicators of a mechanical view of inspiration. While they all emphasized the authority and absolute reliability of Scripture, some acknowledged a more active involvement of the human participant in the inspiration process.

Emerging from these three traditions, Sabbatarian Adventists were also strongly focused on the Bible as their norm for faith and practice. However, with the appearance of the prophetic figure of Ellen G. Harmon in December 1844 and her continued prophetic ministry for more than seventy years, another source of authority came into view that also claimed divine inspiration. After the initial period of theological integration and evangelistic reorientation, Sabbatarian Adventists began to attract believers beyond the Millerite heritage from all sorts of denominational backgrounds. This trend increased dramatically after the formal organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1863 and particularly with the global extension of Adventist missions after 1874. The existence of two inspired sources of authority naturally provoked questions about their relationship to each other from within and from outside of

the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. Witnessing Ellen White as a claimant to divine inspiration also generated both questions and insights about the nature and mode of the Holy Spirit's working in inspiration.

This section examines conceptions Adventists had regarding the inspiration of Scripture and Ellen G. White from 1845 to 1879, comparing them to the different nineteenth-century theories of inspiration and the views held in the three antecedent religious traditions described above.

The Inspiration of Scripture

In their early years Seventh-day Adventists held the Bible in high regard, practiced a literal reading, and repeatedly affirmed the Bible as their only, perfect, and infallible rule of faith and practice, reflective of their conservative Protestant heritage.⁸¹ Yet as Alberto Timm notes, prior to the early 1880s, they wrote very little about the nature of the inspiration of the Bible writers and the church's prophetic voice, Ellen G. White.⁸² It is probably true that explicit statements on inspiration are scarce in their publications during this period, but clues to their notion of inspiration may nevertheless be found in their mention of other views of inspiration, their use of scholarly sources, and their own vocabulary. Thus the present section discusses the perception Adventists had of the different theories of inspiration and the scholars who advocated them, followed by the

⁸¹ Szalos-Farkas, *The Rise and Development of Seventh-day Adventist Spirituality*, 64, 65; Timm, "Adventist Views on Inspiration [No. 1]," 26; George R. Knight, "The Relationship between Ellen White's Authority and the Authority of the Bible in Adventism," *Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium 6* (2010): 37, 38; Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire*, 138, 139; Fritz Guy, "Theology," in *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, eds. Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 147.

⁸² Timm, "Adventist Views on Inspiration [No. 1]," 26, 27.

employment of dictation language and imagery in Adventist publications between 1850 and 1880.

Comments on Theories of Inspiration

The technical terms for the different theories of inspiration, explained above, appear very seldom in Adventist publications before the early 1880s. Terms such as “verbal inspiration” and “thought inspiration” are virtually absent from their publications.⁸³

The phrase “degrees of inspiration” is mentioned once in a reprint from the Spiritualist periodical *Banner of Light* which claimed the universal inspiration of every human, the existence of “different degrees of inspiration,” and the presence of multiple mistakes in the Bible. By reprinting this piece, the editor of the *Review and Herald* intended to instruct his readers about the Spiritualists’ attitude towards Scripture.⁸⁴ A decade later Roswell F. Cottrell argued in favor of different extents or “degree[s] of inspiration.” Accordingly, some type of inspiration was common to all humans whereas another type was only shared by believers, referring to the illumination of the mind and the stimulation of spirituality in the life of a Christian. Cottrell did not distinguish between the illumination of regular believers and the inspiration of the biblical writers, stressing that inspiration protected neither of them from making mistakes. While he mentioned that they were inspired by God “to fulfill his word,” he failed to mention

⁸³ The only reference to “verbal inspiration,” an incidental remark in a quotation from the *Liberal Christian*, fails to allow inspection into their view of inspiration. See “The Gospel in Tents,” *Review and Herald*, 8 September 1874, 93.

⁸⁴ G., “Teachings of the Spirits,” *Review and Herald*, 21 November 1865, 196.

anything concerning the Spirit's protective influence aiding prophets in the transmission of the divine communication. Thus Cottrell advocated a form of degrees of inspiration but did not make any explicit statements about the reliability and accuracy of Scripture.⁸⁵

While the term "plenary inspiration" was used more often, it appeared primarily in reprints from non-Adventist publications and was mostly left unexplained.⁸⁶ In one reprint the author spoke of "the *language* that Inspiration adopted," suggesting the Holy Spirit deliberately provided a particular wording.⁸⁷ A similar word-focused view appeared in a brief discussion of an apparent contradiction in Acts 23:9 in the *Review*. Editor Uriah Smith argued that "believers in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures" would not advocate "the idea of an improper use of the word," implying that Adventists were such believers.⁸⁸ Besides these few more explicit remarks, Adventists were rather disinterested in discussing the various theories of inspiration espoused by theologians.

Use of Scholarly Writings

Nevertheless, Adventist writers did not seem to discriminate among the writings of scholars who differed from them in their view of inspiration. They quoted positively and freely from such works, provided they deemed their exegetical, theological, or

⁸⁵ R. F. Cottrell, "Inspiration," *Review and Herald*, 14 December 1876, 188, 189.

⁸⁶ John Cummings, "Various Readings," *Review and Herald*, 16 December 1858, 27; Moses Hull, "Evidences of Christianity: Chapter I," *Review and Herald*, 3 December 1861, 3; "Spiritualism," *Review and Herald*, 20 June 1865, 19.

⁸⁷ Daniel D. Buck, "Avenging of the Elect," *Review and Herald*, 16 September 1862, 123 (emphasis original).

⁸⁸ [Uriah Smith], "Angel and Spirit, Acts xxiii, 8," *Review and Herald*, 16 July 1867, 68.

historical explanations useful to their own argument. For example, they quoted and cited Philip Doddridge,⁸⁹ John Pye Smith,⁹⁰ and Daniel Wilson,⁹¹ all scholars who advocated some form of degrees of inspiration. They appreciated studies by Moses Stuart⁹² and Calvin E. Stowe,⁹³ who both favored the inspiration of the person. Adventist writers also drew from Charles J. Ellicott, a proponent of thought inspiration.⁹⁴ References to the writings of these theologians attest that Adventists read either their writings or quotations from them in other publications. Some of these theologians allowed for the possibility of

⁸⁹ See, e.g., J. H. Waggoner, "The Law of God and Baptism," *Review and Herald*, 24 October 1854, 84; "Plain Truths," *Review and Herald*, 6 August 1857, 106; Oliver Hoffer, "Explanation," *Review and Herald*, 25 August 1863, 103; "The Commentary: Matthew vi, 12," *Review and Herald*, 13 August 1867, 132; Philip Doddridge, "Amazing Beautiful Change," *Review and Herald*, 21 January 1873, 41; J. N. Loughborough, *The Saints' Inheritance: Or, The Earth Made New* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1873), 13; "To Correspondents: 50. No Man That Sinneth Not," *Review and Herald*, 6 November 1879, 156.

⁹⁰ See, e.g., Voice of the Church, "Principles of Interpretation," *Review and Herald*, 20 May 1858, 3; J. N. Loughborough, "Saints' Inheritance," *Review and Herald*, 26 May 1859, 3; Eld. Taylor, "The Coming Earthquake," *Review and Herald*, 16 November 1869, 162; James White, et al., eds., "The New Earth: Testimony of Eminent Men," *Review and Herald*, 17 February 1874, 75; J. N. Loughborough, "The Saints' Inheritance: Purpose of God Concerning the Earth," *Signs of the Times*, 23 July 1874, 38.

⁹¹ James White, "Questions," *Review and Herald*, 23 July 1861, 60; James White, ed., "Progress of Skepticism," *Review and Herald*, 16 June 1863, 19; Uriah Smith, ed., "Promptness in Charity," *Review and Herald*, 11 August 1868, 127.

⁹² See, e.g., J. H. Waggoner, "The Truth Found: A Short Argument for the Sabbath," *Review and Herald*, 31 January 1856, 142; Uriah Smith, ed., "Advantages of Revelation," *Review and Herald*, 13 May 1858, 203; Uriah Smith, "Mortal or Immortal? Which?: Or, An Inquiry into the Present Constitution and Future Condition of Man," *Review and Herald*, 1 September 1859, 113; J. H. Waggoner, "S. D. Adventists and Their Critics," *Review and Herald*, 14 February 1871, 67; J. N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and the First Day of the Week*, 2nd ed. (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1873), 233, 359, 360; Loughborough, "The Saints' Inheritance," 38; James White, et al., eds., "The Oneida Community," *Signs of the Times*, 27 February 1879, 68.

⁹³ Calvin E. Stowe, "Prof. Stowe on the Decalogue," *Review and Herald*, 2 August 1870, 50, 51; W. H. Littlejohn, "The Statesman Articles: Article Seven," *Review and Herald*, 13 May 1873, 171; S. B. Whitney, "The Book of Revelation," *Review and Herald*, 1 February 1877, 34; W. H. Littlejohn, "Feet-Washing: Where and When," *Review and Herald*, 29 August 1878, 74; D. M. Canright, "When Was the Bible Written?," *Signs of the Times*, 19 December 1878, 378.

⁹⁴ James White, et al., eds., "Religious News and Notes," *Signs of the Times*, 21 November 1878, 351; *[New York] Independent*, "The Archaeology of Baptism," *Review and Herald*, 29 May 1879, 170.

minor mistakes, discrepancies, and inconsistencies in Scripture, yet Adventists made no reference to such statements or to remarks touching on their views of the nature, mode, and extent of inspiration. Moses Hull's *The Bible from Heaven* (1863) is probably the most prominent defense of the divine origin of Scripture and its reliability in historical and scientific matters, but it did not clarify the particulars of the inspiration process.⁹⁵

The way Seventh-day Adventists used the writings of three theologians—Louis Gaussen, Adam Clarke, and Thomas Hartwell Horne—whose views on inspiration have been mentioned above, deserves a closer look.

Jud Lake argues that Adventists uncritically assimilated “Gaussen’s monergistic word-oriented view of inspiration” because he had been a defender of the Bible, a respected interpreter of biblical prophecy, and a trusted believer in the Second Coming since Millerite times.⁹⁶ Considering that between 1850 and 1880 there are only about nine references to Gaussen in the *Review and Herald* and none in the *Signs of the Times*, one may wonder, however, how strong this influence really was. He was obviously less referenced and quoted than some of the previously mentioned theologians. Six of these references talk about the future culmination of all hopes and full knowledge, the interpretation and historical fulfillment of prophecy, general historical events, and the correspondence between scientific knowledge and biblical remarks about the form and

⁹⁵ Moses Hull, *The Bible from Heaven: Or, A Dissertation on the Evidences of Christianity* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1863).

⁹⁶ Lake, "D. M. Canright, Ellen G. White, and Inspiration," 42, 43.

composition of the earth.⁹⁷ Only the remaining three quotations concern the content-related perfection of the Bible as a result of inspiration.

In the first quotation Gaussen affirmed Scripture's absolute flawlessness in its accounts of natural and historical events, but he failed to specify how this inerrant perfection came about. His mention of differences in the biblical writers' mental cultivation, rank, condition, time, and place could be read as a recognition of an active human participation in the composition of the Bible. Lacking any remarks on the *modus operandi* of inspiration, the editor of the *Review* may have regarded the quotation as a valuable affirmation of the reliability of the message and content of Scripture.⁹⁸

The second quotation from Gaussen came in answer to a question on the inspiration of Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 7:6-12. Speaking of the "divinity of apostolic language," he suggested the respective phrases were "authorized" by "the fullest and most sovereign inspiration." These remarks heavily emphasize the divine impulse to write these phrases, yet Gaussen spoke of an authorization to write them without specifying the precise mode of inspiration.⁹⁹

The third quotation is a longer reprint from Gaussen's *Theopneusty*, yet instead of quoting directly from the book, the editor copied it from its recent appearance in the *Advent Herald*. In the most striking statement in that reprint, Gaussen suggested that

⁹⁷ Louis Gaussen, "Obscure Scriptures," *Review and Herald*, 12 June 1856, 53; J. H. Waggoner, "What the Prophets Teach," *Review and Herald*, 30 October 1856, 203 [2x]; "The Little Horn," *Review and Herald*, 24 December 1857, 52; "The Resurrection," *Review and Herald*, 6 December 1864, 11; Louis Gaussen, "Earth's Fiery Treasures," *Review and Herald*, 5 October 1869, 114, 115 [quoted from the *Advent Herald*].

⁹⁸ Louis Gaussen, "Perfection of the Bible," *Review and Herald*, 15 September 1859, 134.

⁹⁹ "To Correspondents," *Review and Herald*, 21 August 1860, 112.

rather than object to such a passage [2 Timothy 4:13], thereby to deprive the Scriptures of their infallibility, we should there recognize that wisdom of God which, so often by one single touch, has given instructions for which, without that, many pages would have been necessary. We should adore that tender condescension which, stooping even to our weakness, is pleased, not only to reveal to us the highest thoughts of Heaven in the simplest language of earth, but to also offer them to us under forms so living, so dramatic, so penetrating, often compressing them in order to render them more intelligible, within the narrow space of a single verse.¹⁰⁰

Here, Gausson emphasized that inspiration had a more direct impact on the form and language of the biblical text. The overall message of that reprint places the emphasis nevertheless on the spiritual usefulness of 2 Timothy 4:13, surpassing the seeming banality of Paul's considerations. This quotation is the only definite and unambiguous affirmation of a word-focused view of inspiration. While Lake is probably correct in his suggestion that Adventists quoted Gausson uncritically and without properly understanding the working of inspiration, his conclusion that Gausson had become their trusted authority on the nature of inspiration¹⁰¹ seems to overstep the mark as they quoted him only three times on the issue of inspiration in thirty years.

One writer, possibly Uriah Smith, discussed a seeming contradiction in 1 Corinthians 1:16 and quoted from Adam Clarke's commentary on Corinthians in support of his harmonization attempt. What is more interesting than the quotation itself is an unmarked omission within the text. While one sentence negated the prophets' infallibility and the apparent next sentence explained the purpose of inspiration, Smith omitted Clarke's statement in between: "Nor, was that *inspiration* ever given, so to work on a

¹⁰⁰ Louis Gausson, "Paul's Cloak," *Review and Herald*, 25 October 1870, 146 [reprinted from the *Advent Herald*].

¹⁰¹ Lake, "D. M. Canright, Ellen G. White, and Inspiration," 42–44, places much weight on these three quotations, interpreting them as illustrations of the appreciation Adventists showed for Gausson.

man's memory, that he could not forget any of the *acts* which he had performed during life." The omission may be indicative of Smith's unwillingness to concede room for mistakes in the biblical writers' recollection of the past or to provide leeway for minor discrepancies in the historical accounts.¹⁰²

Peter van Bemmelen suggests that Horne's *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* advocates the idea of various degrees of inspiration and that it became known among Seventh-day Adventists through Dudley M. Canright's endorsement in *The Bible from Heaven* in 1878.¹⁰³ Van Bemmelen fails to notice that Horne's *Introduction* had already been recommended by George W. Amadon¹⁰⁴ and Moses Hull¹⁰⁵ in the early 1860s and had also been used by other Adventist leaders such as Uriah Smith¹⁰⁶ and J. N. Loughborough.¹⁰⁷ Canright may nevertheless be credited with

¹⁰² [Uriah Smith], "1 Corinthians i,16," *Review and Herald*, 16 July 1867, 68 (emphasis original). Cf. Adam Clarke, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*, new improved ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Thomas, Cowperthwait & Co., 1844), 101.

¹⁰³ Bemmelen, "The Mystery of Inspiration," 5.

¹⁰⁴ George W. Amadon, "The Skeptic Met," *Review and Herald*, 11 September 1860, 131; George W. Amadon, "Origin of the Old Heathens' System of Religion," *Review and Herald*, 26 March 1861, 148.

¹⁰⁵ Moses Hull, "Evidences of Christianity: Chapter IV," *Review and Herald*, 18 February 1862, 90; Moses Hull, "Evidences of Christianity: Chapter VI," *Review and Herald*, 4 November 1862, 177, 178; "A New Work," *Review and Herald*, 21 April 1863, 168; Hull, *The Bible from Heaven*, iii, 37, 45, 62–65, 69, 73, 78, 79, 98, 136, 140, 183.

¹⁰⁶ [Uriah Smith], "Punctuation of Scriptures," *Review and Herald*, 23 September 1858, 144; [Uriah Smith], "The "Ravens" That Fed Elijah," *Review and Herald*, 25 September 1860, 147; [Uriah Smith], "Division of the Sacred Scriptures into Chapters and Verses," *Review and Herald*, 8 January 1861, 59; [Uriah Smith], "Punctuation of the Bible," *Review and Herald*, 8 January 1861, 59; Uriah Smith, *Thoughts Critical and Practical on the Book of Revelation* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1865), 25.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Hartwell Horne, "Scripture Account of the Flood, Vindicated," *Review and Herald*, 29 October 1861, 173, 174 (introduction by J. N. Loughborough); J. N. Loughborough, "Guidance of Nature," *Review and Herald*, 5 November 1861, 178; J. N. Loughborough, "Do Violence to No Man," *Review and Herald*, 30 September 1862, 140.

extensively promoting the *Introduction* among Adventist readers as he was apparently the only Adventist writer who referred to it from the late 1860s to the late 1870s.¹⁰⁸ Van Bemmelen incorrectly attributes the theory of degrees of inspiration to Horne for, as has been shown above, his *Introduction* did, in fact, propagate William Parry's view of partial inspiration. It is further striking that none of the quotations from and references to the *Introduction* touch on either Horne's or Parry's view of inspiration. Thus the theory of degrees of inspiration as it would be advocated by George I. Butler in 1884, which will be discussed in the next chapter, did not seem to find entrance into Adventism through Canright's endorsement of Horne's *Introduction*.

Employment of Dictation Language and Imagery

Beyond the usage of the writings of theologians who advocated various theories of inspiration, Adventists employed language that may be indicative of their view of inspiration. Emphasizing the divine origin and authority of the biblical writings, they stated that "inspiration has said" or "inspiration has defined" something.¹⁰⁹ Since the

¹⁰⁸ D. M. Canright, "One Argument for the Immortality of the Soul Considered," *Review and Herald*, 29 June 1869, 3; D. M. Canright, "The Ancient Philosophers Did Not Believe the Immortality of the Soul," *Review and Herald*, 13 July 1869, 18, 19; D. M. Canright, "How the Separate Existence of the Soul Came to be Believed," *Review and Herald*, 12 October 1869, 122; D. M. Canright, "Arguments for Immortality," *Review and Herald*, 2 January 1872, 21; D. M. Canright, "Deut. 31:26," *Review and Herald*, 16 January 1872, 36, 37; D. M. Canright, "Morality of the Sabbath and Its Importance," *Signs of the Times*, 4 March 1875, 131; D. M. Canright, "The Law of Types and Shadows," *Signs of the Times*, 20 May 1875, 218; D. M. Canright, "A Plain Talk to Murmurers [No. 1]: Some Facts for Those Who Are Not in Harmony with the Body," *Review and Herald*, 15 March 1877, 85; D. M. Canright, *The Bible from Heaven: A Summary of Plain Arguments for the Bible and Christianity* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1878), 16, 64-66, 70, 71, 76-78, 103, 104, 106, 111-118, 125, 144, 147, 167-174, 176, 180-183, 205, 242, 278; D. M. Canright, "Philosophical Sects That Rejected the Doctrine of the Soul's Immortality," *Review and Herald*, 2 January 1879, 2; D. M. Canright, "Immortality of the Soul," *Review and Herald*, 13 February 1879, 49; D. M. Canright, "The Immortality of the Soul: History of the Doctrine," *Signs of the Times*, 2 October 1879, 290.

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Bates, "The Beast with Seven Heads," *Review and Herald*, 5 August 1851, 4; Hiram Edson, "The Two Laws," *Review and Herald*, 7 October 1851, 36.

Bible was the product of the “pen” of inspiration,¹¹⁰ they referred to biblical statements as the “page,”¹¹¹ “record,”¹¹² and “word”¹¹³ of inspiration so that the words, phrases, and style reflected “not simply their own language”¹¹⁴ but “the language of inspiration.”¹¹⁵ In 1854, J. N. Andrews argued that “the holy Scriptures come to us with the divine guarantee that every word therein contained was divinely inspired.”¹¹⁶ In a reprint from the Seventh Day Baptist *Sabbath Recorder* the biblical writers were referred to as “the divinely inspired amanuenses of the Holy Spirit.”¹¹⁷ While such phrases could be read as a figurative emphasis on the divine origin and authority of Scripture, they may also betray a word-focused view of inspiration. In fact, a number of Adventist writers employed the terms “dictate” and “dictation” incidentally to emphasize the divine origin of the biblical writings, in contrast to the view that they were merely human productions.¹¹⁸ That the presence of dictation language and imagery is not necessarily an

¹¹⁰ Uriah Smith, "The Warning Voice of Time and Prophecy," *Review and Herald*, 12 May 1853, 201; D. M. Canright and Charles Stone, "The Vermont Camp Meeting," *Review and Herald*, 2 September 1875, 69; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:9, 10, 12, 370 [1876, 1879].

¹¹¹ Annie R. Smith, "The Blessed Hope," *Review and Herald*, 6 May 1852, 1; *Review and Herald*, 2 September 1858, 128; "The Last Trumpet," *Review and Herald*, 2 August 1864, 73.

¹¹² J. N. Andrews, "Thoughts on the Sabbath," *Review and Herald*, December 1850, 10.

¹¹³ J. N. Andrews, "The Time of the Sabbath," *Review and Herald*, 2 July 1851, 92; Edson, "The Two Laws," 36.

¹¹⁴ Calvin W. Stone, "The Resurrection," *Review and Herald*, 17 July 1879, 25.

¹¹⁵ J. N. Andrews, "Thoughts on Revelation XIII and XIV," *Review and Herald*, 19 May 1851, 82; D. M. Canright, "Notes of the Discussion in Kansas," *Review and Herald*, 11 January 1877, 12.

¹¹⁶ J. N. Andrews, "Things to Be Considered," *Review and Herald*, 31 January 1854, 10.

¹¹⁷ "Relation of Church Membership," *Review and Herald*, 19 December 1854, 140.

¹¹⁸ M[yrt]a E. S[teward], "Conditions of Salvation, No. 3," *Review and Herald*, 25 March 1858, 146; Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts: The Great Controversy between Christ and His Angels, and Satan and His Angels*, vol. 1 (Battle Creek, MI: James White, 1858), 176; G. P. Wilson, "The Destiny of the Ungodly," *Review and Herald*, 10 July 1860, 61; Joseph Clarke, "Brevities," *Review and Herald*, 2 July

indication of a mechanical or word-focused understanding of inspiration has been pointed out above in the discussion of the views held by Robert Haldane and John Wesley. An examination of the use of dictation language among writers of the Christian Connexion and Millerite Movement suggests, however, a more word-focused view of inspiration. Since different writers have employed the same language and imagery, it is left for the immediate context of such statements and the overall understanding of inspiration to determine the specific location within the continuum of more conservative inspiration views. For example, in 1876, Ellen White penned one of her strongest early statements on the inspiration of the Bible writers. She stated, “The scribes of God wrote as they were dictated by the Holy Spirit, having no control of the work themselves.”¹¹⁹ An isolated, out-of-context reading of this sentence could easily suggest a mechanical, dictatorial view of inspiration, yet the immediate and wider context of the statement repeatedly emphasizes the Holy Spirit overruled the biblical biographers’ personal biases and gave them impartial insights of both positive and negative experiences of his people, transcending their own perception and knowledge. The term “dictate” does not refer to

1861, 46; "Christ Knocking at the Door," *Review and Herald*, 26 August 1862, 97; D. M. Canright, "Why I am a Christian," *Review and Herald*, 23 June 1863, 27; J. N. Loughborough, "Prepare to Spread the Light," *Review and Herald*, 27 September 1864, 142; John McMillan, "The Bible Alone," *Review and Herald*, 8 August 1865, 75; J. M. Weaver, "The First Resurrection," *Review and Herald*, 15 August 1865, 83; Samuel Horsley, "Reference Bibles," *Review and Herald*, 1 May 1866, 176; J. W. Raymond, "The Place and Time of Recompense," *Review and Herald*, 19 November 1867, 346; Uriah Smith, "Rules for Bible Reading," *Review and Herald*, 21 January 1868, 92; Isaac D. Van Horn, "Translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek," *Review and Herald*, 17 March 1868, 215; Uriah Smith, ed., "The Serpent of Serpents: or The Bible and the Fictitious," *Review and Herald*, 23 June 1868, 7; Isaac D. Van Horn, "The Spirit of Christ in the Prophets," *Review and Herald*, 25 April 1871, 149; J. H. Waggoner, "The Law of God, No. 8," *Review and Herald*, 8 April 1875, 113; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:9, 180; Hattie M. Rose, "Sowing and Reaping," *Review and Herald*, 24 October 1878, 135; D. M. Canright, "The Scripture Doctrine of a Future Life, No. 18," *Signs of the Times*, 15 May 1879, 154. See also Lake, "D. M. Canright, Ellen G. White, and Inspiration," 44–46.

¹¹⁹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:9.

the narrow meaning of a dictation of specific words to the writers but to the broader meaning of the term as the guiding influence of the Spirit on the writers. This observation is supported by James H. Burry who notes that, depending on the context, Ellen White employed the terms “dictate” and “dictation” in different ways, making use of their entire semantic field. She used them, for example, with the meaning of guiding, leading, instructing, ordering, suggesting, prescribing, and proper dictating.¹²⁰ Yet if the immediate literary context fails to shed light on the meaning of the language and imagery employed, it may be ambiguous at best.

Given the lack of precise definitions of the Holy Spirit’s *modus operandi* in the inspiration process and the employment of dictation imagery and language, “monergistic word-oriented” assumptions may have existed among Seventh-day Adventists. Considering the diffused conception of inspiration among them, one cannot readily conclude, however, that every person who made use of that language and imagery advocated a mechanical, dictatorial view of inspiration. Thus lack of precision and the presence of ambiguous language left room for undefined diffused assumptions as to the nature and operation modus of inspiration. These observations may qualify the suggestions of Knight and Lake who note that a word-oriented view “seems to have been held by some Adventists from the beginning of the movement.”¹²¹ The next section will ascertain how early Adventists viewed the inspiration of Ellen White.

¹²⁰ 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," 48–50. See also Frank M. Hasel, "Revelation and Inspiration," 1090.

¹²¹ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 134; Lake, "D. M. Canright, Ellen G. White, and Inspiration," 44.

The Inspiration of Ellen G. White

Ellen G. White's life and writings have been explored from numerous perspectives as both admirers and detractors seemed to regard her prophetic claims and literary productions as significant enough.¹²² About two months after the Great Disappointment, she experienced her first vision at the age of seventeen which clarified why the eagerly anticipated event of Jesus' second coming had not materialized on October 22, 1844. That vision and subsequent ones provided guidance to disappointed Millerite believers, confirming the discoveries of ensuing Bible studies. Until her death in 1915 Seventh-day Adventists looked to her for guidance in the areas of health, education, organization, theology, mission strategies, among others. The acceptance of her writings as the fruits of divine inspiration has time and again created the need to clarify the nature and mode of her inspiration and the relationship of her literary corpus to the writings of the Bible. This section will therefore examine the views Seventh-day Adventists, Ellen G. White herself, and her critics held in regard to her inspiration until about 1880.

Seventh-day Adventists on Ellen White's Inspiration

Adventists believed in the perpetuity of the New Testament spiritual gifts and emphasized that the predicted end-time manifestation of the prophetic gift (Joel 2; Revelation 12:17; 19:10) had, at least partially, been fulfilled in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White who received visions and dreams. Rather than discussing the precise nature and mode of her inspiration, they attempted to disprove particular accusations and

¹²² For a bibliographic overview of writings about Ellen White both critical and affirmative see Burt, "Bibliographic Essay on Publications About Ellen G. White," 148–213.

charges of her opponents.¹²³ Scholars acknowledge that statements touching on her inspiration are scarce in Adventist publications between 1845 and 1880.¹²⁴ Incidental remarks on the inspiration of Ellen White may nevertheless be indicative of the assumptions held by either individuals or the church and thus shed light on their view of her inspiration. It is necessary, however, to avoid jumping to hasty conclusions based on such remarks. The following paragraphs address the ambiguous use of dictation language to affirm the divine origin of her writings, the absence of a dictational word-focused view in the understanding of the leaders, and the partial acceptance of her writings by some church members.

The ambiguous use of dictation language

A number of Adventist writers stressed their belief in the divine origin of the visions and testimonies, and in the divine guidance of the inspiration process. Several official denominational resolutions therefore affirmed “the testimonies of sister [*sic*] White to be the teachings of the Holy Spirit” and “the voice of the Lord to his people,” without specifically defining the *modus operandi* of inspiration.¹²⁵ Since the visions were accompanied by supernatural phenomena, Adventists saw only two possible sources for

¹²³ Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*.

¹²⁴ Timm, "Adventist Views on Inspiration [No. 1]," 26, 27.

¹²⁵ James White, "Conference," *Review and Herald*, 12 November 1857, 4; James White and Uriah Smith, "Business Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Session of the General Conference of S. D. Adventists," *Review and Herald*, 14 February 1871, 68; George I. Butler and Uriah Smith, "The Conference," *Review and Herald*, 25 March 1873, 116; George I. Butler and Uriah Smith, "Business Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Meeting of the S.D.A. General Conference," *Review and Herald*, 25 November 1873, 190; E. H. Root and Sidney Brownsberger, "Sixteenth Annual Session of the Michigan State Conference," *Review and Herald*, 5 October 1876, 106; James White and Uriah Smith, "General Conference," *Review and Herald*, 4 December 1879, 184.

them. Thus, in 1851, Joseph Baker highlighted, as reported by Ellen White, that there “is no half way work about this business [the visions]; the visions are all of God or there are none of them of God.”¹²⁶ Seventeen years later Dudley M. Canright applied the same argument to White’s testimonies when he suggested that “there is no half way work about this” as she supposedly claimed that her writings resulted from things shown to her by God in vision, that they were “not her opinion, but the word of God.” Hence he concluded that her claim is either correct and she is “a servant of God,” or it is false, exposing her as a deceiver and servant of Satan.¹²⁷ Jud Lake interprets Canright’s remarks as a piece of evidence for Canright’s belief in verbal inspiration. Lake is correct in stating that Ellen White herself never equated the *Testimonies* with “the word of God,”¹²⁸ although she admittedly referred to her messages as “the words of God.”¹²⁹ Yet while Canright certainly mishandled that phrase, its incidental use is not necessarily an indication of his concept of inspiration as there are no further clues found in the article. The phrase is located in the context of his argument that if Ellen White’s own claims are

¹²⁶ Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 21 vols. (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981-1993), 3:402 [1851]; Timothy L. Poirier, Kenneth H. Wood, and William A. Fagal, eds., *The Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts with Annotations: 1845-1859*, vol. 1 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2014), 313, 311 fn. 16.

¹²⁷ D. M. Canright, "Conversations on Important Subjects—No. 2," *Review and Herald*, 28 January 1868, 99. Four years later, George I. Butler used a similar reasoning when he stated: “If God is speaking to us [through the *Testimonies*], we might as well treat it with decent respect. If He is not, we are the greatest dupes I know of.” See George I. Butler to James White, 22 August 1872, EGWCF, EGWE.

¹²⁸ Lake, "D. M. Canright, Ellen G. White, and Inspiration," 54, 55.

¹²⁹ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 1:40.

taken seriously, her writings cannot just be viewed as good books containing her personal opinion.¹³⁰

Whereas Canright's language is somewhat ambiguous and inconclusive, there were a few other writers who actually employed dictation language in the context of the divine origin of Ellen White's writings. Thus H. C. Miller argued that "the word of reproof and instruction" found in the testimonies was "dictated" by God's Spirit.¹³¹ The use of the term "dictate" in that sentence suggests, however, that the author may have used it in the sense of "command," "prescribe," and "order." Another writer stated that, when he read several volumes of *Spiritual Gifts* and the *Testimonies for the Church*, he "believed they were dictated by the Spirit of truth."¹³² Like the previous statement, this one may employ the term "dictate" in a broader sense although a dictatorial understanding cannot entirely be ruled out. The author's use of the past tense could refer to a bygone state as he was describing his initial experience when accepting the Sabbath truth, yet one should avoid reading too much into the tense form used. Comparing the employment of dictation imagery and language regarding the inspiration of the Bible with such references to Ellen White's writings, it appears that this language was used far less frequently for the latter.

¹³⁰ In fact, his emphasis on the absence of any mediating position reflects Ellen White's own emphasis of the same point. See Ellen G. White to J. N. Andrews, 11 June 1860, Lt 8, 1860, EGWE; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:230 [1875].

¹³¹ H. C. Miller, "So Shall Ye Prosper," *Review and Herald*, 14 September 1869, 91.

¹³² G. W. Mitchell, "A Sketch of Experience," *Review and Herald*, 3 November 1868, 226. Jud Lake refers to Mitchell as "one convert to Adventism" which could create the impression that he was a recent convert. See Lake, "D. M. Canright, Ellen G. White, and Inspiration," 46. Yet it seems that Mitchell reminisced about his experience six or seven years after beginning to keep the Sabbath (August 1861) and receiving Ellen White's books (shortly afterwards). He was therefore no longer a recent convert.

The leaders' rejection of a word-focused view of inspiration

Those who knew Ellen White more closely were aware of corrections and changes of language, grammar, and style, a circumstance that eliminated the idea of inspiration operating in her experience in a dictational word-focused manner. Her husband James White (1821-1881) served as her chief literary assistant and was one of the most significant supporters of her spiritual gift.¹³³ Uriah Smith (1832-1903), long-time editor of the *Review and Herald*, was the most important single defender of Ellen White's ministry against external attacks.¹³⁴ Both were familiar with her visions and literary activities. Thus, in 1866, Uriah Smith acknowledged the presence of imperfections in Ellen White's writings such as the accidental omission of words and punctuation marks. He also suggested that it was possible to omit redundant phrases and statements. Smith suggested that her visions were given for particular purposes and under special circumstances. When the purpose of a given vision had been fulfilled, only certain portions of it were still relevant to present circumstances and were therefore republished. Some things were only "related to particular and local circumstances," but other matters were consequently of "general interest." Smith believed inspired messages varied in scope and purpose. Since he thought accidental imperfections of the language and deliberate changes of a given text were possible, he evidently did not assume a word-

¹³³ Gerald Wheeler, "White, James Springer," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 558.

¹³⁴ Eugene F. Durand, "Smith, Uriah (1832-1903)," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 517. See, e.g., Uriah Smith, *The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White: A Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts According to the Scriptures* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1868).

focused view of inspiration.¹³⁵ As leading ministers gained insight into Ellen White's life and work it became incomprehensible why they should hold a dictational word-focused view of inspiration. Hence, William C. White's recollection sounds reasonable when he stated in 1911, "Mother has never laid claim to verbal inspiration, and I do not find that my father, or Elder Bates, Andrews, Smith, or Waggoner, put forth this claim."¹³⁶ It may be significant to note that White asserted that these leading individuals never advocated a word-focused view of his mother's inspiration. Considering that some individuals made use of dictation language to affirm the divine origin of her writings, Levterov may go too far by applying that assertion to Seventh-day Adventists in general.¹³⁷ As the leaders were lacking precision and definiteness in their description of the different aspects of the divine-human process of inspiration in Ellen White's experience, it may be expected that church members, particularly new converts to Adventism who were even less familiar with the manner in which she produced her writings and how these were subsequently adapted, held diverse assumptions and imprecise conceptions of that process. Thus, as a result, some church members may have held a word-focused view of her inspiration, analogous to Knight's previous suggestion regarding Adventists' beliefs on the

¹³⁵ Uriah Smith, "The Visions—Objections Answered," *Review and Herald*, 31 July 1866, 66.

¹³⁶ Quoted in Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 3 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980b), 437. Lake seems to apply this statement generally to their view of the inspiration of the Bible writers, yet he fails to notice that their view of the inspiration of the Bible writers and the inspiration of Ellen White might not necessarily coincide. See Lake, "D. M. Canright, Ellen G. White, and Inspiration," 44. The possibility of such a difference is recognizable, for example, when, in 1933, Georg W. Schubert explained that the biblical writers were verbally, literally inspired whereas Ellen White's words were imperfect and could be changed. Quoted in Hartlapp, *Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten im Nationalsozialismus*, 270.

¹³⁷ Theodore N. Levterov, "The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889," *Ellen White Issues Symposium* 9 (2013): 20.

inspiration of the Bible that a word-oriented view “seems to have been held by some Adventists from the beginning of the movement.”¹³⁸

The skeptics’ retreat to partial inspiration

Aside from the official Adventist position on the inspiration of Ellen White, some church members had reservations about her prophetic gift. They generally affirmed the divine origin of the visions, but tended to differ from the mainstream position when they were personally rebuked by Ellen White or they disagreed with some of the visions’ teachings. In harmony with the mainstream, some Adventist leaders distinguished between matters on which Ellen White had received “light from the Lord” and matters where she gave her private judgment.¹³⁹ Extending the private and uninspired realm to her acknowledged inspired writings, some people nevertheless suggested that one part of a given testimony was correct whereas another “part of it was a mistake” as she was mixing visionary insights with information received from other people.¹⁴⁰ While such a position closely resembles the concept of partial inspiration, it was apparently not so much a deliberate and well-conceived decision for a particular theory of inspiration, as it was rather an attempt to cope with inexplicable rebuke. By adopting that argument, they nevertheless intimated the possibility for a divinely inspired person to be influenced by others, to confuse sources of information, and to make mistakes.

The tendency to question some aspects of the testimonies illustrates potential results of the predicament some church leaders found themselves in when they tried to

¹³⁸ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 134.

¹³⁹ George I. Butler to James White, 24 January 1872, EGWCF, EGWE.

¹⁴⁰ Ellen G. White to J. N. Andrews, 11 June 1860.

cope with seemingly unfair reproof against them. Some resented the perceived unjust treatment and questioned Ellen White's inspiration entirely. Others began to comprehend the accuracy and appropriateness of a testimony only after longer periods of self-reflection.¹⁴¹

The functions and quality of the gift of prophecy

The existence of two inspired sources of authority naturally raises questions about the relationship between these two sources. Ellen White's opponents generally questioned the authority of her visions and writings, the quality of her work, and the role her writings played, and it was usually these questions that dictated the agenda of her advocates. Since these questions of authority, quality, and function had precedence, the more intricate theoretical points of the precise nature and modes of her inspiration were understandably considered secondary or insignificant.

Seventh-day Adventists believed that Ellen White's visions and dreams were divine revelations for God's people in the time of the end. As they were of divine origin Adventists did not view "her inspiration," as Knight correctly notes, "of lesser quality than that of the Bible writers."¹⁴² This may explain the preoccupation of some Adventist

¹⁴¹ See, e.g., Arthur L. White, "The Story of Stephen Smith and the Unread Testimony," *Review and Herald*, 6 August 1953, 16–18; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years, 1862-1876*, vol. 2 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1986), 425–29; Roy E. Graham, *Ellen G. White: Co-Founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, American University Series, Series 7, Theology and Religion, vol. 12 (New York, et al.: Lang, 1985), 133; Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 59, 132, 133; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 429; Ronald D. Graybill, "Prophet," in *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, eds. Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 83, 84, 86; Graeme Sharrock, "Testimonies," in *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, eds. Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 61; Poirier, Wood, and Fagal, *The Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts with Annotations*, 1:800, 889, 890.

¹⁴² Knight, "The Relationship between Ellen White's Authority and the Authority of the Bible in Adventism," 39. See also Burt, "Revelation and Inspiration," 30.

writers to prove the reliability of her writings.¹⁴³ Thus, in his book *The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White* (1868), Uriah Smith repeatedly rejected the claim of contradictions in the visions.¹⁴⁴ Adventists generally believed the inspiration operating in the experience of Ellen White and the biblical writers had the same quality, yet they did not regard her writings as having the same authority. In their view, the authority of her writings differed from that of the biblical writers at least in three aspects—locus of authority, function, and scope.

Adventists believed both sets of writings were authorized by God and were thus authoritative, but they argued that White's writings were subject to the scrutiny of Scripture (1 Thessalonians 5:19, 20) and derived their authority therefore from the perfect and complete revelation in Scripture which was Adventists' "only rule of faith and practice." Having a subordinate authority, the writings of Ellen White were hence considered to have a different function. Thus they were to lead people to God and the Bible. They were to correct, revive, and heal those who erred from biblical truths and principles.¹⁴⁵ Rather than becoming the foundation for new doctrines they may confirm

¹⁴³ See Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 114–16.

¹⁴⁴ Smith, *The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White*, passim, esp. 86.

¹⁴⁵ Timothy L. Poirier, "Contemporary Prophecy and Scripture: The Relationship of Ellen G. White's Writings to the Bible in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1845-1915" (Research paper, Wesley Theological Seminary, 1986), 21–27; Alberto R. Timm, *The Sanctuary and the Three Angels' Messages: Integrating Factors in the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines*, Adventist Theological Society Doctoral Series, vol. 5 (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society, 1995), 164, 386–391; Knight, *Meeting Ellen White*, 28–32; Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 22–25; Szalos-Farkas, *The Rise and Development of Seventh-day Adventist Spirituality*, 64–68, 72–78; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 56–59, 109–113.

previous discoveries of Bible study and should, as a result, foster unity.¹⁴⁶ Adventists also thought Ellen White's writings differed from Scripture in their scope. Scripture was therefore authoritative for all Christians throughout the Christian dispensation whereas her writings spoke to a particular group of people at the time of the end (Revelation 12:17; 19:10).¹⁴⁷ White's writings became a test only to those people who were convinced of their divine origin.¹⁴⁸ Thus they suggested it would be inconsistent to say that these messages were not binding or not a test to those who believe in their divine origin—as if God's will was irrelevant for believers.¹⁴⁹ Yet Adventists only expected new

¹⁴⁶ Poirier, "Contemporary Prophecy and Scripture," 18–20; Timm, *The Sanctuary and the Three Angels' Messages*, 166–169, 390, 390, 393–396; Knight, *Meeting Ellen White*, 22–27, 30; George R. Knight, *Joseph Bates: The Real Founder of Seventh-day Adventism*, Adventist Pioneer Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004), 102, 103, 116, 153; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844–1889*, 113, 114. See, e.g., James White, "A Test," *Review and Herald*, 16 October 1855, 61, 62; Uriah Smith, "The Sanctuary," *Review and Herald*, 22 December 1874, 204.

¹⁴⁷ Graham, *Ellen G. White*, 45, 46; Szalos-Farkas, *The Rise and Development of Seventh-day Adventist Spirituality*, 71, 72, 76–83; Graybill, "Prophet," 79, 80.

¹⁴⁸ See, e.g., J. B. Orton, S. T. Belden, and T. B. Mead, "A Test," *Review and Herald*, 16 October 1855, 61; Joseph Bates, J. H. Waggoner, and M. E. Cornell, "Address of the Conference Assembled at Battle Creek, Mich., Nov. 16th, 1855," *Review and Herald*, 4 December 1855, 79; Uriah Smith, "The Visions a Test," *Review and Herald*, 14 January 1862, 52, 53; J. N. Andrews and Uriah Smith, "Business Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Session of the General Conference of S. D. Adventists," *Review and Herald*, 25 May 1869, 173; James White and Uriah Smith, "Business Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Session of the General Conference of S. D. Adventists," *Review and Herald*, 22 March 1870, 109; James White and Smith, "General Conference," 184.

¹⁴⁹ Bates, Waggoner, and Cornell, "Address of the Conference Assembled at Battle Creek, Mich., Nov. 16th, 1855," 79. Pöhler interprets this statement as a rejection of a more exclusive understanding of the Sola Scriptura principle of the previous years. See Rolf J. Pöhler, "Adventisten, Ellen White und das Sola-Scriptura-Prinzip," *Spes Christiana* 17 (2006): 48–50. His assertion certainly illustrates the real practical tension between two divinely inspired sources, yet his appraisal of pre-1855 and post-1855 statements seems artificial because in both periods statements emphasized Scripture as the supreme authority on all matters and the authority of God's will communicated through the modern-day gift of prophecy. Nevertheless, there were two changes that may have affected the perception of the second source of authority. First, in the late 1850s a hermeneutical shift occurred especially in matters of organization from nothing is allowed that is not explicitly (literally) taught in Scripture to things are permitted that are in harmony (spiritually) with Scripture. See Andrew G. Mustard, *James White and SDA Organization: Historical Development, 1844–1881*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 12 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1988), 131, 134, 171, 172, 221, 222, 231, 232; George R. Knight, "Ecclesiastical Deadlock: James White Solves a Problem That Had No Answer," *Ministry*, July

converts to believe in the biblical doctrine of spiritual gifts and to be willing to “candidly acquaint themselves with the visions.”¹⁵⁰ Hence, while they believed Ellen White’s experience to be the predicted manifestation of the gift of prophecy among the eschatological remnant and her writings to be beneficial to everyone, they did not believe the scope of her writings equaled that of the Bible.

Ellen White’s Perception of Inspiration

Ellen G. White firmly believed in her divine calling to the prophetic ministry and in the manifestation of the true gift of prophecy in her life and work. During the first thirty years of her ministry statements about the nature and mode of her inspiration were nevertheless rare.¹⁵¹ Until the early 1860s she was primarily concerned with emphasizing the genuineness and divine origin of her visionary experience, the biblical foundation for the modern-day gift of prophecy, and the spiritual significance of her messages. From the mid-1860s to the late 1870s Ellen White made some incidental remarks about the dynamics of the divine-human cooperation in the inspiration process. These provide

2014, 9–13. Second, the shift from a hesitancy to promote the visions for fear of the prevalent prejudice against visions to a renewed emphasis and promotion of the visions in the mid-1850s. It does not seem, however, that this second change became possible through James White’s replacement by a new editor of the *Review and Herald* as Ann Taves and Jonathan Butler suggest. See Ann Taves, “Visions,” in *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, eds. Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 39; Jonathan M. Butler, “A Portrait,” in *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, eds. Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 9, 10. The renewed emphasis came after the leaders realized that indifference towards the visions was widespread among Sabbatarian Adventists. See Timm, *The Sanctuary and the Three Angels’ Messages*, 390.

¹⁵⁰ J. N. Andrews, “Our Use of the Visions of Sr. White,” *Review and Herald*, 15 February 1870, 65. See also George I. Butler, “Visions and Prophecy: Have They Been Manifested Among Seventh-day Adventists? [No. 5],” *Review and Herald*, 9 June 1874, 202.

¹⁵¹ See, e.g., Denis Kaiser, “Ellen G. White’s View of Divine Inspiration,” *Perspective Digest* 19, no. 2 (2014), accessed 23 June 2014. <http://www.perspectivedigest.org/article/131/archives/19-2/ellen-g-white-s-view-of-divine-inspiration>.

helpful insights into the way she experienced inspiration. Following the chronological sequence of the revelation-inspiration process, the present section will describe the dynamic divine-human relationship in revelation, inspiration, and the final product as Ellen White perceived and experienced it between 1845 and 1880. It will demonstrate that the previously discussed theories of inspiration are all too limited to sufficiently encapsulate Ellen White's incarnational, integrated, and wholistic view and experience of inspiration.¹⁵² These descriptions are antecedent to the discussion of her more detailed views on inspiration from 1880 to 1915 in the following two chapters.

Various types of revelation

In her early years Ellen White experienced revelations usually in the form of public visions, but by the 1870s, as these open visions occurred less frequently, night visions (dreams) became the customary mode of revelation.¹⁵³ Her writings abound in "I saw," "I was shown," and "I looked and saw" statements, suggesting the visionary origin of the attending messages.¹⁵⁴ She emphasized that she was unable to produce or control visions because they came whenever the Holy Spirit decided to give them.¹⁵⁵ Herbert Douglass notes nine different types of visions in her experience: first, a seemingly

¹⁵² Burt, "Revelation and Inspiration," 35–37; Timm, "Understanding Inspiration," 12; Alberto R. Timm, "Interpreting Ellen G. White's Letters and Manuscripts," in *The Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts with Annotations: 1845-1859*, eds. Timothy L. Poirier, Kenneth H. Wood, and William A. Fagal (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2014), 1:34.

¹⁵³ Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 135–37.

¹⁵⁴ Ronald D. Graybill, "The 'I Saw' Parallels in Ellen White's Writings," *Adventist Review*, 29 July 1982, 4–6; Szalos-Farkas, *The Rise and Development of Seventh-day Adventist Spirituality*, 56, 57; Burt, "Revelation and Inspiration," 39.

¹⁵⁵ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts: My Christian Experience, Views, and Labors in Connection with the Rise and Progress of the Third Angel's Message*, vol. 2 (Battle Creek, MI: James White, 1860), 293; Ellen G. White, "Questions and Answers," *Review and Herald*, 8 October 1867, 260.

personal presence and participation in the events of a vision; second, a panoramic view of past, present, and future developments; third, the observation of an event with the accompanying interpretation by a heavenly guide; fourth, a view of future buildings attended by an instruction for the future workers in that building; fifth, symbolic representations that either were explained by her guide or were self-explanatory; sixth, seemingly secret visits of “institutions, committee meetings, families in their homes, and persons;” seventh, the presentation of the results of both obedience and disobedience to the inspired instruction; eighth, specific instructions for her husband, her and him as parents, and for denominational and institutional leaders; and ninth, the presentation of broad principles that integrated “advanced opinions of her day with additional insights on such subjects as health, education, and temperance.”¹⁵⁶ Thus, her visions could be described as whole-body experiences.

The divine-human dynamics of inspiration

Sometimes Ellen White gave an oral report of the vision shortly afterwards to those present, yet it often took weeks, months, or even years to write down the details and concerns of a given vision.¹⁵⁷ She further emphasized her dependence on the Holy Spirit to revive the details of respective visions and dreams in her memory as she usually did not clearly remember every detail. She suggested she was generally left to herself to clothe the revealed scenes and impressed thoughts in words.¹⁵⁸ Her answer to questions

¹⁵⁶ Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 137, 138. See also Burt, "Revelation and Inspiration," 39.

¹⁵⁷ Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 144, 147, 148.

¹⁵⁸ Ellen G. White to J. N. Andrews, 11 June 1860; Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:292, 293; Ellen G. White, "Questions and Answers," 260; Ellen G. White to J. N. Loughborough, 24 August 1874, Lt

regarding her testimonies on female dresses in 1867 illustrates that experience. Thus when she had been shown “three companies of females” with dresses of different lengths, she was “left to describe the length of the proper dress in [her] own language” as effectively as possible. That on different occasions she did not always use the exact same measurement to describe the same idea is indicative of the above experience.¹⁵⁹ Apart from her general experience of clothing scenes and ideas in her own language, she sometimes heard and recited words spoken by an angel which she “always enclose[d] in marks of quotation.”¹⁶⁰ Thus, in her view, inspiration operated on the mind by giving thoughts, scenes, and sometimes words, without overruling her choice of language. She admitted that composing grammatically and orthographically correct sentences was not a skill natural to her. She was keenly aware of her need of literary assistants to prepare her manuscripts for publication. White’s experience in expressing the ideas and views in her language suggests God is mainly interested in conveying a message in a comprehensible form to the intended audience and not so much with ensuring perfect grammar and spelling. As she adapted her writings for different audiences and appreciated literary

2, 1874, EGWE. Her statement in these sources, that she was “just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing a vision, as in having the vision,” has sometimes been interpreted as a claim to absolute divine word-focused control over her as a person in the inspiration process. Such an interpretation overlooks her subsequent qualification of that dependence when Ellen White stated she was unable “to call up things which have been shown me unless the Lord brings the same before me at the time and on the occasion that he is pleased to have me relate it.”

¹⁵⁹ Ellen G. White, "Questions and Answers," 260; Jerry Moon, "Who Owns the Truth?: Another Look at the Plagiarism Debate," *Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium 1* (2005): 57.

¹⁶⁰ Ellen G. White, "Questions and Answers," 260.

assistance as long as her thoughts and ideas were maintained, she did not seem to believe inspiration resided in the words.¹⁶¹

Ellen White suggested that God generally took special care to avoid the corruption of his messages during the process of inspiration. She therefore vehemently objected to the claims of some that she had mixed up private reports with her visions.¹⁶² She nevertheless conceded that God did not always immediately correct her when she toned down the urgent and radical nature of messages, misunderstood the meaning of a vision, or gave an incomplete account of a vision. Three examples may serve to illustrate this aspect.

The first example is seen in a statement from 1851 when she related that in writing down messages of warning, she had “often softened them down, and made them as mild as possible for fear of grieving” the recipients. Failing to describe the condition, consequences, and destiny as they were described, she had neglected to convey the urgency and radical nature of the message. She stated that God did not correct her immediately but after some time confronted her with Jesus’ frown and her responsibility for the recipients’ eternal destiny. This appeal to her conscience and free choice illustrates the dynamic reciprocal involvement of the divine and human participants in the

¹⁶¹ Ellen G. White, Diary entries for January 10 and 11, 1873, Ms 3, 1873, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Uriah Smith, 19 February 1884, Lt 11, 1884, EGWE. See also Viera, *The Voice of the Spirit*, 34, 35; Kaiser, "Ellen G. White's View of Divine Inspiration;" Arthur Patrick, "Author," in *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, eds. Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 92, 93.

¹⁶² Ellen G. White to J. N. Andrews, 11 June 1860; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:313, 314 [1874].

inspiration process.¹⁶³ Apparently, God did not overrule her will to communicate his message and accomplish his purpose.

The second example has to do with a vision Ellen White received in 1847. In response to competing views on the proper starting time of the Sabbath, she was told in a vision, “From even unto even, shall ye celebrate your Sabbath.” Joseph Bates instantly interpreted these words from Leviticus 23:32 as a support of his 6:00 p.m. position, an interpretation that Ellen White readily accepted. J. N. Andrews demonstrated eight years later that “even” refers to sunset. She was stunned and wondered about her earlier experience. She related that an angel showed her a few days later that the visions were not to curtail serious Bible study, the revealed and properly transmitted message had been unintentionally misunderstood, and God was patient to correct that misunderstanding at a later time. The incident also illustrates another point: she was not immediately protected from adopting a slightly deviating interpretation of the message, which still lay more or less in the realm of the original meaning.¹⁶⁴

The third example illustrates Ellen White’s vulnerability under unfavorable physical and mental circumstances. In 1867, she was pressured by some people in Battle Creek to add information on the health institute to the recently completed text of *Testimony for the Church*, no. 11. Her mind and body suffered under the heavy speaking schedule, many visits from house to house, and the writing of numerous private letters

¹⁶³ Ellen G. White, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (Saratoga Springs, NY: James White, 1851), 62–64.

¹⁶⁴ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts: Important Facts of Faith: Laws of Health, and Testimonies, Nos. 1-10*, vol. 4 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1864), 4b:3, 4; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:116; James White, "Time to Commence the Sabbath," *Review and Herald*, 25 February 1868, 168. See also Moon and Kaiser, "For Jesus and Scripture," 38.

and personal testimonies. Under these circumstances she gave in and wrote an incomplete account although she initially did not want to publish anything on the health institute before she was able to write a complete report. In *Testimony for the Church*, no. 12, she expressed her regret and stated that she had made a mistake in giving an incomplete report of what God had revealed to her.¹⁶⁵

She seemed to suggest that while God wants believers to grow in their understanding of biblical truths and their practical application to their lives, he may for some time be content with their lack of understanding when they continue to express an attitude of fidelity and devotion. Hence, although God did not always immediately correct the misinterpretation, softening, or incomplete understanding of a message, he eventually did clarify the intended meaning to finally accomplish his desired purpose. It seems, however, that cases such as the ones described above were exceptions and were part of her learning experience on how to communicate inspired messages.

Thus, in Ellen White's view and experience inspiration integrated various elements of the previously discussed theories. Accordingly, the Holy Spirit operates in dynamic ways by reviving the memory, showing scenes, giving thoughts, and providing words. Describing that wholistic experience, she did not seem to see these different modes always operating in concert, but whenever the Spirit considered it necessary to use one or the other mode of operation. She therefore described a divine-human incarnational process in which the Spirit guided and assisted her to transmit a divine message without eliminating her weaknesses or forcing her to employ a specific language.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:562-564, 485-495.

¹⁶⁶ See also Burt, "Revelation and Inspiration," 35-38.

The nature, scope, and authority of the writings

When Ellen White had committed the visions, dreams, or thoughts to writing, she unambiguously attributed to them divine authority. In her view there was “no half-way work,” the testimonies originated either with the Holy Spirit or with the devil.¹⁶⁷ She repeatedly referred to the warnings that had been given to her through visions and that she communicated through her writings as “the words of God,” “the teachings of God,” and “His voice.”¹⁶⁸ With such phrases she did not try to claim, however, the communication of dictated messages but rather intended to emphasize the divine source of the messages.

One might think all her writings presented the content of particular visions. She stated, however, that not every testimony resulted from a specific vision. Thus she sometimes applied a general vision or multiple visions to the case of a particular individual who then received a testimony from her.¹⁶⁹ At other times, she published testimonies for the entire church that originally addressed only specific people.¹⁷⁰ Similarly, when at times she felt that some counsel would also be of benefit to the general public, she adapted and revised the wording of a previous publication with the new

¹⁶⁷ Ellen G. White to J. N. Andrews, 11 June 1860; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:230. This reasoning appears for the first time in Ellen White’s report of Joseph Baker’s confession. See Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 3:402 [1851].

¹⁶⁸ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:40 [1849].

¹⁶⁹ Ellen G. White to Brother and Sister, 17 December 1877, Lt 1, 1877, EGWE; Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings*, 43.

¹⁷⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:631, 632; 2:112; 5:658, 659; Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 32, 131, 132.

audience in mind.¹⁷¹ The same was true for her description of overarching themes such as the great controversy between good and evil as it was displayed in heaven and on earth. Initially published in compressed form, she later rewrote, amplified, and enlarged the description.¹⁷² These examples illustrate once again that she did not perceive inspiration as being primarily concerned with words and language but more with themes and ideas.

She stressed the divine origin and authority of all her testimonies, yet at times she indicated that not all of them had the same scope and significance. Thus when *Testimonies for the Church*, nos. 1-10 [1855-1864], were reprinted in *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4 [1864], she decided to omit “local and personal matters” because they were not of “practical and general interest and importance.” The omission of these matters reduced the textual corpus to a third of the original text. With new members joining the church who were unfamiliar with the early history of the church, it was decided seven years later to reprint these testimonies in full even though they contained, according to James White, “matters of a local and personal character, which do not have a direct bearing upon our time.”¹⁷³ These nevertheless inspired messages had accomplished their purpose at a

¹⁷¹ For example, the chapter “Proper Education” from *Testimony for the Church*, no. 22, was serially published in a revised form in the *Health Reformer*. See Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Church*, no. 22 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1872), 3–49; Ellen G. White, “Proper Education [No. 1],” *Health Reformer*, September 1872, 284–86; Ellen G. White, “Proper Education [No. 2],” *Health Reformer*, December 1872, 378–80; Ellen G. White, “Proper Education [No. 3],” *Health Reformer*, April 1873, 124; Ellen G. White, “Proper Education [No. 4],” *Health Reformer*, May 1873, 156, 157; Ellen G. White, “Proper Education [No. 5],” *Health Reformer*, June 1873, 188–90; Ellen G. White, “Proper Education [No. 6],” *Health Reformer*, July 1873, 220–22; Ellen G. White, “Proper Education [No. 7],” *Health Reformer*, September 1873, 280–82.

¹⁷² Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 445, 446, 456, 458; Denis Kaiser, “Ellen G. White’s Life of Christ: An Episode in the History of Early Adventist Translation Work,” *Spes Christiana* 22-23 (2011-2012): 131.

¹⁷³ James White’s preface to Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 4a:[iii]; Ellen G. White, *The Testimonies to the Church: Nos. 1-11* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1871), iii. See also Arthur L. White, “Why All the Testimonies Were Not Reprinted in 1864,” in *The*

particular time and place, and were only of little significance to the broader readership of the church, suggesting inspired messages may vary in significance and scope.

Regardless of the varied scope of the messages, she asserted their divine authority to the intended audience. That claim raises questions about their relationship to the Bible. In her view, the divine origin and authority of her writings did not place them on par with the Bible. First, her writings had to be tested by Scripture and were therefore subject to Scripture, deriving their authority from it. Second, they differed from the Bible in their function. She saw the Bible as the rule of faith and practice, and objected to acting as conscience for other people, or to functioning as a final arbiter. Third, as the minute instructions in Numbers and Deuteronomy define the principles of the Decalogue and apply them to everyday life, she conceived her writings as having the purpose of pointing people to the Bible, correcting those who erred from its truths, and aiding people to better understand Scripture and its principles of Christian living. Hence she suggested inspired writings may not only vary in scope but also in function and purpose.¹⁷⁴

Inspired writing vs. common matters

While Ellen White frequently stressed the divine nature and reliability of her inspired writings, she intimated that not everything she wrote was of an inspired nature.

Spirit of Prophecy Treasure Chest: An Advent Source Collection of Materials Relating to the Gift of Prophecy in the Remnant Church and the Life and Ministry of Ellen G. White (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1960), 59–61. By adding the word “only” to James White’s statement (“only ‘matters of local and personal character’”), Sharrock erroneously extends the limited scope to the entire content of *Testimonies for the Church*, nos. 1-10. See Sharrock, “Testimonies,” 62.

¹⁷⁴ LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1971), 93–96; Poirier, “Contemporary Prophecy and Scripture,” 4-9, 15-17; Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 17, 18, 22; Knight, “The Relationship between Ellen White’s Authority and the Authority of the Bible in Adventism,” 39; Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire*, 139, 140; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White’s Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 133, 134.

In the previously mentioned *Testimony for the Church*, no. 12, she spoke of “writing hundreds of pages of personal testimonies and private letters.”¹⁷⁵ A perusal of her letters and manuscripts from 1845 to 1850 shows at least five different types that also illustrate more or less the nature of her later material until 1880 and beyond. The first type of these unpublished documents is characterized by reports of visions about heavenly realities and eschatological developments, something that is especially seen in her early writings.¹⁷⁶ The second type of material is concerned with religious, biblical, and experiential matters, sometimes interspersed with references to visions.¹⁷⁷ Another type of material contains visionary insights followed by encouragement or reproof for particular individuals or groups of people, a pattern that characterizes specifically her testimonies.¹⁷⁸ The fourth type only deals with private and domestic matters, sometimes interspersed with spiritual encouragement.¹⁷⁹ A fifth type of documents was a mixture of private matters and visionary insights.¹⁸⁰

An interesting illustration of the last type may be Ellen White’s first autobiography, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, published in 1860. Some scholars seem to consider it as a prime example of the divine-human process of inspiration,¹⁸¹ while others avoid

¹⁷⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:563.

¹⁷⁶ See, e.g., Poirier, Wood, and Fagal, *The Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts with Annotations*, 1:85-116, 134-153, 160-163, 192-196.

¹⁷⁷ See, e.g., *ibid.*, 1:118–128.

¹⁷⁸ See, e.g., *ibid.*, 1:156, 157, 177–185, 188, 189.

¹⁷⁹ See, e.g., *ibid.*, 1:158, 159, 186, 187, 197, 198.

¹⁸⁰ See, e.g., *ibid.*, 1:154, 155, 164–176, 190, 191.

¹⁸¹ Knight, *Meeting Ellen White*, 43; Burry, "An Investigation to Determine Ellen White's Concepts of Revelation, Inspiration, 'The Spirit of Prophecy,' and Her Claims About the Origin, Production

classifying the biographical sections of the book among her inspired writings, without negating, however, the significance of the spiritual messages and visions.¹⁸² In the preface of the volume she stated that in writing the book she “had to depend in many instances on [her] memory.” This statement differs from her description of the divine assistance the Holy Spirit extended to her in reviving her memory of the details of a previous vision. Here, Ellen White suggested she took several steps to ensure an accurate report of the events described in the book. Since in the early years she did not keep a diary of her daily experiences and events, she made therefore much use of her rich correspondence with the Howland family who had taken care of her son Henry Nichols White (1847-1863) for five years. By sending the book manuscript to eye witnesses for examination, she took another step to ensure the most accurate account of these events.¹⁸³ The last few pages of the book contain “testimonies” of such eye witnesses, confirming the veracity of particular events.¹⁸⁴ A third step to eliminate any remaining inaccuracies was taken by including the following appeal to the first printing of the book: “A special request is made that if any find incorrect statements in this book they will immediately inform me.”¹⁸⁵ This reference to potential inaccuracies is a unique and unusual statement in her textual corpus of inspired writings. Considering the book contains her biographical

and Authority of Her Writings," 53 fn. 1; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 80.

¹⁸² T. Housel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1955), 397; T. Housel Jemison, "Inspiration and the Ellen G. White Writings," in *The Spirit of Prophecy Treasure Chest: An Advent Source Collection of Materials Relating to the Gift of Prophecy in the Remnant Church and the Life and Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1960), 64; Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings*, 46, 47; Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3:57, 58.

¹⁸³ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:iii.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:301–304.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:295.

story, travel reports, spiritual experiences, visions, and testimonies, it is evident that she considered the content as a mixture of private and sacred matters.

Judging from her different treatment of this book, Ellen White seemed to distinguish between private materials as common matters and sacred (visionary, testimonial, spiritual) materials as inspired matters. It was not until later in her ministry, however, that she would explicitly clarify the difference between these two domains in her writings (see chapter 4).

Critical Perceptions of Ellen G. White

In their surveys of the opposition to and defense of Ellen White's prophetic gift in the first thirty some years of the Seventh-day Adventist movement, Theodore Levterov and Merlin Burt observe that, before the formal organization of the church in 1863, objections against her visions and testimonies arose primarily within the Sabbatarian Adventist community, whereas after 1863 they were criticized from both inside and outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church.¹⁸⁶ The following paragraphs disclose the assumptions about divine inspiration underlying their objections and critique before and after 1863.

In the 1850s, opposition to Ellen White's prophetic gift was spearheaded by a group of former Sabbatarian Adventist ministers known as the "Messenger Party." In 1853, Hiram S. Case and Charles P. Russell left the Sabbatarian Adventist community when rebuked by Ellen White. Shortly afterwards they began publishing the *Messenger*

¹⁸⁶ Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 45–142; Burt, "Bibliographic Essay on Publications About Ellen G. White," 148.

of Truth as a means to attack her visions as false and inaccurate. Soon they were joined by J. M. Stephenson and D. P. Hall who refused to relinquish their “Age to Come” views.¹⁸⁷ Many early critics believed the gift of prophecy had ceased with the end of the apostolic period and rejected modern-day prophetic claimants as impostors. Like Ellen White’s defenders, they nevertheless assumed inspiration would safeguard the content and message of true visions by causing them (a) to be consistent with themselves, facts, and Scripture; (b) to foster harmony, unity, and “present truth;” and (c) to point to the Bible as the rule of faith and practice. Whereas Sabbatarian Adventists believed Ellen White’s visions and testimonies satisfied these qualifications, their opponents felt they failed to meet these requirements.¹⁸⁸

As Seventh-day Adventism became more organized in the 1860s and 1870s, the opposition to White’s prophetic gift also “became more organized and systematic.”¹⁸⁹ In 1858, Gilbert W. Cranmer separated from the Sabbatarian Adventists and established Sabbath-keeping congregations in Michigan under the name “Church of Christ.” Soon they joined with other groups in other states. In August 1863, they began publishing the *Hope of Israel*.¹⁹⁰ The periodical contained occasional articles and letters that opposed

¹⁸⁷ Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 46, 47; Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 199, 200.

¹⁸⁸ Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 47–53.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁹⁰ Robert Coulter, *The Journey: A History of the Church of God (Seventh Day)* ([Denver, CO]: [Church of God (Seventh Day)], 2014), 74, 76. The first issue of the *Hope of Israel* appeared on August 10, 1863. See *Hope of Israel*, 10 August 1863, [1].

Ellen White's claim to inspiration.¹⁹¹ In 1866, Benjamin F. Snook and William H. Brinkerhoff, former president and secretary respectively of the Iowa Conference, founded the so-called "Marion Party" and opposed Ellen White's writings and ministry.¹⁹² The *Hope of Israel* relocated to Marion, Iowa,¹⁹³ and opposition to her visions intensified in the periodical.¹⁹⁴ Later they were joined in their opposition by Henry E. Carver and H. C.

¹⁹¹ W. Phelps, "Letter from Eld. Phelps," *Hope of Israel*, 28 October 1863, [1]; "Beware!," *Hope of Israel*, 24 March 1864, [2]; "Mesmerized," *Hope of Israel*, 24 March 1864, [3]; M. O. Burdick, "From M. O. Burdick," *Hope of Israel*, 2 May 1864, [2, 3]; J. C. Day, "From Bro. Day," *Hope of Israel*, 16 May 1864, [2]; R. G. Whitcomb, "Dear Brethren," *Hope of Israel*, 16 May 1864, [3]; V. M. Gray, E. P. Goff, and M. N. Kramer, "[Extract from] Circular Letter," *Hope of Israel*, 7 September 1864, [1]; Luther L. Tiffany, "Bro. Tiffany on Visions," *Hope of Israel*, 7 September 1864, [3]; E. W. Waters, "Another Voice from the East," *Hope of Israel*, 16 November 1864, 96; Luther L. Tiffany, "Time of Christ's Resurrection," *Hope of Israel*, 23 December 1864, 112; Thomas Hamilton, "From Bro. Hamilton," *Hope of Israel*, 11 January 1865, 118; Luther L. Tiffany, "Reply to M. O. B.," *Hope of Israel*, 8 March 1865, [6]; John E. Woods, "News from the Scattered Flock: A Call For Preaching!," *Hope of Israel*, 18 October 1865, [6]. That the periodical did not just print onesided material is evident from the fact that it printed the response of one writer who pointed out the fallacy of one argument against the visions. See M. O. B[urdick], "Reply to L. L. T.," *Hope of Israel*, 30 November 1864, 102. Interestingly, in late 1864, S. C. Hancock suggested discontinuing the warfare on the visions in order to avoid driving away such Seventh-day Adventists who, despite their interest in the *Hope of Israel*, were still believing in the visions. See S. C. Hancock, "Heart Cheering Letters," *Hope of Israel*, 23 December 1864, 107. After his recommendation, the number of references to Ellen White and the visions seemed to dwindle for more than a year.

¹⁹² Benjamin F. Snook and William H. Brinkerhoff, *The Visions of E. G. White, Not of God* (Cedar Rapids, IA: Cedar Rapids Valley Times Book and Job Print, 1866). In the fall of 1861, twenty-five members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Marion, Iowa, separated from the congregation in opposition to Ellen White's visions and formed a congregation under the name "Church of Jesus Christ." In late 1865, B. F. Snook, W. H. Brinkerhoff, and Henry E. Carver joined that congregation and assisted these believers in Iowa to organize the Iowa State Conference. Thus the *founding* of the Marion party built upon the already existing congregations and network of churches. See Coulter, *The Journey*, 81, 83, 84, 93.

¹⁹³ In 1866, the local Seventh-day Adventist church disbanded and sold its building to the other congregation. The first floor was used for the chapel and the second floor for the printing press of the *Hope of Israel*, which had moved to Marion in the spring of 1866. Six years later the name of the periodical changed to *Advent and Sabbath Advocate and the Hope of Israel*. In 1874, it was changed to *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*. See *ibid.*, 81, 148, 149.

¹⁹⁴ With W. H. Brinkerhoff becoming the editor of the *Hope of Israel* and Snook and Carver assuming leading roles in the Church of God, the periodical almost immediately took on a more aggressive attitude towards Ellen White, her visions, and Seventh-day Adventists. It seems that these newcomers almost immediately hijacked the periodical to continue their fight against the church that they had just left. See B. F. Snook, "Report from Bro. Snook," *Hope of Israel*, 29 May 1866, 3; [W. H. Brinkerhoff], "Introductory," *Hope of Israel*, 29 May 1866, 4; Henry E. Carver, "To the Christian Public and Especially to the Brethren of the Seventh-day Adventist Church," *Hope of Israel*, 29 May 1866, 4; [W. H. Brinkerhoff], "The Number '666' of Rev. XIII, 18," *Hope of Israel*, 12 June 1866, 12; Henry E. Carver, "Visit to the Iowa S. D. A. Annual Conference," *Hope of Israel*, 26 June 1866, 20; "Books and Tracts for

Sale: Visions of E. G. White Not of God," *Hope of Israel*, 12 June 1866, 24; Thomas Hamilton, "The Nature and Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts, or 'Objections Answered' Reviewed," *Hope of Israel*, 10 July 1866, 26; Henry E. Carver, "The Visions—Objection Answers Examined," *Hope of Israel*, 10 July 1866, 29, 30; "Local Items: [H. E. Carver's Examination of the Shut Door Vision]," *Hope of Israel*, 10 July 1866, 32; Thomas Hamilton, "The Nature and Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts, or, 'Objections Answered' Reviewed," *Hope of Israel*, 24 July 1866, 33, 34; [W. H. Brinkerhoff], "Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness," *Hope of Israel*, 24 July 1866, 36; D. W. Hull, "Cheering News—Letter From Bro. Dan'l W. Hull," *Hope of Israel*, 24 July 1866, 37; Henry E. Carver, "The Visions—Objection Answers Examined," *Hope of Israel*, 24 July 1866, 37, 38; Thomas Hamilton, "The Nature and Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts, or, 'Objections Answered' Reviewed," *Hope of Israel*, 7 August 1866, 41; J. D. Bonnell, "[Letter]," *Hope of Israel*, 7 August 1866, 44; Henry E. Carver, "The Visions—Objection Answers Examined," *Hope of Israel*, 7 August 1866, 45, 46; W. H. Ball, "From Bro. W. H. Ball," *Hope of Israel*, 7 August 1866, 47; Thomas Hamilton, "The Nature and Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts, or, 'Objections Answered' Reviewed," *Hope of Israel*, 21 August 1866, 49, 50; W. Phelps, "From Eld. Phelps," *Hope of Israel*, 21 August 1866, 55; Wm. Heaton, "From Bro. Wm. Heaton," *Hope of Israel*, 21 August 1866, 55; William H. Brinkerhoff, "To Elder Isaac Sanborn," *Hope of Israel*, 21 August 1866, 56; Thomas Hamilton, "The Nature and Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts, or, 'Objections Answered' Reviewed," *Hope of Israel*, 4 September 1866, 57, 58; J. F. Chaffee, "From Bro. Chaffee," *Hope of Israel*, 4 September 1866, 63; "Notice," *Hope of Israel*, 4 September 1866, 64; Thomas Hamilton, "The Nature and Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts, or, 'Objections Answered' Reviewed," *Hope of Israel*, 18 September 1866, 65, 66; D. W. Hull, "Which Is True[?]," *Hope of Israel*, 18 September 1866, 68; S. O. Winslow, "Note from S. O. Winslow," *Hope of Israel*, 18 September 1866, 71; John Reed, "From Bro. Jno. Reed," *Hope of Israel*, 18 September 1866, 71; W. H. Ball, "Why Not Respond?," *Hope of Israel*, 23 October 1866, 79; Thomas Hamilton, "The Nature and Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts, or 'Objections Answered' Reviewed," *Hope of Israel*, 23 October 1866, 81, 82; Thomas Hamilton, "The Nature and Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts, or 'Objections Answered' Reviewed," *Hope of Israel*, 6 November 1866, 68 [sic]; Thomas Hamilton, "The Nature and Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts, or 'Objections Answered' Reviewed," *Hope of Israel*, 20 November 1866, 97, 98; Thomas Hamilton, "The Nature and Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts: Reply to S. C. Hancock—2nd Article," *Hope of Israel*, 18 December 1866, 111; Thomas Hamilton, "Objections Against the Visions," *Hope of Israel*, 18 December 1866, 114; J. C. Day, "From Bro. Day," *Hope of Israel*, 22 January 1867, 131; "What Is the Matter?," *Hope of Israel*, 22 January 1867, 132; Henry E. Carver, "The Situation," *Hope of Israel*, 5 February 1867, 137; R. E. Caviness, "Spiritual Gifts, as Taught by the Bible," *Hope of Israel*, 19 February 1867, 143; [W. H. Brinkerhoff], "Questions," *Hope of Israel*, 19 February 1867, 144 [sic]; [W. H. Brinkerhoff], "Local Items: [The Following Resolution . . .]," *Hope of Israel*, 19 February 1867, 148; Thomas Hamilton, "From Bro. Hamilton," *Hope of Israel*, 12 March 1867, 154, 155; [W. H. Brinkerhoff], "Another Book Notice," *Hope of Israel*, 12 March 1867, 156; Henry E. Carver, "Conflicting Statements," *Hope of Israel*, 26 March 1867, 160; William H. Brinkerhoff, "Why So Tardy?," *Hope of Israel*, 23 April 1867, 176; W. H. Ball, "Remarkable Non-Fulfillments of the Visions," *Hope of Israel*, 18 July 1867, 18, 19; "Remarkable Fulfillment," *Hope of Israel*, 27 August 1867, 47; "Local Items: The Visions Exposed, or Review of Uriah Smith's Answers to the Visions of E. G. White, by Thomas Hamilton," *Hope of Israel*, 27 August 1867, 48; J. Millard, "From Bro. J. Millard," *Hope of Israel*, 10 September 1867, 55; "Local Items: [The Visions Exposed]," *Hope of Israel*, 24 September 1867, 64; Thomas Hamilton, "The Three Angels of Rev. XIV.6-12: What Do They Symbolize?," *Hope of Israel*, 22 October 1867, 74; Ransom Hicks, "\$1000 Reward," *Hope of Israel*, 19 November 1867, 90. However, by November 1867, it became apparent that many of the readers had enough of the continuous fight against the visions. He wrote, "We presume the article on [the] second page will be highly satisfactory to the vision-fighting-lovers, unless they might think the matter overdone; (otherwise we think the article is a good one.) but many of our readers are tired of reading about the visions, two-horned beast, &c. Would not the *Hope* sustain a better character by dropping these subjects, and devoting its columns to more practical subjects and theories?" See J. B., "Local Items: [We presume . . .]," *Hope of Israel*, 19 November 1867, 96. The subject continued to come up occasionally, albeit not as frequently anymore.

Blanchard, both former Adventist ministers.¹⁹⁵ The objections of these detractors from Iowa were supplemented by the criticisms of three Advent Christian ministers: William Sheldon, Miles Grant, and Isaac C. Welcome.¹⁹⁶ Beyond assuming inspired writings were divinely protected from internal inconsistencies or theological, historical, and factual errors, they could not fathom how inspired individuals would not know everything, misunderstand aspects of a divine revelation, or grow in understanding. Similarly, they rejected the notion that revelation may progressively unfold over time.¹⁹⁷ Thus they seemed to suggest that inspiration protected the inspired individual from misunderstanding and mistakes, without clarifying how the Holy Spirit operated in that assistance.

Summary

Seventh-day Adventists believed in the divine inspiration of the ancient Bible writers and the modern-day prophetess Ellen G. White, yet their concept of the nature and mode of inspiration was apparently somewhat diffused as technical terms for the different theories of inspiration are almost absent from their publications, and their use of the writings of several adherents of these theories does not suggest preference for any

¹⁹⁵ Henry E. Carver, *Mrs. E. G. White's Claims to Divine Inspiration Examined* (Marion, IA: Hope of Israel Office, 1870); H. C. Blanchard, *The Testimonies of Mrs. E. G. White Compared with the Bible* (Marion, IA: Advent and Sabbath Advocate, 1877).

¹⁹⁶ William Sheldon, *The Visions and Theories of the Prophetess Ellen G. White in Conflict With the Bible* (Buchanan, MI: W.A.C.P. Assn., 1867); Miles Grant, *The True Sabbath: Which Day Shall We Keep? An Examination of Mrs. Ellen White's Visions* (Boston, MA: Advent Christian Pub. Soc., 1874); Isaac C. Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message and Mission, Doctrine and People* (Boston, MA: Advent Christian Pub. Soc., 1874), 397, 402, 404–406, 408.

¹⁹⁷ See Burt, "Bibliographic Essay on Publications About Ellen G. White," 153–156; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844–1889*, 91–99. This is substantiated by the sources listed in the previous footnotes.

particular theory. They sometimes employed dictation language in talking about the inspiration of both the biblical writers and White, but that language was used far less frequently in reference to her writings. Many of these statements could also be read as figurative phrases or in the sense of a divine command for the prophet to write a given message. A few statements seem to betray a word-focused view of inspiration which suggests some Adventists may have held such a strict concept of divine dominance in the inspiration process. Seventh-day Adventists, Ellen White, and her critics apparently mutually assumed the absence of inconsistencies, discrepancies, and mistakes in inspired writings, yet Ellen White's critics strongly rejected the Adventist belief in the divine origin and authority of White's visions and writings. Their disagreement resulted from their differing interpretation of certain biblical teachings and passages, their idea of revelation always presenting the entire picture, and their assumption of inspired individuals having complete knowledge due to divine inspiration.

Adventist writers and Ellen White made more substantial remarks about her inspiration than that of the Bible writers. She and several church leaders objected to the idea that her words were verbally inspired, yet some church members who were unfamiliar with her experience and the manner of producing her writings may have held word-focused views. Nevertheless, Ellen White and Adventist leaders suggested that her writings differed from Scripture in their function and even her own inspired writings varied in scope and purpose. As a result, revisions of language and content for varied purposes, which retained the original ideas and messages, were possible. Besides Ellen White herself, some others also seemed to be aware of the difference between private areas and sacred, inspired matters in her experience and writings.

However, White's statements about her own experience are even more definite and complex. With regards to her visions, White stated that she was unable to produce or control them; they came when it pleased the Holy Spirit to give them. In regards to the inspiration process, she suggested that the Spirit was reviving her memory as she was writing the content of these visions. She further outlined several other dynamics of that process: It was usually left to her to clothe the scenes and thoughts in her own language, but sometimes she rendered the exact words of an angel who had spoken something during the vision, putting his words in quotation marks. Perfection of language seemed to be secondary.

The Spirit generally made sure the content of the message was not corrupted, yet he did not overrule her will and mind. When she misunderstood the meaning of a vision or toned down its message, the Spirit sometimes waited for a while before clarifying its actual intended meaning. Yet even when he eventually clarified the meaning he seemed to appeal to her conscience and reason, facilitating her own growth in understanding and avoiding strict control of the process. Hence, in her view, inspiration seemed to constitute an incarnational, integrated, wholistic, and dynamic process of the Holy Spirit's operations in assisting her to convey God's message.

Subsequent chapters will explore how these basic varied assumptions among Seventh-day Adventists and in the writings of Ellen White appeared and developed in the writings of specific Adventist writers. The development of Ellen White's own experience and thought on the inspiration process will become visible as well.

Scientific, Theological, and Socio-Cultural Challenges

From the mid to late nineteenth century American Christianity encountered several developments that challenged traditional Christian assumptions on the divine origin, inspiration, and authority of the Bible. These decades witnessed how Christian scholars, ministers, and church members faced one challenge after another. First, the hypotheses of the new science of geology and Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory questioned the literal reading of the biblical creation account. Second, American theologians began to adopt critical assumptions and methodologies in their study of Scripture, questioning the reliability of biblical postulations. Third, the utilization of the Bible before and during the American Civil War, the impact of the rapid industrialization on living habits, and the massive immigration of other ethnic groups from different religious backgrounds created an atmosphere un conducive to traditional Protestant affirmations of the supreme authority of the Bible in matters of faith and practice. The following three sections will address how these scientific, theological, and socio-cultural challenges impacted Protestant Christianity and Seventh-day Adventists.

The Challenges of Scientific Theories

In the early nineteenth century Protestant Christianity in America manifested a general interest in scientific discoveries, believing they supported the divine origin and authority of Scripture. Since the days of Isaac Newton (1642-1727) science had enjoyed a growing prestige as it revealed indisputable facts about the natural world and the universe. Scientific discoveries seemed to illustrate the ways of God, suggesting that religion and science mutually supported each other. By the late eighteenth century the rapid growth of scientific knowledge determined increasingly the very ethos of

civilization, permeating many areas of thought and practice. The influences of Scottish common-sense philosophy, eighteenth-century Rationalism, and Jacksonianism strengthened and fostered these sentiments. Scientists who despised religious creeds constituted only an exceptional minority. However, by the middle of the nineteenth century two scientific theories emerged—geology and the evolutionary theory—that presented significant challenges to the traditional belief in the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture. The following paragraphs will describe the development of these theories and discuss how Protestants in general and Seventh-day Adventists in particular responded to them.

Since the late eighteenth century Christian scientists and theologians had been aware of fossils and varied rock layers, and they generally interpreted these geological phenomena as evidences for the catastrophic deluge described in Genesis 7-8. By the early 1830s, especially through the influence of Charles Lyell's (1797-1875) three-volume series *Principles of Geology*,¹⁹⁸ many scientists in Great Britain and to a lesser degree in the United States had accepted uniformitarianism¹⁹⁹ as the presuppositional paradigm to explain these phenomena.²⁰⁰ Conservative Christian scholars responded in at

¹⁹⁸ Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology, Being An Attempt to Explain the Former Changes of the Earth's Surface, By Reference to Causes Now in Operation*, 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1830-1834).

¹⁹⁹ Uniformitarianism assumed these phenomena were the results of processes that took place over long periods of time exceeding biblical chronologies and therefore questioned the historical reliability of the Bible.

²⁰⁰ Charles Coulston Gillispie, *Genesis and Geology: A Study in the Relations of Scientific Thought, Natural Theology, and Social Opinion in Great Britain, 1790-1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 42, 43; John C. Greene, "Science and Religion," in *The Rise of Adventism: A Commentary on the Social and Religious Ferment of Mid-Nineteenth Century America*, ed. Edwin S. Gaustad (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 52-55, 59, 60; Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 2 vols., Ecclesiastical History of England Series, nos. 7 and 8 (London: Black, 1966), 1:558-68; Mott T. Greene, "Genesis and Geology Revisited: The Order of Nature and the Nature of Order in Nineteenth-Century

least three different ways to maintain the divine inspiration and reliability of Scripture. First, a few scholars rejected the genuineness of the phenomena entirely, yet the denial of their existence gradually vanished as the actual discoveries increased.²⁰¹ Second, others attempted to harmonize the biblical data with geological findings by prepending indeterminate periods of time to the six literal creation days of Genesis 1, assuming possible gaps and omissions in biblical genealogies, or interpreting the six creation days figuratively as extended periods of time.²⁰² Third, still others, among them Moses Stuart, argued that the meaning of biblical passages should not be determined by science. Scripture was to be interpreted on its own terms, considering it was the purpose of inspiration to teach religious truths and not the history of the earth.²⁰³ Trying to uphold

Britain," in *When Science & Christianity Meet*, eds. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 152–55; R. Clinton Ohlers, "The End of Miracles: Scientific Naturalism in America, 1830-1934" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2007), 35-43, 64.

²⁰¹ See, e.g., George S. Faber, *Horæ Mosaicæ: or A View of the Mosaical Records, with Respect to Their Coincidence with Profane Antiquity, Their Internal Credibility, and Their Connection with Christianity*, Bampton Lectures of 1801 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1801); Edward Nares, *A View of the Evidences of Christianity at the Close of the Pretended Age of Reason*, Bampton Lectures of 1805 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1805); John Bidlake, *The Truth and Consistency of Divine Revelation, with Some Remarks on the Contrary Extremes of Infidelity and Enthusiasm*, Bampton Lectures of 1811 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1811). See also Bernard M. G. Reardon, *From Coleridge to Gore: A Century of Religious Thought in Britain* (London: Longman, 1971), 286; John C. Greene, "Science and Religion," 55, 56.

²⁰² Davis A. Young, *Christianity and the Age of the Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 55–59; Morgan Sherwood, "Genesis, Evolution and Geology in America Before Darwin: The Dana-Lewis Controversy, 1856-1857," in *Toward a History of Geology*, ed. Cecil J. Schneider (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1969), 305–316; John C. Greene, "Science and Religion," 57–67; Ronald L. Numbers, *Science and Christianity in Pulpit and Pew* (New York, et al.: Oxford University Press, 2007), 23, 24. For gaps and omissions see William Henry Green, *The Pentateuch Vindicated from the Aspersions of Bishop Colenso* (New York: Wiley, 1863), 128; A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, [1878 ed.], 297.

²⁰³ Moses Stuart, "Critical Examination of Some Passages in Genesis 1: With Remarks on Difficulties That Attend Some of the Present Modes of Geological Reasoning," *American Biblical Repository* 7 (1836): 49, 51, 80; Dennis R. Davis, "Presbyterian Attitudes Toward Science and the Coming of Darwinism in America, 1859 to 1929" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1980), 53, 54, 107–109; Jerry Wayne Brown, *The Rise of Biblical Criticism in America, 1800-1870*, 102; John C. Greene, "Science and Religion," 60, 61; Numbers, *Science and Christianity in Pulpit and Pew*, 101–06.

the inspiration of Scripture, they extenuated their belief in the literality, completeness, and absoluteness of the biblical accounts. Seventh-day Adventists accepted geological and paleontological findings as facts, but rejected both the hypothetical assumptions and harmonization attempts as speculative and incompatible with the biblical creation account and time references.²⁰⁴ Depending on the chronology of the Irish scholar and archbishop James Ussher (1581-1656), they generally believed only a few thousand years had elapsed since creation.²⁰⁵ Ellen White argued that geologists could classify and interpret their findings correctly only when using Scripture as the interpretative lens because “inspiration, in giving us the history of the flood, has explained wonderful mysteries that

²⁰⁴ Jesse Dorcas, "From the Sabbath Recorder the New Theory Established," *Review and Herald*, 21 February 1856, 161; Hull, *The Bible from Heaven*, 168–78; Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts: Important Facts of Faith in Connection with the History of Holy Men of Old*, vol. 3 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1864), 3:91, 92, 95, 96; "The Blunders of Geologists," *Review and Herald*, 24 October 1865, 161, 162; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and His Angels and Satan and His Angels*, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1870), 1:87, 90; Uriah Smith and James White, *The Biblical Institute: A Synopsis of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Seventh-day Adventist Publ. House, 1878), 124-126, 131-133. Initially, some Adventists still perceived geological works positively. Thus one writer thought to find some support in Lyell's *Principles of Geology* for the eschatological perspective of 2 Peter 3:10. See "The Renovation of the Earth," *Review and Herald*, 5 January 1864, 41. Two other writers thought to see support for the divinely inspired nature of Scripture in some geologists' attempts to point out parallels between the biblical creation account and the geological columns. See [Uriah Smith], "Infidel Objections," *Review and Herald*, 12 March 1861, 129; S. P. Leland, "Letter from S. P. Leland," *Review and Herald*, 21 July 1863, 61, 62.

²⁰⁵ Many Adventist writers suggested that the creation of the earth took place about six thousand years ago. See Joseph Bates, *The Opening Heavens: Or A Connected View of the Testimony of the Prophets and Apostles, Concerning the Opening Heavens, Compared with Astronomical Observations, and of the Present and Future Location of the New Jerusalem, the Paradise of God* (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1846), 29, 38; "Geology," *Review and Herald*, 3 July 1860, 49; Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 3:91–96; J. N. Loughborough, "A Race of Giants," *Review and Herald*, 18 July 1865, 52; J. N. Andrews, *Sermons on the Sabbath and the Law: Embracing an Outline of the Biblical and Secular History of the Sabbath for Six Thousand Years* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1870), 5, 16; Smith and White, *The Biblical Institute*, 2, 281. Others expressed the same idea when stating that about four thousand years had passed from Adam to Christ's first advent. See Ellen G. White, *Redemption, or, The Temptation of Christ in the Wilderness* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1874), 30, 33, 44, 46, 80; Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy: Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan, Life, Teachings and Miracles of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, vol. 2 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1877), 88.

geology, independent of inspiration, never could.”²⁰⁶ Some Adventist ministers tried to educate the public, church members, and youth in this regard, illustrating the seriousness they ascribed to the challenge geology posed to the inspiration of the Bible and the Sabbath doctrine.²⁰⁷ Thus, in his book *The Bible from Heaven*, Moses Hull devoted almost an entire chapter to discuss the weaknesses of the science of geology.²⁰⁸ Daniel T. Bourdeau wrote a tract on the subject of geology in relation to the Bible in 1867,²⁰⁹ and the denomination’s Battle Creek College offered a class on geology in the 1870s.²¹⁰ Like other Protestant Christians,²¹¹ Seventh-day Adventists perceived the geological theories as a serious threat to the belief in the divine inspiration of Scripture, yet unlike some Protestant theologians they refused to adopt more flexible theories of inspiration and to move away from the literality of the biblical creation account.

²⁰⁶ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 3:91–94; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and His Angels and Satan and His Angels*, 1:88, 89.

²⁰⁷ Some writers argued that the alleged long periods contradicted the creation account (Genesis 1:1–2:4a) because it had been affirmed in the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:8–11), which like the other ten was written by God’s own finger, and the Sabbath institution had been reaffirmed by Jesus (Mark 2:27). See E. R. Seaman, "Extract from J. B. Cook," *Review and Herald*, 17 February 1853, 157; P. C. Rodman, "My Experience, No. 2," *Review and Herald*, 27 September 1864, 139.

²⁰⁸ Hull, *The Bible from Heaven*, 168–81.

²⁰⁹ Daniel T. Bourdeau, *Geology and the Bible, or A pre-Adamic Age of Our World Doubtful* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., [1867]); "New Tracts," *Review and Herald*, 7 May 1867, 264.

²¹⁰ James White, *Life Sketches: Ancestry, Early Life, Christian Experience, and Extensive Labors, of Elder James White, and His Wife, Mrs. Ellen G. White* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1880), 368, 369.

²¹¹ Quotations from articles and books of other religious and secular writers demonstrated that they were not alone in their estimation of the problematic nature of the hypotheses of geologists. See Seaman, "Extract from J. B. Cook," 157; William M. O’Hanlon, "The Scripture Authority and Obligation of the Sabbath Examined," *Review and Herald*, 25 December 1856, 57–59; Horace Lorenzo Hastings, "The Last Days from a Tract by H. L. Hastings," *Review and Herald*, 1 October 1857, 170–72; Uriah Smith, ed., "Geology," *Review and Herald*, 16 December 1858, 28; *Pittsburg Christian Advocate*, "The World in Miniature," *Review and Herald*, 28 July 1863, 66.

With the emergence of the evolutionary theory in the mid-nineteenth century another scientific trend arose which also built on uniformitarian assumptions, raising more questions about the historical accuracy of the biblical creation account and hence the divine inspiration of Scripture. Evolutionary thoughts were not new²¹², but tensions between science and religion entered “a new and acute phase” when Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859) was published and obviously contradicted the biblical account of the origin of life on earth. By the time his *Descent of Man* (1871) appeared the intellectual landscape had noticeably changed. Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895) and John Tyndall (1820-1893), for example, acknowledged the benefits of religion in giving dignity and identity to man but saw no place for it in the field of objective knowledge.²¹³ American scientists were aware of Darwin’s studies and gradually adopted his theory in the 1860s, yet it was not until the early 1870s that the general public and clergy in the United States began to debate it broadly. Some scientists criticized the theory on purely scientific grounds while others shrank from its destructive effect on the value and dignity of the human species. Some theologians and pastors were either favorably inclined to

²¹² Charles Darwin’s grandfather Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802) and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829) had developed the idea earlier but they failed to gain much attention at the time. Popular interest in the theory was aroused when *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, anonymously written but probably authored by Robert Chambers (1802-1871), appeared in 1844. Yet even advocates of the theory considered its content worthless and scientifically ignorant. See Reardon, *From Coleridge to Gore*, 289, 290; Davis A. Young, *Christianity and the Age of the Earth*, 66; Numbers, *Science and Christianity in Pulpit and Pew*, 29; John C. Greene, "Science and Religion," 60; Francis Darwin, *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin: Including an Autobiographic Chapter*, 2 vols. (New York: Appleton, 1887), 2:188.

²¹³ Reardon, *From Coleridge to Gore*, 290–97; Ohlers, "The End of Miracles: Scientific Naturalism in America, 1830-1934," 77–86; George E. Webb, *The Evolution Controversy in America* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 4; Jan M. Ivo Klaver, *Geology and Religious Sentiment: The Effect of Geological Discoveries on English Society and Literature between 1829 and 1859*, Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History, vol. 80 (Leiden, et al.: Brill, 1997), 198; Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*, expand. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 15–18; Numbers, *Science and Christianity in Pulpit and Pew*, 32, 33, 54, 55.

adopt the theory or acknowledged the futility of condemning it. Many denounced it, however, as an impious and irreligious absurdity.²¹⁴ Thus Horace Bushnell (1802-1876) and Charles Hodge (1797-1878) also perceived ramifications of the evolutionary theory for biblical eschatology, teleology, and the teaching of humanity's future destiny.²¹⁵ Seventh-day Adventists became aware of the theory in the early 1860s²¹⁶ but like the general public and other clergymen they published almost nothing on the subject before the 1870s. Discussions of the theories of Darwin, Huxley, and Tyndall were usually reprints and quotations from apologetic articles in other periodicals.²¹⁷ Similar to the above Adventist distinction between facts and assumptions, one reprint expressed gratitude about the scientists' description of facts but objected to their interpretation of

²¹⁴ Ronald L. Numbers, *Darwinism Comes to America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 26-32, 40-43; Hans Schwarz, "The Significance of Evolutionary Thought for American Protestant Theology: Late Nineteenth-Century Resolutions and Twentieth-Century Problems," *Zygon* 16, no. 3 (1981): 267-73; Reardon, *From Coleridge to Gore*, 289, 291-295, 298; Klaver, *Geology and Religious Sentiment*, 197, 199; Ohlers, "The End of Miracles," 64-76; Dennis R. Davis, "Presbyterian Attitudes Toward Science and the Coming of Darwinism in America, 1859 to 1929," 24-28, 35-63, 74, 75, 110-119; Webb, *The Evolution Controversy in America*, 4, 8, 9, 15-23; Numbers, *Science and Christianity in Pulpit and Pew*, 32, 33, 53, 54, 96-98, 109-112; Numbers, *The Creationists*, 25-32.

²¹⁵ Horace Bushnell, *Nature and the Supernatural, as Together Constituting the One System of God* (New York: Scribner, 1858), 264; Charles Hodge, *What is Darwinism?* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1874), 52, 168; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (New York: Scribner, 1874), 2:23.

²¹⁶ *American Baptist*, "Are Miracles Precluded by the Laws of Nature?," *Review and Herald*, 29 January 1861, 81.

²¹⁷ T. L. Cuyler, "Digging for Water," *Review and Herald*, 16 January 1872, 35; "What Has Become of All the Little Girls?," *Review and Herald*, 30 January 1872, 50; D. M. Canright, "Present Condition of the World," *Review and Herald*, 16 April 1872, 137; "The Coming of the Lord," *Review and Herald*, 30 April 1872, 160; M. E. Cornell, "Do Dumb Animals Reason?," *Review and Herald*, 9 September 1873, 98; [William Cullen] Bryant, "Bryant on Darwin," *Review and Herald*, 31 March 1874, 123; G. W. A[madon], "The New Scriptures: According to the Theory of Tyndall, Huxley, Spencer, and Darwin," *Review and Herald*, 8 January 1875, 11; P. R. Russel, "Darwinism Examined," *Review and Herald*, 18 May 1876, 153; "Flabby Religion," *Review and Herald*, 7 June 1877, 181; "Carlyle on Darwin," *Review and Herald*, 19 January 1878, 19; "The Eternal Word," *Review and Herald*, 8 August 1878, 50; J. De Witt Talmage, "Science vs. Religion," *Review and Herald*, 7 November 1878, 145; "An Exchange," *Review and Herald*, 11 September 1879, 95.

them.²¹⁸ Some Adventists classified positive remarks about the evolutionary theory by non-Adventist ministers as signs of last-day scoffing and the apostasy of their respective denominations.²¹⁹ Interestingly, Ellen White seemed to disagree with both the fixity of species as promoted by other contemporary creation advocates and processes of continual development stretching over long periods of time. She believed “the almost endless varieties of species of animals” had developed through intermingling from the “species of animal[s] which God had created [and which] were preserved in the ark.”²²⁰ The comparatively few references to the evolutionary theory in their publications may suggest that Adventists were concerned more with the promotion of their distinctive teachings and beliefs. They viewed the evolutionary theory as a threat to the belief in the absolute reliability of the Bible and the divine inspiration of its writers, yet they did not consider this threat important enough to define, defend, or adjust their view of inspiration.

Challenges in the Area of Biblical Studies

At the time when the scientific theories of geology and evolution began to be debated in theological circles in the United States, scholarly biblical criticism experienced a revival and challenged traditional beliefs in the inspiration of Scripture. While the methodological skepticism was systematized, popularized, and advanced at

²¹⁸ John Hall, "Turning the Tables," *Review and Herald*, 9 April 1872, 130.

²¹⁹ M[ary] W. H[oward], "Millions of Years Yet," *Review and Herald*, 3 March 1863, 110, 111; John G. Matteson, "Progress of the Cause: Chicago, Illinois," *Review and Herald*, 7 October 1873, 134.

²²⁰ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 3:75; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and His Angels and Satan and His Angels*, 1:78. For more recent discussions of her amalgamation statements, see Jud Lake and Jerry Moon, "Current Science and Ellen White: Twelve Controversial Statements," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 231–233; Michael W. Campbell and Timothy G. Standish, "Amalgamation," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 590–594.

universities in Germany (1750s–1850s), its influence in North America appeared in extenuated form and was limited to a relatively small group of scholars in New England in the first part of the nineteenth century. Seventh-day Adventists emerged when the interest in biblical criticism was waning and before it revived in a new form in the 1870s. This section will describe the development of biblical criticism in Germany, American reception and reactions, and the manner in which Seventh-day Adventists responded to this threat against the inspiration and authority of the Bible.

The traditional belief in the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible suffered severe damage when professors and students at German universities began to systematize and popularize the application of methodological criticism to the Bible in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Enlightenment free-thinking and deistic intellectuals such as Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), Jean Astruc (1684-1766), and Voltaire (1694-1778) had already employed a critical approach towards the biblical writings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but it was the rejection of the rigidity of Protestant Orthodoxy in the eighteenth century that gave rise to the Pietist movement in the churches and established theological rationalism at the universities in Germany. Theological rationalism was characterized by a rejection of tradition, an emphasis on human reason, and the adoption of methodological doubt.²²¹ Thus Johann Salomo Semler (1725-1791), professor of theology at the University of Halle, distinguished between the divine spiritual content (the core) and the human relative form (the shell) because he

²²¹ Ran HaCohen, *Reclaiming the Hebrew Bible: German-Jewish Reception of Biblical Criticism*, *Studia judaica, Forschungen zur Wissenschaft des Judentums*, vol. 56 (Göttingen: de Gruyter, 2010), 31, 34; E. Edward Zinke, "Postreformation Critical Biblical Studies," in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1974), 71–73.

believed that the Bible was ultimately only a human collection of religious testimonies from different cultures written long after the described events, containing numerous additions, errors, and contradictions.²²² Johann Friedrich Eichhorn (1752-1827), professor at the universities of Jena and Göttingen, was influenced by Semler and popularized Astruc's source critical approach and extended it beyond the Pentateuch to all Old Testament writings. In his attempt to detect different sources of multiple writers and redactors, he employed the term "höhere Kritik" (higher criticism) for the first time for literary criticism and distinguished it from "niedere Kritik" (lower criticism), i.e. textual criticism.²²³ Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834), professor at the universities of Halle and Berlin, sought to combine the critical scholarly approach with the subjective Pietist experience. He argued that the cultures and religions of ancient peoples evolved gradually from primitive forms to complex forms (unilinear evolution), resulting in the subordination of biblical authority to the evolutionary "revelations" of the

²²² Werner Georg Kümmel, *Das Neue Testament: Geschichte der Erforschung seiner Probleme*, Orbis academicus, Problemgeschichten der Wissenschaft in Dokumenten und Darstellungen, vol. 3/3 (Freiburg and München: Karl Alber, 1958), 73, 74; Gottfried Hornig, *Die Anfänge der historisch-kritischen Theologie: Johann Salomo Semlers Schriftverständnis und seine Stellung zu Luther*, Forschungen zur systematischen Theologie und Religionsphilosophie, vol. 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 56–58; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, 2nd ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), 113; Otto Merk, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments in ihrer Anfangszeit: Ihre methodischen Probleme bei Johann Philipp Gabler und Georg Lorenz Bauer und deren Nachwirkungen*, Marburger theologische Studien, vol. 9 (Marburg: Elwert, 1972), 22; Armin Sierszyn, *Die Bibel im Griff?: Historisch-kritische Denkweise und biblische Theologie* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1978), 23.

²²³ HaCohen, *Reclaiming the Hebrew Bible*, 31, 32; Thomas Kelly Cheyne, *Founders of Old Testament Criticism: Biographical, Descriptive, and Critical Studies* (London: Methuen & Co., 1893), 13; Gerhard 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), 10, 28, 52. See also Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, *Einleitung ins Alte Testament*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1787), 1:vi, 61-63, 2:282, 295, 296, 3:52-100.

immanent God.²²⁴ David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874), a scholar of the next generation who was influenced by the ideas of Schleiermacher and Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831), wrote *Das Leben Jesu kritisch bearbeitet* (1835) in which he argued that the miraculous stories related in the Gospels were mythical in character, practically denying the divine nature of Jesus. This book launched a new period in the critical textual and historical study of Christianity's origin and development.²²⁵ German higher criticism was characterized by a methodological skepticism towards the authorships, the historical reliability, and the supernatural assertions of the biblical writings, and therefore opposed the traditional notion of the divine inspiration of the Bible.

German higher criticism became known to and was employed by some scholars in New England already in the first decades of the nineteenth century, but it was not until the 1870s that it was accepted by a broader academic audience and was having an impact on the notion of divine inspiration in the United States. In the early decades of the century, these rational methods were employed primarily by Unitarian scholars such as William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), Andrews Norton (1786-1853), and George R. Noyes (1798-1868) who considered Old Divinity Calvinism a distortion of the New Testament and therefore sought to restore true primitive Christianity. Yet even Unitarian

²²⁴ Zinke, "Postreformation Critical Biblical Studies," 68; Klaus Berger, *Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments*, UTB für Wissenschaft: Theologie, vol. 2035 (Tübingen and Basel: Francke, 1999), 14-16, 61, 76; D. DeVries, "Schleiermacher, Friedrich Daniel Ernst (1768-1834)," in *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 885-889; B. A. Gerrish, *A Prince of the Church: Schleiermacher and the Beginnings of Modern Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984).

²²⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, "The Old Faith and the New: The Late Theology of D. F. Strauss," in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series*, vol. 192, *Biblical Studies and the Shifting of Paradigms, 1850-1914*, eds. Henning Graf Reventlow and William Farmer (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 223-245; Gerhard F. Hasel, *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 31.

scholars adopted the critical methods only to a certain extent as is evident in their general rejection of Strauss' book, which was published in America as the *Life of Jesus* in 1847, as the natural product of a philosophy that precluded supernatural events. Beyond the Unitarian community and some scholars at Harvard and Andover who were acquainted with "German neology" (as scholars in Britain and North America began calling it since the 1820s),²²⁶ higher biblical criticism failed to have a larger influence in the first half of the century. Moses Stuart, for example, who was a professor at Andover Theological Seminary, admired the grammatical and philological research of German scholars but was deeply disappointed about their constant search for discrepancies, firm skepticism of the inspiration of Scripture, and notion of the Bible as a work like any other ancient book. Apprehensive of the potential acceptance of German neology by American scholars, he read every new publication from German scholars to be able to counter their destructive influence to the notion of the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture.²²⁷ However, by the middle of the century interest in biblical criticism waned even in New England. Nevertheless, "German neology failed in America," as Jerry Wayne Brown notes, not because of the brilliant defense of such scholars as Stuart "but rather because of lack of interest. . . . The great mass of Americans were more readily led to accept the authority of

²²⁶ Gerald Parsons, "Biblical Criticism in Victorian Britain: From Controversy to Acceptance?," in *Religion in Victorian Britain: Controversies*, eds. Gerald Parsons and John Wolffe (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1988), 239; Andrew R. Holmes, "The Common Sense Bible: Irish Presbyterians, Samuel Davidson, and Biblical Criticism, c. 1800-65," in *Dissent and the Bible in Britain, c. 1650-1950*, eds. Scott Mandelbrote and Michael Ledger-Lomas (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 178.

²²⁷ Jerry Wayne Brown, *The Rise of Biblical Criticism in America, 1800-1870*, 7, 10-44, 60-93, 95, 100, 101, 125-152; Holifield, *Theology in America*, 191, 194. See, e.g., Stuart, "Hints Respecting Commentaries upon the Scriptures," 140, 141; Moses Stuart, review of *The Evidences of the Genuineness of the Gospels*, by Andrew Norton, *American Biblical Repository* 11 (1838): 268-70.

the Bible by rhetoric than by logic” presented in scholarly journals or the classroom.²²⁸ Most theologians, ministers, and church members in antebellum America commonly assumed the divine inspiration of Scripture.²²⁹ When interest in critical scholarship revived in the 1870s, giving rise to increased theological tensions and conflicts, it did not build upon the Unitarian tradition and the majority of the theological elite of the Baptist, Congregationalist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches continued to affirm the inspiration of Scripture and to stress its role as the final arbiter in all matters of faith and practice.²³⁰

The disinterest in higher biblical criticism characterizing American Christianity in the middle of the century is also reflected in Seventh-day Adventist publications. They were aware of the developments in Europe through their reading of publications of other American writers, but Adventists seldom engaged in refuting the theories and interpretations of critical scholars. They were aware that higher biblical criticism initially

²²⁸ Jerry Wayne Brown, *The Rise of Biblical Criticism in America, 1800-1870*, esp. 8, 110, 180.

²²⁹ Satta, *The Sacred Text*, 21, 23–26. This circumstance was conceded even by outspoken critical scholars. See, e.g., review of *Lectures on the Inspiration of the Scriptures*, by Leonard Woods, *Christian Examiner* 8 (1830): 362–65; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* (London: William Pickering, 1840), 42; George T. Ladd, *The Doctrine of Sacred Scripture: A Critical, Historical and Dogmatic Inquiry into the Origin and Nature of the Old and New Testament* (New York: Scribner, 1883), 2:452.

²³⁰ Jerry Wayne Brown, *The Rise of Biblical Criticism in America, 1800-1870*, 8, 180; Satta, *The Sacred Text*, x-xv, 1-16, 105-108; John D. Woodbridge and Randall H. Balmer, "The Princetonians and Biblical Authority: An Assessment of the Ernest Sandeen Proposal," in *Scripture and Truth*, eds. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 251–279; Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1979), 246, 247, 285, 346–358; George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 3, 4; David W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody*, A History of Evangelicalism, vol. 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 26.

started in Germany and spread from there to other countries.²³¹ In their view, German neology tended to “rob the Bible of its inspiration, miracles, and divine authority.”²³² The names of German scholars such as Semler, Eichhorn, and Schleiermacher are almost entirely absent from their publications until the early 1880s.²³³ The only exception seems to be Strauss whose theories and influence received critical responses, yet these were primarily reprints from other religious publications.²³⁴ Most references to biblical criticism were reprints from other religious and secular sources.²³⁵ Since American scholars such as Channing, Norton, and Noyes employed critical scholarship only to a certain extent and continued to uphold the inspiration of Scripture in some way or

²³¹ James White, ed., "The Downward Tendency of Man," *Review and Herald*, 21 February 1854, 35; *Pittsburg Christian Advocate*, "The World in Miniature," 66.

²³² F. G. Brown, "Views and Experience in Relation to Entire Consecration and the Second Advent: Addressed to the Ministers of the Portsmouth, N.H., Baptist Association," *Review and Herald*, 11 October 1853, 106, reprinted in F. G. Brown, "Views and Experience in Relation to Entire Consecration and the Second Advent: Addressed to the Ministers of the Portsmouth, N.H., Baptist Association," *Review and Herald*, 3 February 1859, 82. Brown was a Millerite Adventist who converted to the Plymouth Brethren around 1846. See Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 77.

²³³ The only exceptions are mentions of Semler and Eichhorn in reprints. See Cummings, "Various Readings," 27; "The Statesman Articles, Article Eight: Patristic Testimony to the First-Day Sabbath," *Review and Herald*, 20 May 1873, 177.

²³⁴ "The Devil," *Review and Herald*, 10 May 1860, 195; "Christianity and Its Assailants," *Review and Herald*, 3 March 1868, 178; "The Spirit of David and the Spirit of Christ," *Review and Herald*, 4 April 1871, 123; F. H. Newhall, "The Alleged Discrepancies of Scripture," *Review and Herald*, 11 April 1871, 129; D. M. Canright, "Increase of Skepticism," *Review and Herald*, 10 March 1874, 103; "An Alarm Sounded," *Review and Herald*, 26 June 1879, 2; "The Moral World," *Review and Herald*, 24 July 1879, 36.

²³⁵ See, e.g., George Storrs, "Examination of Isaiah II and Micah IV," *Review and Herald*, 16 May 1854, 131; Daniel D. Buck, "Avenging of the Elect," *Review and Herald*, 4 November 1862, 179; Canright, "Increase of Skepticism," 103; W. Laing, "Spiritualizing," *Signs of the Times*, 1 April 1875, 163. Seventh-day Adventists distinguished between "biblical criticism" and "Bible criticism." The second term was employed to emphasize that a particular argument did not stand the test of biblical arguments ("the test of Bible criticism"). See Mary Stratton, "The Cause in Cornville, Me.," *Review and Herald*, 21 February 1871, 79; J. I. Collins, "Minnesota," *Review and Herald*, 30 August 1877, 79; W. H. Littlejohn, "The Utility of the Commentaries in the Study of the Scriptures," *Review and Herald*, 9 October 1879, 121. The first term was generally used in reference to higher criticism, yet it was sometimes also loosely used for lower criticism and in the sense of "Bible criticism." See "Death of Dr. Tischendorf," *Review and Herald*, 15 January 1875, 23; "Rara Avis," *Review and Herald*, 18 September 1860, 144.

another, Adventist writers sometimes referred to them when it was profitable and useful.²³⁶ Judging from their numerous references to Moses Stuart's writings, they seemed to appreciate his scholarship on particular topics.²³⁷ Until the mid-1880s and early 1890s Seventh-day Adventists seemed to lack interest in engaging in discussions involving the specific issues of biblical criticism. In 1856, Uriah Smith, then editor of the *Review and Herald*, offered an explanation for this indifference when he wrote that the paper was to proclaim "the truth especially applicable for this time," and it was therefore futile to fill its columns "with infidelity, or German Neology, and then spend our time in its refutation."²³⁸ It does not seem that Adventists felt threatened by biblical criticism and its arguments to the point that they had to defend and refine their view of divine inspiration.

Socio-Cultural Challenges

American Protestantism's belief in the inspiration and authority of the Bible suffered under the influence of several socio-cultural challenges in the second half of the nineteenth century. The American Civil War, post-bellum industrialization, and massive immigration intensified the impact of the above scientific and theological challenges and influenced the public perception of the Bible. As these three influences had only an

²³⁶ See, e.g., Uriah Smith, ed., "[Quotation from Dr. Noyes]," *Review and Herald*, 26 August 1858, 119; George R. Noyes, "One Spirit in Them," *Review and Herald*, 16 January 1866, 50, 51; W. N. Pile, "The Coming Reign of Terror," *Review and Herald*, 11 February 1875, 50; William Ellery Channing, "Gems from Channing," *Review and Herald*, 9 October 1879, 127; J. B. F., "Learned Men on the Sabbath," *Review and Herald*, 8 May 1856, 30.

²³⁷ See, e.g., Smith, ed., "Advantages of Revelation," 203; Smith, "Mortal or Immortal? Which?," 113; J. H. Waggoner, "The Mark of the Beast: To the (First-Day) Adventists of New England," *Review and Herald*, 17 May 1864, 194; Waggoner, "S. D. Adventists and Their Critics," 67; J. H. Waggoner, "Thoughts on Baptism," *Review and Herald*, 14 February 1878, 49, 50.

²³⁸ [Uriah Smith], "The Review—Its Object," *Review and Herald*, 10 April 1856, 4.

insignificant force among Seventh-day Adventists, the present section will outline them only briefly.

In the decades before the Civil War, Protestants on both sides of the slavery issue utilized the Bible to defend their position and attack the other party. Protestant anti-slavery activists in the North argued that the Bible demanded the immediate abolition of the system of slavery whereas Southern Protestants reasoned that the Bible preordained a social order that included slavery.²³⁹ As a result, major Protestant churches fragmented into northern and southern branches in the 1840s and 1850s.²⁴⁰ The Civil War was consequently not merely a political phenomenon but also a deeply religious one as political and religious convictions were closely connected.²⁴¹ Trivial interpretations of biblical passages abounded during the war.²⁴² Since the reliance on Scripture seemed to be nothing more than “a smokescreen for expressing local prejudice,” many people were

²³⁹ Mark A. Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World: The History of North American Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 106–09; George M. Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001), 74.

²⁴⁰ Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World*, 108, 109; Clarence Curtis Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the American Civil War* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985); Richard Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

²⁴¹ Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism*, 20; Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World*, 108, 109. See also James W. Silver, *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda* (New York: Norton, 1967); James H. Moorhead, *American Apocalypse: Yankee Protestants and the Civil War, 1860-1869* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978); Gardiner H. Shattuck, *A Shield and Hiding Place: The Religious Life of the Civil War Armies* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987); Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson, *Religion and the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

²⁴² Compare, e.g., Benjamin M. Palmer, *National Responsibility Before God: A Discourse, Delivered on the Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer, Appointed by the President of the Confederate States of America, June 13, 1861* (New Orleans, LA: Price-Current Steam Book and Job Print Office, 1861), 5; and Henry A. Nelson, *The Divinely Prepared Ruler, and the Fit End of Treason, Two Discourses Delivered at the First Presbyterian Church, Springfield, Illinois, May 7, 1865, on the Sabbath Following the Burial of President Lincoln* (Springfield, IL: Baker and Phillips, 1865), 32.

disillusioned with the Bible's seeming inability to solve problems, especially since it could apparently be used to say all sorts of things. Instead of claiming divine inspiration for it, many wondered if it was not preferable to class it among ordinary books.²⁴³

Seventh-day Adventists lived primarily in the northern states, were generally anti-slavery advocates, and may have been less affected by the religious and political polemics during the war as a result of their general noncombatant position. A comparison of their antebellum and postbellum publications does not indicate any decrease in their trust in Scripture's inspiration and reliability.²⁴⁴

The increasing large-scale industrialization of the postbellum decades changed the population and living conditions in the cities, and as a result the religious situation in these places. Although the westward move of settlers continued after the war, many people moved away from rural areas to the big cities.²⁴⁵ The industrial and mercantile growth led to a higher quality of life, yet the resulting affluence was not evenly distributed among the population. Poor labor conditions and huge salary differentials produced class resentments and riots. The moral atmosphere and physical surroundings of the city were uncondusive to hereditary Protestant values and the authoritative role of

²⁴³ Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World*, 110, 111.

²⁴⁴ Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, rev. ed. (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000), 95–98; George R. Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 2nd ed., Adventist Heritage Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004), 73–75.

²⁴⁵ Robert Jewett and Ole Wangerin, *Mission and Menace: Four Centuries of American Religious Zeal* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2008), 153, 154; Stow Persons, "Religion and Modernity, 1865-1914," in *Religion in American Life*, vol. 1, *The Shaping of American Religion*, eds. James W. Silver and A. Leland Jamison (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 369; Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 108; Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World*, 110.

Scripture in people's lives.²⁴⁶ Churches made major efforts to cope with these urban changes and societal conditions, and it was apparently easier for liberal theology to adapt to these changes by concentrating on clarifying the relationship between Christianity and existential matters of life to the neglect of more abstract theological questions such as the nature, manner, and extent of biblical inspiration. Conservative Evangelicals objected to this trend of paying more attention to beings and actual processes (God's immanence) rather than things and abstract theories (God's transcendence).²⁴⁷ Like many other Christians, and increasingly by the end of the century, Seventh-day Adventists were aware of the unfavorable conditions in the big cities and warned their members of the spiritual impediments of city life.²⁴⁸

Mark A. Noll refers to the impact which massive immigration had on the status of the Bible in mainstream American culture in the late nineteenth century.²⁴⁹ Being primarily of British descent and Reformed heritage, American Protestants valued

²⁴⁶ Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism*, 18; Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World*, 110; Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, and Randall Herbert Balmer, *Religion in American Life: A Short History*, updated ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 295; Nancy Koester, *Fortress Introduction to the History of Christianity in the United States* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), 125; Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 108.

²⁴⁷ Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism*, 20, 246–251; Robert T. Handy, "Introduction," in *The Social Gospel in America, 1870-1920*, ed. Robert T. Handy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 3–16; Koester, *Fortress Introduction to the History of Christianity in the United States*, 125–33; Butler, Wacker and Balmer, *Religion in American Life*, 261, 262, 269, 270, 295–298; Jewett and Wangerin, *Mission and Menace*, 154–59; Evans, *Histories of American Christianity*, 208-212, 221-244. Evans clarifies that in the nineteenth century context the term "liberalism denotes the ways that theological beliefs and traditions could be adapted to the contours of the natural and social world." See Evans, *Histories of American Christianity*, 208.

²⁴⁸ D. Dorchester, "Methodism in the Large Cities," *Methodist*, 27 December 1873, cited in Uriah Smith, "Falling Behind," *Review and Herald*, 20 January 1874, 45; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:232, 6:193, 7:81-84, 9:89-96; Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905), 190-192, 262, 263, 363-365.

²⁴⁹ Mark A. Noll, "The Bible, Minority Faiths, and the American Protestant Mainstream, 1860-1925," in *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 192, 193.

personal choice, pursued individual goals, and exercised a dominant influence in the nation. The influx of immigrants from other religious backgrounds in the postbellum period, however, gave rise to a growing pluralism. Many European immigrants settled in family and ethnic communities. German and Scandinavian Lutherans theoretically believed the Bible to be the final authority in matters of faith and practice, but in reality they often adhered to their respective creeds and what their pastor told them to believe. Roman Catholics from Ireland and southern and eastern Europe regarded the church's interpretation of the Bible as the supreme authority. Tensions arising from ethnic and religious particularism thus produced a pluralistic landscape that reinforced the tendency of seeking safety in traditional customs and beliefs, and contributed to the declining belief in the divine authority and relevance of the Bible.²⁵⁰ By the 1870s Seventh-day Adventists began to reach out more to foreign language groups in North America and overseas, yet such ethnicities did not grow to significant proportions within Adventism before the mid-1880s.²⁵¹ As the understanding of the nature and mode of inspiration was somewhat diffused among Adventists, no recognizable difference has been observed among church members from other ethnicities.

²⁵⁰ Noll, "The Bible, Minority Faiths, and the American Protestant Mainstream, 1860-1925," 193; Mark A. Noll, *The Work We Have to Do: A History of Protestants in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 63, 64, 77, 79, 82; Evans, *Histories of American Christianity*, 246, 247, 250–254; Jewett and Wangerin, *Mission and Menace*, 106, 107, 161-164, 177-179; Koester, *Fortress Introduction to the History of Christianity in the United States*, 104, 105; Persons, "Religion and Modernity, 1865-1914," 369; Jon Gjerde, *The Minds of the West: Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West, 1830-1917* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 10, 15; James D. Bratt, "Protestant Immigrants and Protestant Mainstream," in *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 111.

²⁵¹ Emmett K. Vande Vere, "Years of Expansion, 1865-1885," in *Adventism in America: A History*, ed. Gary Land, rev. ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 68–72; Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 137–45.

Noll suggests that these new challenges changed not only “the face of American life” in the postbellum period, but also affected the “appropriation of Scripture.”²⁵² Americans seemed more hesitant to quote the Bible in public and tended to avoid giving biblical names to children, organizations, and cities.²⁵³ Seventh-day Adventism remained seemingly unaffected by these challenges that aided in debilitating the trust of certain sections of American Protestantism in the divine inspiration of the Bible, Scripture’s ability to solve conflicts, and the necessity to solve abstract theological questions.

Summary

The challenges in the areas of science, theology, and society influenced the role the Bible played in major parts of Protestant Christianity. Aligning themselves with the conservative sector of American Protestantism in its rejection of the scientific hypotheses and harmonization attempts, Seventh-day Adventists emphasized the role of the Bible as the interpretative lens for all matters. Generally disinterested in refuting the claims of biblical criticism, they felt such refutations would divert their attention from proclaiming their end-time message. The different socio-cultural challenges apparently bypassed Adventism as they mostly refrained from engaging in the rhetoric of war, avoided the big cities and their challenges, and were still primarily dominated by members of British descent and Arminian tradition. As these challenges to traditional Protestant Christianity

²⁵² Noll, "The Bible, Minority Faiths, and the American Protestant Mainstream, 1860-1925," 192.

²⁵³ Lewis O. Saum, *The Popular Mood of America, 1860-1890* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 79–82; Mark A. Noll, "The Image of the United States as a Biblical Nation, 1776-1865," in *The Bible in America*, eds. Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 40, 53 en. 13; Noll, "The Bible, Minority Faiths, and the American Protestant Mainstream, 1860-1925," 192.

intensified in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it remains for chapters 2-4 to determine their impact on Seventh-day Adventism in later periods.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided background on the two central subjects of this study—inspiration of the Bible writers and Ellen G. White—by describing five nineteenth-century theories of inspiration, three religious antecedents of Seventh-day Adventism, Seventh-day Adventist conceptions of the inspiration of Scripture and Ellen G. White from about 1845 to 1880, and the challenges of a scientific, theological, and socio-cultural nature to Protestant and Adventist notions of divine inspiration.

Theologians in North America assumed different, more or less conservative, theories of inspiration. These theories may be classed along a spectrum from complete divine involvement to more human participation in the inspiration process, yet it has been observed that almost every theory had a certain flexible range as regards the intensity of divine involvement in the process and the extent of reliability. The theories of verbal-plenary inspiration, thought inspiration, inspiration of the person, and degrees of inspiration more or less maintained the inspiration of the entire Bible (plenary). As some assumptions of these theologians in regard to the extent of human involvement overlapped, these theories may not necessarily be mutually exclusive. Considering the observed flexibility within each theory of inspiration, it will be necessary to avoid reading the stricter twenty-first century definitions of these theories into the statements from the nineteenth century.

The three religious antecedent traditions of Seventh-day Adventism—Wesleyan Methodism, Restorationism, and Millerism—emphasized the divine origin of the Bible

and generally tended towards a word-focused view of inspiration. That the employment of dictation imagery and language may not necessarily be indicative of a mechanical, word-oriented view has become visible in the writings of John Wesley who saw room for human choice in the inspiration process. Adam Clarke assumed the Holy Spirit adapted the intensity of inspiration to each circumstance to ensure a reliable result. Restorationist and Millerite writers seemed to have a somewhat diffused understanding of inspiration, but Louis Gaussen's strict word-focused view may have been appealing to them due to his affirmation of the reliability of Scripture, biblical prophecy, and the imminent Second Coming of Christ. In general, all three traditions affirmed the trustworthiness and reliability of the Bible.

The diffuseness of the Restorationist and Millerite conception of divine inspiration reappeared in Seventh-day Adventism. Adventists were generally disinterested in the technical definitions of inspiration and their use of the writings of scholars who advocated different theories was almost exclusively confined to arguments that supported Adventist interpretations and beliefs. In agreement with the previous traditions, Adventists, Ellen G. White, and her critics believed inspiration prevented any real inconsistencies, discrepancies, and mistakes. Similar to proponents of verbal-plenary inspiration and John Wesley, some writers incidentally employed dictation language to describe the divine origin of the Bible. Such language, however, was used far less in reference to Ellen White's writings. Most of these phrases could be understood as affirmations of the Holy Spirit prescribing and guiding the writing down of the messages rather than dictating the exact words and sentences to the inspired writers, yet the

ambiguity and lack of precision in these statements often prevented any clear judgment on the probable underlying concept of the nature and mode of inspiration.

Statements by Seventh-day Adventist leaders and Ellen White about the nature and mode of her inspiration were more substantial than their remarks about the inspiration of the Bible writers. They objected to the idea of inspiration being verbally at work in her experience. This is illustrated by revisions and revamping of her writings for various purposes while retaining the original idea and meaning. Further, they acknowledged in her writings differences in scope and purpose, and differences between private, common matters and sacred, inspired matters.

White's own statements about her experience in the inspiration process are, however, more complex than those of her fellow Adventists. She stated that the Holy Spirit chose when and where to give visions, leaving it outside her mastery to produce or control them. She further suggested that the Spirit operated in diverse manners, presenting scenes with or without audible explanations, reviving details to her memory, and/or giving only thoughts. That influence did not seem to overrule her own will but facilitated in her a process of growth in her understanding. Usually she was permitted to render the scenes and thoughts in her own words. Ellen White admitted that in rare cases she allowed others to influence her—toning down a message for fear of the recipients' reactions; accepting somebody else's inaccurate interpretation of a vision; or giving a message too hastily and incompletely—and God corrected the resulting mistakes by appealing to her reason and conscience. No one of the discussed theories of inspiration seems to encompass all these aspects. In her view, inspiration operated not merely on the thoughts but also on the person. It did not mechanically give words and sentences, but

sometimes she was reminded of words spoken in a vision. Yet the Spirit did not always work in the same manner but adapted the mode of his working to the circumstances. She further suggested there was a private and uninspired realm in her life. Therefore, her concept of inspiration dynamically contained elements of all the above theories, suggesting a divine-human, integrated, wholistic, and dynamic process to convey an authoritative message from God.

Nevertheless, Ellen White neglected to provide church members with a systematic explanation of the process of inspiration in her experience and many of them were unfamiliar with the way in which she produced her writings. As a result, many may have assumed that in that writing process the Holy Spirit gave her exact words, phrases, and sentences. The generally unqualified and ambiguous use of dictation imagery and language regarding the inspiration of the Bible may have nurtured such ideas among church members about the origin of both the Bible and her writings.

While the combined challenges in the areas of science, theology, and society in the second half of the nineteenth century began to impact large numbers of Protestant Christians in America, Seventh-day Adventists seemed mostly disinterested in refuting particular claims of scientific theories and biblical criticism, because engagement in such discussions threatened to divert their attention from their commitment to missions. The socio-cultural transitions taking place in broader culture, especially in the big cities, appeared to more or less bypass Seventh-day Adventism, at least until the late 1870s. Seemingly unaffected in their belief in the authority of Scripture by these challenges, Adventists remained in the conservative faction of Protestant Christianity in America.

The following three chapters will determine how significant Seventh-day Adventist thought leaders envisaged the nature, mode, and extent of the divine inspiration of the Bible writers and Ellen G. White between 1880 and 1930. Situated in the conservative camp of Protestant Christianity and confronted with intensifying challenges to a belief in the divine origin and authority of the Bible, there may have been tendencies among Adventists to consolidate the somewhat diffused word-oriented view of inspiration. Resulting from their experience with Ellen White, some Adventist leaders held a more dynamic concept of divine inspiration, but the basic contours of that still somewhat diffused concept would develop with more exposure to her writing experience in later years. It remains to be determined in these later chapters how White's neglect to provide a systematic outlining of the *modus operandi* of inspiration in her experience influenced or failed to influence her fellow Adventist leaders and church members.

CHAPTER 2
PERCEPTIONS OF DIVINE INSPIRATION IN
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGY
FROM 1880 TO 1895

Introduction

The last two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed an intensification of the influences that the new scientific theories and higher biblical criticism had on American Protestants and their faith in the inspiration of Scripture. As theological liberalism gave rise to adjusted understandings of the Bible's origin, conservative Protestants reacted to these challenges with more inert definitions of divine inspiration. Princeton Theological Seminary, the premier seminary within the Reformed tradition, graduated many staunch critics of the liberal trends in Protestant Christianity.¹

About the same time, Seventh-day Adventists sought to move from a more diffused understanding of inspiration to a more precisely defined concept of the inspiration of the Bible writers and Ellen G. White. These more or less deliberate reflections transpired in the context of a series of significant changes, challenges, and tensions. The unexpected death of James White (1821-1881), heretofore the visible leader of the church's administration and publishing work for the past thirty years, left his successors—most prominently George I. Butler—insecure about how to steer the increasingly global denomination. Conflicts among denominational workers increased.

¹ Evans, *Histories of American Christianity*, 245–48.

The situation at Battle Creek College, formally established in 1874, seems to be a case in point when, in 1882 and 1883, it became increasingly the center of controversy as educators and administrators disagreed about how to lead that institution and how to apply educational principles. At the same time, Ellen White's earliest writings were reprinted and her first thirty numbers of the *Testimonies for the Church* were republished in an edited format in 1882 and 1885 respectively. These new editions not only attracted the criticism of her opponents, but they also unsettled some of her most ardent supporters. Disagreements between leaders in the East (Uriah Smith and Butler) and in the West (E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones) on the interpretation of the law in Galatians 3 gave rise to increased discussions in the years leading up to the General Conference session at Minneapolis, Minn., in 1888.² In early 1887, Dudley M. Canright, a prominent minister, parted with Adventism as a result of some of these developments and became one of Ellen White's most ardent critics. Rumors of individuals being involved in conspiracies against prominent church leaders were spreading during both the college controversies and the Minneapolis conflict. These leaders felt misunderstood and consequently wondered about White's inspiration as they found themselves frequently reproved by her as she seemingly sided with the alleged conspirators. As she spent almost half of these years in the mission field on foreign continents—first in Europe from 1885 to 1887, and then in Australia from 1891 to 1900—a new circumstance arose for church leaders who were accustomed corresponding with her more or less frequently, but then had to cope with her physical absence.

² Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 91–110; Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 88–92; Pöhler, *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching*, 151–54.

The above circumstances form part of the background to the considerations and discussions regarding divine inspiration within Adventism between 1880 and 1895. Since Smith, Canright, Butler, and White, according to the primary sources, were individuals who made the most definite comments about the nature, manner, and extent of divine inspiration during that time period, the present chapter looks at each of these four individuals and describes their concepts of inspiration, sources and influences that spurred them to formalize their views, attack other views of inspiration to which they objected, and the context in which they made their statements.

Doubts and Confidence: The Case of Uriah Smith

Serving as editor in chief of the *Review and Herald* for thirty-five years and as corresponding editor of the *Signs of the Times* for thirteen years, Uriah Smith (1832-1903) was admittedly one of the most prominent and influential figures in Seventh-day Adventism's first half century. He wrote about four thousand editorials, hundreds of articles, and some twenty books.³ Smith was the first Bible teacher at the denominational college and held ministerial institutes for the church's ministers, teachers, and canvassers.⁴ Besides his editorial, literary, and educational work, he served as president of the Michigan Conference and secretary of the General Conference, not to mention his active memberships in numerous boards and committees.⁵ He was a friend and colleague

³ Durand, "Smith, Uriah (1832-1903)," 515. See also Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 482.

⁴ Durand, "Smith, Uriah (1832-1903)," 516.

⁵ See Denis Kaiser, "Setting Apart for the Ministry: Theory and Practice in Seventh-day Adventism (1850-1920)," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 51, no. 2 (2013): 204.

of Ellen White and “one of the staunchest defenders of her prophetic gift”⁶ as testified in his apologetic defense *The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White* (1868).⁷ When she sent strong reproofs to him, Smith nevertheless found it difficult to comprehend and accept them.⁸ His tremendous theological influence on both laity and ministers illustrates the particular importance of looking at two sets of Smith’s writings on inspiration between 1882 and 1888.

The Distinction between “Testimony” and “Vision”

The first set of statements stems almost exclusively from Smith’s correspondence and talks with fellow ministers and church members from early 1882 to late 1883, the time of the college controversy and rising criticism against Ellen White’s reprinted early writings. Most of the details constitute snippets of complaints which fail to give a well-developed systematic view of the nature, manner, and extent of inspiration.

Concept of Inspiration

Uriah Smith adopted to a certain extent a view that resembled the theory of partial inspiration described in chapter 1. His brief statements are not necessarily representative of his overall understanding of inspiration, yet they provide insight into his stance on and attitude towards the inspiration of White’s writings during these one and a half years.

⁶ Poirier, Wood, and Fagal, *The Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts with Annotations*, 887.

⁷ Smith, *The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White*. The book is an expanded version of a five-part series of articles from 1866. See Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire*, 32–34.

⁸ Eugene F. Durand, *Yours in the Blessed Hope, Uriah Smith* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 285–90; Poirier, Wood, and Fagal, *The Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts with Annotations*, 1:887.

As the biblical doctrine of spiritual gifts was “clear enough,” at least “theoretically,” Smith continued to believe in the perpetuity of spiritual gifts⁹ and their manifestation in White’s visionary experience. In keeping with the official Adventist position, he did not place the visions on par with Scripture, neither did he believe they were to “be made a test of fellowship.”¹⁰ He believed in their divine origin but emphasized that Adventist beliefs came through the study of Scripture rather than through the visions.¹¹

Unlike his fellow Adventists, Smith felt, however, that “now” he had to “discriminate between ‘testimony’ and ‘vision.’”¹² Some scholars interpret that distinction as an indication of the theory of degrees of inspiration as Smith did “not” seem to regard all her writings as “equally inspired.” Along these lines, they argue, Smith was convinced Ellen White’s “‘visions’ were inspired, [and] her ‘testimonies’ were

⁹ Uriah Smith to D. M. Canright, 22 March 1883, EGWCF, EGWE; Uriah Smith, "An Explanation," *Review and Herald*, Supplement, 14 August 1883, 10.

¹⁰ Uriah Smith to D. M. Canright, 7 August 1883, EGWCF, EGWE; Smith, "An Explanation," 10.

¹¹ Uriah Smith to D. M. Canright, 6 April 1883, EGWCF, EGWE. Discussing his personal trials during this time, Smith later stated, “I have never seen the time when I was willing to accept the results of a denial of the position and calling of Sister White in connection with this cause, and hence have never seen the time when I have said by word of mouth, or come to a decision in my own heart, that her visions were not the operation of the Spirit of God.” See Uriah Smith, "Personal," *Review and Herald*, 22 November 1887, 15.

¹² Smith to Canright, 7 August 1883.

not.”¹³ It seems more likely, however, that Smith presumed a form of partial inspiration,¹⁴ applying it to a single “testimony” and not to all “testimonies.” He wrote,

I have never had any controversy with the Testimonies, or with your work; and I do not intend to have. . . . The ground of my hesitancy to regard that part of your communication referring to the special school trouble, as a “testimony,” was the fact that *I had always supposed that a testimony was based on a vision*, and I did not understand that you had had any vision since the recent trouble in the college commenced; hence I did not see how there could be any “testimony,” in the common acceptance of that term, concerning these special matters.¹⁵

The apparent absence of a preceding vision and Smith’s inability to comprehend her reproof¹⁶ caused him to regard that particular letter as her personal opinion rather than a testimony that had been preceded and informed by a vision.¹⁷ As Ellen White insisted that it was a testimony, he felt compelled in that case to distinguish between “vision” and

¹³ Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," 491. See also Timm, "History of Inspiration in the Adventist Church (1844-1915)," 184; Timm, "Understanding Inspiration," 12; Timm, "Adventist Views on Inspiration [No. 1]," 27; Frank M. Hasel, "Inspiration, Degrees of," 896; Burt, "Revelation and Inspiration," 36; Timm, "The Authority of Ellen White's Writings," 57; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 184. Levterov states that Smith considered “I saw” phrases as the distinctive feature for differentiating between visions and testimonies, yet this phrase does not appear in the source he gives nor in any other communication from Smith. Also, the letter that discussed that differentiation was written on August 6, 1883, and not on March 22, 1883 as Levterov suggests. Cf. Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 184, 236 en. 213; Smith to Canright, 22 March 1883; Smith to Canright, August 6, 1883.

¹⁴ George R. Knight, *Angry Saints: Tensions and Possibilities in the Adventist Struggle Over Righteousness by Faith* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1989), 88. Knight correctly identifies that distinction, yet he nevertheless concludes that Smith applied that distinction to all of White’s communications.

¹⁵ Uriah Smith to Ellen G. White, 10 August 1882, EGWCF, EGWE (emphasis supplied).

¹⁶ Uriah Smith to Ellen G. White, 1 December 1882, EGWCF, EGWE.

¹⁷ Uriah Smith to Ellen G. White, 10 August 1882; Uriah Smith to Canright, 7 August 1883. See also George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, 3 May 1882, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, 16 May 1882, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler to W. C. White, 16 May 1882, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler to W. C. White, 25 May 1882, EGWCF, EGWE; Ellen G. White to W. H. Edwards, 14 June 1882, Lt 29, 1882, EGWE; Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Battle Creek Church*, [84-page ed.] (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1882), 45, 50.

“testimony.”¹⁸ As a result, he felt unable to defend her writings in general, a circumstance that White interpreted as a rejection of, in principle, all testimonies.¹⁹ Equating his denial of the inspiration of that specific testimony with the theory of degrees of inspiration blurs, however, the difference between the concepts of degrees and partial inspiration.²⁰

Objections to Other Views

Smith obviously disagreed with White’s estimation of his situation and the circumstances at Battle Creek College, yet he rejected two particular views on divine inspiration prevalent among Adventists.

He suggested that many church members maintained a too dogmatic and unrealistic view of the inspiration and authority of Ellen White.²¹ He felt many were putting forth “erroneous claims” in defending her *Experience and Views* (1851) and *Early Writings* (1882) against charges of omission, ignoring the manner in which the *Testimonies* developed over time.²² He did not specifically address these claims, but Smith seemingly thought many unrealistically assumed that the Holy Spirit had given her the very words and phrases when writing these works. Confronted with charges of the

¹⁸ See, e.g., Uriah Smith to D. M. Canright, 31 July 1883, Albion Fox Ballenger, Edward S. Ballenger, and Donald E. Mote Papers, box 10, fld 34, CAR; Smith to Canright, 7 August 1883.

¹⁹ See Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Battle Creek Church*, [84-page ed.], 46; Ellen G. White to Uriah Smith, 31 July 1883, Lt 3, 1883, EGWE.

²⁰ For example, Timm suggests that Smith and George Butler, whose advocacy of the theory of degrees will be described in the next section, held basically the same view of inspiration in the early 1880s. See Timm, “Understanding Inspiration,” 12.

²¹ Smith to Canright, 6 April 1883.

²² Smith to Canright, 22 March 1883.

critics, they were unable to find adequate answers and as a result they were losing “faith in everything” Adventists taught.²³

Such an adverse decision resulted from their belief that everything hinged on the visions, Smith noted. Dudley M. Canright had apparently arrived at a “disconsolate view” of the past experience of the church as a result of adopting that reasoning. Smith stressed, however, that it was through the study of Scripture rather than the visions that Adventists came to believe in their distinctive doctrines. Supposing the visions were to “drop out entirely,” his faith in the doctrines would not be shaken as they were solidly grounded in the Bible.²⁴ That hypothetical statement in view of other church members’ rash decisions reflects the early Adventist experience of the visions confirming previous Bible study and their affirmation of Scripture as the rule for faith and practice.²⁵ In fact, he wrote:

If our people would come together and calmly, candidly, kindly and freely deliberate upon this matter, I believe, as I have said to you and others, that a consistent position could be found, which would free the subject from difficulties, meet and satisfy the scouting of an intelligent public, and not rob the gift of a whit of the good it was intended to do. But there are many too doggedly bigoted and stubborn to offer any very flattering outlook in this direction.²⁶

Thus he felt that a study similar to the one pursued by the early Sabbatarian Adventists was necessary to solve the current misconceptions of the production of White’s writings and the connection between the visions and the doctrines.

²³ Smith to Canright, 6 April 1883.

²⁴ Ibid. Lindén and Bradford interpret Smith’s “frank and independent” willingness to question the testimonies as a general attitude and overlook the specific context of his remarks. See Ingemar Lindén, *The Last Trump: An Historico-genetical Study of Some Important Chapters in the Making and Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, Studien zur interkulturellen Geschichte des Christentums, vol. 17 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1978), 208, 209; Graeme S. Bradford, *More Than a Prophet: How We Lost and Found Again the Real Ellen White* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 2006), 108.

²⁵ See above on pp. 51, 52.

²⁶ Smith to Canright, 22 March 1883; Smith to Canright, 6 April 1883.

Sources and Influences

Smith's viewpoint of inspiration was apparently shaped by the general Adventist perception of Ellen White's ministry and his personal experience with her. His distinctive attitude towards her one testimony in early 1882 may have been a momentary opinion that fed on previous negative perceptions in his family. The following paragraphs describe these possible underlying influences in his general view of White's writings and their formation, and his particular attitude towards that single testimony.

While his stance on the relationship between the Bible and spiritual gifts reflects both the experience of Sabbatarian Adventists in the late 1840s and their later general position,²⁷ the notion that special revelation always precedes inspired writings may have been quite common among Adventists.²⁸ He may not have been aware that she sometimes applied the principles and counsels previously seen in a general vision or multiple visions to a particular situation, a practice she had explained in a private communication.²⁹

As Smith had joined the editorial staff of the *Review and Herald* in 1853, he had many opportunities to become familiar with Ellen White and her published writings. Thus he was generally aware of how the *Testimonies* came into shape, yet he may not have known the detailed changes in her writings, as is evident in his lack of knowledge about the publishing of *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (1851).³⁰ While his insight into her writing experience certainly exceeded the knowledge

²⁷ See above on pp. 50-53.

²⁸ About fifteen years earlier Canright asserted, for example, that Ellen White claimed her writings resulted from things shown to her in vision. See Canright, "Conversations on Important Subjects—No. 2," 99.

²⁹ Ellen G. White to Brother and Sister, 17 December 1877. See also above on p. 60.

³⁰ Smith to Canright, 22 March 1883.

regular church members had, Smith's own writings fail to disclose a more precise understanding of the particulars of her inspiration.

Smith's correspondence suggests that he experienced an inner struggle as he tried to come to grips with the tension between his belief in White's supernatural experience and her seemingly unfair assessment of his situation. His distinction between vision and testimony seems to have been a momentary solution to the dilemma that White's communication presented; it did not seem to come from a careful study and mature reflection of all factors involved. The distinction between her inspired writings and statements of private judgment was not new as Adventist writers were aware that not everything she wrote came through divine inspiration, especially regarding personal and common matters.³¹ That distinction, however, arose frequently among Adventists who struggled with seemingly inexplicable and unfair reproof. In the summer of 1860, for example, Ellen White suggested that Smith's wife Harriet had influenced him negatively by driving a wedge between him and the Whites.³² Thus the distinction between the common and the sacred was not the primary issue, but rather its application to communications White herself declared to be inspired.

³¹ Other Adventist writers made similar distinctions. Thus W. H. Littlejohn suggested that Ellen White was liable to err when giving only her own judgment concerning matters on which she had received no special light from heaven. Yet he argued that revelations made to her from the infallible Spirit of God were "just as reliable as revelations made by the same Spirit to other persons." See W. H. Littlejohn, "Scripture Questions," *Review and Herald*, 11 December 1883, 778. Burt suggests that Smith believed Ellen White "was not inspired" "when she was expressing her own opinion." See Burt, "Revelation and Inspiration," 36. Since Ellen White herself distinguished between the common and the sacred realm in her experience, it seems more likely that the problem in Smith's argument was found in declaring a pronounced (inspired) testimony a production of her personal opinion.

³² Ellen G. White to Andrews, 11 June 1860.

The Context of the Statements

Adventist scholars correctly locate Smith's statements on inspiration in the context of the Battle Creek College crisis from 1881 to 1883.³³ Charges against Ellen White for suppressing some "inspired" statements seemed to strengthen his indifference towards her writings for most of the year 1883, yet by the early fall he was able to reconcile with her and support her writings again.

The crisis at the college was triggered by animosities between Alexander McLearn (1832-1907),³⁴ its new president, and Goodloe Harper Bell (1832-1899), long-serving teacher and founder of its antecedent school.³⁵ Smith's unconditional support of and fear of a conspiracy³⁶ against McLearn put him frequently at odds with the college's

³³ Richard Julian Hammond, "The Life and Work of Uriah Smith" (M.A. thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1944), 103–08; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years, 1876-1891*, vol. 3 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1984), 196–201; Timm, "History of Inspiration in the Adventist Church (1844-1915)," 184; Frank M. Hasel, "Inspiration, Degrees of," 895, 896; Gary Land, *Uriah Smith: Apologist and Biblical Commentator*, Adventist Pioneer Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2014), 120–38.

³⁴ Some suggest that McLearn had not yet joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church when he became president of Battle Creek College in the summer of 1881. See Emmett K. Vande Vere, *The Wisdom Seekers: The Intriguing Story of the Men and Women Who Made the First Institution for Higher Learning Among Seventh-day Adventists* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1972), 42; Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 126, 127; Land, *Uriah Smith*, 120, 121. Others argue that he had just joined the church. See Arthur W. Spalding, *Captains of the Host: First Volume of a History of Seventh-day Adventists Covering the Years 1845-1900* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1949), 15; Durand, *Yours in the Blessed Hope, Uriah Smith*, 236; Allan G. Lindsay, "Goodloe Harper Bell: Pioneer Seventh-day Adventist Christian Educator" (Ed.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1982), 197. Primary sources suggest, however, that both McLearn and a sizeable number of his Baptist church had joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Mason, Mich., by profession of faith in the summer of 1879. See T. M. Steward and E. P. Daniels, "Progress of the Cause: Michigan," *Review and Herald*, 4 September 1879, 86; T. M. Steward and E. P. Daniels, "Progress of the Cause: Michigan," *Review and Herald*, 11 September 1879, 94; Alexander McLearn, "Personal Experiences in Accepting the Sabbath," *Sabbath Recorder*, 21 March 1895, 186. I am indebted to Stanley D. Hickerson for this information.

³⁵ Bell felt curtailed and bullied by McLearn almost from the beginning of the new school year. See Lindsay, "Goodloe Harper Bell," 198-200; and also, e.g., Eva Bell to [Mary K. White], [1 October 1881], EGWCF, EGWE.

³⁶ S. N. Haskell and Uriah Smith, "The General Conference: Twentieth Annual Session, Dec. 1, 1881," *Review and Herald*, 5 December 1881, 360; George I. Butler to W. C. White, 19 January 1881 [*sic*],

board of trustees in the first five months of 1882.³⁷ The tensions prompted students, faculty, and church members to grow increasingly hostile towards Bell and denominational leaders, and in the turmoil many of them began to regard Smith as the leading figure.³⁸ In mid-April he received a communication from Ellen White to be read to the Battle Creek Church, yet he kept its existence secret for about ten days. When rumors spread about the arrival of a testimony, Smith reluctantly placed it before the church board to determine how to handle it.³⁹ His reluctance arose from at least three reasons. First, he thought he had attempted to take an intermediate position but felt misunderstood and mistreated as he was presented “as the chief criminal.” Second, as White’s description of the developments and attitudes differed from his own perception and memory, Smith concluded she had been “misinformed” by non-local individuals. Third, he thought her letter was merely expressing her private opinion because true

EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler to W. C. White, 29 January 1882, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler to S. N. Haskell, 30 January 1882, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler to W. C. White, 20 February 1882, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler to W. C. White, 22 February 1882, EGWCF, EGWE; J. H. Kellogg to W. C. White, 21 June 1882, EGWCF, EGWE.

³⁷ Seventh-day Adventist Educational Society and Board of Trustees Minutes, 1877-1890, vol. 1, Battle Creek, MI, Minutes Collection of Battle Creek College, Emmanuel Missionary College, and Andrews University, CAR, 102-105, 111-115 [transcript]; George I. Butler, Charges Against Prof. G. H. Bell by Eld. McLearn, 5 January 1882, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler, Copy of Charges Preferred Against G. H. Bell by Prof. E. B. Miller, 5 January 1882, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler, Copy of Charges Preferred Against Eld. A. McLearn by Prof. G. H. Bell, 5 January 1882, EGWCF, EGWE; Butler to W. C. White, 19 January 1881 [sic]; Lindsay, "Goodloe Harper Bell," 213-215, 217.

³⁸ George I. Butler, "Unpleasant Themes: The Closing of the College," *Review and Herald*, 12 September 1882, 586; Lindsay, "Goodloe Harper Bell," 204-21. According to Smith’s personal estimation, between 200 and 300 people repeatedly urged him to give a minority report before the college’s board of trustees, something he was hesitant to do. See Butler to W. C. White, 19 January 1881 [sic]; Butler to W. C. White, 29 January 1882; Butler to Haskell, 30 January 1882; Butler to W. C. White, 22 February 1882; George I. Butler to W. C. White, 26 February 1882, EGWCF, EGWE. It was also suspected that Smith leaked sensitive details from the board to other faculty members or students. See Butler to W. C. White, 29 January 1882; Butler to Haskell, 30 January 1882.

³⁹ Ellen G. White to Uriah Smith, 28 March 1882e, Lt 2a, 1882, EGWE; George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, 26 April 1882g, EGWCF, EGWE; Butler, to Ellen G. White, 3 May 1882; George I. Butler to W. C. White, 3 May 1882h, EGWCF, EGWE. See also Lindsay, "Goodloe Harper Bell," 221-23.

testimonies always resulted from visions but her last vision occurred before the college crisis began.⁴⁰ When that and the following letters were published as special testimonies he felt cornered and denounced before the entire public.⁴¹

In late 1882, many people in Battle Creek embraced the testimonies and confessed their faults.⁴² Left with few like-minded people, Smith seemingly found a confidant in Dudley M. Canright who had just left pastoral ministry and adopted a critical attitude towards Ellen White.⁴³ Smith's statements about his inner troubles and the distinction between "testimony" and "vision" stem from that correspondence. Still thinking he had been mistreated by her, Smith felt no burden to defend her writings against A. C. Long's charges of suppression and omission in *Early Writings* in the spring and summer of 1883.⁴⁴ Urged by George Butler, W. H. Littlejohn, and Jerome Fargo, he eventually contributed a brief explanation to the apologetic *Review and Herald* supplement of August 14, in which he described his basic position on White's visions as a true manifestation of spiritual gifts and their relationship to Scripture. He objected to the rejection of their divine origin and the critical and bitter spirit manifested by her

⁴⁰ Smith to Ellen G. White, 1 December 1882; Butler to Ellen G. White, 3 May 1882. See also Durand, "Smith, Uriah (1832-1903)," 516; Land, *Uriah Smith*, 126.

⁴¹ Smith to Canright, 31 July 1883; Smith to Ellen G. White, 1 December 1882; George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, 14 November 1882, EGWCF, EGWE.

⁴² George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, 12 August 1882, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler to W. C. White, 16 August 1882, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler to W. C. White, 22 October 1882, EGWCF, EGWE.

⁴³ Butler to Ellen G. White, 12 August 1882. See below on pp. 166, 167.

⁴⁴ Smith to Canright, 22 March 1883; Smith to Canright, 31 July 1883; Ellen G. White to Smith, 31 July 1883. See also below on pp. 135, 137, 147, 148.

detractors.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the absence of any other article from his pen in that supplement may be indicative of his reservations regarding White and her writings.

Gary Land suggests that Smith never really “abandoned his [private] reservations regarding the Testimonies,”⁴⁶ yet several experiences at the Michigan camp meeting from September 25 to October 2, 1883 seemed to have restored Smith’s trust in their importance and necessity. He was relieved to discover in a private talk with Ellen White that some things in the testimony were not meant for him. He witnessed the tremendous revivalistic impact of her preaching on the audience, including his daughter Anna who decided to be baptized at the camp meeting. He began to realize that he had misjudged the trustworthiness and religiosity of his son Uriah Wilton while Ellen White was apparently correct in her estimation of his children. It dawned on him that his example caused others to reject the *Testimonies* and the Adventist faith entirely. As his wife Harriet had been “in terrible distress over his position,” she had urged him to reconsider it and talk to Ellen White. After a sleepless night, he made a public confession in the morning of October 2 in which he expressed his confidence in White’s testimonies and his determination to accept them.⁴⁷ In his report of the camp meeting, he urged his

⁴⁵ Smith to Canright, 31 July 1883; Smith to Canright, 7 August 1883; Smith, "An Explanation," 10, 11. Smith’s brief explanation may have come as a result of Ellen White’s letter of July 31, 1883, in which she took him to task for his lack of support against the bitter accusations of Long, Green, and others. See Ellen G. White to Smith, 31 July 1883. Levterov mistakenly suggests that this letter was written in a context different from the one in which her *Testimonies* to the Battle Creek Church were written in the previous year when he states that here Smith was seemingly “affected by the new critical objections against her inspiration.” See Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White’s Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 174. Cf. Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Battle Creek Church*, [84-page ed.]; Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Church*, no. 31 (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1882).

⁴⁶ Land, *Uriah Smith*, 137, 138.

⁴⁷ W. C. White to Mary K. White, 1 October 1883, WCWCF, CAR; Uriah Smith to D. M. Canright, 2 October 1883, Albion Fox Ballenger, Edward S. Ballenger and Donald E. Mote Papers, Bx 10

readers to trust fully in “the manifestation of the spirit of prophecy in the visions of Sr. W[hite]” and avoid any course tending “to destroy confidence in her work.” In these remarks, Smith took “occasion to state more fully than in the recent *Review* supplement our position on a question which has been the cause of no little agitation of late in some quarters.”⁴⁸ He frequently emphasized that White was doing a work no one else was able to accomplish.⁴⁹ At the General Conference session about a month later, church leaders decided to commission the correction of grammatical imperfections in the *Testimonies for the Church*, a work deemed possible as inspiration, in their view, generally imparted thoughts and not words. That Smith was chosen as one of the five members to serve on the revision committee suggests he may have been considered trustworthy enough to engage in this type of work.⁵⁰ In the summer of 1884 Ellen White stated that Smith took special

pains to vindicate the testimony and show the necessity of our having this gift in the church. When reproof is given, he [Smith] is right on hand to stand by them and

Fld 34, CAR; Uriah Smith to Uriah Wilton Smith, 2 October 1883, Uriah Smith / Mark Bovee Collection, Bx 2 Fld 36, CAR; W. C. White to Mary K. White, 4 October 1883, WCWCF, CAR. Ellen White acknowledged that for many people the visions and the faith were closely connected; destroying the first would also destroy the second. See Ellen G. White to Smith, 31 July 1883. In October Smith decided he would rather support the visions, even though some people held misconceptions regarding them, than to destroy their confidence in the gift as such and the doctrines of the church by extension.

⁴⁸ [Uriah Smith], "The Michigan Camp Meeting," *Review and Herald*, 9 October 1883, 630.

⁴⁹ [Smith], "The Michigan Camp Meeting," 630; Smith to Canright, 2 October 1883.

⁵⁰ Butler and Oyen, "General Conference Proceedings," 741, 742. Thompson and Levterov identify Smith as the chair of the revision committee, yet Timm refers to W. C. White as the chair. See Thompson, "Improving the Testimonies Through Revisions," 14; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 179; Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," 493. Andross reminisced, "I remember that you were appointed chairman of the Committee that was asked to take charge of the republication of these volumes." See E. E. Andross to W. C. White, 29 September 1921, WCWCF, EGWE. The business proceedings refer, nevertheless, to Butler as chair of the committee who was empowered to choose the other four members. See Butler and Oyen, "General Conference Proceedings," 742; George I. Butler and A. B. Oyen, "General Conference Proceedings: Twenty-Second Annual Session," *Review and Herald*, 20 November 1883, 732. It is possible that W. C. White was chosen chairman once the work began.

impress them upon the people as the greatest blessing God has ever vouchsafed to them as a people, which constitutes them as God's chosen ones, preparing to stand in the day of the Lord. We seem to draw in even cords now, and I hope the enemy will have no power to separate us again.⁵¹

The Reliable Inspiration of Ideas

A number of articles in the *Review and Herald* from June 14, 1887 to March 13, 1888 constitute a second set of statements revealing Smith's views on inspiration. These articles were apparently written against the backdrop of criticism against the Adventist church, its doctrines, and Ellen White by the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate* and Dudley M. Canright after his separation from the denomination in early 1887.

Conception of Inspiration

The issues addressed in these articles were dictated primarily by Ellen White's critics, yet those directly connected to the subject of inspiration, such as the inspiration of ideas and words, the nature of literary changes, alleged mistakes, and the completeness of revelation, are outlined in the following paragraphs.

Smith did not see any difference between the experience of "the penmen of the Bible" and that of Ellen White. He argued that inspiration usually presents scenes and ideas to the person's mind while sometimes also providing particular language.

If the Holy Spirit should give a person words to write, he would be obliged to use those very words, without change; but when simply a scene or view is presented before a person, and no language is given, he would be at liberty to describe it in his own words, as might seem to him best to express the truth in the case. And if, having written it out once, a better way of expressing it should occur to him, it would be

⁵¹ Ellen G. White to W. C. White and Mary K. White, 20 August 1884, Lt 53, 1884, EGWE. His support for her prophetic ministry is also attested by his affirmation that Ellen White's *Testimonies* and *Spirit of Prophecy* volumes are a true manifestation of the gift of prophecy predicted for the last times in the Bible. See Uriah Smith, *Synopsis of the Present Truth: A Brief Exposition of the Views of S. D. Adventists* (Battle Creek, MI, et al.: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn, et al., 1884), 303.

perfectly legitimate for him to scratch out all he had written and write it over again, keeping strictly to the ideas and facts which had been shown him; and in the second writing there would be the divinely communicated idea just as much as in the first.⁵²

He admitted that such literary changes had been made in White's writings and explained the nature of these changes. Therefore, redundant remarks could be eliminated by retaining the strongest statements that conveyed the same idea. He illustrated that procedure by giving examples of such "omissions" in White's writings and the Bible. He also stressed the possibility of altering phrases and making stylistic changes without modifying the ideas.⁵³

He assumed inspired writings were divinely protected from theological, factual, and historical discrepancies. Thus he affirmed that the content and message of White's early visions were still in harmony with current Adventist teaching.⁵⁴ Further, he thought it was possible to harmonize seeming discrepancies between her narration of events and the manner they were narrated in Scripture.⁵⁵

Smith qualified that assumption by denying that revelation necessarily provides comprehensive knowledge about a subject, a possible cause for both misunderstanding and future growth in understanding. Referring to the discussion of the time to begin the Sabbath, he mentioned that Ellen White initially allowed "science" to define "even" as 6

⁵² Uriah Smith, "Which Are Revealed, Words or Ideas?," *Review and Herald*, 13 March 1888, 168, 169. See also Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 157, 158.

⁵³ Uriah Smith, "Suppression and the Shut Door," *Review and Herald*, 19 July 1887, 456, 457.

⁵⁴ Smith, "Suppression and the Shut Door," 456, 457; Uriah Smith, "Mrs. White and Her Work," *Review and Herald*, Extra, 22 November 1887, 11.

⁵⁵ Uriah Smith, "Mary's Offering," *Review and Herald*, 26 July 1887, 472, 473.

p.m. until later studies revealed that Scripture defined “even” as sunset, the initial understanding being nevertheless in close proximity to the correct biblical definition.⁵⁶

In summary, Smith saw proof in the Bible and White’s experience that inspiration operated in at least two different modes—usually by giving ideas and presenting scenes and sometimes by providing particular language. He primarily focused on the revelatory aspect, without discussing the nature of the divine aid in the subsequent transmission of these truths.⁵⁷ He presented his perspective as the overall Adventist view,⁵⁸ but his statements are admittedly more explicit than the remarks of any other Adventist writer up to that point, only to be exceeded in precision and complexity by Ellen White.

Objections to Other Views

Uriah Smith agreed with White’s opponents in their assumption that divine predictions should be fulfilled and visionary messages be theologically and factually accurate, yet he objected to their claim that her writings did not pass these tests and to their establishment of six strict criteria that exceeded even biblical standards.

First, he objected to their reasoning that White could not be a prophetess because she never worked a miracle to prove the divine origin of her messages by pointing out that Scripture did not contain a precedent for that requirement. Emphasizing that she never called herself a “prophetess,” he stated that it was a term employed by her enemies

⁵⁶ Smith, “Mrs. White and Her Work,” 11. See above on pp. 57, 58.

⁵⁷ Smith, “Which Are Revealed, Words or Ideas?,” 168, 169.

⁵⁸ Uriah Smith, “A Miracle Called for,” *Review and Herald*, 18 October 1887, 649; Smith, “Which Are Revealed, Words or Ideas?,” 168.

to excite prejudice and contempt with those ignorant of the relevant facts.⁵⁹ Second, as numerous people claimed that none of her predictions have been fulfilled (Deuteronomy 18:22), Smith referred to fulfillments of some of her predictions.⁶⁰ Third, responding to the accusation that Adventists suppressed and omitted certain passages in White's earliest writings, specifically on the shut door, he argued that they still believed in the propositions revealed in these visions and no substantial changes effecting their theology had been made during or before his time at the *Review* office (since 1853).⁶¹ Many supposed discrepancies and mistakes resulted from a misunderstanding of the subject or context of these statements.⁶² Fourth, Smith frequently objected to the charge that Ellen White's words cannot be inspired as her manuscripts have been revised for the press and she utilized quotations from historians, by suggesting that Adventists never claimed the inspiration of her words or the words of Scripture. His protestations are significant considering the ambiguous employment of dictation language by some Adventists in the 1860s and 1870s.⁶³ Fifth, he tried to disprove the charge of discrepancies between

⁵⁹ Smith, "A Miracle Called for," 649; Smith, "Which Are Revealed, Words or Ideas?," 168.

⁶⁰ Uriah Smith, "Fulfillment," *Review and Herald*, 9 August 1887, 504, 505.

⁶¹ Smith, "Suppression and the Shut Door," 456, 457. He stated that some of the statements allegedly omitted in 1851 were already missing in publications from 1845 to 1848. Some of the early visions indicated probation had not yet been closed, but since Adventists still believed in a general shut door, they were unable to fathom these aspects in the visions. Smith further pointed out that the strongest statements were erroneously retained in later publications, being still in line with current Adventist beliefs. For a discussion of the history of the Sabbatarian Adventist understanding of the shut door doctrine from the mid-1840s to the early 1850s and Ellen White's contribution to that doctrine, see Merlin D. Burt, "Understanding Ellen White and the 'Shut Door,'" in *Understanding Ellen White: The Life and Work of the Most Influential Voice in Adventist History*, ed. Merlin D. Burt (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 166–176.

⁶² Smith, "Mrs. White and Her Work," 11.

⁶³ Smith, "A Miracle Called for," 649; Smith, "Which Are Revealed, Words or Ideas?," 168. See above on pp. 39-42.

White's writings and the Bible. He concentrated specifically on the criticism against her narration of Mary's offering in chapter 32 of *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 2, comparing it with relevant passages in the gospels and the comments of eminent Bible interpreters.⁶⁴

Sixth, Smith challenged the erroneous expectations that God always reveals comprehensive knowledge and inspired individuals are divinely kept from misunderstanding revealed matters.⁶⁵

Sources and Influences

Smith's involvement in the editing of Ellen White's writings and his reading of kindred considerations by other Adventist writers may have assisted him in formulating his statements on the primary inspiration of ideas rather than words.

Whereas in previous years James White functioned as her main literary assistant, two experiences illustrate Smith's involvement in editing her writings after James's death. In November 1883, the General Conference called for the correction of grammatical imperfections in the *Testimonies for the Church* as "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."⁶⁶ As Smith actively participated in the ensuing correction process, he witnessed first-hand how

⁶⁴ Smith, "Mary's Offering," 472, 473.

⁶⁵ This expectation addressed specifically Ellen White's initial partial understanding of the time to commence the Sabbath mentioned in the previous chapter. See Smith, "Mrs. White and Her Work," 11.

⁶⁶ Butler and Oylen, "General Conference Proceedings," 741.

language may be corrected without altering the underlying ideas.⁶⁷ Then, when Ellen White was in Europe from 1885 to 1887, she continued to send articles for weekly publication in the *Review*.⁶⁸ Yet as she was unable to inspect editorial changes made in preparation for the press, Smith asked her to “convey” her “thoughts” to aid the editorial assistants in maintaining her intended meaning as best as possible.⁶⁹

In the summer of 1887 other Adventist writers voiced similar thoughts.⁷⁰ Thus, in June and July, J. P. Henderson published several articles in the *Review* in which he stressed that “the language of the Bible is not considered to have been inspired” but “its ideas alone were presented” to the Bible writers “in the form of visions and dreams.” The Holy Spirit impressed upon them the duty to describe these truths “in the language of man.” Quoting and paraphrasing from Calvin E. Stowe, he stated that Scripture was not given in superhuman language but in human language, which was by necessity and its very nature imperfect as one word may have different meanings and different words may describe the same thing. Henderson concluded that language was subject to change if

⁶⁷ Butler and Oyen, "General Conference Proceedings," 742; Ellen G. White to Smith, 19 February 1884. See also Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," 493.

⁶⁸ In 1886, every cover article of the *Review and Herald* came from Ellen White's pen. In 1887, most cover articles were from her with a few exceptions. For the exact travel dates of her sojourn in Europe see Moon and Kaiser, "For Jesus and Scripture," 59, 60.

⁶⁹ Uriah Smith to Ellen G. White, 9 November 1886, EGWCF, EGWE.

⁷⁰ Timm and Levterov interpret George W. Morse's statement in early 1888 on the non-inspiration of specific words and phrases in the Book of Job as a rejection of the theory of mechanical inspiration. See Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," 493; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 167. They seem to overlook, however, the context in which that statement was made. Morse argued that the Holy Spirit did not inspire the false words and phrases of Job's friends but he moved the inspired writer of the book to quote their sayings in order to teach some truth or illustrate a principle. He nevertheless failed to qualify the type of inspiration in general. See George W. Morse, "Scripture Questions," *Review and Herald*, 6 March 1888, 155.

modern readers were to understand the intended original meaning.⁷¹ He discussed the issue of supposed mistakes, discrepancies, and contradictions in the Bible and concluded that some of them could be traced back to copyists and translators whereas others could be harmonized easily.⁷² Like Smith, Henderson therefore assumed that the Holy Spirit inspired only the thoughts of the inspired writers while safeguarding them from theological and factual imperfections.

Smith's arguments closely resemble Stowe's ideas on the versatility of human language as quoted and paraphrased by Henderson, but it seems more likely that Smith's own views resulted from his involvement in the editorial work of White's *Testimonies* and periodical articles as these experiences preceded the statements of both Stowe and Henderson, and his views exceeded their remarks in clarity and precision.

The Context of the Statements

Most scholars neglect to reconstruct the background of Smith's statements on inspiration in the years 1887 and 1888.⁷³ Gary Land is an exception to the rule in

⁷¹ J. P. Henderson, "The Bible—No. 3," *Review and Herald*, 7 June 1887, 355. Cf. Calvin E. Stowe, *History of the Books of the Bible: Designed to Show What the Bible is Not, What It Is, and How to Use It* (Boston, MA: Estes and Lauriat, 1886), 15, 16. See also J. P. Henderson, "The Bible—No. 10: History of Various Translations," *Review and Herald*, 26 July 1887, 467, 468.

⁷² J. P. Henderson, "The Bible—No. 4," *Review and Herald*, 14 June 1887, 370; J. P. Henderson, "The Bible—No. 8," *Review and Herald*, 12 July 1887, 434, 435; J. P. Henderson, "The Bible—No. 9," *Review and Herald*, 19 July 1887, 451, 452.

⁷³ Wilcox, Timm, and Levterov mention Smith's March 13, 1888 article but fail to give any background. See F. M. Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus: A Review of the Work and Teachings of Mrs. Ellen Gould White* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1944), 86, 87; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 157, 158, 167; Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," 493, 494; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 157, 158, 167. Durand refers only to Smith's clarification of his personal experience in the *Review and Herald* supplement of December 1887. See Durand, *Yours in the Blessed Hope, Uriah Smith*, 288, 289.

suggesting that Smith's articles were written with D. M. Canright in mind,⁷⁴ yet an examination of these articles shows that this is only partially true.

Land asserts that Smith's first three articles in the *Review* were all drafted in response to Canright's charges against Ellen White,⁷⁵ yet some details in these articles seem to disprove his assertion. Canright's first article did not appear before July 16, 1887, suggesting that at least Smith's articles from June 7, June 14, and July 19 may not have been directed against him after all. A comparison of Smith's articles with the content of the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, the periodical of the Church of God, based in Marion, Iowa,⁷⁶ in the spring of 1887 proves that they came in response to articles in that periodical. In his first article on June 7, he explained his classification of "the opposers" of Ellen White "into two divisions," as found in his 1868 book *The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White*. He further addressed specifically an "opposition" that supposedly began attacking the visions about nineteen years earlier and now claimed that he was "mistaken" in his estimation of their character.⁷⁷ These comments were most likely a response to M. B. Smith's remarks in the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate* on May 3. He had referred to the classification in Uriah Smith's book and critiqued his characterization

⁷⁴ Land, *Uriah Smith*, 138. He does not mention, however, Smith's significant articles of October 19, 1887 and March 13, 1888.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 138, 165 fn. 22.

⁷⁶ The different state conferences organized the General Conference of the Church of God in 1884. See Coulter, *The Journey*, 106, 107.

⁷⁷ Smith mentioned the title "Objections to the Visions Answered" although he actually referred to Smith, *The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White*. The title that he used derived from two other circumstances. First, the title after the title page of the book and the header on every page is "The Visions: Objections Answered." Second, two years earlier he had written articles that bore the title "The Visions: Objections Answered." It seems that this was the general name under which people knew his exposition. See Uriah Smith, "Without A Motive," *Review and Herald*, 7 June 1887, 361; Uriah Smith, "The Visions—Objections Answered," *Review and Herald*, 12 June 1866, 9, 10; Smith, "The Visions—Objections Answered," 65–67.

of those opposing Ellen White's visions.⁷⁸ In his second article on June 14, Uriah Smith responded to "labored articles against the visions of Mrs. E. G. White, in which the writers, after trying to make out in them errors, inconsistencies, and contradictions," claimed "they divide churches, and alienate Christians from each other." The last statement was clearly a paraphrase of a statement that M. B. Smith had made in his May 3 article in the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*. There he had asked, "Is the division of churches and alienation of Christians from each other a matter of no importance, not an evil?" Uriah Smith concluded his article by offering to write about alleged contradictions and suppressions in future issues.⁷⁹ In his third article on July 19, he mentioned receiving "letters and requests" that caused him to ponder more on these subjects. He also responded to an eight-page tract entitled *Marks or Ellipsis* designed to demonstrate Ellen White's neglect to indicate omissions in *Early Writings* by means of quotation marks.⁸⁰ That tract was, in fact, written and published by Cornelius DeVos,⁸¹ a former member of

⁷⁸ M. B. Smith, "An Open Letter to S. D. Adventists," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 3 May 1887, 42, 43.

⁷⁹ Uriah Smith, "Divisions vs. Visions," *Review and Herald*, 14 June 1887, 376; M. B. Smith, "An Open Letter to S. D. Adventists," 44. The group at Marion, Iowa, was interested in the subjects of omissions, suppressions, and the shut door as is evident from their publications. See, e.g., A. C. Long, *Comparison of the Early Writings of Mrs. White with Later Publications* (Marion, IA: Advent and Sabbath Advocate, 1883); Cornelius DeVos, *The Shut Door* (Marion, IA: Advent and Sabbath Advocate, 1885); Jacob Brinkerhoff, *The Seventh-Day Adventists and Mrs. White's Visions*, 3rd ed. (Marion, IA: Advent and Sabbath Advocate, 1884).

⁸⁰ Smith, "Suppression and the Shut Door," 456.

⁸¹ "[Advertisement] Marks or Ellipsis—Is It Right," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 24 May 1887, 72. The advertisement reads, "Marks or Ellipsis—Is it right.—This is the title of a tract of 8 pages written and published by Bro. C. DeVos, concerning the divine inspiration of Mrs. White's visions, and shows that in the republishing of Mrs. White's visions by the Seventh Day Adventists, and their omitting portions of them without using any marks of omission, they are guilty of the charge of suppressing portions of her visions, the portions omitted and suppressed are from earlier visions, being such teaching that they now repudiate; the suppressed portions [*sic*] being the teaching for a few years after 1844, that there was no longer any salvation for sinners. Price 1 cent or 10 cts. per dozen, to be had at this office." On August 23 and 27, DeVos responded to Smith's critique of his tract, published in the *Review* on July 19. See Cornelius

the Seventh-day Adventist Church who had joined the Church of God in the mid-1880s.⁸² It is not entirely clear to whom the next two articles responded. Smith's July 26 article dealt with the identity of Mary and Simon in *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 2. He suggested that some "claimed" the existence of specific difficulties in that chapter.⁸³ In his August 9 article he mentioned that "letter after letter have we at different times received insisting that in no single instance has one of her visions ever been fulfilled." His response seems to suggest once more that he had former brethren in mind who defected from the church and rejected the visions.⁸⁴ On August 17, Smith wrote to the editor of the *Michigan Christian Advocate* to substantiate charges made against Adventists in an editorial note in its August 13 issue. That note claimed that Adventists were "publicly applying the most coarse and unkind epithets to Bro. Canright for having the courage . . . in stating the reasons for his renunciation of their faith." Smith sent the editor of the *Michigan Christian Advocate* Butler's March 22, 1887 article in the *Review*, asking church members to refrain from contacting Canright or talking about him. He further asked the

DeVos, "Some Facts Concerning S. D. Adventists [No. 1]," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 23 August 1887, 170, 171; Cornelius DeVos, "Some Facts Concerning S. D. Adventists [No. 2]," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 27 August 1887, 178–79.

⁸² By his own account, DeVos was disfellowshipped by the Battle Creek Church in early 1885. See Cornelius DeVos, "Wonder How He Would Argue Now," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 18 January 1887, 333. Numerous publications suggest that he joined the Church of God about 1885/1886. See, for example, DeVos, *The Shut Door*; Cornelius DeVos, "From Bro. C. De Vos," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 31 August 1886, 183; Cornelius DeVos, "The Time of Christ's Resurrection," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 7 September 1886, 190; Cornelius DeVos, "An Interesting Letter—The Facts in the Case," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 19 October 1886, 238; Cornelius DeVos, "Weak Arguments," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 28 December 1886, 310, 311; Cornelius DeVos, "How They Believe the Bible; Or What One Paper Contained," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 4 January 1887, 314, 315; Cornelius DeVos, "God's Time-Piece," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 11 January 1887, 322; Cornelius DeVos, "Keep the Clock Wound If You Want It to Run," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 25 January 1887, 142, 143; Cornelius DeVos, "Where Are They?," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 1 February 1887, 346.

⁸³ Smith, "Mary's Offering," 472.

⁸⁴ Smith, "Fulfillment," 504, 505.

editor to inform him how Adventists had deviated from that guideline. As the editor failed to respond, Smith asked him two more times, on August 31 and September 12, for a response.⁸⁵ Smith's response and inquiry suggest that the *Review* had heretofore refrained from publishing any matter against Canright.

All these articles were apparently replies to the Marion party, yet Smith's subsequent articles were primarily responses to Canright's articles in the *Michigan Christian Advocate* of October 8 and 15, 1887. His article on October 18 addressed two recent charges—Ellen White failed to perform miracles in order to prove the divine origin of her prophetic claim, and her words cannot have been inspired because they were revised for the press and she had quoted from uninspired historians.⁸⁶ The first charge was a paraphrase of a statement in a letter from Alfred H. Cleaves, a former church member from Aurora, Illinois, to Smith on August 12.⁸⁷ The fact that Canright made a

⁸⁵ "Current Comment: [Our Adventist Friends]," *Michigan Christian Advocate*, 13 August 1887, 4; Uriah Smith, "Clerical Falsehood: And How the Michigan 'Christian Advocate' Deals in It," *Review and Herald*, 27 September 1887, 616, 617.

⁸⁶ Smith, "A Miracle Called for," 649.

⁸⁷ Uriah Smith to Cornelius DeVos, 19 October 1887, CAR. Cleaves' original statement is quoted in Smith's letter to DeVos as follows, "She [Mrs. White] claims to have performed miracles in proof of her ministry; and in so doing admits the necessity of such evidence in order to establish her office. In her former works she furnishes vouchers for these pretended miracles, and yet she, nor her supporters, would not dare to enter a new field today, and advance her claims, as a prophetess, apostle like, on these grounds." Alfred H. Cleaves was a watchmaker from Aurora, Illinois, who had been a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from about 1878 to 1883. See G. W. Colcord, "Obituary Notices[: N. A. Clark]," *Review and Herald*, 28 March 1878, 103; Alfred H. Cleaves, "A Minister's Letter, and the Reply," *Review and Herald*, 31 January 1882, 67, 68; "Receipts: Shares in S. D. A. P. Association," *Review and Herald*, 14 August 1883, 527; *A Directory of the City of Springfield and Business Guide for 1879-1880*, eds. J. B. Gilliland, J. L. Phillips, and Will H. Gilliland (Springfield, IL: Illinois Journal Co., 1879), 38; 1900 U. S. Federal Census Record, "Alfred H. Cleaves," Illinois, Kane County, Aurora, 17. At some time between 1883 and 1886, he joined the Church of God (Seventh Day) as is evident from his frequent articles and letters in their periodical, the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, in 1886 and 1887. See A. H. Cleaves, "The Church the Bride of Christ [No. 1]," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 29 June 1886, 106, 107; A. H. Cleaves, "The Church the Bride of Christ [No. 2]," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 6 July 1886, 114, 115; A. H. Cleaves, "The Church the Bride of Christ [No. 3]," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 13 July 1886, 122, 123; A. H. Cleaves, "Antichrist," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 31 August 1886, 182, 183; A. H. Cleaves,

similar statement came in, as Smith stated, “as collateral.”⁸⁸ The second charge was a direct quotation from Canright’s article on Ellen White in the *Michigan Christian Advocate* published ten days earlier. Smith’s article did not mention Canright’s name, yet he explicitly clarified to another critic that his reply to that charge came in direct response to Canright.⁸⁹ Then, on November 22, the *Review* issued an extra in response to Canright’s attacks against Adventists.⁹⁰ The Extra contained an article from Smith’s pen in defense of White’s ministry against Canright’s insinuations and another one on his personal experience in 1882/1883 with scruples about the inspiration of the *Testimonies*. In his first article, Smith replied to three issues raised in Canright’s articles of October 8 and 15—Adventists would place her visions on par with or above Scripture; her medical condition when in vision; and her mistakes.⁹¹ Church leaders may have felt the urgent

"Mrs. White's Visions [No. 1]," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 7 December 1886, 282, 283; A. H. Cleaves, "Mrs. White's Visions [No. 2]," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 14 December 1886, 290, 291; A. H. Cleaves, "Mrs. White's Visions [No. 3]," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 21 December 1886, 299, 303; A. H. Cleaves, "Mrs. White's Visions [No. 4]," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 28 December 1886, 306, 307. His last four articles on White’s visions were published as a thirty-six-page pamphlet in early 1887. See "[Advertisement] New Pamphlet," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 4 January 1887, 320.

⁸⁸ Canright stated, “She has never wrought one single miracle to prove her claim as the old prophets did.” See Smith to Devos, 19 October 1887; D. M. Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 12]: Mrs. White and Her Revelations," *Michigan Christian Advocate*, 8 October 1887, 2.

⁸⁹ Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 12]," 2; Smith to DeVos, 19 October 1887; Smith, "A Miracle Called for," 649.

⁹⁰ *Review and Herald*, Extra, 22 November 1887; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 144, 156. Lake suggests the Extra came in response to articles in newspapers and camp meeting handbills. See Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire*, 56. While other articles may have been responses to such materials, Smith’s articles came clearly as replies to his articles in the *Michigan Christian Advocate*.

⁹¹ Smith, "Mrs. White and Her Work," 10, 11. See also Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 12]," 2; D. M. Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 13]: Modern False Prophets," *Michigan Christian Advocate*, 15 October 1887, 2. Levterov seems to suggest that Smith did not address Canright’s “suppression” or “plagiarism” charges because his article in the *Review* Extra failed to mention them, yet he apparently overlooks Smith’s article in the October 18, 1887 issue of the *Review* and his July 19, 1887 article dealing specifically with the suppression charge, even though this

need for a wider circulation of that Extra, which would explain its reprint in December.⁹² A last article on the subject from Smith's pen appeared in the *Review* on March 13, 1888. Intended as a follow-up to the October 18, 1887 article and in answer to inquiries by a brother from Arkansas, the article nevertheless addressed several issues touching on the subject of inspiration as raised by Canright in his articles. Several quotations from anonymous critics were clearly taken from Canright's October 8 article—"We know her words are not inspired. . . . Are these [literary changes by Ellen White or her amanuenses, and quotations from historians] all inspired too?"⁹³

The above examination shows that Smith's articles from early June to early August 1887 came possibly in response to articles and tracts published by the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*. His articles in defense of Ellen White's inspiration in the *Review* from mid-October 1887 to mid-March 1888 were written to address issues raised primarily by Canright's article in the *Michigan Christian Advocate* of October 8, 1887.

After the General Conference at Minneapolis in late 1888, Smith nevertheless returned to judge between acceptable and unreliable portions in White's writings while professedly supporting her ministry. Some scholars interpret Smith's introduction to Ellen White's *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1890) as a plain affirmation of her inspiration,⁹⁴

second article was not directed against Canright. See Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 156.

⁹² See *Review and Herald*, Extra, December 1887. Seemingly unaware of the November 22 issue, Smith's biographers have only referred to the December extra. See Land, *Uriah Smith*, 138; Durand, *Yours in the Blessed Hope, Uriah Smith*, 296 en. 15; Hammond, "The Life and Work of Uriah Smith," 110.

⁹³ Smith, "Which Are Revealed, Words or Ideas?," 168, 169.

⁹⁴ Arthur L. White to Brother, n.d., DF 233-d, LLU; Durand, "Smith, Uriah (1832-1903)," 516.

yet this is doubtful because his introduction neglects to define the issue in precise terms⁹⁵ and it was written amidst his subtle resistance against some of her messages because of her support for E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones.⁹⁶ As a result of White's private testimony to him in the *Review* Extra of December 23, 1890 and serious conversations with him, Smith confessed his wrongs done to Bell in 1882, the trouble caused to her in the past three years, and wrongs done to other people. He accepted White's *Testimonies* wholeheartedly.⁹⁷ She felt that Smith had "fallen on the Rock" and frequently commented positively on his changed attitude.⁹⁸ Subsequently, Smith resumed his strong advocacy of her *Testimonies* and other writings.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets: or, The Great Conflict Between Good and Evil as Illustrated in the Lives of Holy Men of Old* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1890), 19–28.

⁹⁶ Ellen G. White to W. C. White, 27 July 1890, Lt 97, 1890, EGWE; Ellen G. White to O. A. Olsen, 7 October 1890, Lt 20, 1890, EGWE; Ellen G. White to O. A. Olsen, 27 August 1890, Lt 116, 1890, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Uriah Smith, 31 December 1890, Lt 40, 1890, EGWE. See also Knight, *Angry Saints*, 87, 88.

⁹⁷ Ellen G. White, "Be Zealous and Repent," *Review and Herald*, Extra, 23 December 1890, 1–2; Ellen G. White to Bro. and Sr. Washburn, 8 January 1891, Lt 32, 1891, EGWE; Ellen G. White, Diary entries for January 6, 7, 12, and 20, 1891, Ms 40, 1891, EGWE. See also Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:472, 473; Hammond, "The Life and Work of Uriah Smith," 113; Land, *Uriah Smith*, 181, 182.

⁹⁸ Ellen G. White to Bro. and Sr. Washburn, 8 January 1891; Ellen G. White, "Missionary Work," 9 January 1891, Ms 2, 1891, EGWE; Ellen G. White, "Home Again," 9 January 1891, Ms 3, 1891, EGWE; Ellen G. White, Diary entries for January 6, 7, 12, and 20, 1891, Ms 40, 1891. A noteworthy example of her confidence in Smith is her "blank check" to him in 1891 when she sent him an article leaving it up to him how to put it to use. She thought his judgment was "evidently in harmony with what is best, and something to which" she "could have no objection." See Ellen G. White to Uriah Smith, 19 September 1892, Lt 24, 1892, EGWE; Durand, *Yours in the Blessed Hope*, *Uriah Smith*, 295.

⁹⁹ Uriah Smith, "The Spirit of Prophecy and Our Relation to It," sermon delivered on 14 March 1891, EGWCF, EGWE; [Uriah Smith], "In the Question Chair: The Testimonies," *Review and Herald*, 31 March 1891, 200. See also Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:483–485; Hammond, "The Life and Work of Uriah Smith," 113.

Summary

The investigation of two sets of statements on inspiration from Uriah Smith's pen shows that all his comments on the issue were made regarding Ellen White and her writings.

The first set of statements illustrates his doubts about the reliability of a particular testimony as he felt unable to reconcile its postulations with his own perception, experience, and opinion during the College crisis in the spring of 1882. As a result, he argued that White's testimony resulted from her personal judgment rather than from her visions. That dissonance undermined his support of her ministry and writings against others' criticism of her earlier writings in the following one and a half years. Grasping the truthfulness of that testimony in late 1883, Smith regained a measure of his trust in the divine origin of her ministry and writings.

The second set of statements came in response to critiques against White's inspiration primarily by the Marion-based *Advent and Sabbath Advocate* and former Adventist minister Dudley M. Canright in 1887 and 1888. Smith suggested that inspiration generally communicated ideas and only in rare cases words, which is why he rejected her critics' assertion that White claimed a general inspiration of her words. Stylistic changes of words and phrases were therefore unproblematic as long as the sense of the inspired ideas remained unchanged. He assumed inspiration safeguarded the reliable conveyance of theological, factual, and historical matters. His concept of inspiration reflects the view proposed by J. P. Henderson, yet it seems more likely that Smith's understanding of inspiration benefited from his involvement in the revision of the *Testimonies for the Church* in 1884/1885 and the literary editing of her articles during her European travels from 1885 to 1887.

Balancing Extremes: The Rescue Attempt of George I. Butler

George Butler (1834-1918) was an Adventist minister, administrator, and writer who served twice as president of the General Conference (1872-1874, 1880-1888). He became convinced of the genuineness of Ellen White's inspiration in the early 1860s when he listened to Merritt E. Cornell (1827-1893) lecture about the testimonies.¹⁰⁰ When, in 1865, the leaders of the Iowa Conference defected from the church and initiated the Marion Party as a result of their opposition to White's prophetic ministry, Butler not only succeeded them as president of the conference but also became one of the foremost defenders of the visions and testimonies. He increasingly assumed this role after the death of James White in 1881, veteran church leader and husband of Ellen White. Thus, in the summer of 1883, he responded to accusations by the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, a periodical published by the Marion Party, against Ellen White. In the following year Butler wrote a series of articles explaining the nature and manner of divine inspiration.¹⁰¹ Given his significant influence on the church in the 1880s, the present part discusses the propositions and context of these two sets of statements.

The Dynamic Nature of Inspiration

The first set of statements from Butler comes from seven articles and three notes that appeared in a *Review and Herald* supplement on August 14, 1883, published in response to accusations against Ellen White in an *Advent and Sabbath Advocate* extra,

¹⁰⁰ Michael W. Campbell, "Butler, George Ide (1834-1918)," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 331; George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, 18 July 1904, EGWCF, EGWE.

¹⁰¹ Campbell, "Butler, George Ide (1834-1918)," 331, 332.

probably published on July 17, 1883.¹⁰² These articles provide basic insights into Butler's concept of inspiration. Although they lack comprehensive discussions of its nature and operation, they affirm a dynamic nature of inspiration and oppose overly rigid views.

Concept of Inspiration

In his articles Butler addressed the Holy Spirit's operation on an inspired person's mind, divine accommodation to changed circumstances, the imperfection of "inspired" language, and the subject of omissions.

Butler expressed his firm belief that Ellen White's visions and dreams were "a genuine manifestation of spiritual gifts" that fulfilled God's promise of the gift of prophecy in the last days because they passed every biblical test for spiritual manifestations and generated positive fruits in the experience of the Adventist Church.¹⁰³ In his view, the Holy Spirit took "complete possession" of the inspired "person's mind," revealing to him things "he could not know by means of ordinary mental processes of thought and experience." This did not necessarily imply, however, that the Spirit also provided particular language. Butler asserted that visions were God's "ordinary, if not the exclusive manner" of "imparting special light."¹⁰⁴

He suggested that God sometimes accommodates his counsel to changing circumstances and the attitude of his people. Thus when ancient Israel was unwilling to

¹⁰² As Uriah Smith mentioned that extra of the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate* as a recent publication on July 31, 1883, it is assumed that it was issued about July 1883. See Smith to Canright, 31 July 1883. That extra could not be located, yet a later issue of the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate* refers to the publication of an extra on July 17, 1883. See Jacob Brinkerhoff, "S. D. Adventists Vision Fanaticism," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 3 October 1883, 193.

¹⁰³ George I. Butler, "The Visions: How They Are Held Among S. D. Adventists," *Review and Herald*, 14 August 1883, 11, 12.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

follow the path outlined for them, God sometimes adapted his course to accomplish his ultimate goal for them. While the new course may not have been the ideal path, it was the best one under the given circumstances. Butler nevertheless noted that God usually only accommodated his course “in matters of lesser moment.” Counsel given through inspiration may therefore appear contradictory, yet recognizing its underlying principles and overall direction may help in discerning the basic harmony. As a result, not all revealed matter may carry the same authority as, for example, obedience to God’s commandments and the faith of Jesus (Revelation 14:12).¹⁰⁵

In Butler’s view, inspiration did not prevent writers from making grammatical and spelling mistakes. He did not consider the correction of such mistakes by uninspired individuals a problem.¹⁰⁶ Excluding overly verbal concepts of inspiration, he seemed to intimate that God did not supply inspired writers with the very words as he was more concerned with the message, which would then be expressed by the writers in imperfect human language.

The omission of phrases, passages, and entire messages was another subject addressed by Butler. He acknowledged that “more or less numerous . . . omissions” had been made when some early visions and testimonies were reprinted.¹⁰⁷ He assumed that such omissions had often to do with the publication’s intended audience. Butler therefore divided the publicizing of visions into three different groups. First, being of general interest, many visions were published for a wider audience. Second, as some visions

¹⁰⁵ George I. Butler, "The Short-Dress Question," *Review and Herald*, 14 August 1883, 9, 10.

¹⁰⁶ George I. Butler, "Early Writings and Suppression," *Review and Herald*, 14 August 1883, 4.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

addressed particular local churches, containing matters of a personal character, they were in their entirety sent only to these churches. As they often also contained instruction for the church at large, such portions were published in the *Testimonies for the Church* “with the personal passages left out and the persons’ names omitted.” Third, other visions applied only to specific individuals. They were published with the names omitted if they contained general principles of interest for many other people. Butler thought that the original addressees’ “names and peculiarities” were not made known in deference to “the feelings of [these] private persons.”¹⁰⁸ Whether a given passage was considered too personal or no longer important for a reprint often resulted from a change of circumstances such as the original addressee’s repentance, change of course, or death. The determining factor was not the church’s later rejection of some passages as heterodox or immoral. Instead, Butler distinguished the message’s intended purpose for the original audience from its usefulness and applicability to later audiences. Failure to publish these private portions therefore did not jeopardize the belief in their divine inspiration.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, he felt that the insertion of Bible references to an inspired document were not an addition to its ideas and message.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ George I. Butler, "Testimonies, Public and Private," *Review and Herald*, Supplement, 14 August 1883, 13. See also Butler, "The Visions," 12.

¹⁰⁹ Butler, "Early Writings and Suppression," 5.

¹¹⁰ George I. Butler, "A Venerable Document," *Review and Herald*, Supplement, 14 August 1883, 5. Butler suggested that the parts featuring Ellen White’s visions in the tract *A Word to the Little Flock*, published in 1847, contained the number 666 in parentheses and single letters with a rubric at the bottom of each page giving a relevant Bible passage. He indicated that these references were not placed there by Ellen White but by the publishers who assumed they illustrated the same ideas expressed in the vision. See also James White, ed., *A Word to the "Little Flock"* (Gorham, ME: James White, 1847), 14–20; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 166.

Objections to Other Views

Responding almost exclusively to criticisms against Ellen White's visions and writings, Butler objected to several more strict and fixed expectations of divine inspiration. Thus he objected to the idea that the public had a right to know everything inspired. Some messages were addressed only to particular individuals and audiences, and their content was never intended to be known by everybody.¹¹¹ Considering change of circumstances, he responded to the view that White could not have been inspired as her counsel on some subjects had changed over time.¹¹² As he denied the claim that Adventists would consider her writings as the final arbiter of the interpretation of Scripture,¹¹³ he objected to the idea that all products of inspiration were equal in terms of authority. The testimonies were to be received as divinely authoritative communications, but they were nevertheless to be tested by and subject to Scripture.¹¹⁴ He addressed one of the most significant charges against her inspiration in the early 1880s—the suppression of her visions as Adventists were allegedly ashamed of some of her earlier theological statements. Butler's response reveals his conviction that no significant theological changes took place in her writings.¹¹⁵ He also opposed the idea that the omission of

¹¹¹ Butler, "Testimonies, Public and Private," 13; Butler, "The Visions," 12.

¹¹² Butler, "The Short-Dress Question," 9, 10.

¹¹³ George I. Butler, "The New Recruits," *Review and Herald*, Supplement, 14 August 1883, 5.

¹¹⁴ Butler, "The Visions," 12.

¹¹⁵ Butler, "The Short-Dress Question," 9, 10. See also Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 163, 164.

words, phrases, and sentences constituted an inadmissible change of divinely inspired language.¹¹⁶

Sources and Influences

Butler's articles generally discussed the interpretation and handling of Ellen White's visions and writings. He referred to some biblical passages but depended much on the publication and editorial history of her revelations, his own observations and personal experiences with her, and perceptions prevalent among Adventists.

He supported his discussion of White's revelations as a genuine end-time manifestation of spiritual gifts and God's accommodation to changed circumstances by numerous biblical passages. His argument for the first point reminds one of the arguments generally employed by Adventist writers between the 1850s and 1870s.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, he added to his second point that none of the biblical precedents for divine accommodation seemed to circumvent God's great moral principles or Jesus' teachings.¹¹⁸

He saw the same pattern in White's changing counsel concerning female dress in the 1860s. Butler apparently based his discussion on her counsel in her sixth article in *Health: or How to Live* and in the *Testimonies for the Church*. She had initially proposed a particular type of dress based on principles of prudence, health, simplicity, and distinctness, but later she recommended "a dress more in conformity with those

¹¹⁶ Butler, "Early Writings and Suppression," 4, 5; Butler, "A Venerable Document," 5.

¹¹⁷ Butler, "The Visions," 11.

¹¹⁸ Butler, "The Short-Dress Question," 10. He referred to such passages as Numbers 11, 13, 14; 1 Samuel 8; and Matthew 19:1-12.

commonly worn, but plain and unobjectionable,” a response to the opposition of church members to the initial proposition.¹¹⁹

Butler’s statements on Ellen White’s inspiration frequently depended on the publication and editorial history of her visions and writings as illustrated by the following two examples. Butler’s sources for the omission of personal testimonies were *Testimonies for the Church*, numbers 1-10 (1855-1864), and *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 4 (1864). As there were still thousands of copies of the *Testimonies* in circulation when volume 4 of *Spiritual Gifts* appeared, he argued that every reader could examine the differences between the two sets of writings.¹²⁰ The omission of “matters of a local and personal character” in that volume, which were not as relevant for that time any more, had already been pointed out by both James and Ellen White in 1864.¹²¹ Then he stated that the substance of White’s visions as originally printed in *A Word to the Little Flock* (1847) was reprinted “with a few omissions” and “with much other matter” in *Experience and Views* (1851).¹²² These examples illustrate the common Adventist assumption that the Holy Spirit was generally more concerned with the message than the language.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Butler, "The Short-Dress Question," 9; Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 2:410, 473-479; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:421, 456-466; 4:635, 636. See also Dores E. Robinson, *The Story of Our Health Message: The Origin, Character, and Development of Health Education in the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, 3rd rev. and enl. ed. (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1965), 120-130, 166-169, 441-445; Denis Fortin, "Dress Reform," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 786-788.

¹²⁰ Butler, "Early Writings and Suppression," 5.

¹²¹ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 4:iii; Ellen G. White, *The Testimonies to the Church*, [1871], iii. See also above p. 61.

¹²² Butler, "A Venerable Document," 5.

Applying the principle of Matthew 7:16, Butler argued that the kindness, humility, and candor exemplified by believers in the *Testimonies* and the bitterness, unreasonableness, and criticism manifested by those rejecting them proved their divine inspiration.¹²³ His reasons and examples were drawn from the history of the Adventist church and its splinter groups. He argued that the nature of the tree could be determined by the following six fruits of the visions. First, as the visions taught only true, pure, and moral things, church members were led “to the love of God and the study of his word,” and became more devoted, loving, conscientious, and self-sacrificing. Second, acceptance of the visions caused the church to exemplify unity whereas their opponents split into numerous sects. Third, the church constantly gained strength and advanced in various lines of ministry because it followed the advice of the visions. Fourth, conferences in which the testimonies were highly regarded showed the highest degree of prosperity whereas those that respected them less experienced stagnation. Fifth, the same pattern was true for the work and success of individual ministers. Sixth, Butler argued that “the message and the visions belong together, and stand or fall together” as God did not partner with Satan and the visions have been the one leading and molding influence in the church.¹²⁴

¹²³ Butler, "The New Recruits," 6.

¹²⁴ Butler, "The Visions," 11, 12. Levterov shows that the argument of the “good fruits” of Ellen White’s visions and writings had a long tradition in Adventist history, reaching back to the mid-1840s. See Theodore N. Levterov, "How Early Sabbathkeeping Adventists Accepted Ellen G. White as a True Prophet," in *The Gift of Prophecy in Scripture and History*, eds. Alberto R. Timm and Dwain N. Esmond (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 2015), 251, 252.

The Context of the Articles

The above articles were written primarily in the context of the republication of some of Ellen White's early writings and the critical accusations made against her in an *Advent and Sabbath Advocate* extra in July 1883.

In August 1883, Butler stated in retrospect that he had felt for some time the need to republish and make accessible all of White's earlier writings in their original form because church members were increasingly desiring to procure copies of these.¹²⁵ He specifically referred to two sets of documents—those eventually appearing in *Early Writings* and the projected reprinting of *Testimonies for the Church*, nos. 1-30.¹²⁶

To meet that demand the first document, *Early Writings*, was published in December 1882, including reprints of some of her earliest published visions “with the exception of a few sentences.”¹²⁷ When Butler announced the book as containing “the very first of the published writings of Sister White,” he was overlooking the existence of earlier published writings from her pen.¹²⁸

Shortly afterwards, A. C. Long responded in the columns of the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate* accusing Butler of deception as *Early Writings* contained neither “all

¹²⁵ Butler, "Early Writings and Suppression," 5; Butler, "A Venerable Document," 5.

¹²⁶ Butler, "Early Writings and Suppression," 5.

¹²⁷ Butler, "A Venerable Document," 5. See also Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 158.

¹²⁸ George I. Butler, "A Book Long Desired," *Review and Herald*, 26 December 1882, 792. See also Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 161. An example of an earlier document that was not reprinted in *Early Writings* in 1882 was her letter to Eli Curtis in James White, *A Word to the "Little Flock,"* 11, 12. Ellen White explained various omissions in "Suppression and the Shut Door," [1883], Ms 4, 1883, EGWE.

her early visions” nor the earliest of her publications, raising the charge of suppression.¹²⁹ These charges were subsequently reprinted in the tract *Comparison of the Early Writings of Mrs. White with Later Publications* in the spring of 1883. As Long had in his possession the tract *A Word to the Little Flock*, originally published by James White in 1847, he was able to compare it with *Early Writings*. This comparison demonstrated the omission of fifty-five lines from the latter work.¹³⁰

As a result, Butler contacted J. N. Andrews, a ministerial veteran and missionary to Europe, to ascertain precise information about the publishing of Ellen White’s earlier visions in the late 1840s. Andrews provided Butler with information previously unknown to him, confirming some aspects of the publishing history.¹³¹ When Butler attended the western camp meetings, he learned that great efforts had been made to distribute Long’s tract “in almost every church,” troubling especially young converts.¹³² Unable to locate a copy of *A Word to the Little Flock* in New England, he eventually acquired a copy from J. H. Waggoner.¹³³ That copy was apparently reprinted verbatim by July 1883. In

¹²⁹ Butler, "Early Writings and Suppression," 4; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 144, 145, 149, 150, 155, 162.

¹³⁰ Long, *Comparison of the Early Writings of Mrs. White with Later Publications*; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 144, 145, 149. Levterov also mentions the publication of a tract on the same subjects by Jacob Brinkerhoff in 1884, yet its content is not mentioned above as Butler’s articles came directly in response to Long’s tract. See Jacob Brinkerhoff, *The Seventh-Day Adventists and Mrs. White's Visions*.

¹³¹ George I. Butler to J. N. Andrews, 25 May 1883, EGWCF, EGWE; Butler, "Early Writings and Suppression," 4. See also Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 161.

¹³² Butler, "Early Writings and Suppression," 4; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 155.

¹³³ J. H. Waggoner to W. C. White, 16 May 1883, EGWCF, EGWE.

addition, Butler envisioned putting together a *Review* supplement containing articles by Waggoner and Butler.¹³⁴

Meanwhile, in 1882, Alexander McLearn, former president of Battle Creek College, and the lawyer J. S. Green, began joining efforts with the Marion Party. Both were casualties of the Battle Creek College crisis outlined above. The *Advent and Sabbath Advocate* extra allegedly contained also an article by McLearn in which he claimed, for example, that Adventists avoided seriously investigating Scripture because they were afraid to discover something in contrast to Ellen White's teachings.¹³⁵

In response, Butler wrote his article about "the new recruits" of the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, attempting to refute McLearn's charges.¹³⁶ Butler's articles on the issue of inspiration stem from the *Review* supplement of August 14, 1883. Both the supplement and his articles were written with the express purpose of refuting charges and assertions made in the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate* extra and Long's *Comparison of the Early Writings of Mrs. White with Later Publications*.¹³⁷ Butler expressed his astonishment that these people failed to progress although they claimed to believe in the

¹³⁴ George I. Butler to W. C. White, 12 July 1883, EGWCF, EGWE; Butler, "A Venerable Document," 5. See also Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 155, 162.

¹³⁵ Butler, "The New Recruits," 5, 6. For the dating of the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate* extra see above on p. 127 fn. 102. That both Green and McLearn wrote articles against Seventh-day Adventists in general and the visions in particular is also evident from J. S. Green, "Two Sides," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 19 June 1883, 82; Alexander McLearn, "Remodeling the Visions," *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, 31 August 1883, 130.

¹³⁶ Butler, "The New Recruits," 5, 6.

¹³⁷ *Review and Herald*, Supplement, 14 August 1883, 16 pages; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 144, 155. That there was a need for such a publication is evident from Butler's admission that there were many Seventh-day Adventists "who do not believe in the visions." See Butler, "The Visions," 12; Knight, *Meeting Ellen White*, 37.

biblical teachings on the seventh-day Sabbath, the state of the dead, the second coming of Christ, and other doctrines readily shared by Seventh-day Adventists. Their failure, he reasoned, must have resulted from their rejection of the visions.¹³⁸

The Nature and Manner of Inspiration

Scholars acknowledge the significance of the ten-part series of articles by George Butler as published in the *Review and Herald* from January to June 1884 because it was the first distinct promulgation of a particular theory of inspiration in the history of Adventism.¹³⁹ The first five articles appeared from January 8 to February 5, and the remaining five articles were printed intermittently from April 1 to June 3 as Butler was travelling around Europe from February to June.¹⁴⁰ The remarks dealt primarily with the biblical writers, yet Butler noted in conclusion that they were equally applicable to Ellen White.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Butler, "The Visions," 12.

¹³⁹ Bemmelen, "The Mystery of Inspiration," 15; Hoyle, "An Historical Study of the Development of the Doctrine of Inspiration in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1860-1966," 11; Timm, "History of Inspiration in the Adventist Church (1844-1915)," 184, 185; Timm, "Understanding Inspiration," 12; Timm, "Adventist Views on Inspiration [No. 1]," 27, 28. It seems that Van Bemmelen inadvertently gave 1874 as the publication year. See Bemmelen, "Revelation and Inspiration," 52.

¹⁴⁰ See, e.g., George I. Butler to W. C. White, 10 February 1884, EGWCF, EGWE; "[Notice]," *Review and Herald*, 12 February 1884, 112; George I. Butler to W. C. White, 15 June 1884, EGWCF, EGWE; Bemmelen, "The Mystery of Inspiration," 16. Interestingly, whereas the first four articles conclude with a sentence that gives a prospect of the next article, the fifth article finishes with a summary of that article. This could suggest that Butler had not yet written the remaining articles and may not have known yet how to continue, which would also explain the break for almost two months.

¹⁴¹ George I. Butler, "Inspiration, No. 10: Final Conclusions and Reflections," *Review and Herald*, 3 June 1884, 362.

Concept of Inspiration

The following paragraphs explain Butler's understanding of degrees of inspiration, the reliability of the biblical text, and the types of its imperfections. While he sometimes employed the terms "revelation" and "inspiration" in a technical sense, he often seemed to use them interchangeably as the first three degrees concern special revelation whereas the last two describe aspects of inspiration.¹⁴²

God has given light to man in various ways:—**1.** By *speaking with his own voice* his holy law in the audience of the people; by announcing his Son and commanding the people to hear him; and by *writing with his own finger* the words of his law upon the tables of stone. **2.** By *taking Moses and Christ into his especial presence*, and fully instructing them relative to the great work to be done in the dispensations he was then inaugurating. **3.** By revealing to men in *visions and dreams* things which they could not have otherwise known, these men afterward writing or speaking the substance of what was thus given them, for the instruction of others. This method of inspiration, however, was not as full and perfect as the preceding. **4.** By the influence of his Spirit, the Lord *illuminated the memory* of those who had been acquainted with important events, so that they could correctly place them on record. The Spirit brought all things "to their remembrance." **5.** It is probable that the Spirit of God rested upon Solomon and others, and *especially illuminated their natural faculties*, bringing to their minds good thoughts which are left on record for our benefit, in such books as the Proverbs, Job, etc. These books seem to have been given in a different manner from most of the other books of the Bible.¹⁴³

The first and second degrees of inspiration were considered by Butler as the most direct, clear, complete, and impressive manners of giving light, and accordingly as the most superior method of revelation and the highest sense of inspiration.¹⁴⁴ The third degree—visions and dreams—was in his view the most common and ordinary form of

¹⁴² See George I. Butler, "Inspiration [No. 2]: Differences in Degrees and Manner of Bestowment," *Review and Herald*, 15 January 1884, 41. It should be noted that, in his counting of the other degrees, Butler skipped the first degree and referred to the remaining four degrees as the first to the fourth degree.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 41 (emphasis supplied).

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

inspiration. It applied specifically to the production of the prophetic books, large parts of the New Testament, and some Psalms.¹⁴⁵ The fourth degree revived, strengthened, and invigorated the prophet's memory to remember details clearly (John 14:25, 26) and express them accurately in his own language, but Butler believed this mode of the Spirit's operation applied generally to all degrees and particularly to situations where biblical writers were already familiar with the facts. In his view, the historical books of the Bible resulted from that degree of inspiration.¹⁴⁶ The last degree of inspiration dealt primarily with everyday matters rather than spiritual lessons, and had been evident in the writing of the biblical wisdom literature.¹⁴⁷ Butler repeatedly employed the terms "degree," "manner," "form," "mode," "method," and "kind" of inspiration interchangeably to describe varying intensities of the Spirit's revelatory operation.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Butler, "Inspiration [No. 2]," 41; George I. Butler, "Inspiration, No. 3: Visions and Dreams," *Review and Herald*, 22 January 1884, 57, 58; George I. Butler, "Inspiration, No. 4: Light Through Visions the Principal Source of Bible Inspiration," *Review and Herald*, 29 January 1884, 73, 74; George I. Butler, "Inspiration, No. 5: The Word of the Lord Came to Men Through Visions," *Review and Herald*, 5 February 1884, 89, 90; George I. Butler, "Inspiration, No. 6: How Were the Poetic and Historical Books of the Bible Written?," *Review and Herald*, 15 April 1884, 249.

¹⁴⁶ Butler, "Inspiration [No. 2]," 41; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 6," 249, 250. Following the reading of the King James Version, he interpreted Luke 1:3 as saying that Luke was such an eyewitness of the events described in his gospel. While this is certainly true for the Book of Acts (see the use of the word "we" in that book), Butler seemed to overlook the fact that the Greek text of Luke 1:3 suggests that in the drawing of the Gospel, Luke functioned as a historian who carefully collected and investigated the reports of eyewitnesses.

¹⁴⁷ Butler, "Inspiration [No. 2]," 41; George I. Butler, "Inspiration, No. 7: The Books of Solomon, Job, etc.," *Review and Herald*, 22 April 1884, 265–67.

¹⁴⁸ George I. Butler, "Inspiration [No. 1]: Its Nature and Manner of Communication," *Review and Herald*, 8 January 1884, 24; Butler, "Inspiration [No. 2]," 41; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 3," 57; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 4," 73; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 6," 250; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 7," 265, 266; George I. Butler, "Inspiration, No. 8: In What Sense Are the Scriptures Inspired?," *Review and Herald*, 6 May 1884, 296, 297; George I. Butler, "Inspiration, No. 9: Is There Any Degree of Imperfection in the Revelation of God to Man?," *Review and Herald*, 27 May 1884, 345, 346.

He frequently emphasized that the biblical writers recorded true accounts of actual events which were, however, not always perfect, a seeming dichotomy that deserves a detailed explanation.¹⁴⁹ This has been noted but possibly misunderstood by several writers. Emmett K. Vande Vere suggests, for example, that Butler proposed a concept of inspiration that did not require “absolute perfection.”¹⁵⁰ Going slightly beyond Vande Vere, Alberto R. Timm and Frank M. Hasel argue that Butler implied that the *Testimonies* could not be regarded as “absolutely perfect” or “absolutely trustworthy.”¹⁵¹ In Butler’s view, Scripture was both perfect and imperfect. On the one hand, he argued that “so far as perfection of doctrine and moral instruction is concerned this revelation is perfect; and that as a whole it is perfectly adapted to save men from sin” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).¹⁵² On the other hand, he suggested that “there is some degree of imperfection, so far as *clearness* and *fullness* of light is concerned, in revelations from God through prophecy, ever remembering, however, that what is given is true and good.”¹⁵³ Denying that Scripture’s “imperfection” had anything to do with historical or scientific inaccuracies, Butler frequently stressed that inspiration produced “correct,” “true,” and “reliable”

¹⁴⁹ Butler, "Inspiration, No. 6," 249; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 7," 266; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 9," 344, 346; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 10," 361.

¹⁵⁰ Emmett K. Vande Vere, *Rugged Heart: The Story of George I. Butler* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1979), 66.

¹⁵¹ Timm, "Adventist Views on Inspiration [No. 1]," 28; Frank M. Hasel, "Inspiration, Degrees of," 896.

¹⁵² Butler, "Inspiration, No. 10," 361. See also Butler, "Inspiration, No. 9," 344; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 8," 296.

¹⁵³ Butler, "Inspiration, No. 9," 346 (emphasis supplied).

accounts.¹⁵⁴ To clarify the lack of “fullness” of the third and fourth degree of inspiration, he wrote, “The Bible does not profess to be perfect and complete as a history or a prophecy, in the sense that it gives a record of all the past or all that will occur. It tells the truth as far as it goes, but often does not tell all we would like to know.”¹⁵⁵ And as 1 Corinthians 13:9-12 refers to prophecy as something partial and dim in contrast to “the perfect” and clear that is to come, he concluded that visions and dreams do not exhibit a clarity that precludes the possibility of misunderstanding. As a result, believers need the illumination of the Holy Spirit to comprehend the proper meaning of passages, allowing them to grow in understanding and spirituality.¹⁵⁶ Beyond describing inspired passages’ lack of clarity and completeness as “imperfection,” Butler perceived occasional instances of uninspired statements in the Bible. He concluded that no special divine assistance accompanied the writing of a biblical writer’s recording of his hope or uncertainty about particular matters that never came to fruition, illustrating their humanness and incomplete knowledge. He nevertheless believed that these thoughts were accurately recorded and were beneficial for modern-day believers.¹⁵⁷ Talking about the speeches of Job’s friends, he argued that much of what they said was not “in harmony with the mind of the Spirit, and could not, therefore, have been fully inspired with the Spirit of the Lord.” While he did not question that these passages were true and morally instructive accounts of their

¹⁵⁴ Butler, "Inspiration, No. 6," 249; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 7," 266; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 9," 344, 346; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 10," 361; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 8," 296, 297.

¹⁵⁵ Butler, "Inspiration, No. 9," 344.

¹⁵⁶ Butler, "Inspiration, No. 9," 344–46; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 10," 361, 362.

¹⁵⁷ Butler, "Inspiration, No. 10," 361, 362. Butler referred to passages such as 1 Corinthians 1:16; 4:19; 7:7, 10, 12, 40; 16:5-9; 2 Corinthians 1:25-27; 11:21; Romans 15:24; Philippians 2:19, 23; 2 Timothy 4:9-13.

actual experiences, he seemed to confuse the lack of inspiration in Job's friends with the inspiration of the writer of the book.¹⁵⁸

Butler did not think that Scripture's lacking clarity and completeness, and the existence of different modes of divine operation, would jeopardize the reliability of its reports and divine insights. It was to be accepted with reverence and respect as a reliable and authoritative account.¹⁵⁹ His mixed form of the theories of degrees and partial inspiration attempted to affirm Scripture's reliability and explain some of its human phenomena, yet it will become evident below that his frequent emphasis on its imperfection and his mention of uninspired portions constituted contentious issues.

Objections to Other Views

Butler's frequent references to objectionable views of Scripture may shed light on his reasons for writing the series of articles. He explicitly opposed the verbal inspiration of Scripture and accommodating views of inspiration, representative of two extremes in the continuum of inspiration theories.

He used the phrase "the pen of inspiration" to describe a certain phrase in the book of Isaiah,¹⁶⁰ but he vehemently opposed the idea that the Holy Spirit gave the inspired writers "the very words and forms of expression" because such a manner of inspiration would have turned them into mere machines and robbed the writings of their "stamp of individuality." That theory was employed by professed defenders of Scripture

¹⁵⁸ Butler, "Inspiration, No. 7," 266.

¹⁵⁹ Butler, "Inspiration, No. 10," 361, 362; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 8," 297; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 9," 344.

¹⁶⁰ Butler, "Inspiration, No. 4," 73, 74.

such as Benjamin B. Warfield and Alexander A. Hodge,¹⁶¹ yet Butler felt that it put forth false claims that would eventually damage a belief in the divine inspiration of the Bible. Since God did not prevent variants and different translations of the biblical manuscripts, Butler suggested that God obviously “did not consider a word-for-word inspiration necessary or essential.” As there was nevertheless an agreement in the essential thoughts and ideas, he concluded that God must have been less concerned with safeguarding actual words and phrases.¹⁶²

In contrast, he rejected the attempt of some Protestant ministers to reconcile Scripture with scientific theories and human speculations. He considered the claims of Thomas Paine (1737-1809) and Robert G. Ingersoll (1833-1899) too shocking to be attractive to contemporary Protestants, yet Butler sensed that there were other “infidels” who were more effective in overthrowing faith in the inspiration, truthfulness, and reliability of Scripture. Some theologians speculated that Moses had received the stories of Genesis from tradition rather than from divine revelation. Others asserted that the historical writings in Scripture originated in the same way as ordinary, uninspired history books. Overlooking the possibility that the Holy Spirit could have assisted biblical writers in the choice of historical annals and genealogies, Butler reasoned that Moses’ report could be authoritative and trustworthy only if he had received the information through divine revelation. Apart from mentioning these threats, Butler nevertheless

¹⁶¹ See Archibald A. Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield, *Inspiration* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1881).

¹⁶² Butler, "Inspiration [No. 1]," 24; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 8," 296, 297. See also Bemmelen, "The Mystery of Inspiration," 20; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 157, 166, 167.

refrained from naming any specific individuals or theories.¹⁶³ He touched the threat of scientific theories and human speculations only briefly, without addressing any specifics.

Judging from the extent of discussion on these two theories, Butler seemed to be more worried about church members following other Protestants in accepting a strict verbal view of inspiration, in reaction to threats against the inspiration and authority of both Scripture and Ellen White's writings.

Sources and Influences

This emphasis on imperfection may have caused some scholars to see the origin of Butler's views in theological liberalism. Leslie Hardinge argues, for example, somewhat anachronistically that Butler "showed a remarkable grasp of neo-orthodox views."¹⁶⁴ In a slightly different way, George Reid suggests that the higher biblical critical trend manifested itself in Butler's series of articles, implying that he had appropriated some of these presuppositions.¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, as he frequently opposed skepticism and critical theology,¹⁶⁶ both Hardinge and Reid seem to misinterpret the nuances of Butler's elucidations.

¹⁶³ Butler, "Inspiration, No. 4," 73; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 8," 296; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 10," 361; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 6," 249. See also Bemmelen, "The Mystery of Inspiration," 22.

¹⁶⁴ Leslie Hardinge, "The Philosophy of Inspiration in the Writings of Ellen G. White: 'Miracle' of Arrogance," *Ministry*, April 1969, 32. See also p. 33: "The article ends with the usual neo-orthodox plea to accept the message of God contained in the Bible and live by it!" It should be noted, however, that neo-orthodoxy did not develop until after World War I in reaction to the classical theological liberalism of the late nineteenth century.

¹⁶⁵ George W. Reid, "Is the Bible Our Final Authority?," *Ministry*, November 1991, 8.

¹⁶⁶ See above on p. 144.

Some scholars suggest Thomas Hartwell Horne's *Introduction* may have been the primary source for Butler's theory of degrees.¹⁶⁷ There are certainly a few similarities to the aspect of partial inspiration, yet those scholars fail to provide evidence for Butler's appropriation of Horne's concept in developing his theory of degrees. Butler supported his argument almost exclusively by referring to biblical passages, but he also left some clues to the source he may have appropriated. The only other source referred to in his articles was Adam Clarke's Bible commentary. The two references to Clarke's work supported merely text-critical and etymological arguments and not his concept of inspiration, but the different aspects of Butler's concept of inspiration demonstrate, in fact, a striking resemblance to Clarke's version of the theory of degrees.¹⁶⁸

Butler's emphases on the inspiration of the thoughts and the mind, rejection of a general verbal view of inspiration, and suggestion of imperfections of language in inspired writings were shared by other Adventist writers and Ellen White as is evident from the resolution of the General Conference to revise the *Testimonies* and White's own statements of previous years.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Bemmelen, "The Mystery of Inspiration," 5, 23; Hoyle, "An Historical Study of the Development of the Doctrine of Inspiration in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1860-1966," 10; Graham, *Ellen G. White*, 159; Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire*, 318 en. 25.

¹⁶⁸ Butler, "Inspiration [No. 1]," 24; Butler, "Inspiration, No. 9," 346. See Adam Clarke, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: The Text Carefully Printed from the Most Correct Copies of the Present Authorized Version, Including the Marginal Readings and Parallel Texts, with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, vol. 2 (New York: Waugh and Mason for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1833), 259, 260. Clarke's concept of inspiration has been outlined above on pp. 17, 18, 29, 92.

¹⁶⁹ Butler and Oyen, "General Conference Proceedings," 741; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 158, 159. See also above on pp. 55-58, 60, 61.

The Context of the Articles

Scholars generally place George Butler's articles on inspiration in the context of the power struggle at Battle Creek College in 1882 and 1883, and follow Emmett K. Vande Vere's suggestion that Butler tried to strike a balance between Ellen White's prophetic authority and Uriah Smith's questioning of the inspiration of her *Testimonies* by recommending a divine-human concept that did not require absolute perfection.¹⁷⁰ It seems more likely, however, that his articles were motivated by a desire to counter the underlying assumptions of the charges against White's recently published book *Early Writings* and to preempt criticism against the forthcoming revised *Testimonies for the Church*.

As shown above, Smith's distinction between "vision" and "testimony" resulted from his inability to reconcile White's testimonies in the spring of 1882 with his self-perception. Yet by early October 1883 he began to recognize that he had misunderstood some portions of these testimonies and that other parts described his condition quite adequately. Smith's altered perception also changed his attitude towards her testimonies.¹⁷¹ As many other people experienced a similar change, it seems unlikely that Butler felt the need to invent a new concept of inspiration to accommodate Smith's earlier doubts.

¹⁷⁰ Vande Vere, *Rugged Heart*, 66, 67. See also Knight, *Angry Saints*, 88; Timm, "History of Inspiration in the Adventist Church (1844-1915)," 184, 185; Hasel, "Inspiration, Degrees of," 895, 896; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 184.

¹⁷¹ See above on pp. 109-111.

In December 1882, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (1851) and *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1 (1858), were reprinted in *Early Writings* to counter the suppression charge of White's critics.¹⁷² Butler suggested in a *Review* announcement and in the preface of the book that "no shadow of change" was made "in any idea or sentiment of the original work."¹⁷³ About half a year later A. C. Long responded with his sixteen-page tract *Comparison of the Early Writings of Mrs. White with Later Publications*. Comparing *A Word to the "Little Flock"* (1847) and *Experience and Views* with the recently published *Early Writings*, he found changes and omissions of some original lines. As a result, he asked, how people who believed that White's writings were God's word could omit portions from them (Revelation 22:18, 19). Burt correctly argues that Long's statement presupposed that true divine inspiration gave specific words and phrases.¹⁷⁴ Adventists replied to Long's tract with a sixteen-page *Review* supplement on August 14, 1883. Scholars see this supplement as one of the most significant early publications because it provided principles on the interpretation of White's writings in response to charges of her critics.¹⁷⁵ In late August she herself wrote one of her rare responses to the criticisms.¹⁷⁶ Butler's correspondence suggests that some Adventists

¹⁷² Ellen G. White, *Early Writings of Mrs. White: Experience and Views, and Spiritual Gifts, Volume One*, 2nd ed. (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1882); "Publishers' Department," *Review and Herald*, 12 December 1882, 784.

¹⁷³ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings of Mrs. White*, iv; Butler, "A Book Long Desired," 792.

¹⁷⁴ Long, *Comparison of the Early Writings of Mrs. White with Later Publications*, 12; Burt, "Bibliographic Essay on Publications About Ellen G. White," 157.

¹⁷⁵ Burt, "Bibliographic Essay on Publications About Ellen G. White," 157, 158; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 155, 156, 160-165.

¹⁷⁶ Ellen G. White, "Our Present Position," *Review and Herald*, 28 August 1883, 545, 546. See also Ellen G. White, to Smith, 31 July 1883; Ellen G. White, "Suppression and the Shut Door," Ms 4, 1883.

were still assailed by doubts about the changes in *Early Writings* until the late summer of 1884.¹⁷⁷

Less than one-and-a-half months prior to the publication of Butler's first article in January 1884 the General Conference resolved to commission the revision of the *Testimonies for the Church*, nos. 1-30. Several aspects suggest that the proposed revised edition constituted part of the background for Butler's consideration in writing his articles on inspiration. As White's earlier *Testimonies* were mostly out of print and many people in Battle Creek distrusted her prophetic role, Butler began requesting their reprint by May 1882, inquiring in advance if she wanted to make any changes.¹⁷⁸ By November he was expressing his joy about their projected reprint.¹⁷⁹ In late December, Butler and S. N. Haskell reviewed some of the grammatical and stylistic changes made by Mary K. White (1857-1890), wife of Ellen White's third son W. C. White. Feeling that thirty percent of the changes were unnecessary, they argued that Mary had merely substituted her "more polished style" for Ellen White's "more abrupt and simple style." They were afraid that

¹⁷⁷ See, e.g., George I. Butler to Brother, 3 September 1884, EGWCF, EGWE.

¹⁷⁸ Butler to W. C. White, 16 May 1882; George I. Butler to W. C. White, 21 June 1882, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler to W. C. White, 19 July 1882, EGWCF, EGWE. The project may have begun as early as 1881. See Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:217, 218; Jerry A. 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 University Press, 1993), 122, 123. Levterov suggests that Butler had noted that church leaders decided "to republish all of Ellen White's *Testimonies*" as a result of the "suppression charges." See Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 155. As the revision of the *Testimonies* commenced as early as 1881, Butler probably did not refer to the suppression charges raised by Long in 1883. Also, it seems that Butler's statement served only as an argument as he wondered why these charges were raised against *Early Writings* and not also against the *Testimonies*, which had appeared in abridged form in 1864 but were now about to be republished in full. See Butler, "Early Writings and Suppression," 5.

¹⁷⁹ George I. Butler to W. C. White, 14 November 1882, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler to W. C. White, 17 November 1882, EGWCF, EGWE.

some of her critics would exploit such changes.¹⁸⁰ In early November 1883, W. C. White felt the changes “would be criticized by friends and enemies [*sic*],” prompting him to inform the ministers of the principles of the revision work and give them the opportunity to look at the changes before they would become prejudiced. Their responses to the proposed revision project illustrate two different mindsets. Some “bitterly opposed any change,” thinking that verbal changes were unacceptable. Others felt that changes were generally feasible, yet they dreaded potential criticism.¹⁸¹ Thus these two mindsets seemed to presuppose a verbal view of inspiration versus a non-verbal view. When reviewing the changes already made, they detected hundreds of unnecessary transpositions and some instances where they felt the sense had been changed.¹⁸² On November 21 the General Conference resolved to reprint the *Testimonies* in slightly revised form, explaining why a revision was necessary and permissible.

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. . . . 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.¹⁸³

This rationale clearly negated the belief in a general verbal inspiration as it surfaced in Long’s criticism of *Early Writings* and in some ministers’ objections to verbal revisions

¹⁸⁰ W. C. White to Mary K. White, 31 December 1882, WCWCF, Microfilm Collection, reel 2, CAR.

¹⁸¹ W. C. White to Mary K. White, 10 November 1883, WCWC, Microfilm Collection, reel 2, CAR.

¹⁸² W. C. White to Mary K. White, 10 November 1883; W. C. White to Mary K. White, 15 November 1883, WCWC, Microfilm Collection, reel 2, CAR.

¹⁸³ Butler and Oyen, "General Conference Proceedings," 741.

in the *Testimonies*.¹⁸⁴ While the resolution allowed for the possibility of the Spirit to give words, it emphasized that he would generally impart thoughts.

That Butler's articles on inspiration may have resulted from that resolution is suggested by several close terminological connections. Both mention the issue of perfection vs. imperfection of inspired writings. They suggest that inspiration happens by the enlightenment of the mind. They argue that inspired ideas would be expressed in words that were generally not given by the Spirit. And both sets of documents oppose primarily a verbal view of inspiration. Interestingly, Butler was not only chosen as chair of the committee to take charge of the republication of the *Testimonies*, but he was also empowered to choose four other committee members—W. C. White, Uriah Smith, J. H. Waggoner, and S. N. Haskell.¹⁸⁵ It seems that Butler tried to preempt criticism against the revised edition of the *Testimonies* by addressing the difficulties of a verbal inspiration view and by devising a biblical basis for a balanced concept of inspiration that would allow for some "imperfections" such as equivocal language and incompleteness.

Some received Butler's articles positively and even recommended a reprint in pamphlet form, yet this wish apparently never materialized.¹⁸⁶ A talk he gave to students

¹⁸⁴ The underlying fear of some Adventists that editorial changes were tantamount to tampering with the very words of God has been noted by some writers. See Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 125; Denis Fortin, "Testimonies for the Church," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 1214.

¹⁸⁵ Butler and Oyen, "General Conference Proceedings," 741, 742.

¹⁸⁶ George I. Butler and Uriah Smith, "General Conference Proceedings," *Review and Herald*, 25 November 1884, 75; "Notes and Queries," *Review and Herald*, 11 August 1885, 504, 505; 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," 26, 27. Lake infers from the motion that a pamphlet was published, yet he fails to provide evidence that it ever existed. See Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire*, 97. Johns' suggestion, that "Adventists have consistently stood in opposition to 'degrees of inspiration,'" seems to miss this nuance as some ministers and leaders considered Butler's

at Battle Creek in March 1888 demonstrates that he continued to voice his ideas on degrees of inspiration.¹⁸⁷ At this point, he still intended to build trust in White's inspiration,¹⁸⁸ yet after the General Conference session at Minneapolis in November his idea of uninspired portions in Scripture began to exert its influence when he began to question the validity of some of White's statements.¹⁸⁹ Shortly afterwards Ellen White began to criticize his emphasis on "imperfections" and his attempts to distinguish between inspired and uninspired writings.¹⁹⁰ By May 1889 Adventist writers consistently opposed the theory of degrees as an infidel invention because it allowed for the judging

concept an intriguing model that was worth promoting. See Warren H. Johns, "Ellen White: Prophet or Plagiarist?," *Ministry*, June 1982, 17.

¹⁸⁷ George I. Butler, "The Visions: Talks to the Students of the 'Special Course' at Battle Creek College on March 18-20, 1888," 20 March 1888, DF 105.06, LLU, 5, 12, 15, 16. A later statement from W. C. White—"He [Butler] felt that he had done a great service to the cause in writing these articles, and some others felt the same way"—supports the positive reception by at least a few people in the church. It also suggests that Butler perceived them as a positive contribution to the church. See W. C. White to E. E. Andross, 21 September 1921, WCWCF, EGWE. When W. C. White mentioned Butler's articles to Andross, the latter read them and felt that they were actually based on the Bible. See E. E. Andross to W. C. White, 2 October 1921, WCWCF, EGWE.

¹⁸⁸ The articles on inspiration, the talks before the students, and other publications from that time support the conclusion that Butler tried to defend the visions and writings of Ellen White. See, e.g., George I. Butler, "Spiritual Gifts [Part 1]: Are They to be Manifested in the Last-day Church?," in *Tabernacle Lecture Course: Comprising a Series of Discourses Setting forth the Doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists Delivered at the S. D. A. Tabernacle, Battle Creek, Mich., and Reported for the Battle Creek Daily Journal* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1885), 230–238; George I. Butler, "Spiritual Gifts [Part 2]: Scriptural Tests for Discerning the True and the False," in *Tabernacle Lecture Course: Comprising a Series of Discourses Setting forth the Doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists Delivered at the S. D. A. Tabernacle, Battle Creek, Mich., and Reported for the Battle Creek Daily Journal* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1885), 239–247.

¹⁸⁹ O. A. Olsen to George I. Butler, 22 September 1889, PL 1, Microfilm 6-1, CAR; Ellen G. White to George I. Butler and Lenthia A. Butler, 11 December 1888, Lt 18, 1888, EGWE. See also Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," 492. Knight correctly suggests that Butler, viewing himself as a defender of White's inspiration, "began to give his concept [of degrees and partial inspiration] a new twist by applying it to her work." See Knight, *Angry Saints*, 87-89, esp. 89; Poirier, Wood, and Fagal, *The Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts with Annotations*, 1:802. Burt's suggestion of reading Butler's 1884 series of articles on inspiration as an advanced version of Uriah Smith's distinction between the inspired and the uninspired realm stretches the evidence as, in 1884, Butler was still very supportive of White's work and writings. See Burt, "Revelation and Inspiration," 36.

¹⁹⁰ See below on pp. 211-213.

between inspired and uninspired portions.¹⁹¹ By 1893, however, Butler's view of her inspiration began to change again.¹⁹² When he accepted the presidency of the Southern Union Conference and the Southern Publishing Association in 1902, he frequently communicated with Ellen White asking her for advice on the work in the southern states. She had the impression that Butler had "humbled his soul before God" and had "another spirit than the Elder Butler of younger years" as he had "been learning his lesson at the feet of Jesus."¹⁹³ Michael W. Campbell notes that Butler "remained a supporter of her work throughout his life" once he had "regained his confidence in the validity of the gift of prophecy as manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen White."¹⁹⁴

Summary

An examination of Butler's statements on inspiration in the years 1883 and 1884 shows that he firmly believed that divine inspiration safeguards the reliability and accuracy of its message and historical accounts. Rejecting the idea of a general verbal inspiration, he employed the unfortunate term "imperfection" to describe lacking clarity

¹⁹¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:691; Louis Gaussen, "Rejected Because Not Understood," *Signs of the Times*, 20 May 1889, 292; "All Scripture," *Signs of the Times*, 7 July 1890, 405; "Bible Study," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 6 March 1891, 15; "A Growing Danger," *Present Truth*, 6 October 1892, 311; "Lessons on the Word and Spirit: Dec. 31, 1892 to March 25, 1893," *Review and Herald*, 20 December 1892, 798; E. J. Waggoner, "The Word of the Lord," *Signs of the Times*, 3 April 1893, 339; "From Moses to Christ: A Study of the Book of Hebrews," *Review and Herald*, 18 July 1893, 456; G. B. Starr, "The Higher Criticism Bible," *Bible Echo*, 1 November 1893, 347; Frank E. Belden, "Believe His Prophets, So Shall Ye Prosper," *Review and Herald*, 17 September 1895, 594. Later, W. C. White reminisced that "Jones criticized [Butler's] articles severely, and a few others of our ministers did the same." See W. C. White to Andross, 21 September 1921.

¹⁹² Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:473, 474.

¹⁹³ Campbell, "Butler, George Ide (1834-1918)," 332, 333; Ellen G. White to Irving A. Keck and Delia A. Keck, May 1902, Lt 77, 1902, EGWE.

¹⁹⁴ Campbell, "Butler, George Ide (1834-1918)," 332, 333. See also Poirier, Wood, and Fagal, *The Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts with Annotations*, 1:802; George I. Butler to Frank E. Belden, 20 June 1907, EGWCF, EGWE; Vande Vere, *Rugged Heart*, 98.

and completeness in the final product. Both sets of statements resulted apparently from the attempt to refute charges against Ellen White's *Early Writings* made in the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate* extra in July 1883 and to clarify inspiration's *modus operandi* in the context of the revision of her *Testimonies*. Butler's articles setting forth the theory of degrees in 1884 allegedly intended to vindicate White's inspiration by providing a biblical explanation for its nature and manner. His version of the theory, which resembles somewhat Adam Clarke's theory of degrees, attempts to explain different manners or modes of divine operation in the revelation-inspiration process. The clarity and comprehensiveness of the truths conveyed varied as a result of more or less intense modes of operation, without affecting their accuracy. These articles were more detailed and comprehensive in their exposition of the subject of inspiration and went beyond previous discussions of the subject by allowing for uninspired statements in Scripture (partial inspiration). Interestingly, Butler seemed to view his theory of degrees as in complete harmony with the church's affirmation of thought inspiration in its resolution to revise the *Testimonies*. His ideas defined the manner of inspiration in more detail whereas the resolution merely affirmed its basic object—thoughts instead of words. His emphasis on “imperfections” and advocacy of uninspired albeit true statements within the corpus of inspired writings nevertheless provoked criticism after tensions arose between him and Ellen White in the aftermath of the General Conference session in 1888.

Enthusiasm and Depression: The Many Facets of Dudley M. Canright

Dudley M. Canright (1840-1919) joined Sabbatarian Adventism at the age of nineteen and briefly served as James White's secretary. Soon he entered the pastoral ministry and became one of Adventism's foremost preachers. He was on the General

Conference executive committee for two years (1876-1878) and served for a short time as president of the Ohio Conference (1879-1880) and the Sabbath School Association. In early 1887, he separated from the church after having experienced several setbacks and disappointments.¹⁹⁵ Subsequently, he began criticizing Ellen White and provided the argumentative framework for her critics in later decades.¹⁹⁶ Nevertheless, one has to be careful to avoid reading his later views into his earlier writings, or to judge them by his later actions.¹⁹⁷ His later critique operated within the framework of the theory of verbal inspiration, yet it is far more difficult to extract his personal concept of inspiration from his writings both before and after his separation from Adventism. The following sections discuss two sets of statements on inspiration from Canright.

Trust and Confidence in the *Testimonies* (1884-1885)

The first set of statements comes from several articles published in the *Review and Herald* from October 1884 to February 1885. After a break from his ministerial work, Canright became fully engaged in preaching and writing for the next two years.

¹⁹⁵ George R. Knight, "Canright, Dudley M. (1840-1919)," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 336–338; "Canright, Dudley Marvin," in *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, eds. Don F. Neufeld and Julia Neuffer, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976), 230; D. M. Canright, *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced: After an Experience of Twenty-Eight Years by a Prominent Minister and Writer of That Faith*, Introduction by Theodore Nelson, 6th ed. (New York, et al.: Fleming H. Revell, [1896]), 46, 47; Graham, *Ellen G. White*, 356, 357; D. M. Canright and E. H. Gates, "Ohio Conference," *Review and Herald*, 11 September 1879, 95; Norman F. Douty, *The Case of D. M. Canright: Seventh-day Adventist Charges Examined* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1964), 52; Lake, "Ellen White Criticism and D. M. Canright," 133; D. W. Reavis, *I Remember* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, [1934]), 114, 117.

¹⁹⁶ Jonathan M. Butler, "Introduction: The Historian as Heretic," in *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 9. See also Lake, "Ellen White Criticism and D. M. Canright," 137, 138.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 139, 140.

The respective statements probably constitute some of his strongest affirmations of the prophetic gift of Ellen White.¹⁹⁸

Concept of Inspiration

In late 1884 and early 1885 Canright made several incidental remarks on the subject of inspiration, yet none of them clarify his concept of that subject. He professed to “believe the testimonies to be from God”¹⁹⁹ and equated Ellen White’s inspiration with that of the Bible writers by affirming that she was “thoroughly imbued with the same Spirit that inspired the Bible, and animated the apostles and prophets.”²⁰⁰ The only statement coming close to a definition of the *modus operandi* of inspiration was, however, a remark in early January 1885. He professed that “the ideas” found in some of White’s writings “carry with them their own proof of inspiration,” and that they “moved the depths of my soul as nothing else ever did.”²⁰¹ Yet that statement is not conclusive enough to clarify the actual mode of inspiration. Previously he had questioned their divine origin because they crossed his feelings and contradicted his self-perception, but now he was able to express full confidence in White’s testimonies. He admitted,

I freely grant for myself that there are some passages which bother me, and which I do not know how to explain. But I believe them for all that just as I do the Bible. . . .

¹⁹⁸ See, e.g., Graham, *Ellen G. White*, 360; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 234; Lake, “Ellen White Criticism and D. M. Canright,” 135.

¹⁹⁹ D. M. Canright, “To My Brethren, the S. D. Adventists,” *Review and Herald*, 7 October 1884, 634.

²⁰⁰ D. M. Canright, “To Those in Doubting Castle—No. 1,” *Review and Herald*, 10 February 1885, 85.

²⁰¹ D. M. Canright, “Get It—Read It,” *Review and Herald*, 6 January 1885, 9.

It would be a wonder indeed if in all these there should not be anything in the wording, the sentiment, or the doctrine, hard to understand and explain.²⁰²

Thus he seemed to be satisfied that inspiration did not always produce unambiguous and unequivocal wording, leaving room for misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

Objections to Other Views

Most of Canright's objections addressed Adventist church members who were doubting the significance, authority, and divine origin of Ellen White's revelations and testimonies while holding fast to the Adventist belief system. He raised several objections against such doubters and skeptics. Thus, he argued, as her ministry and testimonies were invariably connected to the Adventist message, "they stand or fall together." Those who separated from Adventism because they were opposed to the testimonies either entirely disintegrated or enjoyed only a feeble existence. Such opponents of the testimonies have also "disagreed [with one another] in doctrine and discipline, and have split up into little factions." Objectors who remained in the church "soon lose their love for the message, their spirituality, their devotion, their zeal for God, and for the salvation of souls," illustrative of his personal experience during periods of doubt. He admitted that there were certainly passages that seemed to conflict with one another, with biblical passages, or with facts, yet there would be sufficient reasons for those looking for truth to believe the light revealed in these writings. Someone may find obscurities and difficulties in Scripture and the testimonies, yet everyone who "will strictly live up to the teachings of

²⁰² Canright, "To Those in Doubting Castle—No. 1," 85, 86.

the testimonies . . . will certainly be saved.”²⁰³ These objections were based on personal experience and observation, and were often formulated in absolute terms.

Sources and Influences

Canright’s ideas on inspiration were rather narrow in scope and lacked theological substance. Touching on the foundations of his belief in the divine origin of the testimonies, he gave at least six reasons for church members to believe in their inspiration. Like his objections, the reasons that he gave were often phrased in absolute terms. First, Ellen White had been connected to the Adventist message from the very beginning, guiding and molding it more than any other contemporary minister. Second, “from the beginning her teachings have been accepted by all the leading ministers and believers as light from God.” Third, the message and the testimonies were inseparably connected to each other so that “they stand or fall together.” Fourth, those who accepted the testimonies “always stood together and have perfectly agreed in faith and practice.” Fifth, the testimonies tended to “lead to faith in the Holy Scriptures, devotion to God, and a life of humility and holiness.” Hence the nature of their fruits was indicative of a good tree. Sixth, the four volumes of the *Spirit of Prophecy* unveiled “such lofty thoughts of God, of heaven, and of spiritual things [that] cannot come from a carnal heart, nor from a mind deceived and led by Satan.”²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 85. Interestingly, while in the above article for an Adventist readership he closely connected the doctrines and Ellen White’s inspired ministry, in an article for the broader public he disconnected the two from each other. Canright was clearly in line with general Seventh-day Adventist teachings when, in the summer of 1885, he objected to the assertion “that our whole system in which we differed from others is built entirely upon her visions. I positively know this to be an untruth.” Yet he erroneously intimated the doctrines were found in Scripture by the first Seventh-day Adventist Church at

He concluded that the ideas found particularly in portions of White's works that reveal hidden spiritual realities were "their own proof of inspiration" because they influenced his mind and heart positively. They gave him "a new and higher conception of the goodness and forbearance of God, the awful wickedness of Satan, and the tender love of Christ." This was especially true for chapter 24 and subsequent chapters of the recently published *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 4.²⁰⁵ Most of these reasons can be summarized in two categories—the close connection of the testimonies to the Adventist belief system which is assumed to be biblical, and the positive and spiritual fruits of White's writings. Interestingly, the first five reasons reflect Butler's list of positive fruits of the visions as outlined in his August 14, 1883, article on the significance of the visions for Adventists.²⁰⁶ As Butler's influence was instrumental in bringing Canright back to the church and in inspiring his confidence in White's inspiration in the fall of 1883, it is possible that he adopted Butler's argumentation in favor of her visions and writings. It is noteworthy that Canright's views of her inspiration were nevertheless heavily influenced by his personal experience with her and his momentary emotional state, seemingly lacking a thorough biblical underpinning.

Washington, N.H., in 1844, before Ellen White ever joined them. See D. M. Canright, "Who the Adventists Are," *Worcester Daily Spy*, 20 June 1885, 4. Interestingly, the close connection of the doctrines with the visions appears also in Butler's writings. See George I. Butler, "Eld. Canright's Change of Faith," *Review and Herald*, 1 March 1887, 138; Pöhler, *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching*, 203 fn. 4.

²⁰⁵ Canright, "Get It—Read It," 9.

²⁰⁶ Butler, "The Visions," 11, 12.

The Context of the Statements

Canright's strong affirmations of the divine inspiration of White's writings stem from the months after he resumed his ministerial work²⁰⁷ in the fall and winter of 1884-1885. His fluctuating attitude towards the Whites from 1865 to 1884 provides essential background for understanding these affirmations. The following paragraphs outline six phases in Canright's relationship to Ellen White and his perception of her inspiration.

Between 1865 and 1870 Canright experienced recurring periods of inner troubles over James White's seemingly dominant, unreasonable leadership style and his wife's prophetic support for him and stern rebuke for other able leaders. Thus, in 1867 he began "to question Mrs. White's inspiration" as her revelations seemed to always favor her husband and herself.²⁰⁸ Nevertheless, in 1868 he wrote a series of articles to affirm faith in her visions and testimonies.²⁰⁹ Two years later his confidence in the Whites was again shaken because he thought they were ruling and micromanaging the denomination. He

²⁰⁷ Canright took breaks from pastoral ministry on four occasions before finally leaving Adventism forever in February 1887. See George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, 17 February 1887, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler, "Brief History of Eld. Canright's Connection with This People," *Review and Herald*, Extra, 22 November 1887, 2, 3; cf. Canright, *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced*, [1896], 43. It seems that he had left the ministry briefly in December 1870, for a couple months in the summer and fall of 1873, from late September 1880 to early January 1881, and from the fall of 1882 to September 1884. Butler explicitly defined the final departure as "the fifth time that he had gone off this way." Thus it is surprising that Lake suggests Canright left the ministry only three times before his final separation. See Lake, "D. M. Canright, Ellen G. White, and Inspiration," 55; Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire*, 46, 306 en. 6; Lake, "Ellen White Criticism and D. M. Canright," 134-136. Canright's ministerial credentials were always renewed except for one year when he was farming. See D. 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 Pub. Co., 1888), 156.

²⁰⁸ Canright, *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced*, [1896], 38-42. See also Moon and Kaiser, "For Jesus and Scripture," 48; Douty, *The Case of D. M. Canright*, 59, 60.

²⁰⁹ D. M. Canright, "Conversations on Important Subjects—No. 1," *Review and Herald*, 21 January 1868, 84, 85; Canright, "Conversations on Important Subjects—No. 2," 98, 99; D. M. Canright, "Conversations on Important Subjects—No. 3," *Review and Herald*, 4 February 1868, 114, 115. See also Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 105.

had not yet been reproved personally, but he dreaded to meet them, afraid of their potential criticism. As he firmly believed in the biblical foundation of the Adventist beliefs, he kept his inner troubles to himself. Yet years later he admitted that he had hated his own cowardice and despised his fellow ministers' weakness for failing to stand up to the Whites.²¹⁰

In August 1873, serious clashes erupted at a joint vacation of the two couples in Colorado.²¹¹ When the Whites pointed out problematic areas in the character and work of the Canrights, they gave a testy reply and resisted everything said.²¹² A couple days later Ellen White wrote a testimony and rebuked Canright for his arrogance, suspicion, doubt, and lack of courtesy and a daily living experience with God. She pointed her finger at his negative feelings against her and James and his dread of receiving reproofs. She warned him and his wife Lucretia that although they might think they believed the testimonies, in reality unbelief about their divine origin was gaining ground with them.²¹³ They felt that the rebuke was "too severe" and partially untrue, making several allegations against the Whites.²¹⁴ A conciliatory letter from James White helped them to recognize most points

²¹⁰ Canright, *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced*, [1896], 38-42. See also Moon and Kaiser, "For Jesus and Scripture," 48; Douty, *The Case of D. M. Canright*, 60.

²¹¹ Canright, *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced*, 42, 43. For the respective testimony see Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:304-329 [12 August 1873]. See also Moon and Kaiser, "For Jesus and Scripture," 48; Graham, *Ellen G. White*, 358, 359; Douty, *The Case of D. M. Canright*, 62.

²¹² Ellen G. White, Diary entries for August 10-12, 20, and 21, 1873, Ms 10, 1873, EGWE.

²¹³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:304-329.

²¹⁴ See Ellen G. White to D. M. Canright and Lucretia C. Canright, 12 November 1873, Lt 1, 1873, EGWE; Canright, "To My Brethren, the S. D. Adventists," 633. See also Lake, "Ellen White Criticism and D. M. Canright," 134.

of criticism, yet they could still not see the validity of some points.²¹⁵ Ellen White explained the points in more detail and responded to their allegations.²¹⁶ Canright resumed his work even though he “did not feel exactly right toward Sr. White, nor [did he] fully accept all [of] the testimony.”²¹⁷ Nevertheless, some twenty years later he inadvertently seemed to confirm her observations.²¹⁸ In April 1874, he defended her visions against Miles Grant’s attacks and explained that Adventists “received it [the Sabbath] from Bible evidence, and not from a vision.” The visions later confirmed the results of Bible study.²¹⁹ By June he had more confidence in the Whites as he began to see that their advice concerning the evangelistic work was more effective than his own

²¹⁵ D. M. Canright to James White, 8 November 1873, EGWCF, EGWE. Knight’s depiction of a “heartfelt reconciliation of the two families in November of that year” may sound too positive. See George R. Knight, “Canright, Lucretia (Cranston [sic]) (1847-1879),” in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 338. In a different place, Knight sounds more nuanced when he writes, “After a few months the two couples were reconciled. A crisis had been successfully weathered, but seeds of discord had been sown, especially in the mind of Canright.” See Knight, “Canright, Dudley M. (1840-1919),” 337. On the surface several documents seem to show a positive picture of Canright and his relations. See James White to W. C. White, 11 February 1874, JWCF, EGWE; J. N. Loughborough, “Progress of the Cause: California,” *Review and Herald*, 24 February 1874, 86; Ellen G. White to W. C. White, 25 March 1874, Lt 18, 1874, EGWE; James White, “Progress of the Cause: The Cause on the Pacific,” *Review and Herald*, 7 April 1874, 134.

²¹⁶ Ellen G. White to D. M. Canright and Lucretia Canright, 12 November 1873. She read the letter to Butler, Haskell, and others on November 13. See Ellen G. White, Diary entry for November 13, 1873, Ms 13, 1873, EGWE. Two days later she added several pages to it in which she provided more explanations on Canright’s condition and answered his charges against them in matters of diet, dress, and Sabbath-breaking.

²¹⁷ Canright, “To My Brethren, the S. D. Adventists,” 633. See also D. M. Canright, “Progress of the Cause: New England and Maine,” *Review and Herald*, 27 January 1874, 54; D. M. Canright to Ellen G. White, 3 November 1880, EGWCF, EGWE. See also Douty, *The Case of D. M. Canright*, 63, 86. Douty suggests that Canright withdrew from the ministry for about three months.

²¹⁸ Canright, *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced*, [1896], 38-41.

²¹⁹ D. M. Canright, “Eld. Grant’s Attack upon Eld. James White and Wife at Napa, Cal., March 28, 1874,” *Review and Herald*, Extra, 14 April 1874, 3. See also Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White’s Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 116.

ideas.²²⁰ In January 1875, Ellen White sent him another testimony addressing his unwillingness to accept correction and his questioning of the divine origin of the testimonies. Reminding Canright of his own words, she stressed that “there is no half-way work in the matter. The *Testimonies* are of the Spirit of God, or of the devil.”²²¹

When Canright wrote a series of ten articles in defense of the Whites against critics and apostates in early March 1877, however, most reservations had seemingly vanished.²²² Considering the fruits of the visions and *Testimonies*, he pronounced them “to be of the same Spirit and of the same tenor as the Scriptures.” They led people to God’s law and the Bible, making them better Christians. As the church’s leaders had ample opportunities to investigate her gift as they had been frequently reproved by the testimonies, Canright made the unrealistic and exaggerated claim that “not one of them” “doubt[ed] the testimonies,” they all had “the strongest faith” in them. He argued that even White’s “most bitter opponents” had to admit that she was truly a Christian. The

²²⁰ D. M. Canright to Ellen G. White, 12 June 1874, EGWCF, EGWE.

²²¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:227–246, esp. 230. See also Canright, “Conversations on Important Subjects—No. 2,” 99. See also above on pp. 45, 59, 60.

²²² Canright, “A Plain Talk to Murmurers [No. 1],” 84, 85; D. M. Canright, “A Plain Talk to Murmurers [No. 2]: Some Facts for Those Who Are Not in Harmony with the Body,” *Review and Herald*, 12 April 1877, 116, 117; D. M. Canright, “A Plain Talk to Murmurers [No. 3]: Some Facts for Those Who Are Not in Harmony with the Body,” *Review and Herald*, 19 April 1877, 124, 125; D. M. Canright, “A Plain Talk to Murmurers [No. 4]: Some Facts for Those Who Are Not in Harmony with the Body,” *Review and Herald*, 26 April 1877, 132; D. M. Canright, “A Plain Talk to Murmurers [No. 5]: Some Facts for Those Who Are Not in Harmony with the Body,” *Review and Herald*, 10 May 1877, 148, 149; D. M. Canright, “A Plain Talk to Murmurers [No. 6]: Some Facts for Those Who Are Not in Harmony with the Body,” *Review and Herald*, 17 May 1877, 156, 157; D. M. Canright, “A Plain Talk to Murmurers [No. 7]: Some Facts for Those Who Are Not in Harmony with the Body,” *Review and Herald*, 24 May 1877, 165; D. M. Canright, “A Plain Talk to Murmurers [No. 8]: Some Facts for Those Who Are Not in Harmony with the Body,” *Review and Herald*, 31 May 1877, 173; D. M. Canright, “A Plain Talk to Murmurers [No. 9]: Some Facts for Those Who Are Not in Harmony with the Body,” *Review and Herald*, 7 June 1877, 181; D. M. Canright, “A Plain Talk to Murmurers [No. 10]: Some Facts for Those Who Are Not in Harmony with the Body,” *Review and Herald*, 14 June 1877, 188, 189. See also Lake, “Ellen White Criticism and D. M. Canright,” 134.

positive fruits of the Seventh-day Adventist work were, in his view, inextricably bound up with her prophetic ministry.²²³

By early September 1880, Canright was reportedly ready to give up preaching and was talking about farming.²²⁴ On October 20 he accepted re-election as president of the Ohio Conference provided he could occasionally leave the field,²²⁵ yet one week later he resigned to find relief from his increasing discouragement.²²⁶ Several factors seemed to contribute to that state. Thus, about 1878, when his wife Lucretia was suffering from tuberculosis, Ellen White wrote Canright a testimony as she was “in great doubt” of his “piety” and feared Lucretia’s life was “sacrificed unnecessarily.”²²⁷ As a result, he felt animosity towards White because he thought the testimony was untimely.²²⁸ Lucretia’s death in late March 1879 constituted a significant blow to him.²²⁹ Furthermore, he

²²³ Canright, "A Plain Talk to Murmurers [No. 4]," 132. See also Canright, "A Plain Talk to Murmurers [No. 3]," 124, 125; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 110–12.

²²⁴ J. H. Kellogg to W. C. White, 13 September 1880, EGWCF, EGWE.

²²⁵ D. M. Canright and J. B. Gregory, "Ohio Conference," *Review and Herald*, 30 September 1880, 238.

²²⁶ Graham suggests he ceased preaching in October 1880. See Graham, *Ellen G. White*, 359. However, Canright himself stated that he resigned from office “the next week” after his reelection, which would date his resignation to the week from September 26 to October 1. See Canright, *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced*, [1896], 47; Douty, *The Case of D. M. Canright*, 64, 86.

²²⁷ Ellen G. White to James White, 28 August 1878, Lt 48, 1878, EGWE.

²²⁸ Canright, "To My Brethren, the S. D. Adventists," 633.

²²⁹ "The Death of Sister Canright," *Review and Herald*, 3 April 1879, 108; Douty, *The Case of D. M. Canright*, 63. Graham suggests the death of Canright’s wife may not have diminished his faith and his efforts in promoting the Adventist cause. See Graham, *Ellen G. White*, 359. Considering Canright’s emotional instability, it seems nevertheless probable that his bereavement had long-term psychological effects irrespective of his attempt to get over it by throwing himself into work. Later, he would argue with Ellen White about his late wife’s final spiritual condition and attitude towards her. See Ellen G. White to D. M. Canright, 20 April 1887, Lt 22, 1887, EGWE; D. M. Canright to Ellen G. White, 29 July 1887, EGWCF, EGWE. The final correspondence between her and Lucretia seems to prove Ellen White’s perspective correct. See Ellen G. White to Lucretia C. Canright, 21 February 1879, Lt 46, 1879, EGWE;

thought that the “severe,” “harsh,” “unfeeling,” and “dictatorial” reproofs of the Whites encouraged a “spirit of oppression, criticism, distrust, and dissension” among the ministers which he feared would do “more harm than good.” He felt that his evangelistic, ministerial, and administrative efforts amounted to nothing.²³⁰ In the fall of 1880 Canright considered preaching for the Methodists, but he felt unable to reconcile that step with his conscience as the Adventist teachings were strongly supported by the Bible and other denominations experienced difficulties too.²³¹ In October, Ellen White urged him to refrain from spreading his skepticism among church members, to compare his ambitions with Christ’s humility, and to grasp God’s hand firmly.²³² Feeling her criticism was unjustified, he replied that she was “liable to be deceived too.”²³³ After conciliatory conversations with Butler, the Whites, and others in January 1881, Canright chose to return to his work in the church. That James White “did all a man could to remove it [the tensions between them] on his part” and offered to work closely with him gave Canright

Lucretia C. Canright to Ellen G. White, 25 February 1879, EGWCF, EGWE; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:621, 622. More than forty years later W. C. White reminisced that Canright was trying to become General Conference president although his wife was dying. See W. C. White to W. E. Barr, 26 July 1920, WCWCF, EGWE.

²³⁰ Canright, *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced*, [1896], 46, 47; D. M. Canright, "Danger of Giving Way to Discouragement and Doubts," *Review and Herald*, 13 September 1881, 185; Canright to Ellen G. White, 3 November 1880. See also Douty, *The Case of D. M. Canright*, 63, 64.

²³¹ Canright, "Danger of Giving Way to Discouragement and Doubts," 185. See also Lake, "Ellen White Criticism and D. M. Canright," 134, 135. Interestingly, it must have been shortly before that he was preaching in numerous big churches in Chicago, an experience that left him with the impression that Seventh-day Adventism would keep him from being a famous preacher. See Reavis, *I Remember*, 118, 119.

²³² Ellen G. White to D. M. Canright, 15 October 1880, Lt 1, 1880, EGWE. Lake mistakenly suggests this letter was the cause of Canright’s departure from the ministry. See Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire*, 46, 306 en. 13. Later in October Ellen White stated, “[I] also feel sad over Elder Canright. His mistake is just as I have written, because of his self-confidence and not digging deep and laying his foundation upon the Rock. I knew he would come to his present state sooner or later, because he has not true religion.” See Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, 29 October 1880, Lt 55, 1880, EGWE.

²³³ Canright to Ellen G. White, 3 November 1880.

a more positive prospect.²³⁴ Yet he was still assailed by personal troubles and difficulties even though he intended to keep them to himself.²³⁵ His suspicions and doubts may have increased when James White was playing down the severity of his wife's reproofs and exaggerating Butler's and Haskell's alleged influence over her.²³⁶ In addition, Canright's labors for the church were impeded because many church members and leaders were aware of his volatility and had lost confidence in him.²³⁷ Therefore, on September 6, Butler advised him to publish a confession explaining his experience and present feelings. Canright reassured him of his belief in the Adventist doctrines, "perhaps [with] the exception of the *Testimonies*," as they contained some things "which looked as if they must be of God and some which seemed the other way."²³⁸ One week later the *Review*

²³⁴ Canright, "Danger of Giving Way to Discouragement and Doubts," 185. See also Douty, *The Case of D. M. Canright*, 52, 64, 65.

²³⁵ D. M. Canright to James White, 15 July 1881, EGWCF, EGWE. See also James White to D. M. Canright, 13 July 1881, Albion Fox Ballenger, Edward S. Ballenger, and Donald E. Mote Papers, box 10, fld 34, CAR.

²³⁶ George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, 22 April 1881, EGWCF, EGWE; James White to D. M. Canright, 24 May 1881, Albion Fox Ballenger, Edward S. Ballenger, and Donald E. Mote Papers, box 10, fld 34, CAR; D. M. Canright to James White, 12 July 1881, EGWCF, EGWE; James White to Canright, 13 July 1881; Canright, *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced*, [1896], 47, 48. James White may have thought such concessions—his wife's messages to him were correct but a little bit too harsh—would make him feel better as he did not seem to be susceptible to doubts anymore, not realizing that they may have, in fact, fueled Canright's doubts. Whereas James White was quite optimistic about Canright's condition, Ellen White felt uneasy and suspicious of his apparent positive state, despite her emphasis on the need of support for him. See James White to Ellen G. White, 4 February 1881, JWCF, EGWE; James White to Ellen G. White, 7 February 1881, JWCF, EGWE; James White to W. C. White and Mary K. White, 17 February 1881, JWCF, EGWE; James White to Canright, 24 May 1881; Ellen G. White to W. C. White and Mary K. White, April 6[-11], 1881, Lt 2a, 1881, EGWE; Graham, *Ellen G. White*, 395, 396 en. 24. See also Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 88. In his May 24 letter, James White cherished the thought, "I hope you will finally see your way clear to fully relieve [my] wife of the burden you have laid upon her in stating to her your want of faith in her work."

²³⁷ S. N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, 1 April 1881, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler to W. C. White, 17 August 1881, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, 6 September 1881, EGWCF, EGWE.

²³⁸ Butler to Ellen G. White, 6 September 1881; George I. Butler to W. C. White, 7 September 1881, EGWCF, EGWE.

carried Canright's clarification, explaining his past troubles, present belief in the church's teachings, and decision to work for the church in the future. Nevertheless, his clarification neglected to mention the visions and *Testimonies*.²³⁹ Three years later Canright admitted that he still had difficulties accepting the *Testimonies* because he thought they were unreliable.²⁴⁰

Canright continued to work for the church another year, but he was unhappy, dissatisfied, and assailed by doubts. At the 1882 ministers' meetings, he admitted his lack of confidence in the church's missionary work to W. C. Gage.²⁴¹ He still doubted White's inspiration and took a break from the ministry from the fall of 1882 to September 1884 because he felt unable to emotionally digest her previous testimonies. During that period he corresponded with Levi R. Long (1841-1902), a minister and long-time friend, and with Uriah Smith, who confided to Canright his own inner tensions regarding one testimony and White's seemingly unfair dealings with him.²⁴² The correspondence reveals Canright's "disconsolate view" of the Adventist experience—the denial of the visions would necessarily result in a rejection of the Adventist doctrines.²⁴³ Talking about Ellen White and other Adventist leaders, he wrote,

²³⁹ Canright, "Danger of Giving Way to Discouragement and Doubts," 185. Lake seems to overlook that aspect in his discussion of Canright's experience. See Lake, "Ellen White Criticism and D. M. Canright," 135; Douty, *The Case of D. M. Canright*, 65.

²⁴⁰ Canright, "To My Brethren, the S. D. Adventists," 633.

²⁴¹ D. M. Canright, "Items of Experience," *Review and Herald*, 2 December 1884, 763.

²⁴² Smith to Canright, 22 March 1883; Smith to Canright, 7 August 1883. See also Douty, *The Case of D. M. Canright*, 86, 87. See also above on p. 109.

²⁴³ Smith to Canright, 6 April 1883; D. M. Canright to [L. R.] Long, 9 December 1883, DF 351 #56, CAR. Douty mistakenly assumes the addressee was A. C. Long, editor of the Marion-based *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*. See Douty, *The Case of D. M. Canright*, 66.

It would be a long task to tell you what I now think of S. D. Adventists. I am thoroughly satisfied that the visions are not from God, but are wholly the fruit of her own imagination. I have often seen her show a bitter, vindictive spirit toward those who cross her path. I think she is self-deceived. . . . I feel a high regard for Elder Butler and all the other leading men. I believe them to be honest, self-sacrificing, God-fearing men. They have all treated me well and I have no feelings against any of them, excepting Mrs. White. I dislike her very much indeed.²⁴⁴

He later stated that whereas his doubts and fears had increased in these two years, his devotion and religious interest had decreased.²⁴⁵

In September 1884, Canright joined Butler in attending the Northern Michigan camp meeting at Traverse City and the camp meeting at Jackson, Mich. They carefully examined Ellen White's past testimonies to him. Canright realized that he had misinterpreted some things and "other things were certainly true." As a result, he felt he could say "for the first time in years" that he "believed the testimonies." His "hard feelings" toward her disappeared and he sensed "tender love towards her." He acknowledged that he had opened his heart to doubts, then cherished and magnified them. Surprised about the sudden change of feelings and attitude, he stated, "Now I not only accept, but believe the testimonies to be from God."²⁴⁶ A couple weeks later, at the General Conference session, he was touched by the sermons and felt they were better,

²⁴⁴ Canright to Long, 9 December 1883. See also Lake, "Ellen White Criticism and D. M. Canright," 135; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 234.

²⁴⁵ Canright, "To My Brethren, the S. D. Adventists," 633. See also Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire*, 48.

²⁴⁶ George I. Butler, "Camp-Meeting Notes," *Review and Herald*, 9 September 1884, 584; Canright, "To My Brethren, the S. D. Adventists," 633, 634. See also Lake, "Ellen White Criticism and D. M. Canright," 135; Douty, *The Case of D. M. Canright*, 66–69; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 234. Graham suggests Canright made a personal confession to Ellen White at that time based on the allusion to such a confession in Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:621–628. See Graham, *Ellen G. White*, 360, 396 en. 28. However, he overlooks the fact that the respective letter was written three years later, on April 20, 1887. The confession alluded to was the one following a clash between the Whites and the Canrights in 1873. See Ellen G. White to Canright, 20 April 1887; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:628.

more spiritual, and more effective. While he had believed the work was going down, he realized it was actually increasing and growing stronger.²⁴⁷ Considering the striking similarities between Butler's and Canright's discussions of the diverse fruits of one's attitude towards the visions, Canright's attempts at persuading fellow doubters were possibly reflecting the arguments Butler had used to convince Canright of the testimonies' divine inspiration.²⁴⁸

In summary, Canright's experience was characterized by recurring doubts about the divine origin of White's testimonies, especially when assailed by discouragements in the face of ill success, wanting recognition, a negative atmosphere among fellow ministers, and difficulties in digesting reproof and criticism from Ellen White. These discouragements and doubts were seemingly blown away by the reversion of feelings and perception in the late summer and early fall of 1884. That experience gave rise to Canright's above affirmations of her inspiration without specifying its *modus operandi*.

Ellen G. White's Alleged Claim to Verbal Inspiration (1887-1889)

When Dudley M. Canright parted with Seventh-day Adventism in February 1887, his perception of Ellen White and her writings changed. Between June 1887 and February 1889 the *Michigan Christian Advocate* and several local newspapers published articles by Canright and reports about his talks against Adventist beliefs and White's inspiration. The first edition of his book *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced* (1888) offered an advanced version of his critique.

²⁴⁷ Canright, "Items of Experience," 764.

²⁴⁸ See Butler, "The Visions," 11, 12; Canright, "To Those in Doubting Castle—No. 1," 84–86.

Conception of Inspiration

In the early summer of 1887, Canright preached on the inspiration of Scripture to convince skeptical people of its reliability and divine authority.²⁴⁹ As the content of these talks is not documented, his critique of Ellen White's prophetic ministry is probably the only available source for his concept of inspiration. Thus some scholars deduce Canright's concept of inspiration from his critical arguments.²⁵⁰ The following paragraphs address the word-focused paradigm found in his writings and additional results expected from divine inspiration.

Judging from his reading habits, occasional use of dictation language, and emphasis on the divine origin of White's testimonies in the 1860s and 1870s, Lake concludes that Canright personally believed in verbal inspiration in the late 1880s.²⁵¹ However, Lake's reasons fail to surpass the realm of circumstantial evidence. Canright's use of dictation language was ambiguous and inconclusive, paralleling the use of such language by Uriah Smith, Ellen White, and others who negated a general verbal inspiration.²⁵² Some of his statements could also be interpreted as an emphasis on divine guidance and ordering rather than the prescribing of specific words.²⁵³ However, in the late 1880s, Canright continuously used a word-focused view of inspiration as a point of reference to evaluate White's literary productions. Thus he wrote,

²⁴⁹ "Local Items," [*Otsego, Mich.*] *Weekly Union*, 1 July 1887, [5].

²⁵⁰ Lake, "D. M. Canright, Ellen G. White, and Inspiration," 36, 56; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 151, 152.

²⁵¹ Lake, "D. M. Canright, Ellen G. White, and Inspiration," 52–55.

²⁵² See above on pp. 39–41, 47, 48.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 53.

She claims that every line she writes, even in a private letter, is directly inspired by God. . . . I do positively know that the words in her written “testimonies” are not inspired, for—1. When writing them out she will often change what she has written, and write it very differently. I have seen her scratch out a whole page, or a line, or a sentence, and write it over differently. If God gave her the words, why did she scratch them out and alter them? 2. I have repeatedly seen her sit with pen in hand and read her manuscript to her husband for hours, while he suggested many changes, which she made. She would scratch out her own words and put in the ones he suggested, sometimes whole sentences. Was he inspired, too? 3. As she is very wordy and wholly ignorant of grammar, of late years she has employed an accomplished writer to take her manuscript and correct it, improve the wording, polish it up, and put it in popular style, so her books would sell better. Thousands of words, not her own, are thus put in by these other persons, some of whom were not even Christians. Are their words inspired, too? 4. She often copies, without credit or sign of quotation, whole sentences and even paragraphs, almost word for word, from other authors. . . . This she does page after page. Was D’Aubigné also inspired?²⁵⁴

Since he continued to employ that line of argument even after Smith drew his attention to the fact that neither White herself nor Adventists in general held that view of inspiration,²⁵⁵ he may have been unwilling to accept Smith’s pleadings to the contrary

²⁵⁴ Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 12]," 2 (emphasis supplied); Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 151, 152. In his book he claimed, "There you have it, simon pure: every word she writes is a ray of light from the throne of God. . . . Thus it will be seen that Mrs. White claims the very highest inspiration, the voice of God speaking directly through her. . . . Here she claims that the very *words* in which her visions are recorded are of divine inspiration." See Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, [1888], 44 (emphasis original). Although Knight attributes a verbal view of inspiration to Canright himself, he notes that Canright "asserted that 'every line she wrote . . . she claimed was dictated to her by the Holy Ghost,'" thereby leaving open the possibility that Canright only attempted to disprove Ellen White's alleged claim to verbal inspiration. See Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 106, 107.

²⁵⁵ Smith, "A Miracle Called for," 649; Smith, "Which Are Revealed, Words or Ideas?," 168, 169; Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, [1888], 44, 45. Graham's reference to other clear misrepresentations of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and historical facts by Canright in that context may support the conclusion that he was more concerned with employing convincing arguments despite their lack of complete accuracy. See Graham, *Ellen G. White*, 397 en. 38. Interestingly, a perusal of the 1886 volume of the *Review and Herald* to verify Canright's claim that Seventh-day Adventists equated Ellen White's writings and the Bible demonstrates that the one writer who was using quotations from White's writings in support of matters of practice by far more than any other writer was Canright himself. See, e.g., D. M. Canright, "Qualifications for the Ministry," *Review and Herald*, 16 March 1886, 170, 171; D. M. Canright, "Qualifications for the Ministry—9. Education," *Review and Herald*, 13 April 1886, 234, 235; D. M. Canright, "Qualifications for the Ministry—10. How to Study," *Review and Herald*, 20 April 1886, 251; D. M. Canright, "Qualifications for the Ministry—10. How to Study [Continued]," *Review and Herald*, 27 April 1886, 266, 267; D. M. Canright, "Young Man, Young Woman, Go to School," *Review and Herald*, 10 August 1886, 505, 506. A similar example for quotations from White's writings in support of a practice

because he thought either that the argument was too good to throw out, he was not convinced by Smith's negations, or he himself really preferred the concept of a verbal inspiration.

In addition, Canright assumed true divine inspiration would produce several results. The first expected result was rather unusual, yet the others paralleled those held by Adventists and other Christians. Thus truly inspired individuals should be able to work "miracle[s] to prove [their] claim" to the supernatural origin of their prophetic gift. Then inspiration should divinely safeguard an inspired person from making factual and theological mistakes. The predictions of a true prophet were to be fulfilled (Deuteronomy 18:22). And since the Holy Spirit would reveal things otherwise unknown to an inspired person, that person's testimony was to be characterized by original and unique insights.²⁵⁶

Objections to Other Views

In his writings after 1887, Canright opposed the belief in Ellen White's divine inspiration and authority based on the assumption that she herself and Adventists in general held a strict verbal view of inspiration.

Canright's objections presupposed that she claimed the Holy Spirit told her exactly what to say and what to write. Quoting her statement from *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 2 (1860), "I am just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing a

is Committee, "Program for Studies for Ministers," *Review and Herald*, 4 May 1886, 288. Tait also referred to the *Testimonies* by saying that the strongest evidence for their inspiration is the "internal evidence." By practicing what they say and comparing one's life to the previous condition one would see a difference. See A. O. Tait, "Why I Believe the 'Testimonies,'" *Review and Herald*, 27 April 1886, 259. See also A. O. Tait, "Read the 'Testimonies,'" *Review and Herald*, 14 December 1886, 772. Yet these two last articles are different in that they only encourage the reading of these books without quoting them in support of a practice.

²⁵⁶ Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 12]," 2; Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 13]," 2; Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, [1888], 44-49. See also Graham, *Ellen G. White*, 362.

vision as in having a vision,” he asserted that she claimed divine inspiration for the “very words in which her visions are recorded.” He therefore argued repeatedly that she herself claimed that “every word she writes” and “every line she writes, even in a private letter, is directly inspired by God.” Canright further emphasized that White suggested that the voice of God would seemingly speak through her almost mechanically. He thus stated,

She claims that every line she writes, even in a private letter, is directly inspired by God. . . . Thus it will be seen that Mrs. White claims the very highest inspiration, the voice of God speaking directly through her.²⁵⁷

Beyond attributing to her the claim of a verbal and mechanical inspiration, he also suggested that she claimed that type of inspiration for all her literary productions, “private letter[s] or newspaper article[s]” included.²⁵⁸

At least seven reasons led him to reject that type of inspiration allegedly claimed by White. First, her rewriting and omitting of passages stood in contrast to the claim that God had previously given her the very words. Second, she replaced words and sentences with language suggested by her husband. Third, she employed literary assistants, some of them not even Christians, who corrected her language, improved the wording, and put it in popular style. Fourth, she often copied whole sentences, paragraphs, and pages from other biographical, historical, and theological sources without giving credit to them, charging her with plagiarism.²⁵⁹ Fifth, some statements found in White’s earlier writings

²⁵⁷ Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, [1888], 43, 44.

²⁵⁸ Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, [1888], 43, 44 (emphasis supplied); Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 151.

²⁵⁹ Scholars suggest that Canright was the first person who accused her of literary theft. See Ronald D. Graybill, "D. M. Canright in Healdsburg, 1889: The Genesis of the Plagiarism Charge," *Insight*, 21 October 1980, 7–10; *A Critique of the Book Prophetess of Health*, 29; Poirier, "Ellen White and Sources," 145, 151; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G.*

were omitted in later editions of her works because they supposedly contradicted current Adventist beliefs. Sixth, a comparison of the first edition of the *Testimonies for the Church* with the revised edition, published in 1885, revealed heavy editing of the language by “her own son and a critical editor.”²⁶⁰ Canright wondered how the words could be changed and replaced with language from obviously non-inspired sources if God had previously inspired her to employ the very wording. His assertion that Ellen White claimed for herself a verbal inspiration was at variance with his knowledge and view of how her writings were prepared for publishing. Seventh, like many Protestants and Adventists, he assumed that inspiration safeguarded an inspired writer from making factual and theological mistakes, yet he stressed that White had made a number of mistakes in theological and factual matters.²⁶¹

In summary, Canright utilized statements from White’s own writings to argue that she claimed to be verbally inspired, a claim he could easily disprove with examples from his own experience and interaction with her.

White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889, 147, 148, 151–153, 167. Poirier states that “there is evidence of earlier questioning of Ellen White’s use of sources.” The legal, ethical, and theological implications of White’s literary borrowing and the plagiarism charge are treated in Poirier, “Ellen White and Sources,” 152–159; Moon, “Who Owns the Truth?,” 46–66.

²⁶⁰ Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, [1888], 44, 45. See also above on p. 170. The fourth point is mentioned in Graybill, “D. M. Canright in Healdsburg, 1889,” 7–10; Patrick, “Author,” 99; Gary Land, “Biographies,” in *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, eds. Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 328, 329; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 151. The sixth point is mentioned in Thompson, *Escape from the Flames*, 63; Thompson, *Inspiration*, 268; Thompson, “Improving the Testimonies Through Revisions,” 15; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 151, 152; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 120.

²⁶¹ D. M. Canright, “Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 2]: Did the Pope Change the Sabbath?,” *Michigan Christian Advocate*, 30 July 1887, 2; D. M. Canright, “Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 5]: The Sabbath Controversy Not a New Thing,” *Michigan Christian Advocate*, 20 August 1887, 2; D. M. Canright, “Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 7]: Origin and Work of the Seventh-Day Adventist Movement,” *Michigan Christian Advocate*, 3 September 1887, 2, 3.

Sources and Influences

Scholars note that Canright reiterated and systematized many arguments previously utilized by Ellen White's opponents.²⁶² His publications show signs of literary borrowing from their writings. Beyond quoting selectively from the writings of Ellen White and other Adventist writers, he also frequently invoked personal experiences from his Adventist past.

Canright frequently utilized the writings of long-time critics of Ellen White.²⁶³ He quoted, for example, from *Mrs. E. G. White's Claims to Divine Inspiration Examined* (1877) by Henry E. Carver to demonstrate that she did not originate anything new.²⁶⁴ Similarly, many of his arguments against her inspiration appear already in that book.²⁶⁵ Responding to White's emphasis on her dependence on God for the entire revelation-inspiration experience from receiving visions to relating them in oral and written form, he asserted, "Here she claims that the very *words* in which her visions are recorded are of divine inspiration," a statement taken verbatim from Carver's book.²⁶⁶ He also used Miles

²⁶² Graybill, "Prophet," 86; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, xi; Graham, *Ellen G. White*, 363, 364, 367; Lake, "Ellen White Criticism and D. M. Canright," 137.

²⁶³ Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 147.

²⁶⁴ See Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, [1888], 49; Carver, *Mrs. E. G. White's Claims to Divine Inspiration Examined*, 74.

²⁶⁵ The list of White's mistakes common to both Carver and Canright contains her statements on slavery, the reform dress, the time to commence the Sabbath, the shut door, and Christ's imminent second coming. See Carver, *Mrs. E. G. White's Claims to Divine Inspiration Examined*, 14-18, 22-26, 28-48, 49, 50; Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, [1888], 45-49.

²⁶⁶ See Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, [1888], 44; Carver, *Mrs. E. G. White's Claims to Divine Inspiration Examined*, 43. The emphasis is original in both sources. Both Carver and Canright made reference to her statement, "I am just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing a vision as in having a vision." See Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:293.

Grant's *The True Sabbath* (1874) as a source because his quotations from John Megquier and L. S. Burdick on the shut door correspond with that work.²⁶⁷ Then, in early December 1887, Canright corresponded with O. R. L. Crosier, a former early Sabbatarian Adventist, about White's advocacy of the shut door teaching in the mid-1840s.²⁶⁸ Similar to other critics, Canright likened her visionary experience to the predictions and influence of such prophetic claimants as Joanna Southcott, Ann Lee, Joseph Smith, and Emanuel Swedenborg.²⁶⁹ And, like previous critics, he accused Adventists of suppressing White's earlier writings and omitting objectionable parts in reprints to obliterate her initial belief in the shut door.²⁷⁰

He frequently quoted from her writings to demonstrate the existence of historical and theological errors in them. He often employed the writings of other Adventist writers and Protestant scholars to falsify some of her historical remarks and prove the faultiness of her theological propositions. Similarly, he compared the works of Adventist and Protestant writers to disprove Adventist teachings on various historical and theological matters. Yet these quotations were often only brief and selective remarks detached from their literary context.²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ See Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, [1888], 45; Grant, *The True Sabbath*, 70, 72.

²⁶⁸ Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, [1888], 45.

²⁶⁹ See Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 7]," 3; Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 13]," 2; Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, [1888], 54, 55; Grant, *The True Sabbath*, 44, 49, 68.

²⁷⁰ See Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 12]," 2; Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, [1888], 45; William Sheldon, "The Visions and Theories of the Prophetess Ellen G. White in Conflict with the Bible," *Voice of the West*, 1 January 1867, 52.

²⁷¹ Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 2]," 2; D. M. Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 3]: Did the Pope Change the Sabbath?," *Michigan Christian Advocate*, 6 August 1887, 2; D. M. Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 4]: Why Not Found Out

Canright frequently emphasized in his argumentation against White's inspiration that he was drawing from first-hand knowledge. Thus he stated, for example,

I do positively know that the words in her written "testimonies" are not inspired. . . . I have seen her scratch out a whole page, or a line, or a sentence, and write it over differently. . . . I have repeatedly seen her sit with pen in hand and read her manuscript to her husband for hours, while he suggested many changes, which she made. She would scratch out her own words and put in the ones he suggested, sometimes whole sentences. . . . I could not avoid knowing them [damaging facts], for I have been where I saw it myself.²⁷²

Being personally acquainted with her, Canright thought he knew more than the "common reader" as he "could not avoid knowing" these practices.²⁷³ Discussing the commotion the reform dress caused in families and in society, he claimed that his wife wore it in compliance with White's testimony and suffered under public resentment.²⁷⁴ As he was personally acquainted with her, his assertions carried more weight.

The Context of the Statements

Canright's questions and doubts may have been triggered by several events and circumstances. The present section discusses events that may have contributed to his

Before?," *Michigan Christian Advocate*, 13 August 1887, 2; Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 5]," 2; D. M. Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 6]," *Michigan Christian Advocate*, 27 August 1887, 2; Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 7]," 2, 3; D. M. Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 8]: The Sabbath on a Round World," *Michigan Christian Advocate*, 10 September 1887, 2; D. M. Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 9]: The Sabbath in the New Testament," *Michigan Christian Advocate*, 17 September 1887, 2; D. M. Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 10]: The Sabbath in the New Testament," *Michigan Christian Advocate*, 24 September 1887, 2; D. M. Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 11]: The Jewish Sabbath Abolished," *Michigan Christian Advocate*, 1 October 1887, 2; Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 12]," 2; Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 13]," 2.

²⁷² Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, [1888], 44, 45.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 45.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 48, 49.

decision to abandon Adventism entirely and disengage from Adventist teachings and Ellen White's prophetic role.

The death of his youngest child on February 25, 1885, threw him into despair and doubt like nothing else before. He began to question God's goodness and thought he would rather die than live.²⁷⁵ His perception of the testimonies and Ellen White had changed in 1884 and 1885, but his narcissism and longing for denominational success remained apparently unaffected.²⁷⁶ White felt unable to approve many of his literary productions in 1886, and she thought that Canright was on a spiritual downward path again, influencing others to follow along.²⁷⁷ In these years he was given several responsible tasks—substitute teaching for Smith in the College, writing articles for a column in the *Review*, etc.—but some leading ministers and church members still dared not trust in his management and advice.²⁷⁸ As he was repeatedly overlooked in the

²⁷⁵ George I. Butler, "Obituary Notices[: George Hadden Canright]," *Review and Herald*, 3 March 1885, 143; D. M. Canright to Ellen G. White, 27 February 1885, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, 21 March 1885, EGWCF, EGWE.

²⁷⁶ See, e.g., Canright, "Who the Adventists Are," 4.

²⁷⁷ Ellen G. White mentioned at least four aspects she considered problematic in Canright's experience in 1886. First, she considered Canright's recommendation of reading material as ill-advised and detrimental. Here, she was probably referring to D. M. Canright, "A List of Good Books for Young Folks," *Review and Herald*, 7 September 1886, 570; Hammond, "The Life and Work of Uriah Smith," 50. Second, she thought his ideas on the law were mixed up and few understood where his arguments would lead. Third, she stated that he came across as a "bishop of the Methodist Church" in the mass of articles that he wrote in the *Review*. She may have had in mind particularly his frequent articles in the column of the "Ministers' Department" in the *Review* from March 16 to October 26, 1886. In these articles, he usually gave advice on pastoral and ecclesiastical matters, as well as on such topics as qualifications for the ministry, funerals, Sabbath school, reading material, examination of church books, etc. Fourth, in her view, Canright failed to provide proper evidence from the Bible for Adventist teachings but merely "tide[d] over points . . . with assertions." See Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, 30 December 1886, Lt 6, 1886, EGWE; Butler to Ellen G. White, 17 February 1887; Ellen G. White to George I. Butler and Uriah Smith, 5 April 1887h, Lt 13, 1887, EGWE; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:571-573; Graham, *Ellen G. White*, 360.

²⁷⁸ George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, 31 August 1885, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, 30 September 1885, EGWCF, EGWE; George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, 31 March 1887,

appointment for leadership positions in the fall of 1886, his desire for recognition and esteem remained unsatisfied. Thus in late September, Canright mentioned that he would cease preaching for the church if the delegates failed to elect him president of the Michigan Conference; instead they chose to appoint General Conference President Butler to fill both offices simultaneously.²⁷⁹ When he was also overlooked at the General Conference session in early December, he seemed even more disappointed because he was “left out of most everything” and hence “his labors [did not seem to] amount to anything” so that he might as well “return to his farm.”²⁸⁰ Meanwhile, in October, Canright prepared for a proposed but never realized series of debates on the law and covenants with David R. Dungan, president of Drake University in Des Moines, Ia., which confronted him with some insurmountable difficulties on these subjects.²⁸¹ Then in November, he visited Cornelius DeVos, an estranged former church member and publishing house worker, to win him back, yet the latter confronted him with criticisms of White’s statements on the shut door and omissions in her early writings so that Canright

EGWCF, EGWE; Ellen G. White to George I. Butler, 5 April 1886, Lt 77, 1886, EGWE. In 1885, from February 26 to April 1, he gave twelve of the thirty-two lectures (more than one-third) setting forth the faith and practice of the Seventh-day Adventists for the benefit of the residents of Battle Creek and vicinity. See *Tabernacle Lecture Course: Comprising a Series of Discourses Setting forth the Doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists Delivered at the S. D. A. Tabernacle, Battle Creek, Mich., and Reported for the Battle Creek Daily Journal* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1885), 54-61, 69-83, 92-99, 106-112, 137-158, 175-197, 213-220.

²⁷⁹ J. Fargo and A. H. Mason, "Michigan Conference Proceedings," *Review and Herald*, 26 October 1886, 668, 669; Carrie Johnson, *I Was Canright's Secretary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1971), 80. Cf. Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire*, 49; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 234.

²⁸⁰ George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, 16 December 1886, EGWCF, EGWE. Canright’s close friend D. W. Reavis suggested that he was yearning for recognition and popularity. See Reavis, *I Remember*, 117.

²⁸¹ D. M. Canright, "The Debate at Des Moines Given Up," *Review and Herald*, 19 October 1886, 649; Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, [1888], 156; Paul E. Penno, Jr., "Calvary at Sinai: The Law and the Covenants in Seventh-day Adventist History," Vallejo, CA, 2001, 74. See also Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire*, 49; Douty, *The Case of D. M. Canright*, 69, 70.

left shocked and distressed.²⁸² Shortly afterwards in December, he experienced heated discussions on the nature and significance of the law in Galatians 3 when serving as a member of a committee intended to resolve the disagreements. He partnered with Butler and Smith in opposing E. J. Waggoner's views, yet he was distraught over the hostile feelings present among the committee members, their inability to settle the issue, and the potential validity of Waggoner's interpretation.²⁸³ Butler became afraid that Canright would be overcome by discouragement and "be tried on his old weakness."²⁸⁴ Later Canright conceded that these experiences triggered his "old feelings of doubt" and caused

²⁸² Cornelius DeVos to L. E. Froom, 27 November 1934, CAR. DeVos had been a member of the church and a worker at the publishing house in Battle Creek from 1879 to about 1883. See [Uriah Smith], "The Conference," *Review and Herald*, 24 April 1879, 132; D. M. Canright and Uriah Smith, "Business Proceedings of the Fourth Special Session of the General Conference of S. D. Adventists," *Review and Herald*, 24 April 1879, 133; *The Seventh-day Adventist Year Book: Containing Statistics of the General Conference and Other Organizations of the Denomination, with the Business Proceedings of the Anniversary Meetings Held at Rome, N.Y., Dec. 7-9, 1882* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1883), 55. Confronted with criticism against Ellen White's visions and writings in 1883, DeVos began questioning the divine origin of her writings and engaged in unnerving correspondence on the shut door and omissions in her early writings with Uriah Smith and Joseph Harvey Waggoner from about mid-1884 to late 1887. See, e.g., Uriah Smith to Cornelius DeVos, 21 July 1884, CAR; Cornelius DeVos to Uriah Smith, 1 December 1884, CAR; Cornelius DeVos to J. H. Waggoner, 18 January 1885, CAR; J. H. Waggoner to Cornelius DeVos, 15 February 1885, CAR; DeVos, *The Shut Door*; Cornelius DeVos to J. H. Waggoner, 26 February 1885, CAR; Cornelius DeVos to Uriah Smith, 29 November 1885, CAR; Uriah Smith to Cornelius DeVos, 3 December 1885, CAR; Cornelius DeVos to Uriah Smith, 18 October 1887, CAR; Smith, 19; Cornelius DeVos to Uriah Smith, 20 October 1887, CAR. On January 18, 1887, shortly after Canright's visit with him, DeVos made the following comment in the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*: "I would say to those who have so much faith in Mrs. White's writings, that she at one time stated in a private letter to Elder Canright that 'if one error is possible, many are possible, and hence all may be erroneous.' I have called your attention to *one* error, and could give *many* more if you desire them." See DeVos, "Wonder How He Would Argue Now," 333. It is nevertheless unclear if he learned that detail from Canright in November 1886 or earlier.

²⁸³ Butler to Ellen G. White, 17 February 1887; George R. Knight, *A User-friendly Guide to the 1888 Message* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998), 41, 42. See also Woodrow W. Whidden, *E. J. Waggoner: From the Physician of Good News to the Agent of Division*, Adventist Pioneer Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2008), 99, 102; Land, *Uriah Smith*, 172; Moon and Kaiser, "For Jesus and Scripture," 92 en. 197; Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire*, 49–55. Lake suggests that this was the defining event that "changed his relationship to Adventism and Ellen White for the rest of his life." See Lake, "Ellen White Criticism and D. M. Canright," 136. However, it seems more likely that as one incident in the line of several debilitating experiences, it was the straw that broke the camel's back.

²⁸⁴ Butler to Ellen G. White, 16 December 1886.

him to study the issues for several weeks. Instead of siding with Waggoner, however, he concluded that Adventists were mistaken in their entire approach to the law.²⁸⁵ These experiences apparently all contributed to his deliberation to give up faith in “the ten commandments . . . , the Sabbath, the [three angels’] messages, the sanctuary, our position upon the U.S. in prophecy, the *Testimonies*, health reform, the ordinances of humility.”²⁸⁶ He specifically mentioned that the testimonies had taught the shut door movement and the reform dress. Finally, he admitted that he had struggled with these questions for twenty years but felt no longer able to endure the tension now. Thus the church complied with Canright’s wish to drop his name from church membership on February 17, 1887.²⁸⁷

One week later the [*Otsego*] *Weekly Union* published a letter from Canright in which he felt the need to explain his current position. He had only positive feelings towards Adventists because they had treated him “in the most fair and liberal manner,” yet he stated that he separated from them for the following reasons.

I lost confidence in the doctrine of the church. I have had my doubts on some points for years, but tried to make myself believe with the church till my conviction became so strong that I could do so no longer. I became fully satisfied that keeping the seventh day is an error productive of evil rather than of good. The visions of Mrs. White are held by them to be inspired. I satisfied myself beyond all doubt that they are only the imaginings of her own mind. I could not believe the position of our

²⁸⁵ Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, [1888], 156; Knight, *A User-friendly Guide to the 1888 Message*, 41, 42.

²⁸⁶ *Church Record of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Otsego, Allegan Co., Mich. [1879-1893]* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1878), 43–45.

²⁸⁷ Butler to Ellen G. White, 17 February 1887; "Additional Local," [*Otsego, Mich.*] *Weekly Union*, 25 February 1887, [14]; Penno, "Calvary at Sinai," 73; Richard W. Schwarz, "The Perils of Growth, 1886-1905," in *Adventism in America: A History*, ed. Gary Land, rev. ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 84; Douty, *The Case of D. M. Canright*, 88–90.

people on several points of prophecy vital to the faith. I also felt that our people were too narrow and exclusive in their feelings toward other churches.²⁸⁸

In early March the *Review* printed an article by Butler to inform the church about Canright's change of faith. The article included a statement by Canright, explaining his step, and was followed by a reprint of his article from October 7, 1884.²⁸⁹ Ellen White criticized Butler for his "soft words," thinking they were totally uncalled for.²⁹⁰ A few weeks later Butler had to urge church members to refrain from contacting Canright and talking about him in a way "calculated to create an acrimonious spirit."²⁹¹ Canright initially intended to part with his former co-workers and members peacefully, but unfortunate reactions of some Adventists²⁹² and the felt need to justify his step may have led him to explain his new position and his decision to leave the denomination. On May 22, 1887 he began giving public presentations at other churches, explaining his reasons

²⁸⁸ D. M. Canright, "Change of Faith," [*Otsego, Mich.*] *Weekly Union*, 25 February 1887, 8.

²⁸⁹ Butler, "Eld. Canright's Change of Faith," 138; D. M. Canright, "To My Brethren, the S. D. Adventists," *Review and Herald*, 1 March 1887, 138, 139. Judging from the title of Butler's article, he made reference to Canright's article in the [*Otsego, Mich.*] *Weekly Union* from February 25, 1887.

²⁹⁰ She wrote, "And after his [Canright's] apostasy, why need you [Butler and Smith] say the things in regard to him you have? God did not treat apostates in this way; and if you had anything to say, say it without putting such things in the paper. . . . Elder Canright's course is contemptible, and do not seek to palliate it with soft words or smooth speeches." See Ellen G. White to Butler and Smith, 5 April 1887.

²⁹¹ George I. Butler, "A Few Words More Concerning Eld. Canright," *Review and Herald*, 22 March 1887, 185.

²⁹² See Graham, *Ellen G. White*, 398 en. 39; Lake, "Ellen White Criticism and D. M. Canright," 136. Ellen White's last letter to him may also have spurred Canright's resentment. See Ellen G. White to Canright, 20 April 1887. Regarding evidence for his initial peaceful departure see Douty, *The Case of D. M. Canright*, 90, 91. Yet in his description of events in the spring of 1887, Douty seems to overlook Butler's smooth comments on Canright in March 1887 and erroneously interprets the *Review and Herald* extra from late November 1887 as the trigger for "Canright's self-defense." See *ibid.*, 97.

for parting with Adventism.²⁹³ About three weeks later he gave a talk on Ellen White's visions.²⁹⁴

In the following months he began to write a series of thirteen articles entitled "Seventh-Day [sic] Adventism Renounced," published successively in the Methodist periodical *Michigan Christian Advocate* from July 16 to October 15.²⁹⁵ The articles dealt primarily with the issue of the seventh-day Sabbath, yet they were interspersed with remarks about Ellen White's assertions. The last two articles, on October 8 and 15, discussed specific objections against her claim to divine inspiration, similarities between her ministry and that of other modern prophetic claimants, and an exemplary list of her mistakes.²⁹⁶ In the following year, the two articles appeared in slightly revised form in the chapter "The Visions of Mrs. White" in his well-known book *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced*.²⁹⁷

²⁹³ "Additional Local," [*Otsego, Mich.*] *Weekly Union*, 20 May 1887, 8. See also "Local Items," [*Otsego, Mich.*] *Weekly Union*, 3 June 1887, 8; "Canright on the Law: He Interprets Scripture to Prove the Seventh Day Adventists Wrong," [*Otsego, Mich.*] *Weekly Union*, 14 October 1887, 4; "Local Items," [*Otsego, Mich.*] *Weekly Union*, 11 November 1887, 5; "Local Items," [*Otsego, Mich.*] *Weekly Union*, 18 November 1887, 5; "Local Items," [*Otsego, Mich.*] *Weekly Union*, 25 November 1887, 5; "Local Items," [*Otsego, Mich.*] *Weekly Union*, 9 March 1888, 5.

²⁹⁴ "Additional Local," [*Otsego, Mich.*] *Weekly Union*, 10 June 1887, [8].

²⁹⁵ "Local Items," [*Otsego, Mich.*] *Weekly Union*, 22 July 1887, [5].

²⁹⁶ Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 12]," 2; Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 13]," 2.

²⁹⁷ A comparison of his thirteen articles in the *Michigan Christian Advocate* with the twelve chapters of the 1888-edition of his book *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced* shows many similarities in subject and content. Interestingly, although the book was first published about August 1888, it gives "1887" as the copyright year. Except for his first article, all remaining articles in the *Michigan Christian Advocate* carry almost the same copyright reference (articles 2-6: "Copyrighted 1887. All rights reserved.") or the exact same copyright reference (articles 7-13: "Copyrighted 1887, by D. M. Canright. All rights reserved."). This is another suggestion that his book was actually based on that series of articles from 1887. See Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, [1888], i, ii.

In early 1889, some Protestant clergymen invited Canright to give a series of public lectures on the “heresies” of Seventh-day Adventism at Healdsburg, Calif.²⁹⁸ His lectures generally repeated the topics and arguments of his articles in the *Michigan Christian Advocate*. In his lectures on February 11 and 12, he discussed White’s visions and outlined a specific list of mistakes such as her lack of performing miracles, the failed fulfillment of her predictions, her claim to divine dictation refuted by the existence of literary assistants, her practice of copying from other writers, and the suppression of some of her early revelations.²⁹⁹ The course of lectures was followed by a debate between Canright and William Healey, an Adventist minister, in which Canright repeated his accusation that in *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 4, White had copied verbatim “seven solid pages” from J. N. Andrews’ *History of the Sabbath*, a charge challenged by Healey who demanded evidence and asked for an investigation by a committee. J. N. Bailhache and H. B. McBride, the two non-Adventist members of the three-man investigation committee, concluded that she had copied largely from Andrews’ book when writing her vision. Loughborough observed, however, that “the sentences were not the same, but were expressed in a different manner, and these did *not* refer to the *ideas* and reasoning of Mr. Andrews, but were matters of historical statement readily attainable from many sources.”³⁰⁰ Canright had already accused her of plagiarism in his articles in the *Michigan*

²⁹⁸ Graybill provides an informative sketch of the 1889 Healdsburg lectures and debates. See Graybill, “D. M. Canright in Healdsburg, 1889,” 7–10.

²⁹⁹ “Seventh-day Adventism Renounced,” *Healdsburg Enterprise*, 6 February 1889; “Seventh-day Adventism Renounced,” *Healdsburg Enterprise*, 20 February 1889. See also Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire*, 57; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 153, 154.

³⁰⁰ John N. Bailhache and H. B. McBride, “The Committee Report,” *Healdsburg Enterprise*, 6 March 1889; J. N. Loughborough, “False Charges Refuted,” *Healdsburg Enterprise*, 13 March 1889,

Christian Advocate in 1887, yet it was the direct comparison of her writings with the sources of literary borrowing that created a normative paradigm for both later critics and defenders.³⁰¹

Summary

This section dealt with the concept of inspiration held by Dudley M. Canright from 1884 to 1889. Circumstantial evidence could support the thesis that he entertained a word-focused view of inspiration, yet there is no direct evidence in the primary sources as to his particular concept of inspiration at any given time. After his separation from Adventism in 1887, he employed a dictation-type model of inspiration to disprove the claim of Ellen White's divine inspiration. Several facts seem to favor the conclusion that he only utilized that model to refute her alleged claim to a divine inspiration of her

(emphasis original). See also Poirier, "Ellen White and Sources," 146; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 168, 169.

³⁰¹ Numerous studies appeared in the 1970s and 1980s attempting to demonstrate the manner and extent of literary borrowing in White's writings. Whereas some interpreted her borrowing as illegal and unethical literary theft to prove the mere human origin of her writing ministry, others concluded it conformed to the literary practices in North America in the late nineteenth century to defend her inspiration. See, e.g., Peterson, "A Textual and Historical Study of Ellen G. White's Account of the French Revolution;" Peterson, "Ellen White's Literary Indebtedness;" McAdams, "Shifting Views of Inspiration;" Numbers, *Prophetess of Health; A Critique of the Book Prophetess of Health*; Rea, *The White Lie*; John J. Robertson, *The White Truth* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1981). After the copyright lawyer Vincent L. Ramik and the textual critic Fred Veltman made available the results of their studies on White's borrowing practices, public interest in the subject began to wane. See Vincent L. Ramik, "Memorandum of Law: Literary Property Rights, 1790-1915," 14 August 1981, DF 389, EGWE; Veltman, "Full Report of the Life of Christ Research Project,;" Fred Veltman, "The Desire of Ages Project [Part 1]: The Data," *Ministry*, October 1990, 4-7; Roger W. Coon, "Ellen White's Use of Sources," *Adventist Review*, 17 September 1981, 3; Roger W. Coon and Vincent L. Ramik, "There Simply is no Case," *Adventist Review*, 17 September 1981, 4-6. Several new studies appeared in recent years to respond to continuing criticism from non-Adventists. See Brand and McMahon, *The Prophet and Her Critics*; Moon, "Who Owns the Truth?," 46-71; E. Marcella Anderson King and Kevin L. Morgan, *More Than Words: A Study of Inspiration and Ellen White's Use of Sources in The Desire of Ages* (Berrien Springs, MI: Honor Him, 2009); Kevin L. Morgan, *White Soap: For Removal of Lingering Stains on Ellen White's Integrity as an Inspired Writer* (Millers Creek, NC: Honor Him, 2013); Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire*, 65-84; Fortin, "Plagiarism," 1028-1035; Poirier, "Ellen White and Sources," 145-165; Lake, "Ellen G. White's Use of Extrabiblical Sources," 316-332.

words. Canright's critique may therefore not necessarily qualify as an unambiguous disclosure of his personal view of the Holy Spirit's operation in the inspiration of the Bible writers as it may be merely a piece in his argumentation to demonstrate the contradiction between White's own claim and her practice.³⁰²

Canright's attitude towards White's personality, visions, and writings was often affected by his momentary emotional state.³⁰³ Full affirmations of her divine inspiration alternated with recurrent phases of doubt and resentment. When, in 1884 and 1885, he felt fully convinced to defend the inspiration of the testimonies, he nevertheless formulated his evidences (positive fruits) in such absolute and unrealistic terms that it could shake his confidence in her inspiration and the denominational teachings if these evidences were proven wrong by experiences. In 1887 these spiritual evidences gave way to factual arguments to disprove White's inspiration. Except for the charge of literary theft, these factual evidences were generally copied from previous critics of Adventism and Ellen White, yet his personal acquaintance with her and ministerial experience in the Adventist denomination lend significant credence to these arguments. Previously he tried to convince Adventist sceptics of her divine inspiration whereas afterwards he attempted to convince everyone of the falsity of that belief.

³⁰² Twenty-five years later, S. N. Haskell suggested that he and Canright shared the belief in verbal inspiration. See S. N. Haskell to W. C. White, 21 November 1912, EGWCF, EGWE. He may have been correct, yet the primary sources fail to provide conclusive evidence.

³⁰³ It is striking how many times Canright used the words "feel" and its derivatives in his correspondence and publications over the years. It has been suggested that his emotional instability, changing moods, and inability to take criticism resulted in a rather erratic relationship with the church. See Knight, *A User-friendly Guide to the 1888 Message*, 43; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 147. Even Douty, a defender of the post-Adventist Canright, admits the strong "emotional element" in Canright's Adventist experience. See Douty, *The Case of D. M. Canright*, 73.

His change of mind did not appear to arise from a deep study of the biblical foundations for the gift of prophecy and White's personal views, but rather it occurred as the final step in a longer series of events and developments that successively weakened his confidence in the future prospects of the church, the trust of leaders and members in him, his own future place in the denomination, the sincerity about White's early teachings, the biblical validity of the Adventist doctrines, and the unity of the leaders. These debilitating experiences brought up again his past doubts and discouragements. After he felt attacked by some Adventist individuals and received recognition from non-Adventist audiences for his insider information, Canright began to justify his change of mind and denominational affiliation both orally and in writing.

Specifying Particulars: The Clarification Efforts of Ellen G. White

As in previous decades, Seventh-day Adventists continued to believe that the true gift of prophecy manifested itself in their midst. Ellen White nevertheless faced a number of unprecedented challenges in this period from 1880 to 1895. The death of her husband on August 6, 1881 deprived White of her most important editorial helper, increasing the need for other literary assistants. She had previously lived in various parts of the United States but now she ventured into new continents—Europe (1885-1887) and Australia (1891-1900). Despite these increased travels, she wrote some of her most important works during this time.³⁰⁴ Those years also presented her with some of the biggest

³⁰⁴ Ellen G. White, *Sketches from the Life of Paul* (Battle Creek, MI, Oakland, CA: Review and Herald; Pacific Press, 1883); Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan: From the Destruction of Jerusalem to the End of the Controversy*, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1884); Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1888); Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and*

challenges as some significant supporters, former adherents, and opponents began to question and openly vilify her. White's plainest statements on the nature and modes of inspiration stem from that period. She affirmed her previous concept of inspiration but formulated the details more precisely than before and advocated her concept in readily available publications.

Conception of Inspiration

The following paragraphs describe Ellen White's thought and experience regarding the generating agents of Scripture, the *modus operandi* of divine inspiration, the utilization of literary resources, the aid of literary assistants, and the issue of infallibility.

She frequently employed phrases that could be indicative of a dictatorial understanding such as "the pen of inspiration,"³⁰⁵ "the language of inspiration,"³⁰⁶ "the

Prophets; Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Chicago, IL, New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1892); Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers: Instruction for the Minister and the Missionary* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1892).

³⁰⁵ Ellen G. White, "Appeal to Mothers," *Good Health*, January 1880, 13; Ellen G. White, "Bible Biographies," *Review and Herald*, 22 January 1880, 49; Ellen G. White, "Church Difficulties," 18 February 1880, Ms 1, 1880, EGWE; Ellen G. White, "Work of Parents," *Good Health*, March 1880, 76, 77; Ellen G. White, "Aaron's Sin in Yielding to the People," *Signs of the Times*, 20 May 1880, 217; Ellen G. White, "God's Abhorrence and Treatment of Sin," *Signs of the Times*, 27 May 1880, 229; Ellen G. White, "Necessity of Temperance," *Signs of the Times*, 8 July 1880, 301; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:462, 491, 569, 639; Ellen G. White, *Sketches from the Life of Paul*, 50, 97; Ellen G. White, "Science and Revelation," *Signs of the Times*, 13 March 1884, 161; Ellen G. White, "The Precious Promises," *Review and Herald*, 1 December 1885, 737; Ellen G. White, "Lessons From the Training and Character of Moses," 13 December 1885, Ms 36, 1885, EGWE; Ellen G. White, "The Sufferings of Christ," *Present Truth*, 21 January 1886, 10; Ellen G. White, "Daniel an Example of Faithfulness," *Signs of the Times*, 4 November 1886, 657; Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, 1 June 1894b, Lt 27, 1894, EGWE.

³⁰⁶ Ellen G. White, "The Work for Our Time," *Review and Herald*, 20 October 1885, 641; Ellen G. White, "Union With Christ in Our Work," *Review and Herald*, 16 August 1887, 513.

inspired words,³⁰⁷ “the revealed word of God,”³⁰⁸ and the “inspired word of God.”³⁰⁹ Considering her view of the nature and *modus operandi* of inspiration, they seem rather to be figures of speech stressing the divine origin of the biblical record. God’s authorship did not necessitate that the human writers be merely pens in his hand. Employing phraseology known from other nineteenth-century theologians, she emphasized that the biblical writers were “God’s penmen, not His pen.”³¹⁰ That difference is also intimated in her description of the Decalogue as a purely divine composition, because its words had been spoken and written by God himself, and the other biblical writings as “a union of the divine and the human.” She suggested that divine truths, “the knowledge necessary for salvation,” and God’s will were shed into the biblical writers’ hearts and minds by means of “dreams and visions, symbols and figures.”³¹¹ The thoughts and ideas were given in such a way that the human writers were able to grasp them. They did not

³⁰⁷ Ellen G. White, "Our Spiritual Warfare," *Review and Herald*, 19 July 1887, 450; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:701; Ellen G. White to the Workers in the Office at Oakland, 19 December 1891, Lt 31, 1891, EGWE; Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, [1892], 128; Ellen G. White, "Ye Are My Witnesses," *Home Missionary*, September 1892, 195; Ellen G. White to H. W. Kellogg, 3 August 1894, Lt 44, 1894, EGWE; Ellen G. White to those who work at Cooranbong, 4 March 1895, Lt 2, 1895, EGWE; Ellen G. White, "He That Will Love Life," 14 April 1895, Ms 11a, 1895, EGWE; Ellen G. White, "God to Be Glorified in Our Work," *Youth's Instructor*, 18 July 1895, 226.

³⁰⁸ Ellen G. White to Bro. and Sr. Garmire, 12 August 1890, Lt 12, 1890, EGWE; Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 124; Ellen G. White, "The Blessed of the Father," *Home Missionary*, July 1891, 149. See also Ellen G. White, "The Stone of Witness," *Signs of the Times*, 26 May 1881, 229.

³⁰⁹ Ellen G. White, "Safety in Following Christ," *Sabbath-School Worker*, April 1893, 59; Ellen G. White, "There is Help in God," *Signs of the Times*, 29 July 1889, 450; Ellen G. White to Bro. Church, Battle Creek, MI, 8 July 1890, Lt 8a, 1890, EGWE.

³¹⁰ Ellen G. White, "Objections to the Bible," [ca. September 1885 - May 1886], Ms 24, 1886, EGWE, published in Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:21. See also above on pp. 5, 8, 21, 26.

³¹¹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1888], c.

necessarily reflect “God’s mode of thought and expression” and he did “not put himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible.”³¹²

Ellen White’s remarks on the nature and *modus operandi* of inspiration controvert a dictational understanding of her above figurative phrases. She stressed that the biblical writers embodied the divine thought in “the imperfect expression of human language.”³¹³

The Bible is not given to us in grand superhuman language. . . . The Bible must be given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect. Different meanings are expressed by the same word; there is not one word for each distinct idea. The Bible was given for practical purposes. The stamps of minds are different. All do not understand expressions and statements alike.³¹⁴

Hence human language is only an imperfect tool whose lack of precision may naturally result in misunderstandings, ambiguity, and distortions. Differences between the biblical writers—their writing style, the time in which they lived, their “rank and occupation,” and even “mental and spiritual endowments”—accounted for the wide diversity in style, language, expressions, subject areas, and emphases in the Bible. Notwithstanding that

³¹² Ellen G. White, "Objections to the Bible," Ms 24, 1886. When Levterov states, “In addressing ministers in 1885 she again noted that ‘God impressed the mind’ of his messenger ‘with ideas’ to meet those who needed help,” quoting from *Testimony*, no. 32, he misquotes White’s statement and misreads it as an affirmation of the concept of thought inspiration. See Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White’s Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 180. She was addressing the guidance that the Holy Spirit lends to the church’s ministers when she wrote, “The Spirit of *God*, if allowed to do its work, will *impress the mind with ideas* calculated to meet the cases of those who need help.” See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:251 (emphasis supplied).

³¹³ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1888], c. d. See also Ellen G. White, "Objections to the Bible," Ms 24, 1886. See Burt, "Revelation and Inspiration," 39, 40, for her retelling of revealed scenes.

³¹⁴ Ellen G. White, "Objections to the Bible," Ms 24, 1886. See also George R. Knight, "How to Read Ellen White’s Writings," in *Understanding Ellen White: The Life and Work of the Most Influential Voice in Adventist History*, ed. Merlin D. Burt (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 71; Harder, "Revelation, a Source of Knowledge, As Conceived by Ellen G. White," 234, 235. She nevertheless argued that the Bible is “plain on every point essential to the salvation of the soul.” See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:706. She conceded that nonessential mistakes may have crept into the biblical text through translators and copyists, yet Knight mistakenly interprets that statement as an open acknowledgement of “errors in factual details in the Bible.” See Ellen G. White, "The Guide Book," c. 1888, Ms 16, 1888, EGWE; Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 110, 111.

diversity, there is nevertheless an underlying harmony because the writers merely brought out and focused on varying aspects of the same truths.³¹⁵ Describing the different emphases and foci of the writers, she stated,

One writer *is more strongly impressed* with one phase of a subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase; and each, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents *what is most forcibly impressed* upon his own mind; a different aspect of the truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all.³¹⁶

Ellen White's repetitive statement suggests that the said impressions on the writer's mind resulted from his experience, perception, and appreciation, while all this nevertheless occurred "under the guidance of the Holy Spirit."³¹⁷ In a most remarkable statement, she succinctly summarized the object of inspiration, its *modus operandi*, and divine-human union.

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. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.³¹⁸

³¹⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1888] c, d. See also Ellen G. White, "Objections to the Bible," Ms 24, 1886; Harder, "Revelation, a Source of Knowledge, As Conceived by Ellen G. White," 235.

³¹⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1888], d (emphasis supplied).

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, d.

³¹⁸ Ellen G. White, "Objections to the Bible," Ms 24, 1886. The concept expressed in that statement is often described as "thought inspiration." While "thoughts" play an important role in Ellen White's description, it seems that her dynamic multi-faceted concept of inspiration exceeds the general understanding of "thought inspiration," a fact acknowledged even by those scholars who continue to employ the term to describe White's concept of inspiration. See, e.g., Ángel M. Rodríguez, "Revelation/Inspiration and the Witness of Scripture," in *The Gift of Prophecy in Scripture and History*, eds. Alberto R. Timm and Dwain N. Esmond (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 2015), 87, 88; Lake, "Ellen G. White's Use of Extrabiblical Sources," 324–326; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 165. Drawing from Webster's

Here, she negated the idea of an inspiration of the words and advocated an inspiration of the person who would clothe the inspired thoughts in his/her own language. The resulting product was nevertheless to be considered the word of God.

To avoid the impression that all her inspired writings resulted from immediate special revelation, she specified that an inspired person could utilize at least four different literary resources. First, in producing new publications, she frequently rewrote and utilized her previous writings.³¹⁹ Second, being aware of her literary and grammatical shortcomings, she used the works of other writers as a literary mine by borrowing from them words, expressions, and phrases.³²⁰ Third, she used the works of historians and religious reformers in describing the work of reform and Satan's militating efforts in the history of Christianity. Concerned with revealing the conflict between the principles of good and evil, she avoided giving source references for the concise and comprehensive quotations because the historical facts were well documented in history books and they

1828 dictionary, Lake aptly states that "the word 'diffused' meant that the Holy Spirit was 'dispersed' and spread throughout the human mind. . . . This understanding of inspiration focuses on the total personality of the prophets, rather than just their words or thoughts." See Lake, "Ellen G. White's Use of Extrabiblical Sources," 325.

³¹⁹ See, e.g., Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 30–32; Kaiser, "Ellen G. White's Life of Christ;" Denis Kaiser, "How Ellen White Did Her Writing," in *Understanding Ellen White: The Life and Work of the Most Influential Voice in Adventist History*, ed. Merlin D. Burt (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 120–122; Viera, *The Voice of the Spirit*, 84, 85.

³²⁰ Kaiser, "How Ellen White Did Her Writing," 120; Poirier, "Ellen White and Sources," 153, 154; Tim Crosby, "Does Inspired Mean Original?," *Ministry*, February 1986, 4, 5; Ronald D. Graybill, "Ellen White as a Reader and a Writer," *Insight*, 19 May 1981, 9, 10; Johns, "Ellen White," 5–12; Lake, "Ellen G. White's Use of Extrabiblical Sources," 319, 320. See also Ellen G. White to W. W. Prescott, 18 January 1894, Lt 67, 1894, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Smith, 19 February 1884. Graybill and Lake point out that she frequently recommended the books she was utilizing to the church before her own work was published. See Graybill, "Ellen White as a Reader and a Writer," 9; Lake, "Ellen G. White's Use of Extrabiblical Sources," 326, 327.

only served as illustrations of the underlying struggle.³²¹ She also utilized Gospel harmonies and books on biblical chronology to determine the order of events revealed to her.³²² Fourth, sometimes she learned of developments and events through fellow church members, but she suggested it was through the light received from previous revelations that she could judge their true character, and thus her counsel was nevertheless written under inspiration.³²³ In addition, at the time needed the Holy Spirit revived the memory of particular scenes she had been shown years earlier but that she had forgotten.³²⁴

White's employment of literary assistants to augment her grammatical and literary skills illustrates another facet of her inspiration thought. Her assistants generally recorded oral material in shorthand, copied materials by hand or with a typewriter, and performed simple copyediting tasks such as correcting spelling and grammar, eliminating unnecessary repetitions, and improving sentence structure. She also had trusted assistants who were to compile sentences, paragraphs, or sections on a given subject from her

³²¹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1888], g, h. See also Graybill, "How Did Ellen White Choose and Use Historical Sources?," 49–53; Olson, "Ellen G. White's Use of Historical Sources in The Great Controversy," 3–5; Knight, *Meeting Ellen White*, 96; Bradford, *More Than a Prophet*, 102; Viera, *The Voice of the Spirit*, 62; Lake, "Ellen G. White's Use of Extrabiblical Sources," 319, 320.

³²² Ellen G. White to W. C. White and James Edson White, 22 December 1885, Lt 38, 1885, EGWE. See also Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 115; Kaiser, "Ellen G. White's Life of Christ," 132–136, 141–144; Johns, "Ellen White," 18; Bradford, *More Than a Prophet*, 102; Lake and Moon, "Current Science and Ellen White," 216; Lake, "Ellen G. White's Use of Extrabiblical Sources," 323, 324.

³²³ Ellen G. White to Brethren and Sisters in Battle Creek, 20 June 1882, Lt 2b, 1882, EGWE, published in Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:64, 66, 67. She also suggested that God did "not give a vision to meet each emergency which may arise." Rather, he often "impress[ed] the minds of His chosen servants with the needs and dangers of His cause and of individuals, and to lay upon them the burden of counsel and warning." See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:684, 685; Knight, *Meeting Ellen White*, 44, 45.

³²⁴ Ellen G. White, Paragraphs and Diary Entries on Various Subjects, 18 March 1889, Ms 31, 1889, EGWE. See also Douglass, "Ellen White as God's Spokesperson," 86, 87.

previous writings in another manuscript. White would then rewrite the compiled passages by rearranging, adding, and omitting material for a different audience. None of her literary assistants were allowed to introduce new thoughts or change ideas. These guidelines illustrate her understanding of inspiration as operating primarily on the thoughts and ideas.³²⁵

As before, she emphasized that her writings derived their authority from Scripture which was the supreme and unerring authority for faith and practice.³²⁶ Yet this was not to mean that “copyists” or “translators” were divinely protected from making mistakes in the transmission of the biblical text.³²⁷ Talking about the reliability of the biblical writings, she stated that the Bible contained “definite, unmistakable instructions”³²⁸ and

³²⁵ Kaiser, "How Ellen White Did Her Writing," 120. See also Roger W. Coon, "EGW's Use of Literary Assistants: The Prophet as a Writer," rev. ed., 13 April 1995, WDF 701-a-6, fld 3, no. 30, CAR; Jerry Moon, "Ellen G. White's Use of Literary Assistants," lecture outline for GSEM 534 - Issues in Ellen G. White Studies, Berrien Springs, MI, 2004, 1; Norma J. Collins, "Compilations: What They Are and What They Are Not," White Estate shelf document, Silver Spring, MD, December 2001, 2.

³²⁶ Ellen G. White, Sermon/Address to Bible Workers and Ministers, 28 January 1894, Ms 7, 1894, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Brother Colcord and Sister Colcord, 16 January 1894, Lt 11, 1894, EGWE; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:663, 665; Ellen G. White to Bro. and Sr. Garmire, 12 August 1890. See also R. Clifford Jones, "Ellen White and Scripture," in *Understanding Ellen White: The Life and Work of the Most Influential Voice in Adventist History*, ed. Merlin D. Burt (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 46–49. Knight correctly states that although Ellen White and other Adventists made such statements, they “did not mean that they held her inspiration to be of a lesser quality than that of the Bible writers. To the contrary, they believed that the same Voice of authority that spoke through the Bible prophets also communicated through her.” See Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 24, 25. Ellen White criticized a person for presenting the *Testimonies* as an addition to the Word of God. Rather, she saw the *Testimonies*’ function as leading people to the Bible. See Ellen G. White to P. B. W. Wessels, 17 March 1893, Lt 63, 1893, EGWE.

³²⁷ Ellen G. White, "The Guide Book," Ms 16, 1888.

³²⁸ Ellen G. White, "Christian Unity," *Signs of the Times*, 25 January 1883, 38; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:248.

was “to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of his will.”³²⁹ Yet, she refused to claim infallibility for herself, arguing that “God alone is infallible.”³³⁰

Objections to Other Views

Ellen White occasionally opposed views on inspiration that were either too strict or too flexible. The first usually overemphasized the divine involvement in the inspiration of the writers, resulting in unrealistic views of the final product of inspiration. The latter exaggerated the human participation, denying the significance and authority of divine assistance in the process. When she differentiated between the Decalogue and the other biblical writings, she may have been responding to overly verbal views of inspiration. Some Christian writers suggested that prophets and apostles were “only the amanuenses of the Holy Ghost” and their writings were therefore “written by the finger of God”³³¹ or “the finger of inspiration.”³³² In contrast, White distinguished between the two and argued that “the ten commandments were spoken by God himself, and were written by his own hand,” while the remainder of Scripture “was written by human hands,” by inspired people who “themselves embodied the [divine] thought in human language.”³³³ Similarly, in her paraphrase of Stowe’s explanation of inspiration and her preface to the

³²⁹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1888], d. One should also note her rejection of attempts from people in the church to find mistakes in the Bible. See, e.g., Ellen G. White, “Our Present Position,” 545, 546; Ellen G. White, “Notes on Travel: At the Sanitarium and the Office,” *Review and Herald*, 16 October 1883, 641, 642.

³³⁰ Ellen G. White to Frank E. Belden, 9 June 1895, Lt 10, 1895, EGWE. See also Ellen G. White, “Open the Heart to Light,” *Review and Herald*, 25 March 1890, 177; Ellen G. White, “Search the Scriptures,” *Review and Herald*, 26 July 1892, 465.

³³¹ Siewers, “The Reciprocity of the Gospel,” 81.

³³² Eastman, “Letter from Bro. Eastman,” 59; Bartholomew, “Letter from Bro. Bartholomew,” 44.

³³³ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1888], c.

Great Controversy, she stressed that the Bible writers were “God’s penmen, not His pen,” and that they, impressed by their different backgrounds and assisted by the Holy Spirit, clothed the revealed thoughts and ideas in their own words.³³⁴ Thus she openly rejected a dictatorial understanding of inspiration.³³⁵ On the other hand, she emphasized that her articles and books were not merely her own opinion but resulted from divine revelation. She frequently objected to views that introduced a difference in textual accuracy and authority within the corpus of inspired writings, both in the Bible and her own works, by distinguishing between divine and human aspects, inspired and uninspired parts, messages of divine origin and personal opinion, intelligence disclosed by a vision and information acquired solely through human informants.³³⁶ In her view, such delicate distinctions were “utterly false.”³³⁷ She believed in “an entire Bible.”³³⁸ Thus White objected to views that either created unrealistic expectations or diminished the divine origin of inspired messages, provoking distrust and doubt.

³³⁴ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:21; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1888], c, d.

³³⁵ Ellen White often read the typed copy of her letters and manuscripts, and rewrote parts by adding statements and rephrasing words to improve the language for a better comprehensive of the ideas. See Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 180.

³³⁶ Ellen G. White, "The Guide Book," Ms 16, 1888; Ellen G. White to R. A. Underwood, 18 January 1889, Lt 22, 1889; Ellen G. White to R. A. Underwood, 25 January 1889, Lt 3, 1889; Ellen G. White, "The Discernment of Truth," January 1889, Ms 16, 1889, EGWE; Ellen G. White, "Our Present Dangers," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 13 April 1891, 257.

³³⁷ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:683.

³³⁸ Ellen G. White, "The Guide Book," Ms 16, 1888.

Sources and Influences

It is difficult to identify specific source materials for most of Ellen White's incidental remarks touching on the issue of inspiration, yet the present section nevertheless seeks to establish some sources for her statements on inspiration—Calvin E. Stowe's *Origin and History of the Bible*, her personal experience and writings, phrases commonly used by Protestant writers, and the biblical writings.

Scholars underline that she paraphrased and reworked a passage from Stowe's *Origin and History of the Bible*. William Peterson suggests she appropriated the language and ideas of Stowe,³³⁹ yet others argue that she made use of his language but diverged from his theological ideas.³⁴⁰ Both Stowe and White evidently held a similar view of human language, progressive revelation, and the “essentially human character of the biblical revelation,” yet she had expressed these ideas already before Stowe's book.³⁴¹ Neff points out several striking differences where White went beyond Stowe's line of ideas. Thus she emphasized more the divine aspect of the revelation-inspiration process and the objective nature of the truth communicated through inspiration, whereas Stowe highlighted the subjective nature of the message. She sensed a greater need for divine

³³⁹ Peterson, "Ellen White's Literary Indebtedness," 73–84.

³⁴⁰ Bemmelen, "The Mystery of Inspiration," 36–38, 43–46; David Neff, "Ellen White's Theological and Literary Indebtedness to Calvin Stowe," 1979, WDF 65, EGWE; Robert W. Olson, *101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981), 104, 105; Robert M. Johnston, "The Case for a Balanced Hermeneutic," *Ministry*, March 1999, 11; Lake and Moon, "Current Science and Ellen White," 220; Fortin, "Plagiarism," 1033, 1034; Burt, "Revelation and Inspiration," 38; Lake, "Ellen G. White's Use of Extrabiblical Sources," 321. Johns merely states that White paraphrased the passage without commenting on the extent and manner of borrowing. See Johns, "Ellen White," 17.

³⁴¹ Neff, "Ellen White's Theological and Literary Indebtedness to Calvin Stowe," 14. See above on pp. 55–59.

assistance and serious human effort in interpreting Scripture. Also, she emphasized more the permanent character of God's word to man.³⁴² Ellen White paraphrased Stowe's remarks at the end of her 1885 diary, a possible clue that it was done in Europe sometime between September 1885 and May 1886.³⁴³ Since White's office library contained an 1867 edition of the book at the time of her death, she may possibly have owned it already during her European travels.³⁴⁴ It cannot be ruled out that she had access to a copy of the book in the library of the late J. N. Andrews,³⁴⁵ but there is no evidence to support the assumption that he owned that book. That it was known among Adventists is nevertheless clear from references in publications in the 1870s.³⁴⁶ It should be noted that her paraphrased notes were not published during her lifetime.³⁴⁷

³⁴² Ibid., 14–19. See also Olson, *101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White*, 104, 105.

³⁴³ See Timothy L. Poirier, email to Denis Kaiser, 24 August 2015.

³⁴⁴ See *A Bibliography of Ellen G. White's Private and Office Libraries*, eds. Warren H. Johns, Timothy L. Poirier, and Ronald D. Graybill, 3rd rev. ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1993), 53.

³⁴⁵ Bemmelen, "The Mystery of Inspiration," 37. See also Neff, "Ellen White's Theological and Literary Indebtedness to Calvin Stowe," 2.

³⁴⁶ Littlejohn, "The Statesman Articles," 171; Whitney, "The Book of Revelation," 34; Littlejohn, "Feet-Washing," 74; Canright, "When Was the Bible Written?," 378; "News and Notes: Religious," *Signs of the Times*, 9 September 1886, 558; Henderson, "The Bible—No. 3," 355; E. W. Webster, "Inspiration of the Bible," *Review and Herald*, 4 June 1889, 354, 355. See also above on p. 34. Therefore, Van Bemmelen and Neff seem to be mistaken that the book became known in Adventist circles through the efforts of Dudley M. Canright. See Bemmelen, "The Mystery of Inspiration," 37; Neff, "Ellen White's Theological and Literary Indebtedness to Calvin Stowe," 15.

³⁴⁷ Thompson and Bradford state that Ellen White's paraphrase was apparently not available to the public before its publication in the first volume of *Selected Messages* in 1958. See Thompson, *Inspiration*, 52; Thompson, *Escape from the Flames*, 25, 33, 100; Bradford, *More Than a Prophet*, 90. However, her manuscript was published entirely and in part already between the 1930s and 1950s. See F. M. Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus: A Review of the Work and Teachings of Mrs. Ellen Gould White* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1934), 18; Ellen G. White, "Inspiration of the Bible Writers: Objections to the Bible," *Ministry*, March 1944, 14–15; Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus*, [1944], 18; *Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly*, July - September 1950, 4; Francis D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics: An Answer to the Major Charges that Critics Have Brought Against Mrs. Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1951), 654–56; Denton E. Rebok, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church," in *Our Firm*

However, White's preface to the *Great Controversy* contains ideas and literary elements that had appeared previously in her reworked paraphrase of Stowe's passage, in her previous publications, and in an article by her husband. The preface reflects several ideas from her paraphrase. She stated, for example, that God's direct oral instructions to Adam were passed on "through successive generations." She also mentioned that the diversity of the biblical writers' background, education, and thought patterns may have influenced the way in which they expressed the truth. The revealed thoughts were expressed and clothed in human language. The Bible was given in language that was necessarily imperfect because it was human. She concluded that these facts may cause dishonest, skeptical, or superficial readers to perceive contradictions where honest, open, and devoted Bible students see unity and harmony. As Christ became human to reach humanity, the Bible was given in human language. She further stressed that the Bible presents a union of the divine and the human.³⁴⁸ However, as many of these ideas appeared already in her previous writings, it seems that she chose to paraphrase Stowe's statements because they resembled her own ideas and experience to a certain extent. She

Foundation: A Report of the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Conference Held September 1-13, 1952, in The Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church, Takoma Park, Maryland, ed. Denton E. Rebok (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953), 258, 259; Roy F. Cottrell, "How the Bible Came to Us—[No.] 1: God's Chosen Penmen," *Review and Herald*, 3 March 1955, 5; Denton E. Rebok, *Believe His Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1956), 187, 190, 191, 194. The fact that Ellen White never put that paraphrase in print raises a number of questions. The document would have been helpful in some of the later discussions with David Paulson and A. T. Jones (1906-1909), yet she referred to readily available publications. Maybe she was not aware of its existence anymore, or she did not feel that it fully applied to these discussions. That she did not merely take notes from her reading of Stowe's passage but also deviated somewhat from his ideas and added her own comments suggests that she was, in fact, digesting that passage. Nevertheless, since the document remained in its original condition as a paraphrase without ever being utilized or improved for publication, one should probably refrain from placing too much emphasis on her particular choice of words and from employing this document as the main source for Ellen White's theology of inspiration.

³⁴⁸ See Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:19-21; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1888], c-f.

had variously suggested that the initial direct divine instructions to Adam were handed down “through successive generations.”³⁴⁹ She had previously mentioned how it was left to her to clothe revealed scenes and impressed thoughts in her own language.³⁵⁰ While she emphasized the divine origin of her writings, she nevertheless conceded their imperfect language.³⁵¹ And she stated that the Bible constitutes “a union of the divine and the human,” existing similarly in the nature of Christ as indicated in John 1:14.³⁵² The preface of the *Great Controversy* was therefore only indirectly based on Stowe’s exposition on divine inspiration. On the other hand, her distinction between the production of the Decalogue and the remainder of the Bible reminds one of a statement her husband made in 1851 in which he stressed that the Ten Commandments had been written by God’s own finger whereas the other laws were written by Moses.³⁵³

The examination of White’s statements on inspiration seems to suggest that she employed phraseology commonly used in conservative Protestant publications. As the so-called dictation language was widely used by Protestant Christians in nineteenth-century America,³⁵⁴ it is nearly impossible to determine any one source for the respective phrases.

³⁴⁹ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 3:296; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and His Angels and Satan and His Angels*, [1870], 1:262; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:9; Ellen G. White, "The Law and the Gospel," *Signs of the Times*, 14 March 1878, 81; Ellen G. White, "Bible Biographies," 49; Ellen G. White, "The Law and the Sabbath," *Signs of the Times*, 10 June 1880, 253; Ellen G. White, "Objections to the Bible," Ms 24, 1886.

³⁵⁰ Ellen G. White to Andrews, 11 June 1860; Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:292, 293; Ellen G. White, "Questions and Answers," 8 October 1867, 260; Ellen G. White to Loughborough, 24 August 1874.

³⁵¹ Ellen G. White, Diary entries for January 10 and 11, 1873, Ms 3, 1873; Ellen G. White to Smith, 19 February 1884.

³⁵² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:747. See also Ellen G. White, "Objections to the Bible," Ms 24, 1886.

³⁵³ James White, "The Two Laws: Answer," *Review and Herald*, 5 August 1851, 4.

³⁵⁴ See above pp. 3-5, 16, 17, 20, 21, 25-27, 29, 30, 39-49, 70, 188-193.

They could be easily understood as affirmations of a dictatorial view of inspiration, yet they were similarly employed as figures of speech to affirm the divine origin of the biblical writings, as seen in the previous chapter.

Besides quoting biblical passages commonly utilized in discussion of inspiration and spiritual gifts, Ellen White placed the treatment of the subject in her preface within the larger biblical narrative of the controversy between God and Satan from the Garden of Eden to the time of the end. Without giving any specific reference, she perceived in Scripture diversities in style, subject, and personality. She further equated her own experience of inspiration with that of the Bible writers.³⁵⁵

The Context of the Statements

The present section attempts to assess four particular events that may have formed the context for Ellen White's statements—Uriah Smith's distinguishing between vision and testimony in the early 1880s; the revision of the *Testimonies for the Church* in the mid-1880s; D. M. Canright's criticism of White's inspiration in 1887; and George Butler's difficulties with accepting her inspiration in the post-Minneapolis time. These events will be depicted only briefly as they were described to a certain extent previously.

³⁵⁵ 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; John 1:14; 14:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:1; Isaiah 8:20; Matthew 28:20; Ephesians 4:12, 13; 1:17-19; Acts 2:38, 39; Joel 2:38. See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1888], c-h. She employed the language of passages such as Hebrews 1:1; 2 Peter 1:21; Mark 4:28; Matthew 13:44-46; Luke 24:13-27; and referred to the arrangement of Christ's miracles in the Gospels in Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:20, 21. Similarly, she referred to Paul's experience and equated it with her own. See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:64, 66, 67.

Uriah Smith's Repulsion of the "Testimony" (1882-1883)

As shown above, the Battle Creek College crisis and Uriah Smith's response to a testimony Ellen White sent to him form an important background to several statements penned by her in 1882 and 1883. Scholars have previously recognized that connection.

As tensions rose between Alexander McLearn and Goodloe Harper Bell, students, faculty, and church members generally sided with the more prominent new president. Convinced of McLearn's value for the institution, Smith, as chairman of the College's board of trustees, assured the president of unconditional support. Fearing a conspiracy against McLearn, he opposed several actions of the board. As the atmosphere on campus and in town turned increasingly hostile towards Bell and the leaders of the denomination, many began to look up to Smith as their leader.³⁵⁶ When, in April 1882, he received a letter from Ellen White to be read to the local congregation, he kept its existence secret for about ten days. It was with reluctance and only after rumors about the arrival of a testimony from Ellen White had spread that he placed it before the church board.³⁵⁷ Judging that the letter depended on distorted assumptions about his involvement in the situation and doubting it was actually based on a vision, Smith stated repeatedly that he perceived the letter to be an expression of White's private opinion and not a testimony. Assuming Ellen White had been misinformed by a nonlocal person, he concluded that the

³⁵⁶ Butler to W. C. White, 19 January 1881 [*sic*]; Butler to W. C. White, 29 January 1882; Butler to Haskell, 30 January 1882; Butler to W. C. White, 20 February 1882; Butler to W. C. White, 22 February 1882; Kellogg to W. C. White, 21 June 1882; Seventh-day Adventist Educational Society and Board of Trustees Minutes, 1877-1890, vol. 1, 102. See also above on pp. 107, 108.

³⁵⁷ Ellen G. White to Smith, 28 March 1882; Butler to Ellen G. White, 26 April 1882; Butler to Ellen G. White, 3 May 1882; Butler to W. C. White, 3 May 1882. See also above on p. 108.

letter could not have been a testimony as he thought testimonies were always based on visions.³⁵⁸ Since she insisted, however, that the letter was a divinely inspired testimony, Smith began to distinguish between “testimony” and “vision,” believing the second was inspired whereas the first was not.³⁵⁹ When that letter and subsequent ones were published as special testimonies, he felt cornered and denounced before the entire public.³⁶⁰ Ellen White nevertheless affirmed the divine inspiration of her letters to Smith by applying the example of the Apostle Paul to the present circumstances.

Paul was an inspired apostle, yet the Lord did not reveal to him at all times just the condition of His people. Those who were interested in the prosperity of the church, and saw evils creeping in, presented the matter before him, and from the light which he had previously received he was prepared to judge of the true character of these developments. Because the Lord had not given him a new revelation for that special time, those who were really seeking light did not cast his message aside as only a common letter. No, indeed. The Lord had shown him the difficulties and dangers which would arise in the churches, that when they should develop he might know just how to treat them. . . . The reproof he sent them was written just as much under the inspiration of the Spirit of God as were any of his epistles.³⁶¹

The Improvement of the *Testimonies for the Church* (1881-1885)

The revision of Ellen White’s thirty numbers of the *Testimonies for the Church* presents a significant illustrative background to her statements about the possible change

³⁵⁸ Smith to Ellen G. White, 1 December 1882; Butler to Ellen G. White, 3 May 1882. See also Durand, "Smith, Uriah (1832-1903)," 516; Land, *Uriah Smith*, 126.

³⁵⁹ Smith to Canright, 22 March 1883; Smith to Canright, 31 July 1883; Ellen G. White to Smith, 31 July 1883.

³⁶⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Battle Creek Church*, [24-page ed.] (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1882); Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Battle Creek Church*, [84-page ed.]; Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Church*, no. 31; Smith to Canright, 31 July 1883; Smith to Ellen G. White, 1 December 1882; Butler to Ellen G. White, 14 November 1882.

³⁶¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:65, 66. See also Harder, "Revelation, a Source of Knowledge, As Conceived by Ellen G. White," 236; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 185, 186; Johns, "Ellen White," 17, 18.

of language in inspired writings. These events have been outlined in a previous section and by other scholars.³⁶²

Apparently, Mary K. White began making editorial and stylistic changes in the fall of 1881, yet she felt continually haunted by the thought of making “too many changes or in some way change the sense.”³⁶³ Upon observing the changes, George Butler and S. N. Haskell thought at least a third of the changes were more stylistic in nature and hence they were afraid that Ellen White’s critics would make a big deal of these changes.³⁶⁴ Mary’s husband, W. C. White, anticipated criticism from both outsiders and church members, yet for different reasons. He thought outsiders would find fault with the early writings whereas church members would rather criticize the latter volumes as they were yet in circulation and their original addressees were still alive. By late October 1883, following conversations with Butler, Uriah Smith, and George W. Amadon, W. C. White advised his wife to “correct only bad grammar and punctuation” because he thought now they should have better “let many of the minor imperfections pass unchanged.”³⁶⁵ Shortly afterwards, at the ministers’ meetings, he informed the ministers about the history and guidelines of the project. While some of the ministers were “bitterly opposed” to any changes, others thought the principle as such was fair enough but they “dreaded criticism.” Yet he wanted them to criticize the revisions first before the volumes

³⁶² Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:217-219; Thompson, "Improving the Testimonies Through Revisions," 13–15; Thompson, *Inspiration*, 267–72; Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 122–29.

³⁶³ Mary K. White to W. C. White, 7 January 1882, WCWCF, EGWE, partially quoted in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:218; Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 122.

³⁶⁴ W. C. White to Mary K. White, 31 December 1882.

³⁶⁵ W. C. White to Mary K. White, 25 October 1883, WCWC, Microfilm Collection, reel 2, CAR.

would go out to the public. When Ellen White explained “what light she had on the subject”—comments that W. C. White neglected to relate—it lessened the resistance. A committee of about thirty people was formed, chaired by J. N. Loughborough, to examine the changes in the envisaged first two volumes.³⁶⁶ They generally appreciated the work that had been done, yet they were disappointed about “hundreds of transpositions” and omissions of words that might be viewed as a change of the sense.³⁶⁷ About a week later at the General Conference session in Battle Creek, Mich., the revision project was discussed again and, being afraid it would be condemned altogether and render their previous efforts superfluous, W. C. White “introduce[d] a resolution explaining the principles of the change.” The delegates approved the resolution to authorize the revision of the *Testimonies*. Yet when he informed his wife about the final decision, his rendition of the respective resolution seems to indicate that he had hoped for a permit that exceeded “grammatical imperfections only.”³⁶⁸ Two observations should be noted regarding the adopted resolutions. The resolutions may have presented a compromise as some objected to any change, because they either maintained more verbal views of inspiration or they were afraid of resulting criticism, and others anticipated more improvements of language. Further, the fact that the resolutions justified the correction of grammatical imperfections by stating that God had been “imparting thoughts, and not

³⁶⁶ W. C. White to Mary K. White, 10 November 1883. *Testimonies for the Church*, volumes 1 and 2, contain the first twenty numbers of the original series of the *Testimonies for the Church* (1855-1871).

³⁶⁷ W. C. White to Mary K. White, 10 November 1883; W. C. White to Mary K. White, 13 November 1883, WCWC, Microfilm Collection, reel 2, CAR; W. C. White to Mary K. White, 15 November 1883.

³⁶⁸ See W. C. White to Mary K. White, 20 November 1883, WCWC, Microfilm Collection, reel 2, CAR; Butler and Oylen, "General Conference Proceedings," 741.

(except in rare cases) the very words in which the ideas should be expressed,³⁶⁹ suggests that the mode of inspiration had to be clarified to create understanding among church members and to avoid criticism from opponents. After the conclusion of the General Conference session, Mary continued to work on the remaining numbers of the *Testimonies* to be included in volumes 3 and 4.³⁷⁰ During the session a committee had been chosen by Butler to review and approve her corrections.³⁷¹ By this point J. H. Waggoner, Eliza Burnham, and Marian Davis joined the project.³⁷² Surprised that the *Testimonies* had been printed as they were, J. H. Waggoner advocated more improvements to match the style and construction with Ellen White's more recent writings.³⁷³ In February 1884, she herself expressed to Smith her disappointment about the criticism of the corrections and the delay of the work. Feeling that at the session many responded with a skeptical and critical attitude to the idea of revising the *Testimonies*, she thought the changes suggested by her daughter-in-law would generally improve these

³⁶⁹ Butler and Oyen, "General Conference Proceedings," 741. Lake's assertion that "this statement marked a clear departure from verbal inspiration" suggests that at this point Adventists had moved away from a previously held word-focused view of inspiration. See Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire*, 114. However, it seems that Adventists had a rather diffused understanding of inspiration as demonstrated in chapter 1. While some people may have held verbal views, others held more flexible views while, at the same time, affirming the divine origin of White's visions and writings. Similarly, Levterov also seems to overlook the fact that the resolution presented a compromise between the Whites and those who preferred changing nothing at all. See Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 166, 170.

³⁷⁰ These volumes contain *Testimonies for the Church*, numbers 21-30 (1872-1881).

³⁷¹ W. C. White to Mary K. White, November 1883, WCWC, Microfilm Collection, reel 2, CAR; W. C. White to Mary K. White, 23 November 1883, WCWC, Microfilm Collection, reel 2, CAR.

³⁷² Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 122, 123. See also J. H. Waggoner to W. C. White, 29 January 1884, EGWCF, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Uriah Smith, 17 June 1884, Lt 7, 1884, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Uriah Smith and Harriet Smith, 23 March 1885, Lt 19, 1885, EGWE; W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, 11 July 1885, WCWC, Microfilm Collection, reel 2, CAR.

³⁷³ J. H. Waggoner to W. C. White, 29 January 1884.

writings.³⁷⁴ Imperfections that were removed in the following year and a half were, for example, ambiguous sentence constructions and factual errors included by the printers or copyists that affected a proper understanding of statements.³⁷⁵ By mid-July 1885, about two to three months before the publication of the revised edition, W. C. White was confident that the final result would satisfy the “most critical brethren, as well as the author,” hinting at the differing expectations. To accomplish this goal, they reversed many proposed changes and brought “the phraseology of the new edition as nearly as possible to that of the old.”³⁷⁶

The history of this revision project in the early 1880s illustrates Ellen White’s conviction that the language could be changed without necessarily changing the ideas, yet it seems she was willing to go further than many of her fellow Adventists.

³⁷⁴ Ellen G. White to Uriah Smith, 19 February 1884; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 120; Thompson, “Improving the Testimonies Through Revisions,” 14. Knight correctly suggests that although church leaders agreed in theory with the concept of thought inspiration, in practice they had difficulties with its application. As a result, many of the improvements had to be reversed. See Knight, *Meeting Ellen White*, 41. Similarly, Douglass states probably in too strong terms that Smith “opposed the revision—even after the resolution was passed.” See Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 118, 119. It may nevertheless be questioned whether they personally had an issue with such changes or if they were afraid of the possible ramifications—i.e., attracting criticism from White’s opponents and supporters. See also Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire*, 110.

³⁷⁵ W. C. White refers to two examples. First, writing of Zedekiah’s loss of sight, the original sentence structure created ambiguity as to the timing of that event. Second, the question of whether Timothy or Titus was with Paul at Rome had been a mistake generated by the printer or copyist. Interestingly, Ellen White’s view of these points was correct but she either felt unable to perceive the ambiguity or she was clearly aware of the mistake in the published text. See Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Church*, no. 27 (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1876), 63; W. C. White to J. H. Waggoner, 31 March 1885, WCWC, Microfilm Collection, reel 2, CAR; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:184; W. C. White to Mary K. White, 31 March 1885, WCWC, Microfilm Collection, reel 2, CAR. The “error” with Zedekiah was a major example for Cornelius DeVos in early 1887. See DeVos, “Wonder How He Would Argue Now,” 333.

³⁷⁶ W. C. White to O. A. Olsen, 11 July 1885.

Dudley M. Canright's Disengagement from Adventism (1887-1888)

Ellen White may have written the preface for her book *The Great Controversy* with D. M. Canright, among others, in mind.³⁷⁷ She finished writing the preface to the *Great Controversy* in May 1888.³⁷⁸ Scholars occasionally refer to that preface as the classic and most comprehensive formulation of her concept of inspiration.³⁷⁹ In describing the divine-human interaction in the production of the biblical writings, she presumably aimed at substantiating her own experience in writing the *Great Controversy*.³⁸⁰ Since the preface answers several questions on the subject of inspiration raised by Canright's articles in the *Michigan Christian Advocate* in the early fall of 1887, White may have intended to clarify once and for all some of these obscurities. As Canright's experience has been discussed above, only the details relative to White's statements on inspiration in the preface of the *Great Controversy* are delineated here.

When Canright officially parted with his former denomination on February 17, 1887, he apparently left with peaceful feelings and promised to maintain good personal

³⁷⁷ Arthur Patrick suggests, for example, that "the Canright controversy provides essential background for understanding" her preface. See Patrick, "Author," 100.

³⁷⁸ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1888], h.

³⁷⁹ W. C. White, "On the Spirit of Prophecy," *General Conference Bulletin*, 2 June 1913, 234, 235; A. G. Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1936), 282; F. M. Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus*, [1944], 68, 74, 75, 121; L. H. Christian, *The Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts: The Influence and Guidance of Ellen G. White in the Advent Movement* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1947), 137–39; Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, 545; Jemison, *A Prophet Among You*, 219, 281, 282, 285, 299, 314, 332, 334, 365, 374, 431; Rebok, *Believe His Prophets*, 153, 155, 191-193; Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:15; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White—Messenger to the Remnant* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1969), 9, 57; Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings*, 25, 26, 43, 66, 86, 121, 122, 124, 125, 150, 151, 154; Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3:28, 61; Roger W. Coon, *The Great Visions of Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1992), 68; Viera, *The Voice of the Spirit*, 83; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 376, 381, 421, 447, 450, 457.

³⁸⁰ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1888], g, h.

relationships with Adventists.³⁸¹ Nevertheless, three months later he began giving public lectures on his reasons for leaving Adventism and on Ellen White's visions.³⁸² The content of these lectures was successively published in article form in the *Michigan Christian Advocate* from July 16 to October 15, 1887. Only the last two articles in that series address White's inspiration.³⁸³ The series of articles was completely or partially reprinted by permission in various other periodicals.³⁸⁴ As a result, his ideas and arguments received a wide audience among both Protestants and Adventists. Apparently several Adventist ministers left the church as collateral damage.³⁸⁵

A comparison of both document sets, Canright's two articles on her inspiration and her preface to the *Great Controversy*, shows the discussion of several similar subjects. Thus he argued that Adventists would exalt White's writings as another Bible that became the lens for interpreting Scripture. She stated that the gifts of the Spirit do not supersede the Bible but have to be judged by the Bible as the standard and test for all

³⁸¹ *Church Record of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Otsego, Allegan Co., Mich. [1879-1893]*, 43-45; Butler to Ellen G. White, 17 February 1887; D. M. Canright to Ellen G. White, 18 March 1887, EGWCF, EGWE.

³⁸² "Additional Local," 20 May 1887, [8]; "Additional Local," 10 June 1887, [8].

³⁸³ Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 12]," 2; Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 13]," 2.

³⁸⁴ Burt, "Bibliographic Essay on Publications About Ellen G. White," 159.

³⁸⁵ The cases of D. B. Oviatt and A. B. Oyen were specifically mentioned in connection with D. M. Canright. See *Northern Christian Advocate*, 1 September 1887, 276; "Current Comment," *Michigan Christian Advocate*, 29 October 1887, 4; D. M. Canright, "Another Advent Minister Renounces the Faith," *Michigan Christian Advocate*, 20 August 1887, 8. That connection may be confirmed by Ellen White who referred to the "apostasy" of Canright and Oviatt in the same breath in early September 1887. See Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, 1 September 1887, Lt 50, 1887, EGWE. Another minister who left the church was A. B. Oyen, editor of the Danish church paper and former missionary to Europe. Prof. C. C. Ramsey, who taught in Battle Creek College and in South Lancaster Academy, was another case. As neither of these individuals lived in Otsego, Mich., it might be possible that Canright wanted these items to be included in the local newspaper in support of his own position. See "Local Items," [*Otsego, Mich.*] *Weekly Union*, 28 October 1887, 5; "Local Items," [*Otsego, Mich.*] *Weekly Union*, 1 June 1888, 5.

teaching and experience. Canright suggested new revelations would necessarily be equal to Scripture, yet in her view God continued to give new light “apart from the revelations to be embodied in the sacred canon.” Canright accused White of claiming the inspiration of the very words, whereas she affirmed the inspiration of the mind and ideas. Further, he questioned how she could claim inspiration for her writings if they manifested grammatical defects and were subsequently improved. In contrast, she argued that the language of the biblical books reflected the personality, education, style, as well as “mental and spiritual endowments” of their writers, and while human language was necessarily imperfect, these writings were nevertheless God’s Word. Canright questioned her borrowing from the works of historians (lack of quotation marks, neglecting to give credit) while she explained how she utilized such works (quotation marks provided, no credit given because not quoted in support). Finally, he controverted the belief in the divine origin of White’s messages whereas she affirmed that these had truly been given by the Holy Spirit.³⁸⁶

As Ellen White was seemingly aware of some of Canright’s “terrible statements” in the second half of 1887,³⁸⁷ she may have known of his specific articles against her in the *Michigan Christian Advocate* and therefore addressed these subjects in the preface to

³⁸⁶ Canright, "Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced [Article 12]," 2; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1888], c-h. Patrick asserts that the preface, “which contains White’s most detailed statement about the use she made of the writings of other authors,” was written against the backdrop of the charges of Canright who accused Ellen White of literary theft. See Patrick, "Author," 100; cf. Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 184.

³⁸⁷ Ellen G. White to Jennis L. Ings, 17 August 1887, Lt 66, 1887, EGWE. In November 1887, White was urgently searching for a letter from Canright which she had received shortly after her return to the United States in mid-August 1887, and “a large letter” to him which may be the letter from April 22 or another one no longer extant sent prior to or after Canright’s letter. See Ellen G. White to Mary K. White, 19 November 1887, Lt 51c, 1887, EGWE.

the *Great Controversy* a couple months later. Considering the particular nature and wide circulation of his charges, she may have deemed it reasonable to address them in the beginning of her next public work to reduce prejudices of the envisaged broader readership.

George I. Butler's Injudicious Advocacy of Ellen White's Writings

Scholars understand that Ellen White's negative statements on degrees of inspiration came in response to George Butler's articles on the subject in the *Review and Herald* in 1884,³⁸⁸ an observation supported by the primary sources.³⁸⁹ It is nevertheless remarkable why she would respond to his views for the first time five years later in early 1889.³⁹⁰ A closer look at her respective statements reveals possible reasons for her late response. First, she may still have perceived the need to address his views at such a late date because the theory of degrees was publicized through articles on inspiration in the *Review*, sermons in the Battle Creek church, and classes in the college.³⁹¹ A typed transcript of talks Butler gave to students at Battle Creek College in March 1888 demonstrates that he still cherished his views of degrees at that time.³⁹² Second, White

³⁸⁸ Coon, *The Great Visions of Ellen G. White*, 141; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 410; Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 157, 185; Burt, "Revelation and Inspiration," 36.

³⁸⁹ Ellen G. White, "The Discernment of Truth," Ms 16, 1889.

³⁹⁰ Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 410; Coon, "Inspiration/Revelation, What It Is and How It Works," 20.

³⁹¹ Ellen G. White to Underwood, 18 January 1889; Ellen G. White, "The Discernment of Truth," Ms 16, 1889.

³⁹² Butler, "The Visions: Talks to the Students of the 'Special Course' at Battle Creek College on March 18-20, 1888," 5, 12, 15, 16.

acknowledged that Butler's initial reasons for presenting these views may not have seemed to be too amiss, yet the divine perspective and possible ramifications of Butler's views had been overlooked. She stated,

Infidel arguments have been brought into the college *for the purpose of instructing our youth how to argue against infidelity*. The seeds of infidelity may not at once be developed, yet they will manifest their existence when temptation arises.³⁹³

She felt Butler should have kept his thoughts on the subject to himself to avoid harming other people.³⁹⁴ Third, White's objections addressed primarily the judging between inspired and un-inspired parts and only secondarily the aspect of degrees.

Both in the tabernacle and in the college, the subject of inspiration has been taught, and finite men have taken it upon themselves to say [that] *some things in the Scriptures were inspired and some were not*. I was shown that the Lord did not inspire the articles on inspiration published in the *Review*, neither did He approve their endorsement before our youth in the college. When men venture to criticize the Word of God, they venture on sacred, holy ground and had better fear and tremble and hide their wisdom as foolishness. God sets no man to pronounce judgment on His Word, *selecting some things as inspired and discrediting others as un-inspired*. The testimonies have been treated in the same way, but God is not in this.³⁹⁵

Brother Butler is on the wrong track. God has not given the work into his hands to set up his human wisdom to put his hand on the sacred ark of God. When sitting in judgment upon the living oracles of God, did he consider that God had placed upon him the work *to pass judgment as to what is inspired in the Word of God and what is not inspired?* Has God committed the work to him to state *what sort of degrees of inspiration attend some utterances and what is wanting in others?* Whatever may be his thoughts in these things, if they are kept to himself they will not harm other souls.³⁹⁶

The judging between inspired and un-inspired portions formed only a small part in Butler's series of articles in 1884 as his articles generally affirmed the reliability and

³⁹³ Ellen G. White to Underwood, 18 January 1889.

³⁹⁴ Ellen G. White, "The Discernment of Truth," Ms 16, 1889.

³⁹⁵ Ellen G. White to Underwood, 18 January 1889 (emphasis supplied).

³⁹⁶ Ellen G. White, "The Discernment of Truth," Ms 16, 1889 (emphasis supplied).

divine authority of Scripture. This may explain why she did not critique his views before the problematic parts began enjoying a wider reception. In fact, her first direct criticism of that distinction and different intensities or, in Butler's term "degrees" of inspiration, appeared one month after the Minneapolis General Conference session (October 18 to November 4, 1888).³⁹⁷ In subsequent months she repeatedly addressed the subject in her writings and connected it frequently to the views advocated by Butler.³⁹⁸

To understand Butler's changed attitude towards Ellen White, it is necessary to briefly describe the developments preceding the session. In the discussion on the nature of the law in Galatians 3, whether the law was the ceremonial law or the Decalogue, Butler sought to use the power of his office and to enlist the aid of White to weigh down E. J. Waggoner's "new" theology. Yet she rebuked him for the role he played and the position he took. When he realized that she had failed to help him and had lent her open support to Waggoner and A. T. Jones instead, he began to doubt her fairness and divine inspiration as he was profoundly convinced of the correctness of his own position. As a result, he concluded she had changed her position and sided with the heretics. Thus, in his view, it became necessary to distinguish between what has been inspired and what was not. Given his position and wide influence in the church, Butler's negative attitude towards Ellen White and his insinuations about her change of position had a strong

³⁹⁷ Ellen G. White, "Sermon by Mrs. E. G. White, Delivered in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Des Moines, Iowa, Sabbath, December 1, 1888, at the State Meeting of the S.D.A. reported by W. E. Cornell," 1 December 1888, Ms 13, 1888, EGWE; Ellen G. White, "The Guide Book," Ms 16, 1888.

³⁹⁸ Ellen G. White to Underwood, 18 January 1889; Ellen G. White to Underwood, 26 January 1889; Ellen G. White, "The Discernment of Truth," Ms 16, 1889; Ellen G. White to Bro. and Sr. Maxson, 2 March 1889, Lt 26b, 1889, EGWE.

impact on those who shared his interpretation of the law in Galatians. In response, she attempted to counter this detrimental influence and clarify her position.³⁹⁹

When *Testimony for the Church*, no. 33, was published in 1889, it contained a chapter on the nature and influence of the *Testimonies*.⁴⁰⁰ Apart from frequent introductory remarks, the chapter consists largely of quotations from her published writings of the previous thirty some years. Some of the statements had just appeared six years earlier.⁴⁰¹ The reprinting of these selected statements on issues related to the divine origin and inspiration of her testimonies may have come in response to actual needs in the church such as the mistrust in White's *Testimonies* sown by Butler and Smith.

Summary

The present section resumed the examination of Ellen White's concept of divine inspiration begun in the previous chapter. Several details reappeared in her writings, although they were apparently triggered by actual circumstances and necessities in the 1880s and early 1890s. Thus she emphasized the divine-human nature of inspiration as

³⁹⁹ Poirier, Wood, and Fagal, *The Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts with Annotations*, 1:801, 802; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:385-403. See also George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, 1 October 1888, EGWCF, EGWE; Ellen G. White to William Healey, 9 December 1888, Lt 7, 1888, EGWE; Ellen G. White to George I. Butler and Lenetha A. Butler, 11 December 1888; Ellen G. White to George I. Butler, 14 October 1888, Lt 21, 1888, EGWE; Ellen G. White to George I. Butler, 15 October 1888, Lt 21a, 1888, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Mary K. White, 9 October 1888, Lt 81, 1888, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Mary K. White, 4 November 1888, Lt 82, 1888, EGWE; Ellen G. White, Morning Talk at Minneapolis, Minn., 24 October 1888, Ms 9, 1888, EGWE; Ellen G. White, "Looking Back at Minneapolis," ca. November/December 1888, Ms 24, 1888, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Underwood, 25 January 1889.

⁴⁰⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Church*, no. 33 (Battle Creek, MI, Oakland, CA: Review and Herald; Pacific Press, 1889), 182–219. Levterov places that section in the context of "the controversial climate" of the Canright crisis but overlooks the opposition against Ellen White ignited by Butler and Smith in the aftermath of the Minneapolis conference. See Levterov, *The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift, 1844-1889*, 178, 179. Later, he concurs with the observation that the *Testimony* responded to the views of Butler and Smith. See *ibid.*, 185.

⁴⁰¹ See Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Church*, no. 33, 199, 202, 205, 206, 208–213.

inspired writers clothed the ideas and thoughts in their own language. She rejected the idea that inspiration operated in a mechanical or dictatorial manner, as illustrated in her response to D. M. Canright's allegations. As her time was limited and her literary skills were deficient, she made use of literary assistants who helped her to prepare her writings for different audiences and purposes. The revision of the first thirty *Testimonies for the Church* in the early 1880s is an illustration of these principles. As before, she rejected assertions that she had been misinformed by private reports or that she falsely claimed inspiration for her personal opinions. Cases in point were her responses to Uriah Smith in 1882/1883 when he argued that a particular letter, which she classed with her inspired writings, was merely a private communication. She held, however, that a testimony was not always based on a direct immediate vision but may have resulted from the application of principles to the present situation conveyed through various past visions. She also stressed that the Holy Spirit often revived the memory of previous visions at the proper time. Another example was her objections to Butler's theory of degrees of inspiration, which he originally published in a series of articles in 1884, but she did not comment on them until after the Minneapolis General Conference (1888), when one of its minor aspects—personal, uninspired portions within the inspired corpus of writings—began to unfold its full potential in Butler's and Smith's attempts to judge between inspired and uninspired portions in her testimonies. She emphasized the divine origin and authority of all her testimonies while she continued to affirm the role of Scripture as the supreme rule of faith and practice.

More than in previous years, she outlined the influence of an inspired writer's experience, perception, education, writing style, mental and spiritual endowments on the

written product of inspiration, while continuing to emphasize that it was nevertheless written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. She mentioned utilizing different resources as literary mines, historical illustrations for underlying principles, and aids to locating historical scenes shown to her in vision. Her most comprehensive exposition of the subject of inspiration in the 1880s appeared in the preface to her classic work *The Great Controversy*. Several aspects in that preface came allegedly in response to Canright's charges against her inspiration in the previous year, yet she may also have utilized several points from her reworked paraphrase of Calvin Stowe's discussion of the subject as they reflected her previous experience and views quite well. Her loose paraphrase of Stowe's passage shows that while she utilized some of his language and structure, she differed from his theological ideas, especially as regards the manner of inspiration and the reliable and permanent character of God's word. It is unlikely that either Smith, Butler, or Canright were aware of these aspects in the paraphrase as they were not published during her lifetime.

Ellen White's statements on the subject of the nature and manner of inspiration were more detailed and precise than those in the previous thirty some years. The next chapter will provide insight into her developing description of the subject in her last stage of life.

Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the concepts of divine inspiration as held by Uriah Smith, George Butler, Dudley Canright, and Ellen White in the 1880s, supplemented by the examination of possible sources and influence, objections to other concepts, and the contexts in which these individuals developed and made their statements. All of them in

their own way exerted an important influence on Seventh-day Adventist perceptions of divine inspiration.

The examination of the source material demonstrates that three of the four individuals (Smith, Butler, and White) generally held a more comprehensive view, suggesting inspiration operates primarily on the level of ideas and only rarely on the level of the specific language chosen to express those ideas. They believed that inspiration protected the reliable transmission of historical and theological matters without removing or preventing imperfections in language and precision. While they emphasized the divine origin of the visions and writings of Ellen White, they consistently opposed dictational or verbal views of inspiration. Their views differed nevertheless in some respects. White suggested that the Holy Spirit operated in diverse manners, yet Butler interpreted these manners as degrees or intensities of inspiration. White acknowledged a private, uninspired realm in the life of an inspired person, but denied the existence of uninspired portions within the corpus of inspired writings. While Butler had previously conceded such portions in otherwise inspired writings in his articles on the nature and manner of inspiration in 1884, it was apparently not until 1888 that he began to interpret some of White's statements as uninspired. Smith, on the other hand, assumed that a testimony always resulted from an immediate vision. Yet White argued that inspired advice may sometimes be based on the cumulative insight gained from numerous past revelations. In contrast, Canright's personal concept of inspiration is difficult to determine. In 1884, he regarded White's writings as inspired due to their positive fruits, yet three years later he considered them uninspired, presupposing that her alleged claim of dictational, verbal inspiration contradicted the real circumstances.

The influences and circumstances that led to the respective statements on inspiration were diverse. From mid-April 1882 to early October 1883 Smith distinguished between inspired vision and uninspired testimony because the content of the communication, that Ellen White claimed was a testimony, varied significantly from his own perception and memory and he was unaware that she had any recent new vision.

Butler's articles in the summer of 1883 came in response to the critique of the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate* against White's *Early Writings* (1882), that heterodox early teachings of the visions had been omitted from that publication. In late 1883, the General Conference resolved to undertake grammatical improvements in her *Testimonies for the Church*. As the change of language posed a potential threat to the belief in the inspiration of these writings, in the following months Butler wrote a series of articles on the nature and manner of inspiration, suggesting various manners and degrees of inspiration, seeking to place the teaching of inspiration on a biblical foundation, explain its diverse phenomena, and stymie the dreaded criticisms of both opponents and friends. It seems that White's personal efforts helped Smith to discern the validity of her testimony in the early fall of 1883.

Similarly, Butler's efforts helped Canright to recognize the validity of White's past personal testimonies to him in the late summer of 1884. Yet Canright apparently failed to base his new confidence in her inspiration on a solid theological foundation. As a result of several debilitating incidents and developments, his confidence in the positive fruits of White's writings gave way to doubts, discouragement, and opposition. Smith's defense of the inspiration of her writings in 1887 and early 1888 came presumably in response to criticism by the Marion party in the *Advent and Sabbath Herald* and by

Canright in his later articles in the *Michigan Christian Advocate*. When, in 1888, White wrote her explanation of the Holy Spirit's operation in inspiration in the preface of her classic *The Great Controversy*, she may have written it with Canright's points of criticism in mind as there are several similarities between the two sets of statements. The preface reflects ideas already present in her previous experience and writings as well as in her reworked paraphrase (spring 1886) of Calvin Stowe's exposition on inspiration.

The views of Butler and Smith deviated somewhat from White's concept of inspiration, in their post-Minneapolis judging between inspired and uninspired portions in her writings, yet their general view of inspiration as working primarily on the thoughts was similar to her concept. White's criticism of their stance resulted in an overall rejection of the views of degrees and partial inspiration, and in an affirmation of the divine origin of her writings. The next chapter will show that this change of attitude among ministers and church leaders may have led some of them to adopt overly strict and verbal views of inspiration.

CHAPTER 3
PERCEPTIONS OF DIVINE INSPIRATION IN
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGY
FROM 1895 TO 1915

Introduction

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries liberal theology continued to make inroads in American Protestant Christianity. Traditional views of the inspiration of the Bible increasingly made way for views that attempted to harmonize modern scientific hypotheses with the Bible. In the 1880s Seventh-day Adventists had attempted to move from a diffused understanding of the divine inspiration of the Bible writers and Ellen G. White to more precise definitions of the nature and manner of inspiration. As Butler and Smith began to harbor skeptical views towards her inspiration, theories such as degrees of inspiration and partial inspiration received much opposition from A. T. Jones, E. J. Waggoner, and others who had championed the message of righteousness by faith at the Minneapolis General Conference session. The years after 1888 were characterized by a stronger emphasis on the reliable inspiration of the entire corpus of White's writings.

As Ellen White transitioned to Australia (1891-1900) and Waggoner to Europe (1892-1903), Jones remained in the United States and through White's continuing support he became her primary spokesperson and the single most influential figure in American Adventism before her return in 1900. Another important leader who emerged after Minneapolis was W. W. Prescott, the church's foremost educator in the 1890s and

editor of the *Review and Herald* as well as vice president of the General Conference during the first decade of the twentieth century. Belonging to the older guard of church workers, S. N. Haskell was an influential missionary and evangelist who promoted the study of the Bible both in and outside the church. Both Prescott and Haskell worked closely with Ellen White for brief periods in the 1890s and kept up a constant correspondence with her throughout the following decade. At a time when American Protestant academic institutions and denominations experienced a growing divide over new biblical scholarship, these younger Adventist individuals aligned themselves with conservative Protestant scholars who defended the verbal-plenary inspiration of Scripture. The crisis surrounding Dr. J. H. Kellogg and the Adventist medical work from 1902 to 1907 led some people to question, however, the trustworthiness of Ellen White and her inspiration. As a result, all these individuals were compelled to reposition their relationship to her and their perception of her inspiration.

As each of them had a considerable impact on how members, ministers, and leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church perceived the role, nature, manner, and product of divine inspiration, the present chapter looks at A. T. Jones, W. W. Prescott, S. N. Haskell, and once again Ellen G. White, and their respective views of inspiration, the ideas and sources that may have influenced them, the objections they raised against other views, as well as the contexts in which their statements were made.

From Endorsement to Antipathy: The Changing Perception of A. T. Jones

Alonzo T. Jones (1850-1923) entered the denominational limelight through his editorial work for the *Signs of the Times*, the preaching of the message of righteousness by faith at the General Conference session in 1888, and his public advocacy of religious

liberty during the national Sunday legislation crisis in the late 1880s. As he received significant support from Ellen White, many church members viewed him as having particular insights, which contributed to him becoming “Adventism’s most influential preacher in the 1890s” as George Knight notes.¹ Jones worked as editor of the *American Sentinel* (1887-1896) and the *Review and Herald* (1897-1901), and served as a member of the General Conference Committee (1897-1899) and president of the California Conference (1901-1903).² After the removal of Battle Creek College to Berrien Springs, Mich., he headed the medical college that transferred from the Sanitarium to the former premises of the College.³ Jones’ sentiments influenced many members and workers tremendously in their views on the inspiration of Scripture and the role, purpose, and authority of White’s writings.⁴ Until the early 1900s he strongly advocated the verbal inspiration of both sets of writings, yet afterwards he modified his perception of Ellen White’s inspiration. This section will deal with these two periods separately.

¹ George R. Knight, "Jones, Alonzo Trevier (1850-1923)," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 429. See also Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 197.

² *Seventh-day Adventist Year Book: Containing Statistics of the General Conference and Other Organizations, with Business Proceedings, etc. of Anniversary Meetings Held at Oakland, California, November 13 to December 3, 1887* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1888), 16; "[Name of Editor]," *American Sentinel*, 7 October 1897, 609; "[Name of Editors]," *Review and Herald*, 5 October 1897, 632; "Editorial Change," *Review and Herald*, 14 May 1901, 320; George R. Knight, *A. T. Jones: Point Man on Adventism's Charismatic Frontier*, Adventist Pioneer Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2011), 184, 189, 199, 221, 232.

³ Knight, *A. T. Jones*, 236–38.

⁴ Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 129.

Implicit Trust in Verbal-Plenary Inspiration

From 1885 to 1901 Jones was thoroughly engaged in editorial work with several periodicals. In the first seven years he emphasized the inspiration of the Bible writers, whereas afterwards, during Ellen White's time in Australia, he stressed the divine origin of her writings and their role in understanding Scripture. As the frequently featured speaker at the General Conference sessions in 1893 and 1895,⁵ he stressed the need for spiritual revival and became White's foremost supporter and spokesperson in America. Most of his statements on her inspiration stem, in fact, from his addresses at these sessions and the one in 1897. Additional statements and incidental remarks come from his articles in denominational periodicals in the 1880s and 1890s.

Concept of Inspiration

Jones presupposed a view of verbal inspiration that stressed the infallibility and perspicuity (or clarity) of inspired writing and the role of the Spirit of Prophecy as final interpreter of Scripture.

He acknowledged a number of exceptions to his general view of inspiration. He distinguished, for example, between the giving of the Decalogue by Christ's hand and that of the other laws "by word, or by inspiration, to Moses."⁶ Balaam's inspiration differed from that of the prophets because it was "irresistible."⁷ Like other Adventist

⁵ Knight, "Jones, Alonzo Trevier (1850-1923)," 430.

⁶ A. T. Jones, "Studies in Galatians: Gal. 3:19," *Review and Herald*, 6 March 1900, 152.

⁷ A. T. Jones, "Editorial," *American Sentinel*, 10 June 1897, 353; A. T. Jones, "Separation of Religion and the State. Out of Egypt. The Singular Nation—Choosing a King," *Signs of the Times*, 16 August 1899, 4; A. T. Jones, *Christian Patriotism: Or Religion and the State* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1900), 28; A. T. Jones, *The Empires of the Bible from the Confusion of Tongues to the Babylonian Captivity* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1904), 152.

writers,⁸ Jones employed multiple figures of speech to emphasize the divine control over the entire process. Thus biblical language seemed to be the product of inspiration⁹ because “the pen of inspiration” had been at work in Scripture.¹⁰ He also personified the term “inspiration.”¹¹ That these phrases were probably not merely figures of speech for

⁸ See above on pp. 39-42, 143, 185, 186.

⁹ For example, he talked about “the Word of inspiration.” See A. T. Jones, “Unlimited Power,” *American Sentinel*, 25 August 1898, 518. Similarly, he spoke of “the words of inspiration.” See A. T. Jones, “Some One-Thousand-Dollar Reasons for Keeping Sunday,” *Signs of the Times*, 27 May 1886, 312; A. T. Jones, “The Fountain of Lawlessness,” *American Sentinel*, 19 September 1895, 289; A. T. Jones, “The Mission of the Church,” *American Sentinel*, 17 October 1895, 321; A. T. Jones, “Studies in Galatians: Gal. 3:2-5,” *Review and Herald*, 14 November 1899, 736; A. T. Jones, *Is Sunday the True Sabbath of God?: Reply to S. W. Gamble's "Sunday the True Sabbath of God"* Bible Students' Library, no. 177 (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 50. He also made reference to “the plain words of inspiration.” See A. T. Jones, “The Scripture Cannot Be Broken,” *Signs of the Times*, 27 October 1887, 647. Talking about the biblical record in general, he employed such phrases as [1] “the pages of inspiration” and [2] “the volume of inspiration.” See [1] A. T. Jones, “Editorial,” *Review and Herald*, 12 July 1898, 444, and [2] A. T. Jones, “The Maintenance of a Good Cause,” *American Sentinel*, 22 July 1897, 452; A. T. Jones, “We Would See Jesus” Bible Students' Library, no. 173 (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1902), 12. Of course, all these phrases can be understood either as figures of speech or as emphases on the verbal operation of the Spirit.

¹⁰ A. T. Jones, “Editorial,” *American Sentinel*, 5 April 1894, 105; A. T. Jones, “Rome Pagan and Papal,” *Present Truth*, 5 September 1895, 565; Jones, “The Mission of the Church,” 321; A. T. Jones, “Papal Policy,” *American Sentinel*, 7 May 1896, 146.

¹¹ Jones argued that inspiration knew, said, wrote, declared, directed, chose, endorsed, or did something. See A. T. Jones, “Notes on the International Lesson. 2 Pet. 1:1-11: Christian Progress,” *Signs of the Times*, 11 June 1885, 359; A. T. Jones, “Notes on the International Lesson. Isaiah 53:1-12: The Suffering Saviour,” *Signs of the Times*, 3 December 1885, 727; A. T. Jones, “The Abiding Sabbath: Origin of the Lord's Day,” *Signs of the Times*, 11 March 1886, 152; A. T. Jones, “Some Questions and Answers, No. 2,” *Signs of the Times*, 24 February 1888, 120; A. T. Jones, *The Two Republics: or Rome and the United States of America* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1891), 873; A. T. Jones, *The Union of Church and State in the United States: A Protest*, Sentinel Library, no. 53 (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1892), 66; A. T. Jones, “Editorial,” *American Sentinel*, 3 November 1892, 338; A. T. Jones, “[Back Page],” *American Sentinel*, 24 November 1892, 368; A. T. Jones, *Appeal from the U. S. Supreme Court Decision Making this "A Christian Nation": A Protest*, Religious Liberty Library, no. 8 (n.p.: International Religious Liberty Association, 1893), 58; A. T. Jones, *The Columbian Year and the Meaning of the Four Centuries*, Religious Liberty Library, no. 12 (n.p.: International Religious Liberty Association, 1893), 19; Jones, “The Mission of the Church,” 321; A. T. Jones, “Catholic Shrines and Miracles,” *American Sentinel*, 24 October 1895, 330; A. T. Jones, “Editorial,” *Review and Herald*, 23 August 1898, 538; A. T. Jones, “The Third Angel's Message: What Is It as to Babylon the Mother?,” *Review and Herald*, 13 February 1900, 104; A. T. Jones, “The Third Angel's Message: How Shall We Know the Image?,” *Review and Herald*, 27 March 1900, 200; A. T. Jones, “The 'Return of the Jews',” *Review and Herald*, 3 April 1900, 216; A. T. Jones, “The 'Return of the Jews',” *Review and Herald*, 10 April 1900, 232; A. T. Jones, “Yet More on that 'Needed Reform in Education',” *Review and Herald*, 14 August 1900, 521; A. T. Jones, “The 'Return of the Jews.' (Concluded),” *Present Truth*, 23 August 1900, 532; A. T. Jones, *The Great Nations of To-day* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1901), 138.

Jones may be suggested by statements as the following ones. He argued, “Words express thoughts. The word of God, then, is the expression of the thought of God. It is therefore inevitably the product of the divine mind.”¹² Hence inspiration made use of a particular language.¹³ Jones suggested that all words in Scripture “were the *words of God*” and were directly given by the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ In all “expressions in the Scriptures . . . is the thought of eternal depth.”¹⁵ Jones wrote that the “Spirit of inspiration” was “not content to use any fewer than all the words that could be used” to make truth “so plain and emphatic that it shall be understood by all.”¹⁶ Knight is therefore correct in his estimation that Jones entertained a verbal view of inspiration.¹⁷ As a result, Jones assumed the absolute accuracy and reliability of inspired writings. He emphasized that inspiration extended to

¹² A. T. Jones, "The Bible Is Science," *American Sentinel*, 5 August 1897, 482.

¹³ A. T. Jones, "The Abiding Sabbath," *Signs of the Times*, 18 March 1886, 168.

¹⁴ A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 19," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 1 March 1893, 441 (emphasis original).

¹⁵ A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 1," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 27 January 1893, 6, 7.

¹⁶ A. T. Jones, "The Immaculate Conception," *American Sentinel*, 7 June 1894, 178; A. T. Jones, *The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Religious Liberty Library, no. 25 (Battle Creek, MI: International Religious Liberty Association, 1894), 1; A. T. Jones, "The Immaculate Conception," *Present Truth*, 9 May 1895, 291; A. T. Jones, "The Immaculate Conception, No. 2," *Signs of the Times*, 5 November 1896, 4; A. T. Jones, "The Faith of Jesus," *Review and Herald*, 25 December 1900, 824; A. T. Jones, *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905), 23.

¹⁷ George R. Knight, "Adventist Theology 1844 to 1994," *Ministry*, August 1994, 12; Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 107; Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 99.

every part¹⁸ and every genre of Scripture,¹⁹ causing the Bible to be “absolutely correct”²⁰ for it to function as “the sole unerring standard.”²¹

Stressing the perspicuity of inspired writing, Jones argued that inspiration produces complete perspicuity so that a statement means “exactly what it says.” While Scripture may contain some abstruse things (2 Peter 3:16), any endeavor to explain a passage was superfluous, proof of one’s mistrust in the Spirit’s ability to clarify it, and a usurpation of Christ’s place.²² As Jesus was the author of Scripture, he alone through his Spirit could explain its meaning. Jones argued that “the Spirit of Prophecy,” the testimony of Jesus, was “the means through which Christ himself gives the true understanding and right interpretation of his word,” and as Christ possesses infallibility, his interpretation was “infallible” and “absolutely sure.”²³ Since Jones perceived Ellen

¹⁸ A. T. Jones, "The International Sunday-School Lessons for 1887," *Signs of the Times*, 16 December 1886, 758.

¹⁹ In his view, inspiration extended to all genres and sections, “whether doctrinal, prophetic, or historical.” See A. T. Jones, "Can the Old Testament Be Trusted? (Concluded)," *Signs of the Times*, 30 July 1885, 452. Of course, this did not mean that the reported actions were infallible. See A. T. Jones, *The "Abiding Sabbath" and the "Lord's Day": The \$500 and \$1000 Prize Essays. A Review* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1888), 81. He also stated that they would not negate previous revelations. See *ibid.*, 145.

²⁰ A. T. Jones, "Shall He Find Faith?," *Review and Herald*, 27 June 1899, 413; A. T. Jones, *The Peopling of the Earth: Or, Historical Notes on the Tenth Chapter of Genesis* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1887), 247.

²¹ Jones, "The International Sunday-School Lessons for 1887," 758.

²² Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 1," 9–11; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 15," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 23 February 1893, 361; A. T. Jones, "The Gifts: Their Presence and Object," *Home Missionary*, Extra, December 1894, 12.

²³ Jones, "The Gifts," 12; A. T. Jones, "The Sure Interpreter," *Bible Echo*, 11 February 1895, 44.

White as the mouthpiece of the Spirit of Prophecy,²⁴ he suggested that her writings were the final infallible interpreter of Scripture.²⁵

Consequently the one chief object of the gift of prophecy is to draw us to the word of God, and enable us to see there the ‘deep things of God;’ . . . The right use of the Testimonies, therefore, is not to use them *as they are in themselves*, as though they were apart from the word of God in the Bible; but to study the Bible *through them*, so that the things brought forth in them we shall see and know for ourselves *are in the Bible*; and then present those things to others *not from the Testimonies themselves*, but *from the Bible itself* so that all others may see for themselves *that the Bible says so*. This and this alone is the right use of the Testimonies, whether used privately or publicly.²⁶

²⁴ Pointing to the Spirit behind Ellen White’s messages and statements, Jones frequently stressed that the Spirit of Prophecy wrote and said something. See A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 9," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 7 February 1893, 183; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 20," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 2 March 1893, 454; A. T. Jones, "Third Angel's Message—No. 23," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 26 March 1893, 512; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 5," *General Conference Bulletin*, 11 February 1895, 86; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 17," *Review and Herald*, 25 February 1895, 331; A. T. Jones, "Editorial," *Review and Herald*, 29 November 1898, 76; A. T. Jones, "The Shaping of Events," *Review and Herald*, 24 January 1899, 58; A. T. Jones, "National Apostasy," *Review and Herald*, 23 May 1899, 329; A. T. Jones, "The Sermon: Christ and the Doctrine," *Review and Herald*, 4 July 1899, 424; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message: What Is It in Spirit and in Truth?," *Review and Herald*, 16 January 1900, 40; A. T. Jones, "Editorial," *Review and Herald*, 6 February 1900, 90; A. T. Jones, "The Meaning of the Missionary Reading Circle," *Review and Herald*, 20 February 1900, 114; A. T. Jones, "Studies in Galatians. Gal. 3:24-26," *Review and Herald*, 24 April 1900, 266; A. T. Jones, "Prophecy or Politics—Which?," *Review and Herald*, 20 November 1900, 745. Sometimes Jones even equated her writings with the Spirit of Prophecy. See Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 17," 331; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 20," *General Conference Bulletin*, 27 February 1895, 382; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 26," *General Conference Bulletin*, April 1895, 491; A. T. Jones, "Editorial Note," *Review and Herald*, 27 December 1898, 832; A. T. Jones, "The Dangers of Imperialism," *Review and Herald*, 17 January 1899, 41. Referring to “a man [who] was once talking against the Spirit of prophecy,” Jones linked Ellen White closely to the Holy Spirit. Although he probably did not intend to equate them, such a use of the term may have been easily misunderstood by a less educated church member. See Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 1," 11.

²⁵ Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 1," 9–11; Jones, "The Gifts," 12. See also Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 26. In 1893, Jones stated, “There are three sources of knowledge upon this [Satan’s movements]: there is the history, there is the Scripture, and there is the Spirit of Prophecy *to explain both*. Has not He left us fully armed, then?” See A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 24," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 26 March 1893, 521.

²⁶ Jones, "The Gifts," 12 (emphasis original). See also Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 150; Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 26.

Intending to uphold the primacy of Scripture, he actually “subordinated it to Ellen White’s writings” as Knight concludes.²⁷ On a practical level, Jones employed her writings to interpret biblical passages, referred to particular statements as “the Word,”²⁸ and used them as source text for “Bible study.”²⁹

Objections to Other Views

Until the early 1900s Jones seemed to oppose only a few other views. His objections addressed primarily the scholarly assertion that the Bible contained uninspired and thus defective portions, yet he also took issue with attempts to employ and understand Ellen White’s writings for their own sake.

²⁷ George R. Knight, *From 1888 to Apostasy: The Case of A. T. Jones*, The 1888 Centennial Series (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1987), 231.

²⁸ Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 1," 5; A. T. Jones, "The Spirit of Prophecy—No. 1," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 12 February 1897, 3; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 23," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 26 March 1893, 513. See also Knight, *From 1888 to Apostasy*, 230.

²⁹ Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 1," 5; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 2," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 29 January 1893, 39; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 3," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 31 and 1 February 1893, 69, 74; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 4," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 31 and 1 February 1893, 93, 94; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 5," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 2 February 1893, 108, 110, 111; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 6," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 2 February 1893, 122, 124; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 7," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 5 February 1893, 148–52; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 8," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 6 February 1893, 165–70; Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 9," 178–85; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 10," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 9 February 1893, 201; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 11," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 13 February 1893, 243; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 12," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 13 February 1893, 262–65; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 13," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 20 February 1893, 297–300, 302; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 14," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 22 February 1893, 343–46; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 16," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 24 February 1893, 377, 378; A. T. Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 17," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 26 February 1893, 403; Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 20," 454; Jones, "Third Angel's Message—No. 23," 507, 508, 510, 511, 513.

He objected to the reading, “all Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable” (2 Timothy 3:16), because it seemed to allow for uninspired portions in Scripture.³⁰ Views that regarded some parts “as purely legendary or mythical,” denying the “equally perfect and authoritative inspiration of all the books of the Bible,” were unacceptable. He mentioned specifically Lyman Abbott and Washington Gladden for their attempts to adjust Christianity to modern times.³¹ Responding to scientific postulations, Jones insisted that the biblical record was completely true. “If scientific deductions agree with the Bible upon matters of which it speaks, it is well; if these deductions do not so agree then the deductions are wrong, that is all, and they, not the Bible, must be revised; they, and not the words of the Bible, must yield, or be re-stated.”³²

Discussing the way White’s writings were employed, Jones denied that “the right use of the *Testimonies*” consisted in using “them as they are in themselves.” They were to be employed rather as an interpreter of Scripture.³³ Jones further viewed the *Testimonies* as deeply personal documents. A given testimony addressed only the intended recipient and could therefore not be applied to others. Once the recipient “acknowledges the testimony and puts himself right in the sight of God, he no longer stands in the position in which the testimony found him.” Now the testimony could “be used as a warning for

³⁰ A. T. Jones, "The Sabbath-School. Notes on the International Lesson. May 31: 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 4:1-8. Paul's Charge to Timothy," *Signs of the Times*, 21 May 1885, 310.

³¹ A. T. Jones, "Present-Day Theological Teaching," *Review and Herald*, 26 July 1898, 474.

³² Jones, "The International Sunday-School Lessons for 1887," 758.

³³ Jones, "The Gifts," 12. This was contrary to the way White herself understood the role and use of her writings. See pp. 62, 194.

others,” but was not to be utilized to condemn the recipient.³⁴ That reasoning had implications for Jones later on and those will be discussed in the next period.

Sources and Influences

Jones’ view reflected yet went beyond ideas shared by the Protestant Reformers, contemporary Christian thinkers, fellow Adventist ministers, and Ellen White.

Like many Protestant thinkers, Jones advocated the perspicuity of Scripture and the knowability of its message. Besides affirming Scripture’s “plain meaning,” these thinkers acknowledged the need for explaining inherent obscurities and linguistic difficulties. They emphasized the need for the Spirit to enlighten one’s understanding and the value of studying Scripture in its original languages.³⁵ Jones exaggerated the perspicuity of human language, however, by arguing that obscurity lies only in the reader. In his view, only divine inspiration could resolve apparent obscurities because any human attempt to clarify the meaning would displace the testimony of Jesus, the Spirit of Prophecy.³⁶

That Jones was aware of developments in American Protestantism and agreed with some ideas promoted by conservative thinkers is suggested by occasional quotations

³⁴ A. T. Jones, "The Spirit of Prophecy—No. 2," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 15 February 1897, 21.

³⁵ Special reference is made here to Martin Luther, John Calvin, Jacob Arminius, and John Wesley. See Allison, *Historical Theology*, 128–38; Larry D. Pettegrew, "The Perspicuity of Scripture," *Master's Seminary Journal* 15, no. 2 (2004): 220–25; James Patrick Callahan, *The Clarity of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 128.

³⁶ Jones, "The Gifts," 12.

from other newspapers.³⁷ He objected to the skepticism permeating theological seminaries³⁸ and commended Presbyterians for their commitment to the authority of Scripture. Thus he reprinted remarks by Samuel T. Spear about the inspiration of the Bible. Spear wrote that God “puts himself in real communication” in Scripture so that he “himself is behind the words and in the words; and what they mean he means.”³⁹ Jones also supported a declaration of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church which asserted “[that] the Holy Spirit did so control the inspired writers in their composition of the Holy Scriptures as to make their statements absolutely . . . free from error when interpreted in their natural and intended sense.”⁴⁰ His affirmation of the ideas of Presbyterian theologians may betray his affinity to their belief in verbal-plenary inspiration.

From 1885 to 1888 Jones was surrounded by kindred spirits at the *Signs of the Times*, such as E. J. Waggoner, his father J. H. Waggoner, and M. C. Wilcox, who adopted Gaussen’s ideas.⁴¹ The *Signs* reprinted several articles that advocated strongly

³⁷ See, e.g., Jones, "Present-Day Theological Teaching," 474; Jones, "Shall He Find Faith?," 413; A. T. Jones, "A 'Remarkable Situation'," *American Sentinel*, 19 April 1900, 245, 246.

³⁸ Thus one finds Jones responding to skepticism against the biblical creation account, the early chapters of Genesis, and the inspiration of the Old Testament in general and literary genres in the Bible in particular. See Jones, *The Peopling of the Earth*, 247; Jones, "Can the Old Testament Be Trusted? (Concluded)," 452.

³⁹ A. T. Jones, "Sound Speech That Cannot Be Condemned," *Review and Herald*, 8 January 1884, 28.

⁴⁰ Jones, "Shall He Find Faith?," 413. See also "Dr. M'Giffert's Case: Created an Exciting Debate in the Presbyterian General Assembly," *New York Daily Tribune*, 26 May 1899, 4.

⁴¹ E. J. Waggoner, for example, [1] opposed any attempt at judging between inspired and uninspired passages, and [2] believed that “the Holy Spirit spoke the words of the Bible.” See [1] E. J. Waggoner, "The Bible the Word of God," *Signs of the Times*, 6 May 1889, 262; [2] E. J. Waggoner, "Letter to the Romans—No. 8," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 16 March 1891, 127. Although J. H. Waggoner questioned the *raison d'être* of theories of inspiration, particularly the theory of degrees, he nevertheless approved the verbal theory promoted by Charles Spurgeon and Louis Gaussen. See J. H.

the verbal-plenary inspiration of the Bible during Jones' tenure,⁴² and it continued to do so after he left his editorial responsibilities.⁴³ That his colleagues did not seem to share every aspect of Jones' view, such as the use of White's writings as the final interpreter of Scripture, is demonstrated, however, by E. J. Waggoner's emphasis on "learn[ing] the Bible from the Bible itself,"⁴⁴ an approach evident in his commentaries on various biblical books.⁴⁵

Waggoner, "Theories of Inspiration," *Signs of the Times*, 3 August 1888, 472. Similarly, M. C. Wilcox argued that the Spirit gave the precise words to the writers and referred to Gausson as the most forcible writer on the subject. See M. C. Wilcox, *The Bible: Its Inspiration and Importance*, Bible Students' Library, no. 27 (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1889), 8–14.

⁴² Such reprints affirmed the "full verbal inspiration" of Scripture and rejected the human discrimination between inspired and uninspired parts (partial inspiration). See, e.g., William Walton Clark, "The Bible," *Signs of the Times*, 2 September 1886, 531. While Clark denied that the biblical writers were mere amanuenses of God and affirmed that the language they employed was in accordance "with their education and temperament," he argued that they were nevertheless so led by the Holy Spirit that God alone was responsible for the words. See also William Walton Clark, "How to Study and Teach the Scriptures," in *New Notes for Bible Readings*, ed. S. R. Briggs (New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1889), 17–25. For more reprints that rejected a partial inspiration see, e.g., "Inspiration," *Signs of the Times*, 11 March 1889, 148, 149. One anonymous writer argued that only such words should be used in defining doctrine as were employed by the Spirit in Scripture. See "Bible Words in the Bible Sense," *Signs of the Times*, 20 January 1888, 36. Another author admitted that the language in the Bible showed characteristics of the writers, yet he suggested that their utterances were nothing less than the oracles of the Spirit and that God superintended the preservation of Scripture and guarded it from errors and discrepancies. See "Bible Interpretation," *Signs of the Times*, 13 April 1888, 228; Clark, "The Bible," 531. That the editors did not always seem to grasp all the nuances of other writers' ideas may be seen in the fact that they reprinted an article by Charles A. Briggs who outlined and explained the steps of Bible study. Although Briggs affirmed that the original text of the Bible came as a result of the Holy Spirit's work, he also included "literary criticism, or the higher criticism," as one of the steps. See Charles A. Briggs, "The True Purpose of Biblical Study," *Signs of the Times*, 4 March 1889, 132.

⁴³ One author argued that only the "direct, dictated, verbal inspiration—that everything in the Bible was set down by the finger of God"—properly represented the teaching taught by Scripture itself. See George S. Bishop, "Five Reasons for Verbal Inspiration," *Signs of the Times*, 29 July 1889, 452. Other reprints affirmed Gausson's plenary, verbal view of inspiration and the idea that inspiration extended not merely to the thoughts of the biblical writers but also to their words and language. See Louis Gausson, "Jesus and the Scriptures," *Signs of the Times*, 19 August 1889, 498, 499; Samuel T. Spear, "Revelation and Inspiration [Part 1]," *Signs of the Times*, 9 September 1889, 547, 548; Samuel T. Spear, "Revelation and Inspiration [Part 2]," *Signs of the Times*, 16 September 1889, 563, 564.

⁴⁴ Waggoner, "Letter to the Romans—No. 8," 127; E. J. Waggoner, "Letter to the Romans—No. 12," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 20 March 1891, 185.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., E. J. Waggoner, *Prophetic Lights: Some of the Prominent Prophecies of the Old and New Testaments, Interpreted by the Bible and History* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1888); E. J. Waggoner, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians: A Review* (Oakland, CA: n.p., 1888). There are some other examples

Jones utilized White's writings to endorse some of his ideas, yet he occasionally went beyond their actual meaning. He quoted, for example, from *Testimony*, no. 33 to support the use of her writings as the final and exclusive interpreter of Scripture. He nevertheless overlooked the fact that she did not ascribe to them the exclusive interpretative task but only the function of simplifying and highlighting biblical truths as many believers neglected to bring their lives in line with biblical principles.⁴⁶ Furthermore, he deemed interpreting inherently problematic although White took issue only with employing statements detached from their literary and historical context either to weaken the purpose and message of the *Testimonies*, or to exaggerate their meaning and drive them to extremes.⁴⁷ She affirmed the perspicuity of the gospel message in the Bible,⁴⁸ but unlike him, she also acknowledged the imperfections of human language and insisted that God had "not put himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the

for his biblical studies. During his European years (1892-1903) he wrote a number of articles and editorials on Isaiah in the *Present Truth*. See E. J. Waggoner, *Treasures in Isaiah: Good News in "The Gospel Prophet"* (Brushton, NY: TEACH Services, 2004). From October 1895 to September 1896 a weekly series of articles on the Epistles to the Romans appeared in the *Signs of the Times*. See E. J. Waggoner, *Waggoner on Romans: The Gospel in Paul's Great Letter* (Paris, OH: Glad Tidings Publishers, [1990s]). At the General Conference session in February and March 1897 he presented a series of studies on the book of Hebrews. See E. J. Waggoner, *Studies in the Book of Hebrews* (Brushton, NY: TEACH Services, 1998). From December 1898 to June 1899 the *Present Truth* published a series of articles on the Gospel of John. See E. J. Waggoner, *Waggoner on the Gospel of John* (Brushton, NY: TEACH Services, 2004).

⁴⁶ Jones, "The Gifts," 12. For Ellen White's perspective see above on pp. 62, 194.

⁴⁷ Jones, "The Spirit of Prophecy—No. 2," 22.

⁴⁸ See Fortin, "The Theology of Ellen G. White," 274; Richard M. Davidson, "Bible, Interpretation of," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 651; Frank M. Hasel, "Ellen G. White's Use of Scripture," in *The Gift of Prophecy in Scripture and History*, eds. Alberto R. Timm and Dwain N. Esmond (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 2015), 306. See also Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:331; Ellen G. White, "The Science of Salvation the First of Sciences," *Review and Herald*, 1 December 1891, 737; Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1896), 89; Ellen G. White, "The Bible to Be Understood by All," *Signs of the Times*, 11 July 1906, 7.

Bible.”⁴⁹ However, he may have been unaware of these considerations as these remarks were not published until the 1930s and 1940s.⁵⁰

The Context of the Statements

Jones’ view of inspiration did not undergo significant changes from the mid-1880s to the early 1900s. Nevertheless, he arguably placed more emphasis on the perspicuity of inspired statements and the interpretative authority of Ellen White’s writings in the 1890s than he did in the 1880s.

Jones served on the editorial staff of the *Signs* from 1885 to 1889 as conservative Protestant theologians intensified their opposition to the growing influence of the new biblical scholarship.⁵¹ A case in point is the dispute in the *Presbyterian Review* with some writers “opposing the results of the new scholarship” and others “giving qualified approval.”⁵² A. A. Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield published an essay on inspiration that became the classic formulation of the verbal-plenary theory among Evangelical theologians.⁵³ Jones’ publications fail to provide evidence that he appropriated the writings of Hodge or Warfield, but they do illustrate his familiarity with developments in biblical scholarship and the positions taken by other conservative Presbyterians.⁵⁴ His

⁴⁹ Ellen G. White, "Objections to the Bible," Ms 24, 1886.

⁵⁰ See above on p. 198 fn. 347.

⁵¹ On the Presbyterian debates (1881-1883) and the responses to critical scholarship from 1880 to 1900 see, e.g., Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism*, 11–31.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵³ Archibald A. Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield, "Inspiration," *Presbyterian Review* 2, no. 6 (1881): 225–60, 225–60; Hodge and Warfield, *Inspiration* (1881 ed.).

⁵⁴ See above on pp. 230, 231.

colleagues at the *Signs* shared his commitment to uphold a verbal view of inspiration and to reject accommodating theories, yet the origins of that like-mindedness can only be surmised.⁵⁵

At the General Conference session in November 1888 Ellen White lent significant support to Jones and Waggoner against those opposing their message of righteousness by faith, and she continued to do so even after she left for Australia in 1891.⁵⁶ In the early 1890s Jones' writings did not yet evince efforts to return that support,⁵⁷ yet his twenty-four revivalistic Bible studies on the third angel's message at the General Conference session in February and March 1893 show an altogether different picture. While Jones' first "Bible study" only seemed to suggest that White's writings were "such a perfect guide, such an infallible one that it will silence every other voice when every wind of doctrine is blowing," his subsequent "Bible studies" were unequivocally insisting that her writings were the sole and final arbiter of biblical interpretation.⁵⁸ His studies were

⁵⁵ See above on pp. 231, 232.

⁵⁶ Ellen G. White, Sermon "Lessons from the Vine," 7 February 1890, Ms 56, 1890, EGWE; Ellen G. White to W. C. White, 19 August 1890, Lt 103, 1890, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Brethren in the Ministry, 17 September 1890, Lt 67, 1890, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Uriah Smith, 6 January 1891, Lt 20, 1891, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Uriah Smith, 30 August 1892, Lt 25b, 1892, EGWE; Ellen G. White to O. A. Olsen, 1 September 1892, Lt 19d, 1892, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Smith, 19 September 1892; Ellen G. White to Frank E. Belden and Hattie Belden, 5 November 1892, Lt 2a, 1892, EGWE; Ellen G. White to William Ings, 9 January 1893, Lt 77, 1893, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Isaac D. Van Horn, 20 January 1893, Lt 61, 1893, EGWE; Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg and Ella Eaton Kellogg, 16 May 1893, Lt 86a, 1893. See also Whidden, *E. J. Waggoner*, 144–46; Gilbert M. Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation*, Adventist Pioneer Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 100.

⁵⁷ Jones' address at the 1891 General Conference session did not contain a single quotation from or reference to White's writings. See A. T. Jones, "Religious Liberty," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 15 March 1891, 103–10.

⁵⁸ Like other Protestant and Adventist writers, Jones emphasized the need for the spirit of truth to guide students of Scripture in their effort to understand the Bible. However, he then implied that the Spirit of Prophecy, referring to Ellen White's writings, was that spirit of truth. In his view, any human endeavor to interpret, clarify, and explain Scripture usurped Christ's prerogative to clarify his own words. The

saturated with quotations from her writings, using them as texts for the studies and as interpretative comments.⁵⁹ S. N. Haskell wrote her enthusiastically, “At this Conference the Testimonies are used more I think than [sic] you would have spoken were you here.”⁶⁰ Afterwards Jones began to act as an intermediary to deliver White’s testimonies to individuals in North America, a circumstance that, coupled with her continuing support for him, may have caused Jones to view himself as her special emissary in America.⁶¹

In 1893, his endorsement of the “testimonies” of Anna C. Rice (née Phillips), who sought validation of “what she thought might be prophetic experiences” from Jones,⁶² reveals his excitement about the capability of inspired communications to induce remarkable revivals.⁶³ Despite stressing White’s divine authority and role as final interpreter of Scripture, he neglected to consult her on Rice’s prophetic claim. As Ellen White did not have “the least confidence in her claims, or the claims any one has made in

logical conclusion was, therefore, that no other person besides Ellen White should be permitted to interpret the Bible. See Jones, “The Third Angel’s Message—No. 1,” 11, 12. See also above on pp. 225-227, 233; Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 99.

⁵⁹ See above on p. 228. See also *ibid.*, 98, 99.

⁶⁰ S. N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, 23 February 1893c, EGWCF, EGWE. W. C. White observed a change in the way his mother’s writings began to be used in the *Review* about that time. Writing to L. E. Froom, he stated, “You will also notice a decided change in the policy of [the] *Review and Herald* from 1892 when Sister White went to Australia. I think that 1892 marks the beginning of a more free use of the *Testimonies* by the writers for the *Review*.” See W. C. White to L. E. Froom, 18 August 1926, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁶¹ Ellen G. White to A. T. Jones, 2 June 1893, Lt 31, 1893, EGWE; Ellen G. White to A. W. Stanton, 22 March 1893, Lt 57, 1893, EGWE.

⁶² George R. Knight, “Rice, Anna C. (Phillips),” in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 498; Butler, “A Portrait,” 21.

⁶³ A. T. Jones to Anna C. Rice, 3 January 1894, cited in Glen Baker, “Anna Phillips—A Second Prophet?,” *Adventist Review*, 6 February 1986, 10. See also “Sabbath, Jan. 27,” *Review and Herald*, 30 January 1894, 80; “Sabbath, Feb. 3,” *Review and Herald*, 6 February 1894, 96.

her behalf,”⁶⁴ she reproved Jones and others for the part they played in that matter. Jones responded with immediate repentance and confession.⁶⁵ That incident illustrates nevertheless an additional problem. Her own absence and simultaneous support for Jones led numerous church members to deem his statements almost as divinely inspired. Some church leaders felt that that one word from his mouth ended every discussion, compelling the entire country to avoid any criticism against him.⁶⁶ White herself lamented that many members viewed him and his views “as if inspired of God,” placing Jones “where God should be.”⁶⁷

In late 1894, Jones published an article about spiritual gifts in general and the gift of prophecy in particular. As he wrote that White’s writings were to lead people to the Bible, Scripture seemed to be upheld as the foundation of faith and practice. Yet, by insisting that “the right use of the Testimonies” consisted in “study[ing] the Bible *through them*,”⁶⁸ Jones actually, as Knight correctly observes, “subordinated it to Ellen White’s writings.”⁶⁹ She called Jones’ attention to his tendency to go to extremes, but

⁶⁴ Ellen G. White to J. D. Rice, 1 November 1893, Lt 54, 1893, EGWE.

⁶⁵ Baker, “Anna Phillips—A Second Prophet?,” 8–10; Glen Baker, “Anna Phillips—Not Another Prophet,” *Adventist Review*, 20 February 1986, 8–10; Moon and Kaiser, “For Jesus and Scripture,” 65. See also Ellen G. White to A. T. Jones, 14 January 1894, Lt 37, 1894, EGWE.

⁶⁶ F. M. Wilcox to S. N. Haskell, 4 March 1894, GCA; S. N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, 22 April 1894, EGWCF, EGWE.

⁶⁷ Ellen G. White to Brethren and Sisters, 16 March 1894, Lt 6a, 1894, EGWE; Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, 1 June 1894a, Lt 27, 1894, EGWE.

⁶⁸ Jones, “The Gifts,” 12 (emphasis original). See also Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 99.

⁶⁹ Knight, *From 1888 to Apostasy*, 231.

apparently neglected to correct his ideas about the use of her writings.⁷⁰ She continued to send him testimonies for “wayward denominational leaders because she knew that he had the courage to face even the most difficult situations.”⁷¹ Many people in America therefore perceived him as her authoritative and foremost spokesperson, despite his denials of being an “authority on the *Testimonies*.” Stressing the perspicuity of White’s writings, he argued, “All I can do is to just believe what they say, and that is all we can know about it. Just what they say is so. What they say is true.”⁷² Knight observes that Jones failed to recognize his lack of absolute objectivity and his tendency to interpret “her writings in light of his own understanding.”⁷³ Ellen White therefore urged him in the spring of 1899,

Do not, when referring to the *Testimonies*, feel it your duty to drive them home. In reading the *Testimonies*, be sure not to mix in your filling of words, for it is impossible for the hearers to tell what is the word of the Lord to them and what are your words. Be careful that you do not make the words of the Lord offensive.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Ellen G. White to A. T. Jones, 2 September 1892, Lt 16j, 1892, EGWE; Ellen G. White to A. T. Jones, 14 January 1894; Ellen G. White to W. W. Prescott and A. T. Jones, 16 April 1894, Lt 68, 1894, EGWE.

⁷¹ Knight, “Jones, Alonzo Trevier (1850-1923),” 430.

⁷² A. T. Jones quoted in J. H. Kellogg, “Christian Help Work,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 8 March 1897, 311. See also Knight, *From 1888 to Apostasy*, 234; Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 98. Some people even viewed Jones as being inspired or as a prophetic extension of Ellen White. See Knight, *A. T. Jones*, 79.

⁷³ Knight, *From 1888 to Apostasy*, 234.

⁷⁴ Ellen G. White to A. T. Jones, 1 May 1899, Lt 91, 1899, EGWE. She also pointed out that Jones occasionally displayed an antagonistic, aggressive, and confrontational style in dealing with other people. See Ellen G. White to A. T. Jones, 13 October 1895, Lt 36, 1895, EGWE; Ellen G. White to A. T. Jones, 6 February 1900, Lt 17, 1900, EGWE. Some people felt that “Jones tried to be a Christian, but that he did not try to be a gentleman.” See Clarence Santee to G. A. Irwin, 20 April 1899, GHMR box 2, GCA.

Jones frequently expressed complete trust in White's testimonies, utilizing them to bring people and denominational policies in line with her ideas or, at least, with how he understood them.⁷⁵

His rationale for the "right use" of her writings in relation to Scripture became more explicit over the years, yet the sources fail to betray possible causes for that emphasis other than Jones' growing interest in the work of the Spirit in the 1890s.⁷⁶

Mistrust and Open Antagonism

The turn of the new century brought several changes for Jones. His interaction with Ellen White changed with her return from Australia. In 1901, he transitioned from editorial work to administrative duties. As relations between denominational leaders and Dr. J. H. Kellogg became increasingly strained by 1903, Jones grew closer to him and more estranged from White and these leaders. By 1906 his disaffection "boiled over into open warfare against Ellen White."⁷⁷ He maintained his belief in verbal inspiration but saw too many examples in White's writings and experience that did not harmonize with that presupposition. Barred from publishing articles in the denominational papers, especially after 1906, he explained his views in private correspondence, privately published tracts, and the *Medical Missionary* issued by Battle Creek Sanitarium.

⁷⁵ G. A. Irwin to A. G. Daniells, 3 November 1903, GCA; A. T. Jones to A. G. Daniells, 26 January 1906, GCA; Jones; A. T. Jones, *Some History, Some Experience and Some Facts: The Final Word and a Confession* (Battle Creek, MI: n.p., [1906]), 35; Knight, *A. T. Jones*, 258.

⁷⁶ Calvin W. Edwards and Gary Land, *Seeker After Light: A. F. Ballenger, Adventism, and American Christianity* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2000), 32, 34, 36, 38, 39; Knight, *A. T. Jones*, 98–128.

⁷⁷ Knight, *A. T. Jones*, 258.

Concept of Inspiration

Jones maintained his assumptions on divine inspiration, yet his ideas on the perspicuity of inspired writings, God's foreknowledge, and the extent of inspiration in the lives of prophets put him in conflict with his belief in Ellen White's inspiration.

Knight is probably correct in his estimation that Jones was "still a verbalist at heart"⁷⁸ in these later years as Jones' own writings suggest. The personification of the "Spirit of inspiration"⁷⁹ and "inspiration"⁸⁰ thus continued to appear in his writings. Like other Adventists, he also continued to place emphasis on the words of Scripture.⁸¹ In fact, he argued that particular words were "definitely chosen by the Spirit of Inspiration,"⁸² and that in a particular instance "the precise word" had been employed by "inspiration."⁸³

⁷⁸ Ibid., 261.

⁷⁹ Jones argued that the "Spirit of Prophecy" speaks, shows, sets down, or declares something in biblical texts. See A. T. Jones, *The Place of the Bible in Education: An Appeal to Christians* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 10, 11, 16, 24, 28, 41, 95, 152; A. T. Jones, "History of Government. Departure from Principle. (Concluded)," *Signs of the Times*, 16 March 1904, 4; A. T. Jones, "Consequences of Church Federation, II," *Medical Missionary*, 17 April 1907, 122; A. T. Jones, "Prophets and Prophecy in the New Testament," *Medical Missionary*, 9 October 1907, 324; A. T. Jones, "Religious Liberty—VII. (Conclusion)," *Medical Missionary*, 19 February 1908, 146.

⁸⁰ Thus Jones said that "inspiration" had written, stated, or declared something in Scripture. See A. T. Jones, "Religious Liberty—VI. God and Cesar," *Medical Missionary*, 12 February 1908, 131; A. T. Jones, "Through the Bible, Gen. 4:11: The Unrepentant Cain," *Medical Missionary*, 19 August 1908, 657.

⁸¹ Thus he referred to biblical passages with phrases such as [1] "the words of inspiration," [2] "the word of inspiration," or [3] "that statement of inspiration." See [1] Jones, *The Place of the Bible in Education*, 9; [2] A. T. Jones, "Eat Ye That Which is Good," *Medical Missionary*, September 1904, 266; A. T. Jones, "Christian Loyalty—II," *Medical Missionary*, 3 April 1907, 106; and [3] A. T. Jones, "Through the Bible: The Redemption—II," *Medical Missionary*, 15 July 1908, 569.

⁸² Jones, *The Place of the Bible in Education*, 16.

⁸³ Ibid., 12, 14.

Jones further continued to stress the perspicuity of inspired writings, suggesting that they “need no explanation.”⁸⁴

Until 1903 he also employed the phrase “Spirit of Prophecy” in such personified ways, yet afterwards this usage disappeared from his writings. He continued to affirm that inspiration had been active, albeit to a lesser extent, in White’s experience. Later, he came to distinguish between proper prophets and those having the Spirit of Prophecy, arguing that every true believer who keeps God’s commandments also has the Spirit of Prophecy (Revelation 12:17; 19:10).⁸⁵ Jones stressed that “the Bible is the supreme thing,” but acknowledged the continuing use of her writings for his “own private study, in the study of the Bible, and in . . . family worship.”⁸⁶ There was, however, one major change in Jones’ view of the inspiration of her writings.

So the sum of it all is that I stand just where I did in 1901 and always before, except in this one single point that I know that not all is from the Lord that is sent out as testimony. . . . I was honest as a man can be in believing that everything that was issued in writing by Sister White was testimony and from the Lord.⁸⁷

Hence he felt compelled to distinguish between inspired and uninspired parts in her writings. In addition, Jones’ response to Ellen White’s allegedly changing counsel is indicative of his assumption that an omniscient God would not need to change his counsel because he could, of course, factor in changing circumstances in his advice.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ A. T. Jones to Ellen G. White, 26 April 1909, EGWCF, EGWE. See also A. T. Jones to A. G. Daniells, 27 January 1907, PIC box 3107, GCA.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ A. T. Jones to Brother, 8 June 1905, EGWCF, EGWE.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Jones, *Some History, Some Experience and Some Facts*, 54, 55.

Objections to Other Views

In these years Jones retracted his previous assumptions concerning the verbal inspiration of White's writings. He further stated that portions of her writings conflicted with his experience, perception of God, and concept of the nature of inspired material. The reasons for these changes from his previous position will be described in the next two sections.

Jones suggested that his concept of inspiration remained generally unchanged, except that he could no longer believe that "all is from the Lord that is sent out as testimony."⁸⁹ Before, he believed "that everything that was issued in writing by Sister White was [a] testimony and from the Lord," yet "now" he felt "compelled to recognize that it is not true."⁹⁰

When his experience and view of reality conflicted with some of White's testimonies, his belief in the harmony of inspired writings was shaken, causing him to reject the divine origin of such testimonies. As he believed in God's omniscience and immutability, he could not comprehend why God would send seemingly conflicting messages in close succession.⁹¹ Jones also rejected the idea that statements could be

⁸⁹ Jones, to Brother, 8 June 1905; A. T. Jones to A. G. Daniells, 26 January 1906, EGWCF, EGWE; A. T. Jones to Ellen G. White, 9 August 1908, EGWCF, EGWE.

⁹⁰ Jones to Daniells, 26 January 1906. See also Jones to Ellen G. White, 9 August 1908. Knight states, "When faced with the facts that inspiration did not guarantee infallible information in every detail, Jones's faith in Mrs. White shattered, and he became her most vocal enemy." See Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 99. While it is certainly true that Jones initially thought that these statements came by inspiration, Knight misses the point that the basic problem for Jones was to assume that everything White had said and written was a testimony.

⁹¹ Jones, *Some History, Some Experience and Some Facts*, 54. For Jones' belief in infallibility and inerrancy, see, e.g., Knight, *A. T. Jones*, 262. Jones assumed that the "Word of God," regardless of whether it was in the Bible or in the Testimonies, was unchangeable. See A. T. Jones, Sermon by Elder A. T. Jones

inspired that resulted from White's own considerations or information received from others.⁹²

As he maintained the assumption that inspired writings were not in need of clarification, he responded vigorously to White's offer to clarify misunderstandings regarding her writings. For her to admit possible obscurities and ambiguities amounted, in his view, to an acknowledgment that her writings could not be inspired.⁹³

Jones still deemed some of her books spiritually beneficial, but he could no longer believe that she was a prophet. He disliked attempts to prove "that she was nevertheless a prophet" and that "her writings [were] on a level with those of Jeremiah and others of the Bible." He argued that he himself "never . . . put them in the place of the Bible, and . . . [he] never . . . put them on an equality with the Bible," although his previous practice seems to suggest otherwise. He could not use them in his sermons, despite their spiritual value. As the Bible was "the supreme thing," he wanted to "preach only the Bible."⁹⁴ Jones suggested that White's testimonies would not have been needed if the people had listened to the Bible.⁹⁵ Like before, he professed to apply the principles of a given testimony to himself but was unwilling to use it "as a test" of someone else's orthodoxy or "as a club" to compel others to do certain things.⁹⁶ That is why he was opposed to

in the Tabernacle, Battle Creek, Mich., 2 January 1906, William Warren Prescott Papers, box 1, fld 13, CAR. See also Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 442 en. 22.

⁹² Jones to Ellen G. White, 9 August 1908.

⁹³ Jones to Ellen G. White, 26 April 1909.

⁹⁴ Jones to Daniells, 26 January 1906.

⁹⁵ A. T. Jones, "Medical Missionary Religious Liberty," *Medical Missionary*, March 1906, 80.

⁹⁶ Jones to Daniells, 26 January 1906. Interestingly, he conceded to having "used them with great force to wheel men and politics into line."

those who, in his view, were claiming “loyalty to the testimonies,” but were in reality simply using the testimonies selectively for their own goals rather than their spiritual life.⁹⁷

Sources and Influences

Jones maintained his particular ideas on the verbal inspiration and perspicuity of inspired writings, going beyond the views of the Protestant Reformers and contemporary conservative Protestants as noted above. His perception of Ellen White’s inspiration was impacted by several confusing experiences after the turn of the century, and his changed views were apparently supported by statements from her writings. In 1906, for example, he encapsulated his change of mind as follows.

I believed—honestly and truly believed—that everything that was written and sent out as Testimony was Testimony from the Lord. To that belief and that confidence I was as true as it is possible for a man to be. But that trust and that confidence have been betrayed. And by that betrayal I have been compelled—most reluctantly compelled, I assure you—yet literally compelled to yield that position.⁹⁸

At least two types of experiences caused Jones to question the inspiration of her counsel. First, assuming that everything she had written was inspired, he was surprised to find her giving contradictory advice because he failed to see that she sometimes made personal suggestions without claiming inspiration for these.⁹⁹ Second, at other time she made certain remarks and qualified them a few days later, yet Jones interpreted them as a

⁹⁷ Jones to Daniells, 26 January 1906; Jones, "Medical Missionary Religious Liberty," 76.

⁹⁸ Jones to Daniells, 26 January 1906; Jones, *Some History, Some Experience and Some Facts*, 53.

⁹⁹ Jones to Brother, 8 June 1905; Jones, *Some History, Some Experience and Some Facts*, 55; Jones to Daniells, 26 January 1906.

contradiction.¹⁰⁰ Jones therefore felt that he had to judge between inspired and uninspired parts even in those writings for which Ellen White claimed inspiration, and that he had to extend the working of inspiration through the Spirit of Prophecy, albeit not the prophetic gift, to every true believer.¹⁰¹ That second idea was seemingly supported by White's refusal to be called a "prophet." Jones nevertheless neglected the immediate literary and historical context of the statements because White justified her refusal by saying, in fact, that this title put limits on the extensive work she was actually doing.¹⁰² These examples capture Jones' apparent inability to develop a balanced position, making him what Knight calls an "ideological extremist."¹⁰³

The Context of the Statements

This section shows that Jones' statements about his changed perception of Ellen White's inspiration were made against the backdrop of the Kellogg crisis, tensions with denominational leaders, and the interpretation of events involving White's advice from 1901 to 1909.

When White returned to the United States in 1900, Jones's role had changed. Heretofore he had been her primary spokesperson in America, yet now she could speak for herself again. In W. C. White and A. G. Daniells, he was faced with two leaders who were not only closely connected with her in Australia, but seemed to understand her

¹⁰⁰ Jones to Ellen G. White, 26 April 1909.

¹⁰¹ Jones to Daniells, 26 January 1906; Jones to Ellen G. White, 9 August 1908.

¹⁰² Jones to Daniells, 27 January 1907. See pp. 250, 272, 341.

¹⁰³ Knight, *A. T. Jones*, 257.

spiritual pragmatism quite well.¹⁰⁴ The Kellogg crisis drove Jones closer to the doctor and further away from Ellen White and that group of leaders.¹⁰⁵ While Daniells seemed to obstruct Kellogg in every way as he sought to rebuild the burned Sanitarium in 1902,¹⁰⁶ newspapers surmised that Ellen White was the real culprit who was “leading in a warfare against” him.¹⁰⁷ Jones was disgusted with Daniells’ endeavor to break Kellogg’s “imperious will,”¹⁰⁸ yet he took no issue with Kellogg’s own (unsuccessful) campaign to replace Daniells with Jones at the 1903 General Conference session.¹⁰⁹ Jones became

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 257, 258.

¹⁰⁵ Knight observes that Jones’ changing perception of Ellen White occurred against the backdrop of that crisis. Jones grew less enthusiastic about the denominational leadership and White’s support for them and he became more sympathetic to the doctor. On the “anatomy” and development of Jones’ alienation from Ellen White see *ibid.*, 256–67. Although W. W. Prescott tended to join Jones in his extremes in the 1890s, he seemed to move away from these by the early 1900s. McArthur notes that he also “possessed a sense of pragmatic realism.” See Benjamin McArthur, *A. G. Daniells: Shaper of Twentieth-Century Adventism*, Adventist Pioneer Series (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2016), 175.

¹⁰⁶ Kellogg had asked for the assistance of the General Conference, yet Daniells was loath to abandon his no-debt policy and to accept Kellogg’s “grand proposition” to have the church market his new book *The Living Temple*. See J. H. Kellogg, “The Battle Creek Sanitarium Fire,” *Review and Herald*, 25 February 1902, 125; A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, 25 March 1902, EGWCF, EGWE; General Conference Committee Minutes, 22 November 1902, GCA; A. G. Daniells to G. A. Irwin, 12 December 1902, GCA. See also McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 191.

¹⁰⁷ Mentioning such newspaper reports, Prescott was wondering whether that campaign was preparing the doctor’s separation from “the denomination on the basis of being ‘driven out.’” See W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, 18 January 1903, Barry Oliver Collection, box 3, fld 13, CAR.

¹⁰⁸ Jones to Brother, 8 June 1905; Jones to Daniells, 26 January 1906; W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, 8 March 1906, PIC bx 3082, GCA.

¹⁰⁹ W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, 25 January 1903, PIC box 3071, GCA; W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, 26 January 1903, Barry Oliver Collection, bx 3, fld 13, CAR; J. H. Kellogg to George I. Butler, 8 February 1903, CAR; J. H. Kellogg to W. C. White, 18 March 1903, EGWCF, EGWE; unknown to G. A. Irwin, 3 July 1904, Richard Hammill Collection, bx 22 fld 9, CAR; A. G. Daniells to C. C. Nicola, 30 July 1906, PIC bx 3082, GAC. See also Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 115; Richard W. Schwarz, *John Harvey Kellogg: Pioneering Health Reformer*, Adventist Pioneer Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2006), 185; Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 152; George R. Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil: The Development of Adventist Church Structure*, Adventist Heritage Series (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2001), 112, 114.

suspicious of Ellen White's support for Daniells and W. W. Prescott,¹¹⁰ whose actions he interpreted as a denial of White's earlier support for his own reform efforts and a top-down reversal of the 1901 session.¹¹¹

Meanwhile several incidents undermined Jones' trust in the overall inspiration and reliability of White's writings. In the autumn of 1902, he was astonished how supposedly uninspired remarks would be published in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7.¹¹² In early 1903, Jones was startled that she suggested the relocation of the General Conference session from Oakland to Healdsburg while making arrangements for herself in Oakland. Jones nevertheless overlooked her explicit note that she spoke for the Healdsburg church rather than for God.¹¹³ Shortly afterwards she sent two letters to M. E.

¹¹⁰ Jones to Daniells, 26 January 1906.

¹¹¹ "The General Conference: Summary of Daily Proceedings, April 6 to 11," *Review and Herald*, 14 April 1903, 24; Jones to Brother, 8 June 1905; Jones to Daniells, 26 January 1906. See also Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 116; Schwarz, *John Harvey Kellogg*, 185; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 175–78.

¹¹² Daniells had talked with her about the Southern Publishing Company, and after her remarks had been recorded in shorthand, they were revised and approved by her. He took a copy to the South, not thinking that it was a testimony. Nevertheless, it was subsequently published in "reversed" form in Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:233-236. Jones wondered how it could be a testimony after the reversal, and he felt that the "galley of reversed and suppressed matter" weakened the Pacific Press workers' confidence in the testimonies. See Jones to Daniells, 26 January 1906.

¹¹³ Ellen G. White to A. T. Jones, C. H. Jones, and M. C. Wilcox, 27 January 1903, Lt 27, 1893, EGWE; Jones, *Some History, Some Experience and Some Facts*, 55; Jones to Brother, 8 June 1905; Jones to Daniells, 26 January 1906. Puzzled, he wrote later, "Could we not all have done better than that without having that [first] communication at all? If it had not come at all, we should have all gone on quietly and steadily with the arrangements for Oakland, and the Conference would have been held in Oakland just where it was held anyhow. What then was that communication? Was it a Testimony, or was it not? If it was, then why was it disregarded by her? If it was not, then why was it sent to me, only to create unnecessary confusion or why was it written at all?" See Jones, *Some History, Some Experience and Some Facts*, 55. A close reading of the respective communication, a letter to Daniells, and White's remarks at a meeting that Jones attended suggests, however, that she spoke on behalf of the Healdsburg church and shared her personal thoughts rather than a divine prescriptive message. Writing to Daniells about the same matter four days earlier, she stated unequivocally, "Seeing that the church is willing to entertain the delegates free of charge, would it not be better to hold the Conference in Healdsburg instead of in Oakland? The meeting will not be as large as the last General Conference, and I think that perhaps Healdsburg would be a more favorable place than Oakland. *But I merely present the earnest petition of the Healdsburg*

Cady, president of Healdsburg College, after she heard that he had overdrawn his account with the institution. Jones supposed the letters contained reproof and hence argued that she had believed “the mere gossip of a man,” proving that “not everything is testimony that is issued as testimony.”¹¹⁴ In the summer and fall Jones had some conversations with Ellen White and received several letters from her in which she reproved him for his decision to join Kellogg in planting a new school at Battle Creek. He thought that her view of these things was false,¹¹⁵ but he assured her of his trust in the testimonies.¹¹⁶ Jones promised to stay only for one year or,¹¹⁷ as he later stated, “as long as the Sanitarium is as bad off and the people there as bad as the *Testimonies* say they are.”¹¹⁸

church, as I was requested to tell you of their great desire that the meeting be held in that place. . . . I will say no more. Only I cannot see why, since Healdsburg pleads so hard for the Conference, it cannot be held there. I know that it would be very difficult to find accommodation for all the delegates in Oakland; for every nook and corner seems to be filled. *Please understand that in referring to this matter, I am speaking for others, not for myself*; for I do not expect to attend the Conference.” See Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells, 23 January 1903, Lt 19, 1903, EGWE. Her statements at the meeting are found in "Remarks at California Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association," 9 February 1903, Ms 194, 1903, EGWE.

¹¹⁴ Ellen G. White to M. E. Cady, 2 September 1903, Lt 194, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White to M. E. Cady, 7 September 1903, Lt 197, 1903, EGWE; Jones to Daniells, 26 January 1906; Jones, *Some History, Some Experience and Some Facts*, 56–59. The General Conference published the two letters to permit every church member to read the respective correspondence. See *A Statement Refuting Charges Made by A. T. Jones against the Spirit of Prophecy and the Plan of Organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, DC: General Conference Committee, 1906), 67–72. Thinking the letters did not contain what he thought they contained, Jones argued that there must have been another communication. See A. T. Jones, *The Final Word and Confession* (Battle Creek, MI: n.p., [1906]), 16–18. Cady replied that there were only these two letters, suggesting Jones never saw the letters until they were published. He also stated that he had not given “a thought as to whether they were Testimonies, or whether they were not Testimonies,” yet he had been deeply impressed that White was “very solicitous for the best interests of the College” and anxious for him to clarify this matter with the college board. The college was printing a book for him and he did not have to pay for the job until it was finished. Meanwhile his account at the institution had been showing the expenses for the paper. See M. E. Cady, "The Alleged Overdraft of \$300," [1906], PIC box 3107, GCA; M. E. Cady to A. G. Daniells, 20 August 1906, PIC box 3107, GCA; M. E. Cady, Notes from Prof. Cady's Talk at the Milton Camp-Ground, [1906], PIC box 3107, GCA.

¹¹⁵ Jones to Ellen G. White, 26 April 1909.

¹¹⁶ Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells, 5 August 1903, Lt 297, 1903, EGWE.

¹¹⁷ Ellen G. White to our medical missionaries, June 1904, Lt 399, 1904, EGWE; Ellen G. White to W. W. Prescott and W. A. Colcord, 16 January 1905, Lt 21, 1905, EGWE.

¹¹⁸ Jones, Sermon by Elder A. T. Jones in the Tabernacle, Battle Creek, MI, 2 January 1906.

Ellen White felt that Battle Creek had become a place dangerous to the true spiritual growth of young people,¹¹⁹ and she feared that Jones had already been influenced by Kellogg's spirit.¹²⁰ In January 1904, she believed that her letters had failed in their purpose and that Jones had truly been "leavened with the spirit that controls the Doctor."¹²¹ At the same time Jones emphasized that he was no longer able to believe that everything she had written was divinely inspired.¹²²

All subsequent encounters and communications seemed to strengthen Jones' alienation from her and denominational leaders.¹²³ In May, Ellen White supported

¹¹⁹ Ellen G. White to A. T. Jones, 2 August 1903, Lt 178, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White to W. C. White, 16 August 1903, Lt 293, 1903, EGWE.

¹²⁰ In August 1903, Ellen White asked Jones to refrain from promoting the school and soliciting money for it on the West Coast. See Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells, 27 August 1903, Lt 190, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White, to W. C. White, 16 August 1903. She even had C. C. Crisler record her conversation with Jones on August 20 to avoid the circulation of conflicting reports. See Ellen G. White, Diary, entry for 20 August 1903, Ms 175, 1903, EGWE. She was afraid that Jones had already been swayed "by the power of a satanic delusion," and that "Kellogg was trying to use him to oppose the very things the Lord had been trying to do." See Ellen G. White to Daniells, 5 August 1903; Ellen G. White to W. C. White, 16 August 1903. She sent letters to Jones for him to read them to Kellogg and alerted him to the danger "of being influenced by the sentiments found in the *Living Temple*." See Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, 26 November 1903, Lt 51, 1904, EGWE; Ellen G. White, "Interview on School Verandah, The Berrien Springs Meeting," [1904], Ms 168, 1904, EGWE. She thought he failed to see things as they really were and where they would lead. See Ellen G. White to W. C. White, 18 August 1903, Lt 186, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White to W. C. White, 16 August 1903; Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg and his associates, 26 November 1903, Lt 265, 1903, EGWE. In her view, Kellogg was no longer "sound in faith" and had been educated in "seductive theories" by satanic agencies. See Ellen G. White to A. T. Jones, 28 August 1903, Lt 192, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White to David Paulson, 14 October 1903, Lt 220, 1903, EGWE. By December Ellen White pointed out that Jones was often abrupt, harsh, and confrontational in calling out certain mistakes while, at other times, passing over other evils. See Ellen G. White to G. C. Tenney and A. T. Jones, 3 December 1903, Lt 266, 1903, EGWE.

¹²¹ Ellen G. White, "Instruction Regarding the Medical Missionary Work," 29 January 1904, Ms 10, 1904, EGWE.

¹²² Jones to Daniells, 26 January 1906. Knight quotes from G. A. Irwin who, in 1903, expressed his astonishment at Jones' dramatic change from complete loyalty to the Testimonies to his "running according to his own mind." See Knight, *A. T. Jones*, 258.

¹²³ Knight, *From 1888 to Apostasy*, 213, observes that although significant efforts were made to unite the two sides at that session of the Lake Union Conference in Berrien Springs, MI, in May 1904, they resulted merely in "the hardening of the lines."

Daniells and Prescott who, in her view, sought to “save” Kellogg by pointing out his dangers, and chided Jones for hindering the latter from truly experiencing repentance and conversion. Jones nevertheless felt that their speeches were calculated to destroy Kellogg,¹²⁴ and he was astonished that she could judge *The Living Temple*, although she had never read the book but only listened to her son read “some of the most objectionable passages.”¹²⁵ Her attempts to break Kellogg’s influence on Jones by getting the latter engaged in evangelistic and religious liberty work in Washington, D.C., were of no avail.¹²⁶ At the same time Jones interpreted it as a denial of her prophetic office when she explained that she avoided using the title “prophet” because her ministry encompassed more than the common understanding of that word signified.¹²⁷

In the following two years Jones had a growing impression that Ellen White was working against him and that the church was returning to old positions. Some utilized White’s testimonies to influence prospective students to choose other Adventist schools instead of going to the new college at Battle Creek.¹²⁸ She also suggested that some

¹²⁴ Knight, *From 1888 to Apostasy*, 213; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 204. See Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells and W. W. Prescott, 20 May 1904, Lt 165, 1904, EGWE; Ellen G. White to P. T. Magan and E. A. Sutherland, 23 July 1904, Lt 255, 1904, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “The Berrien Springs Meeting,” 25 July 1904, Ms 74, 1904, EGWE; Ellen G. White to A. T. Jones, 3 July 1906, Lt 242, 1906, EGWE.

¹²⁵ Jones to Ellen G. White, 26 April 1909.

¹²⁶ Ellen G. White to W. W. Prescott, 26 January 1904, Lt 53, 1904, EGWE; Ellen G. White to Prescott and Colcord, 16 January 1905.

¹²⁷ Jones to Daniells, 26 January 1906; Jones to Daniells, 27 January 1907; J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 27 June 1906, PIC box 3083, GCA. See Ellen G. White, “Notes of Travel—No. 2: Moline and Battle Creek,” *Review and Herald*, 26 January 1905, 9; Ellen G. White to O. A. Olsen, 30 January 1905, Lt 55, 1905, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “We had a very pleasant journey . . .,” 30 January 1905, Ms 140, 1905, EGWE; Ellen G. White, Regarding the Work of Mrs. E. G. White, 7 February 1905, Ms 16, 1905, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “A Messenger,” 26 May 1906, Ms 63, 1906, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “A Messenger,” *Review and Herald*, 26 July 1906, 8, 9. See also Knight, *Meeting Ellen White*, 75, 76.

¹²⁸ Ellen G. White to David Paulson, et al., 1 August 1904, Lt 279, 1904, EGWE; A. T. Jones to Abner B. Dunn, 20 September 1905, EGWCF, EGWE.

leaders of the Sanitarium had sought to gain control of church property and had sent out spies to conferences and congregations, causing Jones to demand names and evidence for such incidents.¹²⁹ Furthermore, he thought that some ministers and leaders advocated salvation by works and various doctrines rather than righteousness by faith.¹³⁰ Jones claimed that the General Conference had increased its bureaucracy, centralization, and elimination of religious liberty.¹³¹

Subsequently a dispute emerged over real loyalty to the testimonies and the right interpretation of past events. Jones asserted that Daniells, Prescott, and W. C. White did “unrighteous things,” claiming “that they were doing them out of loyalty to the testimonies.”¹³² He argued that they paid attention only to those passages that supported their own goals while he and Kellogg were truly following Ellen White’s counsel.¹³³ A

¹²⁹ Ellen G. White, *A Message to Our Physicians*, Special Testimonies Series A, no. 12 (n.p., 1906), 8–11; A. T. Jones to W. C. White, 24 September 1906, EGWCF, EGWE. See also Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years, 1905-1915*, vol. 6 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 124-129; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 94, 95. In his investigation of legal activities of the Trustees of the Michigan Sanitarium and Benevolent Association, I. H. Evans discovered evidence for the deeding of properties to the Association. He further discovered that the Trustees had deeded certain properties to the James White Memorial Home Corporation after Dr. J. H. Kellogg had informed him in writing that the association did not hold the deeds of these properties but that they had been deeded to that Corporation. See W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, 4 March 1906, PIC box 3082, GCA; W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, 8 March 1906, PIC box 3082, GCA.

¹³⁰ Jones to Brother, 8 June 1905; A. T. Jones to W. C. White, 12 August 1907, EGWCF, EGWE; A. T. Jones to A. G. Daniells, 20 August 1907, EGWCF, EGWE; A. T. Jones to R. S. Owen, 20 February 1908, EGWCF, EGWE. Jones published a response to a respective Sabbath school lesson that taught, in his view, salvation by works. Daniells responded to his leaflet and, comparing the character of the two documents, Prescott noted that he admired the spirit in which Daniells had written his letter and that Jones had “lost all sense of modesty, letting alone the question of genuine experience of the theory of which he writes so glibly.” See W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, 3 September 1907, PIC box 3086, GCA.

¹³¹ He argued that denominational leaders actively restrained freedom of religion by transforming the “religious liberty association” into a “religious liberty bureau,” which he considered a contradiction in itself. See Jones to Brother, 8 June 1905.

¹³² Jones, “Medical Missionary Religious Liberty,” 76.

¹³³ Jones to Daniells, 26 January 1906.

closer look at Jones' use of her statements to prove his loyalty nevertheless suggests that he frequently disregarded the literary and historical context.¹³⁴ In January 1906, he wrote Daniells and outlined apparently "unquestionable" facts causing his change of view. He suggested that he had never been partial in his belief and use of White's testimonies, yet he felt betrayed in his trust and confidence.¹³⁵ Reading the letter at the Sanitarium chapel in early March, Jones argued that what he opposed was not the Testimonies but rather the efforts to break Kellogg's will.¹³⁶ Three years later he published these "facts" in the pamphlet *Some History, Some Experience and Some Facts*, a summary of his position on White's inspiration and issues with church leaders.¹³⁷ In May the General Conference issued a *Statement* to refute his charges "against the Spirit of Prophecy and the plan of organization."¹³⁸ Feeling misunderstood, Jones published a rejoinder, *The Final Word*

¹³⁴ Jones quoted, for example, a statement from April 1903 to suggest that she had stressed the need to help the sanitarium, something he claimed he had done in moving to Battle Creek. See Jones, Sermon by Elder A. T. Jones in the Tabernacle, Battle Creek, MI, 2 January 1906. Ellen White had stated, however, that Battle Creek Sanitarium needed help that was different from having church members invest in sanitarium bonds. See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church Regarding Our Youth Going to Battle Creek to Obtain an Education*, Special Testimonies Series B, no. 6 (n.p.: Author, 1905), 13. He withheld the fact that White had sent him personal reproofs for joining in building up the new college in Battle Creek. See Ellen G. White to Jones, 2 August 1903; Ellen G. White to Jones, 28 August 1903. On his selective, out-of-context use of her writings see also Knight, *A. T. Jones*, 248, 250, 264, 265; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 439, 440.

¹³⁵ Jones to Daniells, 26 January 1906. Jones stated that he felt especially betrayed because he had honestly believed that everything Ellen White had written was a testimony from the Lord.

¹³⁶ Prescott to Daniells, 8 March 1906.

¹³⁷ Jones, *Some History, Some Experience and Some Facts*. See also A. T. Jones to A. G. Daniells, 28 May 1909, PIC box 3094, GCA.

¹³⁸ *A Statement Refuting Charges Made by A. T. Jones against the Spirit of Prophecy and the Plan of Organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination*. For a chronology of the correspondence and publications see A. T. Jones to A. G. Daniells, 30 July 1909, PIC box 3094, GCA; Jones to Daniells, 28 May 1909.

and Confession, to further explain his position and the reasons for his change.¹³⁹ Ellen White wrote him, “You consider the light given me of God regarding his [Kellogg’s] position as of less value than your own judgment.”¹⁴⁰ Jones saw no need for a reconciliation with her and church leaders because he supposedly had no disagreements with anyone and thought each person was exercising their freedom of choice.¹⁴¹

From 1907 to 1909 several incidents severed Jones’ ties with the denomination and Ellen White. In February 1907, Jones advocated an extreme theology of congregational independence and attempted to alienate entire churches from the denomination.¹⁴² On May 22 his ministerial credentials were finally withdrawn, and on November 10 the Battle Creek Church disfellowshipped Doctor Kellogg.¹⁴³ A few days later Jones discovered that an article, which he previously quoted as “the word of the Spirit of prophecy,” had been falsely credited to her.¹⁴⁴ He was further incensed that

¹³⁹ Jones, *The Final Word and Confession*. Jones felt that church leaders had dealt arbitrarily with the Sanitarium and that although he considered the testimonies still valid, he believed that “certain improper human influences [were] brought to bear upon the testimonies.” See P. M. C. to W. W. Prescott, 14 June 1906, PIC box 3082, GCA. Jones later surmised that W. C. White had manipulated testimonies. See A. T. Jones to Claude E. Holmes, 12 May 1921, EGWCF, EGWE. He also argued that “someone,” alluding to W. C. White, “had told her wrong information.” See Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 439.

¹⁴⁰ Ellen G. White to Jones, 3 July 1906. She explained to him that Daniells and Prescott had truly sought to save Dr. Kellogg at the Berrien Springs meeting in 1904 whereas Jones had thwarted these attempts and excused Kellogg in his wrong course.

¹⁴¹ A. T. Jones to H. M. J. Richards, 10 July 1906, PIC box 3082, GCA.

¹⁴² McArthur, A. G. *Daniells*, 240; Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 118–25. See also J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 14 February 1907, PIC box 3087, GCA; J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 24 February 1907, PIC box 3087, GCA.

¹⁴³ Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 124; Knight, *A. T. Jones*, 272, 273.

¹⁴⁴ A. T. Jones to Sanford B. Horton, 12 November 1907, EGWCF, EGWE. The article was initially written by G. E. Fifield in 1893 or 1894. In the summer of 1894 H. W. Cottrell reprinted it in a leaflet that advertised his meetings in Lynn, MA. It was credited to “G. E. F.” In early 1895 it was published in the *American Sentinel*, and in August 1895 in the Apples of Gold Library, yet there it was only credited to the *Sentinel*. Eventually, in 1906, it appeared on the title page of the Special Religious Liberty

some people employed portions of the testimonies against him while leaving out more favorable parts.¹⁴⁵ In the summer of 1908, Ellen White proposed to have Jones' 1893 lessons on the Spirit of Prophecy reprinted, yet he recommended abandoning the idea because he surmised that his own remarks might be used against him. He stressed that he still stood by his former position and had changed his view in only one point, a circumstance for which he held her liable.¹⁴⁶ In late April 1909 Jones learned about a letter¹⁴⁷ from Ellen White to various individuals, including himself, three years earlier, in which she had invited them to state their questions regarding her writings and expressed her willingness to answer them. This invitation conflicted with Jones' understanding of the perspicuity of inspired writings and therefore seemed to defeat the claim of the

issue of the *Watchman*, where credit was mistakenly given to Ellen G. White. It was reprinted in *Liberty* magazine in the following year; credit was again given to her. See Sanford B. Horton to A. T. Jones, 18 November 1907, EGWCF, EGWE; George E. Fifield, "Religious Liberty," *American Sentinel*, 17 January 1895, 20, 21; *Religious Liberty*, Apples of Gold Library, no. 27 (Oakland, CA: International Tract Society, 1895); Ellen G. White, "Religious Liberty," *Watchman*, 1 May 1906, 257, 258; Ellen G. White, "Religious Liberty," *Liberty* 2, no. 2 (1907): 4, 5. Jones had quoted it in Jones, *The Final Word and Confession*, 51–54; A. T. Jones, *The Everlasting Gospel of God's Everlasting Covenant* (Battle Creek, MI: n.p., [1907]), 27, 28. Sensing that many would probably accept it as coming from God, he surmised that "such a thing as this, in this time especially, when Sister White's writings are being sifted and many objections are being made—and certainly objections that are not all utterly fallacious—such a thing as this occurring in such a time as this, would certainly have the effect to cast upon her writings in general the reflection that possibly this is not the only instance of the kind in the history of her works and writings." See Jones to Horton, 12 November 1907. Being alarmed, Prescott wrote, "It appears to me that this is a serious situation and that these facts being true, it necessarily casts a suspicion upon Sister White's writings." See W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 22 March 1908, WDF 131, reg. fld 1, no. 48, CAR.

¹⁴⁵ A. T. Jones to H. M. J. Richards, 11 May 1908, EGWCF, EGWE.

¹⁴⁶ He wrote, "I stated to you personally . . . the chief of all causes of my change of view and attitude on this subject, when I told you that YOU, yourself, are the ONE CHIEF cause of all this change. . . . Primarily no person, nor any thing, had any part in it, but yourself. . . . But you, yourself, and you alone, in all the world, are the one who caused my change of view. I did not want it so." See Jones to Ellen G. White, 9 August 1908 (emphasis original).

¹⁴⁷ Ellen G. White, "Those Who Are Perplexed Regarding the Testimonies Relating to the Medical Missionary Work," 30 March 1906, Lt 120, 1906, EGWE.

inspiration of her writings altogether.¹⁴⁸ He further felt abused by the way she and others had employed letters against him while neither he nor the actual addressees ever received them.¹⁴⁹ Shortly afterwards he was dropped from church membership.¹⁵⁰ Besides affecting his own relation to Ellen White, Jones' concept of inspiration also influenced many who remained in the church.¹⁵¹ In subsequent years his literature became a source for detractors and critics in both the United States and foreign countries.¹⁵²

Summary

The investigation of Jones' published and unpublished statements on inspiration from the late 1880s to the late 1900s shows much continuity in his view of the nature, manner, and result of inspiration. Initially he addressed primarily the inspiration of the biblical writings, but in 1893, he began to stress the divine origin of Ellen White's writings. His remarks on the inspiration of both her writings and the Bible were all made within the framework of verbal-plenary inspiration. After 1903 his views on the perspicuity of inspired language, divine unchangeability, and the inspiration of all

¹⁴⁸ Jones stated that "such a proposition in itself surrenders at once the whole ground of the claim in behalf of your writings as the word of God, or as given by inspiration of God. For if the writings were really the word of God[,] . . . they [would] need no explanation." See Jones to Ellen G. White, 26 April 1909. Further, it was incomprehensible to him that Ellen White initially asserted that God had directed her to ask these people to specify their objections and that he would surely help her to answer them, only to add two months later that she had been directed by a messenger from heaven not to try answering all the doubts raised by them. See Ellen G. White, "Hold Fast the Beginning of Your Confidence," 3 June 1906, Ms 61, 1906, EGWE. See Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 482, 483, for an explanation of the circumstances.

¹⁴⁹ Ellen G. White to Russell Hart, 4 February 1907, Lt 38, 1907, EGWE; Jones to Ellen G. White, 26 April 1909.

¹⁵⁰ Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 124.

¹⁵¹ Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 107.

¹⁵² A. W. Anderson to W. C. White, 20 August 1919, EGWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to T. E. Bowen, 18 May 1920, EGWCF, EGWE.

writings of White, regardless of each document's type and subject, nevertheless clashed with his perception of and experience with Ellen White. As the Protestant Reformers, conservative Protestant theologians, fellow Adventist ministers, and Ellen White generally affirmed the perspicuity of Scripture and God's faithfulness, Jones seemingly adopted their ideas and statements. However, he frequently disregarded the immediate literary and historical context, carrying these ideas to an extreme that is lacking in the writings of those thinkers. That tendency came to the fore in the Kellogg crisis, leading to tensions with the denominational leadership and Ellen White whose counsel Jones no longer regarded as reliable. Previously he had considered her writings the final, infallible commentary on Scripture, yet now he no longer granted them this role. He reduced her inspiration to that granted to any believer and abandoned the assumption that everything she had written came directly from God, something she herself had never claimed. His rejection of her prophetic claim seems to have been a deeply personal matter as she placed herself, in his view, on the wrong side of the dispute. Jones believed he had factual evidence for his decision, yet in the end it was a matter of how he interpreted the facts.

From Active to Passive Loyalty: Changing Moods in the Life of W. W. Prescott

William Warren Prescott (1855-1944) was an exceptional writer, editor, scholar, educator, and administrator. He served as a member of the General Conference executive committee for forty-two years, and held many leadership positions in the educational and publishing work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He was president of Battle Creek College (1885-1894), Union College (1891-1893), and Walla Walla College (1892-

1894), and worked as chief editor of the *Review and Herald* from 1903 to 1909.¹⁵³ In the mid-1890s he toured various countries of the world to educate church workers in biblical subjects and to encourage interest in the educational work. Afterwards he edited the *Protestant* magazine for seven years, and served as field secretary of the General Conference from 1915 to 1937. Prescott occasionally assisted Ellen White's literary staff in clarifying historical details and preparing her books for publication.¹⁵⁴ Initially he apparently assumed the verbal inspiration of Scripture but seemed to move away from that position between the mid- and late-1900s. Prescott's statements concerning the inspiration of Scripture and White's writings are significant, given his tremendous influence in educating church workers and members. The mentioned change of emphasis requires a division of this section into two periods.

The Verbal Inspiration of Scripture

In the 1890s and early 1900s Prescott was at the center of the new emphases on righteousness by faith, the role of Scripture in education, the full divinity of Christ, the personhood of the Holy Spirit, and organizational reform. In the 1890s he collaborated with A. T. Jones in the promotion of these emphases and used his influence to promote a high view of Scripture through various educational venues. As the Kellogg crisis in the 1900s drove people and institutions apart, Prescott sided with Ellen White and A. G. Daniells in their endeavor to reclaim Jones and Kellogg. Prescott's articles and

¹⁵³ Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 77; Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 192–94.

¹⁵⁴ Gilbert M. Valentine, "Prescott, William Warren (1855-1944)," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 493; Denis Kaiser, "W. W. Prescott and Erziehung, 1855-1944" (term paper, Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen, 2005).

correspondence show his support for the inspiration of Scripture and White's prophetic counsel.

Concept of Inspiration

Prescott seemed to advocate the verbal inspiration of the Bible, yet his emphasis lay more on the result of inspiration than the technicalities of its actual process. That is why he stressed primarily the reliability of Scripture and White's writings.

Several scholars correctly assert that "the early W. W. Prescott" had espoused the idea of verbal inspiration or "an inerrant Bible."¹⁵⁵ Thus Prescott argued that "every word of the Bible is the exact language of God" because the biblical writers had been moved by the Holy Spirit "to write the prophecy." As "man was only the mouth-piece of God," one was to "lose sight of the human agency" and "see in the Bible the *word of God only*."¹⁵⁶ By expressing "his thought . . . in human language," God "put himself into his word" and dwelled in it through his Spirit. Prescott acknowledged the divine-human union of the word but placed more emphasis on its divinity.¹⁵⁷ He stressed that the Bible was therefore absolutely reliable, infallible, and free from error.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Knight, "Adventist Theology 1844 to 1994," 12. See also Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915," Washington, DC, 1981, White Estate Shelf Document no. 58, EGWE, 3; Thompson, "Improving the Testimonies Through Revisions," 13–15; Thompson, *Inspiration*, 268; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 120; Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 133.

¹⁵⁶ "Bible Study," 15, 16 (emphasis original).

¹⁵⁷ W. W. Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 1," *General Conference Bulletin*, 17 February 1895, 200–02; W. W. Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 2," *General Conference Bulletin*, 20 February 1895, 247; W. W. Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 3," *General Conference Bulletin*, 22 February 1895, 287, 288.

¹⁵⁸ "Bible Study," 15, 16; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 1," 201; W. W. Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 4," *General Conference Bulletin*, 24 February 1895, 319; W. W. Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 4 [cont.]," *General Conference Bulletin*, 25 February 1895, 325–27.

He noted here that through “the testimony of Jesus[, which] is the spirit of prophecy,” “Christ himself gives to his own infallible word . . . the infallible interpretation,” albeit the human instrument used by Jesus was not infallible.¹⁵⁹ Prescott generally emphasized the reliability of Ellen White’s writings and advice.¹⁶⁰ He had complete trust in her testimonies and believed them to be of divine origin, despite his occasional inability to apply them.¹⁶¹ W. C. White indicated that Prescott did not presuppose verbal inspiration for the writings of Ellen White, which seems to be supported by the fact that Prescott’s writings lack such a claim for her writings.¹⁶² Further, he stressed that White’s writings were given to point people to Scripture, and not “for a new rule of faith.”¹⁶³

Objections to Other Views

He responded specifically to the attempts of biblical criticism and such theories as degrees of inspiration and partial inspiration to diminish the reliability and authority of Scripture.

¹⁵⁹ Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 4 [cont.]," 326, 327. See also W. W. Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 5," *General Conference Bulletin*, 25 February 1895, 343; W. W. Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 7," *General Conference Bulletin*, 1 March 1895, 406; W. W. Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 8," *General Conference Bulletin*, 1 March 1895, 416–418, 420.

¹⁶⁰ W. W. Prescott to S. N. Haskell and E. W. Farnsworth, 4 September 1904, Richard Hammill Collection, box 22, fld 9, CAR; A. G. Daniells and W. W. Prescott to Brother, 18 December 1904, EGWCF, EGWE.

¹⁶¹ W. W. Prescott to Ellen G. White, 5 October 1893, EGWCF, EGWE; W. W. Prescott to Ellen G. White, 8 November 1893, EGWCF, EGWE; W. W. Prescott to Ellen G. White, 8 December 1893, EGWCF, EGWE.

¹⁶² W. C. White stated that Prescott introduced the theory of the verbal inspiration of the Bible among Adventists whereas “Haskell and a few others have taught the same regarding the verbal inspiration of the writings of Sister White.” See W. C. White to Luther Warren, 13 April 1924, WCWCF, EGWE.

¹⁶³ Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 8," 418.

Quoting from an encyclopedia, Prescott noted that the new theology of higher biblical criticism rejected “the verbal inspiration of Scripture” and “tended [therefore] to minimize the supernatural . . . [or even] to exclude it.”¹⁶⁴ Higher criticism ostentatiously, and with an expression of contempt, threw overboard “what is called the ‘verbal inspiration’ of Scripture, or of the authority of Scripture generally.”¹⁶⁵

He further argued that “there can be no degrees of inspiration” because 2 Timothy 3:16 affirms that “*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,*” has been “*God-breathed,*” and is therefore “coming alike from God.”¹⁶⁶ He explained his objections as follows:

As soon as we decide that one portion of the Scripture is more inspired than another, we have a man-made Bible, which is really no standard of right and wrong. While we regard certain texts not so fully inspired as others, those texts cannot have the influence on us that they otherwise would. While we doubt portions of Scripture, we have but a doubting faith. But when we accept “*all Scripture*” as being inspired of God, it immediately becomes profitable and a source of strength.¹⁶⁷

Similarly, Prescott rejected the practice of judging between inspired and uninspired portions in Ellen White’s writings, and felt uneasy about the claim of some that some things in her writings were unreliable or even false.¹⁶⁸

Responding to the Roman Catholic teaching of papal infallibility, Prescott argued that no human being is infallible, but God alone is infallible. Accordingly, it is the Spirit

¹⁶⁴ [W. W. Prescott], “Our Message,” *Review and Herald*, 6 July 1905, 5.

¹⁶⁵ W. W. Prescott, “The Situation and the Remedy,” *Review and Herald*, 9 September 1909, 5.

¹⁶⁶ “Bible Study,” 15 (emphasis original).

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ W. W. Prescott to F. M. Wilcox, 7 December 1902, EGWCF, EGWE; W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, 27 May 1904, EGWCF, EGWE; Prescott to Haskell and Farnsworth, 4 September 1904; W. W. Prescott to H. M. J. Richards, 11 March 1906, EGWCF, EGWE; W. W. Prescott to F. M. Wilcox, 11 March 1906, EGWCF, EGWE.

of Prophecy that used the human instrument to communicate a message that is infallible.¹⁶⁹

Sources and Influences

Prescott's concept of inspiration was probably influenced by his understanding of biblical passages, the ideas of Protestant thinkers, fellow Adventist writers, personal experiences with Ellen White's counsel, and his involvement in the production of her publications.

He suggested that Scripture itself should be allowed to define the concept of its inspiration, and the standard passages¹⁷⁰ served as sufficient proof of "the entire word as coming alike from God."¹⁷¹ He argued that Scripture provided abundant evidence for the idea that God speaks through it to its readers because "the Spirit of God dwells in the word of God" and it is an "infallible" "expression of his thought."¹⁷²

His quoting of other Protestant writers' affirmations of the verbal inspiration of Scripture seems to portend his general agreement with that theory.¹⁷³ Of particular interest are four articles that contained long quotations from Adolph Saphir (1831-1891),

¹⁶⁹ Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 4 [cont.]," 326, 327; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 5," 343; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 7," 405–10; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 8," 416–20; W. W. Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 8 [cont.]," *General Conference Bulletin*, 3 March 1895, 429, 430; W. W. Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 10," *General Conference Bulletin*, April 1895, 497–501. At the end of his series of lectures, Prescott added that the real issue is that the so-called "papal principle" had also found entrance into the church by "look[ing] to those in positions of trust as guardians of the truth, and have placed men where God should be." See Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 10," 497.

¹⁷⁰ See 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; Hebrews 1:1, 2.

¹⁷¹ "Bible Study," 15.

¹⁷² Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 2," 247; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 3," 288, 289; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 4," 319.

¹⁷³ Prescott, "Our Message," 5; Prescott, "The Situation and the Remedy," 5.

a Jewish Presbyterian missionary and pastor. Saphir did not necessarily advocate a strict form of verbal inspiration, yet he nevertheless suggested that inspiration impacted the written text of Scripture.¹⁷⁴

Adventist scholars assert that Gausson's theory of verbal inspiration was introduced into Seventh-day Adventism by Prescott and that he, together with S. N. Haskell and M. C. Wilcox, was responsible for its widespread influence within the church.¹⁷⁵ These assertions, however, need some further nuancing. First, those scholars base their assertion on an ambiguous and imprecise source—a letter from W. C. White to L. E. Froom on January 8, 1928.¹⁷⁶ White's remarks could either suggest that Prescott obtained his views from Gausson's *Theopneustia* or that his views resemble those of Gausson. There is nevertheless another source containing very specific details that has been overlooked so far—a letter from W. C. White to Luther Warren on April 13, 1924.¹⁷⁷ Reminiscing about specific events at Battle Creek College in the early 1890s, White stated that Prescott had read *Theopneustia* and shared the ideas with students and church workers. (The particulars of the letter will be described below in the context to Prescott's statements.) Second, as the editors of the *Signs of the Times* promoted the

¹⁷⁴ W. W. Prescott, "The Inspiration of the Scriptures," *Review and Herald*, 13 July 1905, 7; W. W. Prescott, "A Refreshing Testimony," *Review and Herald*, 28 September 1905, 3, 4; W. W. Prescott, "Scripture and the Holy Spirit," *Review and Herald*, 28 December 1905, 5, 6; W. W. Prescott, "The Inspired Word," *Review and Herald*, 4 January 1906, 4, 5.

¹⁷⁵ Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915," 3; Thompson, "Improving the Testimonies Through Revisions," 13–15; Thompson, *Inspiration*, 268; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 120; Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 133.

¹⁷⁶ W. C. White to L. E. Froom, 8 January 1928, WCWCF, EGWE, published in Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3:454.

¹⁷⁷ W. C. White to Warren, 13 April 1924. See also p. 459.

verbal inspiration of Scripture already in the mid- and late-1880s,¹⁷⁸ Prescott was most likely not the one who introduced that theory into Seventh-day Adventism. Third, as the *Review* during Prescott's tenure as editor contained no references to Gausсен and only one statement from him, albeit not on the subject of inspiration, Prescott did not seem to be very active in advertising the author or the book.¹⁷⁹ The first direct evidence for his knowledge of the book's existence stems from 1927.¹⁸⁰ Prescott advocated and promoted the verbal inspiration of Scripture, but he was obviously not the first person to introduce that concept within Adventism.

Following the 1888 General Conference session, he collaborated with A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner, editors of the *Signs of the Times* who both advocated verbal inspiration, in the revivalistic proclamation of the message of righteousness by faith and the central role of Scripture.¹⁸¹ As they had advocated the verbal inspiration of Scripture before Prescott, they may have influenced him. But he may also have reached the same

¹⁷⁸ See pp. 231, 232.

¹⁷⁹ The article dealt with the Spirit's activity in the work of creation. See L. Gausсен, "The Holy Spirit," *Review and Herald*, 9 June 1903, 11.

¹⁸⁰ In October 1927, while at College View, Nebr., Prescott purchased a used book that listed Gausсен's work in a bibliography on inspiration. See Jacob Aall Ottesen Stub, *Verbal Inspiration* (Decorah, IA: Lutheran Publ. House, 1915). He underlined several books, among them Gausсен's *Theopneustia*. The underlining by means of a blue color pencil and a ruler is a typical phenomenon in the books in Prescott's personal library. However, while he evidently owned some of the underlined books on that list, it cannot be verified whether some other underlined titles were also part of his library. Although the underlining probably signifies that Prescott ascribed some significance to these books, including Gausсен's *Theopneustia*, it is probably impossible to determine the particular significance the individual works had for him. The book *Revelation and Inspiration*, by James Orr, was also underlined, and Prescott referred to that book also in his Bible. See *The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments*, American Revised Version (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1901), NT: 4.

¹⁸¹ Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 93. See also Vande Vere, *The Wisdom Seekers*, 62; Knight, *A. T. Jones*, 51, 99, 117-123; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 92. For their advocacy of verbal inspiration, see pp. 223-226, 230-232, 234-236.

conclusion independently from them. Their like-mindedness is attested by their mutual expression of the same ideas. Prescott's discussion of God's thoughts as expressed in human language and the infallible interpretation given through the Spirit of Prophecy resembles Jones' exposition,¹⁸² and his discussion of viewing the Bible as God's voice speaking to its readers shows similarities to Haskell's remarks.¹⁸³

Prescott's experience with Ellen White and her counsel strengthened his confidence in her prophetic guidance. He stated, for instance, that her guidance in the early history of the church and her advice during the Kellogg crisis were a "very strong corroborative testimony in favor of the reliability of the Spirit of Prophecy."¹⁸⁴ He himself had also received testimonies that initially looked just like "the severest rebuke," yet after reading them repeatedly and praying over them, he found more and more encouragement and help in them. Seeing their positive fruits strengthened his faith in their inspiration.¹⁸⁵ Further, he found some of his ideas reflected in her writings.¹⁸⁶

Being involved in the editorial work of White's publications, Prescott knew what her literary assistants did. She sent him materials that he collected for the books *Christian Education* and *Special Testimonies on Education*, and he made a few necessary

¹⁸² Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 1," 200–02; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 4 [cont.]," 326, 327. See pp. 225, 258, 297.

¹⁸³ Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 2," 245–49. See p. 315.

¹⁸⁴ Prescott to Haskell and Farnsworth, 4 September 1904.

¹⁸⁵ Prescott to Ellen G. White, 8 November 1893.

¹⁸⁶ Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 2," 246, 247; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 4," 319; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 8," 418, 419; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 10," 497–99.

corrections and left out some extraneous portions.¹⁸⁷ Prescott also assisted her and Mary Ann Davis in solving some difficulties in preparing the *Desire of Ages*.¹⁸⁸ Thus he was especially aware of Davis' significant service for Ellen White.¹⁸⁹ As editor of the *Review and Herald* from 1903 to 1909, he interacted frequently with W. C. White and C. C. Crisler who gathered materials from Ellen White's writings and edited them for publication in article form.¹⁹⁰

The Context of the Statements

Until the mid-1900s Prescott's statements about inspiration were made in the context of the revivalistic and educational emphasis on Bible study, the production and publishing of some of Ellen White's writings, and the critique arising against her during the Kellogg crisis.

He professedly experienced his "first crisis" in early 1887 when one of his "associates," D. M. Canright—a teacher at Battle Creek College during Prescott's

¹⁸⁷ W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 26 June 1893, EGWCF, EGWE; W. W. Prescott to Ellen G. White, 4 July 1893, EGWCF, EGWE; W. W. Prescott to Ellen G. White, 7 September 1893, EGWCF, EGWE; W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 7 September 1893b, EGWCF, EGWE. See also Valentine, "Prescott, William Warren (1855-1944)," 494; Floyd Greenleaf, *In Passion for the World: A History of Seventh-day Adventist Education* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 132.

¹⁸⁸ Valentine, "Prescott, William Warren (1855-1944)," 494. Prescott saw Ellen White's willingness to consider insights from those around her to insure, for example, an accurate chronology of the life of Christ. See Arthur Patrick, "Learning from Ellen White's Perception and Use of Scripture: Toward an Adventist Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century," in *Avondale Press Series*, vol. 1, *Hermeneutics, Intertextuality and the Contemporary Meaning of Scripture*, eds. Ross Cole and Paul Petersen (Adelaide, South Australia: ATF Theology; Avondale Academic Press, 2014), 129.

¹⁸⁹ W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 6 November 1904, EGWCF, EGWE.

¹⁹⁰ See, e.g., W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 13 July 1905, EGWCF, EGWE; C. C. Crisler to W. W. Prescott, 2 August 1905, William Warren Prescott Collection, fld 5, CAR. See also Patrick, "Author," 93.

presidency and allegedly a believer in verbal inspiration—separated from the church and abandoned its doctrines.¹⁹¹

In late 1889 or early 1890 Prescott reportedly introduced the theory of verbal inspiration to students at Battle Creek College.¹⁹² W. C. White reminisced that “Prof. Prescott informed his students that he had come into possession of a very rare book in which he had found precious truths regarding the Inspiration of the Bible, and from that time on, he imparted to his students Gausen’s [*sic*] views.”¹⁹³ Learning of Prescott’s experience of finding the rare book, Kellogg “bought many copies [of that book] and circulated them among the students.” As a result, many ministers and teachers emphasized “Gausen’s [*sic*] view regarding the verbal inspiration of the scriptures, and Elder Haskell and a few others have taught the same regarding the verbal inspiration of the writings of Sister White.”¹⁹⁴ Thus while Prescott initially shared the ideas from the book, it was actually Kellogg who circulated Gausen’s *Theopneustia* among Adventist students.

¹⁹¹ W. W. Prescott to P. Paulin, 21 December 1937, William Warren Prescott Papers, Col. 143, box 1, fld 1, CAR. See also pp. 178, 180, 181, 308.

¹⁹² Scholars disagree about the time of that event. Arthur White and Herbert Douglass suggest that Prescott espoused and promoted the theory in the early 1890s or in 1893 specifically, whereas George Knight states that it had happened already during the late 1880s. See Arthur L. White, “The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915,” 3; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 120; Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 133. Their assertions are based exclusively on a letter from W. C. White to L. E. Froom in 1928 where the first stated that Prescott, while president of the College, “presented in a very forceful way another view—the view held and presented by professor Gausen.” See W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928, published in Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3:454. Beyond that statement, scholars are nevertheless unable to obtain actual primary sources to verify W. C. White’s claim.

¹⁹³ W. C. White to Warren, 13 April 1924. See also W. C. White to L. E. Froom, 21 January 1929, WCWCF, EGWE.

¹⁹⁴ W. C. White to Warren, 13 April 1924.

Meanwhile, interest in the study of the Bible increased after the 1888 General Conference session and Prescott became more actively engaged with E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, who also entertained the idea of the verbal inspiration of Scripture.¹⁹⁵ Prescott started a special school for ministers, its major focus being the study of the biblical text. He reasoned that if Adventism wanted to be more Christ-centered, it had to be centered more on Scripture than on doctrines.¹⁹⁶ In early March 1891 Prescott conducted a series of studies “on the subject of the Bible as the inspired word of God.” The *General Conference Daily Bulletin* briefly reported that “much interest” had been manifested among members of “the Battle Creek church, the students of the College, the helpers at the Sanitarium, and hands in the Review Office.”¹⁹⁷ Prescott objected to the theory of degrees, which had been championed among Adventists by G. I. Butler from 1884 to 1888, but repudiated by numerous writers after the 1888 General Conference session.¹⁹⁸ He also affirmed the theory of verbal inspiration. “Every word of the Bible is the exact language of God. . . . If God spoke, it was not man. *Man* was only the mouth-piece. It was *God* who spoke. Then we should lose sight of the human agency and see in the Bible the *word of God only*.”¹⁹⁹ The account was only a summary and his studies themselves

¹⁹⁵ See pp. 223-226, 231, 232.

¹⁹⁶ Regardless of the regular college curriculum, the Bible school met for five months each year until 1896, and it attracted the interest of many ministers. Battle Creek College did not offer required classes dealing with the biblical text. See Gilbert M. Valentine, “W. W. Prescott: Architect of a Bible Centered Curriculum,” unpublished manuscript, Berrien Springs, MI, [1982], CAR, 3, 4. See also Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 318. On Prescott’s concern over the deficiencies of ministers as their knowledge of the Bible seemed to be limited to specific proof-texts and not extend to a general broad proficiency in Scripture, see Whidden, *E. J. Waggoner*, 161.

¹⁹⁷ “Bible Study,” 15.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.* See pp. 138-142, 150-152.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 16 (emphasis original).

were never published, yet phonographic notes of such a study by H. E. Rogers have been discovered.²⁰⁰ All attempts to get the notes transcribed were unfortunately unsuccessful. Those studies encouraged leaders to organize a convention for Bible teachers to discuss teaching methods and develop syllabi.²⁰¹ Two years later he described his approach as the study of “the Bible as a whole[,] . . . as the gospel of Christ from first to last.”²⁰² Although his reform agenda met with strong opposition, he was encouraged by letters from Ellen White to continue.²⁰³

Prescott was grateful for everything Ellen White sent him on education, a subject he was deeply interested in. Suggesting the publication of a book similar to *Gospel Workers* (1892), he requested more material in preparation for *Christian Education* (1893).²⁰⁴ Of necessity he had to make some editorial corrections. Thus he eliminated some extraneous portions but was hesitant to make more corrections than “absolutely necessary for perspicuity.”²⁰⁵ As White was in Australia, he considered it hardly feasible

²⁰⁰ The notes are dated March 2, 1891, and located in the holdings of the Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI. Harvey Edson Rogers was a secretary at the General Conference from 1888 to 1903, when it moved to Washington, D.C., after which he served as the church’s statistician until 1941. He authored *The Rogers Compendium of the Graham System of Shorthand: A Practical, Synthetic Method*, 4th ed. (Lansing, MI: Hammond Pub. Co., 1905).

²⁰¹ The convention finally took place at Harbor Springs, MI, in July 1891. See Valentine, “W. W. Prescott: Architect of a Bible Centered Curriculum,” 5; Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 96; Vande Vere, *The Wisdom Seekers*, 62.

²⁰² W. W. Prescott, “Report of the Educational Secretary,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 23 February 1893, 350. See also Valentine, “W. W. Prescott: Architect of a Bible Centered Curriculum,” 6; Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 100.

²⁰³ Valentine, “W. W. Prescott: Architect of a Bible Centered Curriculum,” 8.

²⁰⁴ W. W. Prescott to Ellen G. White, 27 December 1892, EGWCF, EGWE; W. W. Prescott to Ellen G. White, 23 March 1893, EGWCF, EGWE.

²⁰⁵ Prescott to Ellen G. White, 7 September 1893; Prescott to W. C. White, 7 September 1893.

for her to check the final manuscript before publication. Instead, he awaited her criticism in case a revised second edition was needed.²⁰⁶

At the 1895 General Conference session he presented a series of ten revivalistic studies on "The Word of God."²⁰⁷ He sought to avoid "advancing . . . any theory . . . [of] inspiration," but he also stressed that God had put himself and his thought in the language of the Bible, rendering it infallible in every sense.²⁰⁸ Similar to Jones he stressed that Jesus through the Spirit of Prophecy gave an infallible interpretation of Scripture,²⁰⁹ yet he pointed out that inspiration did not make the human instrument infallible.²¹⁰

Prescott's stay in Australia from August 1895 to December 1896 allowed him to observe and assist in the production of some of White's books. She consulted him in organizing her revised material on Christ's life for publication.²¹¹ This experience seemed

²⁰⁶ W. W. Prescott to Ellen G. White, 12 September 1893, EGWCF, EGWE. Walter Rea interprets that incident as a proof that Prescott "was the real compiler of many of the books bearing her name." See Walter T. Rea to Dear Friend, 1993, CAR. He overlooks the fact, however, that Ellen White sent him specific material on the subject of education with Prescott making only minimal changes to the language. While it is true that she did not see the first edition of the book before its publication, Prescott gave her the opportunity to critique the manuscript and make suggestions for a revised second edition. She was apparently satisfied with the end result.

²⁰⁷ Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 1," 199–202; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 2," 245–49; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 3," 285–90; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 4," 317–20; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 4 [cont.]," 325–27; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 5," 342–47; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 7," 405–10; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 8," 416–20; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 8 [cont.]," 429, 430; W. W. Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 9," *General Conference Bulletin*, 5 March 1895, 480–85; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 10," 497–501.

²⁰⁸ Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 4," 317–20.

²⁰⁹ Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 4 [cont.]," 326, 327.

²¹⁰ Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 4 [cont.]," 326, 327; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 5," 343; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 7," 406; Prescott, "The Word of God—No. 8," 416–418, 420.

²¹¹ W. W. Prescott to Ellen G. White, 16 July 1896, EGWCF, EGWE; W. W. Prescott to Ellen G. White, 30 July 1896, EGWCF, EGWE. See also Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 113, 121, 122; Valentine, "Prescott, William Warren (1855-1944)," 494; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 71.

to generally strengthen his faith in her divine inspiration, yet he was not completely satisfied with the manner in which some of her writings had been handled by other people. Thus he felt that her unedited material was more easily comprehensible than those documents that had been heavily edited by Fanny Bolton.²¹² Furthermore, as he thought that the first edition of *Christ Our Savior*, an adaptation prepared by James Edson White, contained much that “contradicted both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy,” he was pleased to see a thoroughly revised edition sometime later.²¹³ These examples illustrate Prescott’s preference for only necessary editing and adaptations that preserved the inherent harmony with Scripture and White’s writings.

During the Kellogg crisis (1902-1907) Prescott objected to Kellogg’s frequent efforts to convince him of the unreliability of her writings and his efforts to employ her writings in support of his agenda. Prescott consistently defended the divine origin of her testimonies.²¹⁴ He asserted that many spoke “most unkindly” of her and her work, suggesting that she was a “fraud.” He credited such attitudes directly to the “reports sent

²¹² W. W. Prescott to Ellen G. White, 9 August 1896, EGWCF, EGWE.

²¹³ W. W. Prescott to Ellen G. White, 26 October 1899, EGWCF, EGWE; W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 16 March 1900, EGWCF, EGWE. See Ellen G. White, *Christ Our Saviour*, 1st ed. (New York, et al.: International Tract Society, 1896); Ellen G. White, *Christ Our Saviour*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1900). The first chapter was moved to a different spot in the book. One chapter was divided into two chapters, and three new chapters were added. A number of editorial changes were made and new material was added.

²¹⁴ Prescott to F. M. Wilcox, 7 December 1902; Prescott to Daniells, 27 May 1904; W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, 20 January 1903, PIC box 3071, GCA; Prescott to Daniells, 25 January 1903; W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, 22 May 1903, PIC box 3071, GCA. Kellogg actually acknowledged that he had distinguished between inspired and uninspired portions in both Scripture and White’s writings for twenty years. In addition, Prescott objected to Kellogg’s misquoting of A. G. Daniells concerning the opening of the new College as he had firsthand knowledge that Daniells disagreed with Kellogg’s use of his statements. See W. W. Prescott to J. H. Kellogg, 6 August 1903, PIC box 3071, GCA.

out from Battle Creek,” and was perplexed that no one seemed to raise a protest.²¹⁵ Her responses strengthened his confidence in her prophetic gift.²¹⁶

He was “surprised” that Jones and others were apparently looking for any opportunity to discredit Ellen White and her work.²¹⁷ Similarly, he suggested that Frank E. Belden lacked any decency when he unleashed his attack against her.²¹⁸ Prescott further witnessed the fruits of Jones’ endeavors to inform others about his view of Ellen White.²¹⁹ In response, Prescott defended her work zealously. His confidence in her inspiration was strengthened as he witnessed that the ministerial workers were led through a careful comparison of White’s original documents with Jones’ claim that these charges were groundless.²²⁰ He further questioned the wisdom of having W. C. White prepare a statement to clarify the work of his mother’s literary assistants as Prescott felt that it could not convince people like Jones and would enlarge the issue even more in the

²¹⁵ Prescott to W. C. White, 6 November 1904; W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 30 December 1903, EGWCF, EGWE; W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, 10 September 1903, PIC box 3071, GCA.

²¹⁶ Prescott to Haskell and Farnsworth, 4 September 1904; Daniells and Prescott to Brother, 18 December 1904. Prescott nevertheless hoped that White would also address the public. See Prescott to Daniells, 22 May 1903; W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, 1 September 1903, PIC box 3071, GCA; W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 8 December 1904, EGWCF, EGWE.

²¹⁷ Prescott to Richards, 11 March 1906; Prescott to F. M. Wilcox, 11 March 1906.

²¹⁸ W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 1 November 1905, EGWCF, EGWE.

²¹⁹ In April 1906, Prescott was informed that Jones had read his letter, which he had sent to Daniells on January 26, to the Sanitarium workers. See W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 17 April 1906, EGWCF, EGWE. Seeing that a minister became “completely confused as a result of his visit to Battle Creek,” Prescott expressed his fear that this man would “follow their lead concerning the testimonies.” See W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 30 October 1906, EGWCF, EGWE. For other examples see W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, 5 July 1907, PIC box 3086, GCA; Prescott to Daniells, 3 September 1907.

²²⁰ Prescott to W. C. White, 17 April 1906.

minds of the people.²²¹ Instead, Prescott published letters and articles from her in the *Review*, explaining her refusal of the title of “prophet”²²² and the correct view of her *Testimonies* as discussed in her letter to David Paulson.²²³

A Reserved Belief in Divine Inspiration

By the late 1900s Prescott seemed to move away from a verbal view of inspiration. As he was increasingly removed from the center of church attention in subsequent years, his denominational influence yet began to diminish. He was still considered a valuable resource due to his research skills and historical expertise. Many Adventists upheld William Miller’s interpretation of the *tāmīd* (daily, perpetual, continual) in Daniel 8:11-13 as Roman paganism while others such as Prescott suggested it should be interpreted as Christ’s continual ministration in the heavenly sanctuary. Ellen White’s role as interpreter of the Bible to settle this conflict became a crucial issue. Prescott’s active involvement in that controversy as well as his assistance in the clarification of historical details for the 1911 edition of the *Great Controversy* and the book *Prophets and Kings*, and his remarks about Ellen White’s inspiration during the 1919 Bible Conference were highpoints that evoked the pronouncement of his views on

²²¹ W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 19 July 1906, EGWCF, EGWE. There are other examples of his advocacy for Ellen White’s ministry and writings during that time. See, e.g., W. W. Prescott to C. C. Crisler, 18 September 1907, EGWCF, EGWE; W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 23 September 1907, EGWCF, EGWE.

²²² Ellen G. White, "A Messenger," 26 July 1906, 8, 9.

²²³ W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 8 August 1906, EGWCF, EGWE; W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 22 August 1906, EGWCF, EGWE; Ellen G. White, "Correct Views Concerning the Testimonies [Part 1]: A Reply to an Enquirer," *Review and Herald*, 30 August 1906, 8, 9; Ellen G. White, "Correct Views Concerning the Testimonies [Part 2]: A Reply to an Enquirer," *Review and Herald*, 6 September 1906, 7, 8.

inspiration. The majority of his statements after 1910 were nevertheless made in unpublished sources.

Concept of Inspiration

Prescott discussed the divine origin of the entire biblical corpus, its divine-human union, and the sure results of inspiration. Concerning Ellen White and her writings, he commented on their role in relation to Scripture and the possible need for correction of historical statements. His concept of inspiration was more fully unfolded, however, in his objections to other views.

He sought to avoid aligning himself with any distinct theory of inspiration,²²⁴ but some of his remarks offer a general perspective about the subject. He affirmed the progressive nature of divine revelation, which did not imply inconsistencies or contradictions. In his view, later revelations did not contradict earlier revelations.²²⁵ He continued to stress the inspiration of all parts of the Bible without suggesting that everything written in Scripture resulted from special revelation.²²⁶

Prescott stressed the mysterious “union of the divine and the human” in Scripture.²²⁷ Comparing Scripture with the incarnated Christ, he perceived “the same

²²⁴ Prescott, "The Inspiration of the Scriptures," 7; Prescott, "A Refreshing Testimony," 3; Prescott, "The Inspired Word," 4.

²²⁵ W. W. Prescott, "Seventh-day Adventism," *Review and Herald*, 29 October 1908, 3; W. W. Prescott, *The Doctrine of Christ: A Series of Bible Studies for Use in Colleges and Seminaries* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1920), 7; W. W. Prescott, "Bible Doctrines," Unpublished manuscript, n.d., 8.

²²⁶ Prescott, *The Doctrine of Christ*, 7; Prescott, "Bible Doctrines," 8; Prescott, "Seventh-day Adventism," 3; L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 27 January 1929, WCWCF, EGWE.

²²⁷ Prescott, *The Doctrine of Christ*, 7–10; Prescott, "Bible Doctrines," 8, 9; Prescott, "A Refreshing Testimony," 3; Prescott, "Scripture and the Holy Spirit," 6.

mystery in the union of the divine and the human in God's word in language as there is in God's word in flesh." The first "reveals the thought of God in human language (Heb 1:1) and the" second "in human flesh (John 1:14)."²²⁸ It was "through human instrumentality" that "the word of God" was communicated.²²⁹ Prescott noted that "the individuality of each [biblical] writer was preserved" and their literary styles were evidently "very distinct."²³⁰ The Holy Spirit also utilized their particular "history, experience, and conformation of mind."²³¹ Prescott emphasized his belief in "the integrity and reliability of the Holy Scriptures."²³² As God was the ultimate author of Scripture, although written by humans, it was authoritative, true, and reliable.²³³ Thus he stated, "By inspiration I mean that each writer was definitely guided by the Holy Spirit that what he wrote was absolute truth, without any mixture of error. . . . [T]he writer dealt with truths beyond his own ability to understand fully and yet expressed absolute truth."²³⁴ Imperfections in the outward form were nevertheless possible, but they did not contradict the divine perfection and infinite depth of its message.²³⁵

²²⁸ Prescott, "Bible Doctrines," 8, 9.

²²⁹ Prescott, "Seventh-day Adventism," 3.

²³⁰ Prescott to Paulin, 21 December 1937.

²³¹ Prescott, "The Inspired Word," 5.

²³² Prescott, "Seventh-day Adventism," 3.

²³³ Prescott, *The Doctrine of Christ*, 7–10; Prescott, "Bible Doctrines," 8, 9; Prescott, "A Refreshing Testimony," 3; Prescott, "Scripture and the Holy Spirit," 6.

²³⁴ Prescott to Paulin, 21 December 1937. See also Prescott, "A Refreshing Testimony," 3. Froom summarized Prescott's view as follows: "He definitely declares at this time that he does not believe in the verbal but rather in the plenary inspiration of the Bible. He thinks that there was an unerring guidance so that the thoughts conveyed by the words of the original text was [*sic*] inerrant." See Froom to W. C. White, 27 January 1929.

²³⁵ Prescott, "A Refreshing Testimony," 4.

During this period Prescott made only a few affirmative remarks on the inspiration of Ellen White. He remarked that her writings could serve as a guide or pointer in study, but suggested the need to “develop directly from Scripture the full meaning” of a passage because Scripture itself was to be the central study.²³⁶ Hence he seemed to have moved away from his earlier emphasis on the Spirit of Prophecy as the final interpreter of Scripture. “The Bible and the Bible only” was to be the foundation of faith.²³⁷ Prescott apparently did not extend his belief in Scripture’s complete reliability to Ellen White’s writings as he thought that matters of historical and exegetical fact in her works may need correction “when the facts . . . required it.”²³⁸

Objections to Other Views

Beginning in the mid-1900s Prescott’s objections addressed primarily word-focused views of inspiration, some of which he had previously advocated. Thus he objected to the formulation of any theory of inspiration and mechanical inspiration, verbal inspiration, and Modernism. He also addressed the relationship between the Bible and Ellen White’s writings, and the issue of historical matters in her writings.

²³⁶ W. W. Prescott to I. H. Evans, 15 February 1933, Richard Hammill Collection, box 22, fld 8, CAR; W. W. Prescott to W. W. Fletcher, 10 November 1929, WCWCF, EGWE.

²³⁷ W. W. Prescott to I. H. Evans, 18 June 1933, Richard Hammill Collection, box 22, fld 8, CAR. He further stated, “I am unable, therefore, to place these [White’s] writings upon the same level as the ordinary teaching of Bible truth, although I think they are to be subjected to the test of the Scriptures as the final authority.” See Prescott to Fletcher, 10 November 1929.

²³⁸ *Report of Bible Conference*, GCA, 1919, 551. Prescott stressed, however, that “I would regard her writings as more reliable and of greater authority than those of any other expositor of this three-fold message. I myself have received much personal benefit and many most valuable helps in the study of the Scriptures by giving careful attention to her writings.” See Prescott to Fletcher, 10 November 1929.

By sharing quotations from other writers, he seemed to affirm their dislike to formulate any particular theory of inspiration because no one had the “personal experimental knowledge” necessary to formulate one “with any degree of certainty.” Whether one referred “to the inspiration of the men who wrote, or to the inspiration of what is written,” they would all affirm the divine authorship of an authoritative and reliable Scripture.²³⁹ He agreed that discussions about “the inspiration of Scripture as ‘mechanical,’ ‘converting men into automata,’” changed the whole question into “such a scholastic and metaphysical form.”²⁴⁰ He distanced himself from “verbal dictation” as it turned “the writer simply [into] a type-writer operated on by someone else.”²⁴¹ Similarly, he professedly rejected the verbal inspiration of the Bible.²⁴² Further, he objected to the idea that inspiration would extend to translations of the Bible because there were “some unfortunate expressions in them.” The gospel was nevertheless clear in all translations.²⁴³

²³⁹ Prescott, *The Doctrine of Christ*, 8. Citing this source, David A. Crouch argues that Prescott believed that “the thoughts and ideas of the Bible are inspired [but] not necessarily the actual words.” He seems to overlook, however, that Prescott avoided affirming any particular theory. In fact, the statement that the Spirit “intended” “such words” could be interpreted, albeit not necessarily, as an affirmation of a verbal theory. See David Arthur Crouch, “The Life and Theology: William Warren Prescott” (Term paper, Andrews University, 1977), 15. Alan Jones expresses Prescott’s idea well: “The written word reveals the thought of God in human language and bears witness to Jesus himself.” See Alan Jones, “Christ and the Doctrines as Related by W. W. Prescott” (Term paper, Andrews University, 1974), 3. See also Prescott, “Bible Doctrines,” 9. In 1905, Prescott quoted a similar statement from Adolph Saphir who stated, “When we are asked, Is this inspiration verbal? or does it refer only to the divinely revealed truths and promises? it is not necessary for us to enter into distinctions which Scripture itself does not make. We need no adjective to qualify the substantive, inspiration. It is impossible for us to form a theory of inspiration.” See Prescott, “The Inspiration of the Scriptures,” 7.

²⁴⁰ Prescott, “Scripture and the Holy Spirit,” 5.

²⁴¹ Prescott to Paulin, 21 December 1937.

²⁴² Froom to W. C. White, 27 January 1929. Prescott assured Froom that he did not believe in verbal inspiration.

²⁴³ Prescott to Paulin, 21 December 1937. See also Froom to W. C. White, 27 January 1929.

Besides opposing verbal views of inspiration, Prescott also reacted against the attempts of higher biblical criticism to question and eliminate supernatural elements from Scripture.²⁴⁴ He objected to the hypotheses of geology that “impugn the reliability of the inspired account of creation.”²⁴⁵ He had studied and weighed the reasons given by modern scholarship for “rejecting the inspiration of the Scriptures, for not believing in the deity of Christ, for claiming that the Bible contradicts the facts of science, etc.,” but he found them wanting.²⁴⁶ He felt that “the inspiration and the infallibility of the Scriptures” had to be revealed by God and be verified in the personal experience of one’s “fellowship with God” because science and human philosophy were incapable of verifying these truths.²⁴⁷

References to physical phenomena that Ellen White experienced during a vision were in his view no sufficient proof for her inspiration.²⁴⁸ Prescott continued to disclaim the idea of a verbal inspiration of White’s writings,²⁴⁹ and felt that requiring belief in that idea while not doing the same for the Bible was not only inconsistent, but it also placed

²⁴⁴ Prescott, "The Inspiration of the Scriptures," 7; Prescott, "A Refreshing Testimony," 3, 4.

²⁴⁵ W. W. Prescott, "Revelation and Speculation," *Review and Herald*, 9 February 1905, 5.

²⁴⁶ Prescott to Paulin, 21 December 1937.

²⁴⁷ Ibid. Campbell shows that Prescott perceived the work of the Fundamentalist movement as something positive because Fundamentalists combatted the spread of Modernism. See Michael W. Campbell, "The 1919 Bible Conference and Its Significance for Seventh-day Adventist History and Theology" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2008), 38, 39.

²⁴⁸ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1212. He stated that different Bible translations disagree on whether Balaam’s eyes were open or shut while he was in vision.

²⁴⁹ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1215, 1216; Claude E. Holmes to Frank Hayes, 24 September 1921, WCWCF, EGWE; Prescott to Fletcher, 10 November 1929; Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915," 13.

her writings above Scripture.²⁵⁰ Affirming the inspiration of thoughts, he perceived the modification of an idea in her writings as highly questionable.²⁵¹ Discussing the relationship of Scripture and White's writings, Prescott stressed that the latter were not to substitute serious Bible study²⁵² and that he himself sought to avoid using her writings "to set aside the Bible."²⁵³ The church's doctrines were to be established on Scripture alone, and it was therefore counterproductive to employ her writings to counter the teachings of former Adventists²⁵⁴ or to settle exegetical discussions.²⁵⁵ He appreciated the spiritual and practical value of her writings, but he felt that she had been mistaken on some matters of biblical interpretation and historical detail.²⁵⁶ Nevertheless, he disliked attempts to publicly contrast her writings with the Bible.²⁵⁷ Prescott did not think that everything she had written under any circumstances was divinely inspired,²⁵⁸ or that she

²⁵⁰ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1215, 1216.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1250, 1251. See also Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 282.

²⁵² Prescott to Evans, 15 February 1933. Through his own Bible study Prescott had arrived at certain conclusions that seemed to differ from Ellen White's interpretation of a passage (the identity of Babylon). See McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 393.

²⁵³ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1252, 1254.

²⁵⁴ Prescott to Evans, 18 June 1933.

²⁵⁵ W. W. Prescott to R. A. Underwood, 2 August 1908, PIC box 3090, GCA; *Report of Bible Conference*, 1204.

²⁵⁶ W. W. Prescott to W. W. Fletcher, 28 June 1929, WCWCF, EGWE; W. W. Fletcher to W. W. Prescott, 25 March 1930, William Warren Prescott Papers, Col. 43, box 1, fld 1, CAR; *Report of Bible Conference*, 1198. Prescott did not view her "as an infallible interpreter of the Bible." See Pöhler, *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching*, 233 fn. 2. Prescott further pointed out that in her historical narrative of the great conflict she had "drawn freely from historical authorities, being assisted in this work by her secretaries." See Prescott to Fletcher, 10 November 1929. Campbell gives a list of the problematic points mentioned by Prescott. See Campbell, "The 1919 Bible Conference and Its Significance for Seventh-day Adventist History and Theology," 145.

²⁵⁷ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1252, 1254.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1213, 1214.

as a person was infallible.²⁵⁹ However, he was unwilling “to draw a line between what was authoritative and what was not.”²⁶⁰ Responding to some who asserted that changes in the 1911 edition of the *Great Controversy* had been made without White’s knowledge and consent, he stressed that she had approved all the changes.²⁶¹ Thus, unlike his practice in previous years, Prescott distanced himself from views of inspiration that diminished, or even eliminated, the human aspect in the inspiration process.

Sources and Influences

Prescott was widely read and particularly interested in the subject of inspiration. Beyond finding evidence for his view in the Bible, he also consulted numerous works by Protestant theologians and Ellen White’s writings.

Besides referring to 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21 in support of the entire inspiration of Scripture and the Spirit’s influence on humans, Prescott saw abundant evidence in the Bible for a diversity of literary styles indicative of the individuality of each writer. That the revealed truths were so deep that they superseded even the prophets’ ability to completely understand them was clearly visible for him in 1 Peter 1:10-12.²⁶² A perusal of his lessons on the inspiration of Scripture in *The Doctrine of Christ* (1920) and “Bible Doctrines” (undated) shows that Prescott intended to develop a basic

²⁵⁹ Prescott to Fletcher, 28 June 1929; Prescott to Fletcher, 10 November 1929.

²⁶⁰ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1252.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 551, 552, 555, 1247.

²⁶² Prescott to Paulin, 21 December 1937.

understanding of inspiration from the Bible.²⁶³ The examples of the Apostle Peter and the prophet Nathan showed him that although they as persons made mistakes, the divinely revealed messages were nevertheless authoritative.²⁶⁴

Prescott owned numerous books on divine inspiration. The majority of them advocated conservative Protestant views on the subject, particularly the verbal inspiration of Scripture.²⁶⁵ That he read them is evident as his underlining appears in many of these works.²⁶⁶ Further, his Bible contained handwritten references to the works of other

²⁶³ Prescott, *The Doctrine of Christ*, 7–10; Prescott, "Bible Doctrines," 7. The reference for the belief that "all Scripture is inspired" came from 2 Timothy 3:16. The references for the idea that "the prophets spoke for God under the influence of the Holy Spirit" were 2 Peter 1:21; Acts 1:16; 4:24, 25; 28:25; 2 Samuel 23:2; Hebrews 3:7; 10:15; Ephesians 6:17. The belief that "God spoke through the prophets" was based on Hebrews 1:1, 7, 13; Jeremiah 9:12; Matthew 1:22; 2:15; Acts 3:18-21; 13:47. Finally, he referred to such passages as Jeremiah 22:1, 2; 23:28; 26:1, 2; Luke 8:21; 11:28; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:13, to show that "the word of God was thus given through the prophets."

²⁶⁴ Prescott to Fletcher, 10 November 1929.

²⁶⁵ For example, John Kennedy, *The Book of Daniel from the Christian Standpoint: With Essay on Alleged Historical Difficulties*, by the Editor of the "Babylonian and Oriental Record" (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1898); George McCready Price, *Outlines of Modern Christianity and Modern Science* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1902); L. T. Townsend, *Bible Inspiration: Orthodox Point of View*, Four Lectures Delivered in Tremont Temple, Boston, Under the Auspices of the Evangelical Alliance (Boston, MA: The Author, 1909); Ada R. Habershon, *The Bible and the British Museum* (London: Morgan & Scott, 1909), purchased in January 1911; George McCready Price, *Back to the Bible: or, The New Protestantism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1916); James Mulchahey, *The Inspiration of History* (New York: American Tract Society, 1896), purchased in April 1921; William George Wirth, *The Battle of the Churches: Modernism or Fundamentalism, Which?* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1924), purchased in April 1925; W. H. Hutchings, *The Person and Work of the Holy Ghost: A Doctrinal and Devotional Treatise*, 4th ed. (New York and Bombay, India: Longman, Green, and Co., 1897), purchased in April 1925; J. Russell Howden, *The Old Paths in the Light of Modern Thought* (1921; reprint, London, et al.: China Inland Mission, 1923), purchased in 1926; Stub, *Verbal Inspiration*, purchased in October 1927; James T. Shotwell, *The Religious Revolution of To-day*, The William Brewster Clark Memorial Lectures (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1913), purchased in February 1929; P. T. Forsyth, *The Principle of Authority in Relation to Certainty, Sanctity and Society: An Essay in the Philosophy of Experimental Religion* (New York and London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), purchased in September 1929; Charles Croslegh, *The Bible in the Light of To-Day* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1896), purchased in October 1931; Basil. F. C. Atkinson, *Is the Bible True?* (London: Thynne & Co., 1934), purchased in 1934.

²⁶⁶ The great majority of underlining was done with a blue color pencil and by means of a ruler. The topics underlined and marked in that manner often correlate with subjects Prescott dealt with in his publications and lecture notes. Such topics were, for example, salvation and faith, the divinity and the cross of Christ, the personality and work of the Holy Spirit, pantheism and God's immanence, and the philosophy

theologians dealing, among other subjects, with inspiration.²⁶⁷ The chapter on inspiration in his book *The Doctrine of Christ* contains one quotation after another from Protestant writers. None of these quotations affirm, however, the verbal inspiration of Scripture.²⁶⁸

Experiences with Ellen White also helped shape his understanding of the proper use of her writings. A point in case was her insistence to refrain from using her writings to support either interpretation of the *tāmīd* (daily/perpetual/continual) in Daniel 8:11-13.²⁶⁹ In refining the *Great Controversy*, Prescott had been asked to suggest corrections. A number of these were accepted and corrections were made accordingly.²⁷⁰ He concluded that the author and editors agreed therefore with “the propriety of making changes necessary when newly discovered facts were brought forward.”²⁷¹ Summarizing a comment from W. C. White, Prescott suggested that Ellen White never “claim[ed] that this book was to be an inspired authority on key facts of history.”²⁷² He also quoted W. C.

of history. These facts seem to rule out the possibility that the underlining stems from a later patron of the Seminary library. The particular underlining may be interpreted variously as they generally only indicate that the reader deemed a statement or sentence significant for some reason without necessarily agreeing with it.

²⁶⁷ *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments*, received as a gift in March 1924. It contained references to Warfield, 304, 298, 303, 283, 279, 285, 284, 281 [NT: 1, 59, 94, 233a, 233, 234b, 238b]; Orr, *Revelation and Inspiration*, 143, 144 [NT: 4]; R. Payne-Smith, *Prophecy, a Preparation for Christ*, 82, 21 note [NT: 19, 197]; Schaff, 85, 86 [NT: 24, 105]; Kirkpatrick, 17, 4 [NT: 135, 233a]; *Our Lord's Divinity*, 45 [NT: 200]; Elliott, vol. 3, 226 [NT: 237a]; *Education*, 191 [NT: 265].

²⁶⁸ Prescott, *The Doctrine of Christ*, 7–10.

²⁶⁹ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1204.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 551.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 552. See also Prescott to Fletcher, 28 June 1929.

²⁷² W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 6 April 1915, EGWCF, EGWE. See also McArthur, A. G. *Daniells*, 392; Prescott to Fletcher, 28 June 1929.

White to suggest that neither she nor the early workers of the church claimed verbal inspiration for her writings.²⁷³

The Context of the Statements

From the late 1900s to the late 1920s Prescott responded primarily to less dynamic views of Ellen White's inspiration and the production of her more popular books. Initially he defended her inspiration by using his editorial authority to avert criticism against her. As he became increasingly the target of attacks from those advocating the verbal inspiration and the final interpretative authority of White's writings, Prescott became more reserved in his defense and advocacy of her inspiration. Personal disappointments and burdens increased his feelings of anxiety and despair, especially in the early 1910s.

As the dispute with Kellogg and Jones was winding down,²⁷⁴ he ran into serious problems with those holding strict views of White's inspiration. After G. A. Irwin's pamphlet *The Spirit of Prophecy*²⁷⁵ had been published during Prescott's absence in 1907, he apparently had the pamphlet withdrawn from circulation because he objected to some of its teachings, such as placing her writings on par with Scripture and probably

²⁷³ Prescott to Fletcher, 10 November 1929.

²⁷⁴ Twenty years later, Prescott reminisced that as he went many times through the tough experience of seeing his most intimate friends leave the church and abandon its doctrines, he wanted to "be sure of the reasons" for holding fast to his faith and hence he examined "the reasons given by modern scholarship for rejecting the inspiration of Scripture." His faith was strengthened as he found these reasons wanting. See Prescott to Paulin, 21 December 1937.

²⁷⁵ G. A. Irwin, *The Spirit of Prophecy: Its Relation to the Law of God and Its Place in the Plan of Salvation* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1907). Irwin had been president of the General Conference from 1897 to 1901. Some older church workers endorsed the pamphlet because it sought to foster faith in White's prophetic gift. See, e.g., "Spirit of Prophecy," *Review and Herald*, 8 August 1907, 2.

employing them as biblical interpreter, making them a test for believers, and some speculative interpretations.²⁷⁶

At the end of the year, Prescott informed W. C. White that he had omitted an explanatory remark on Cambyses in an article that his mother had written because he wanted to “protect [her] writings from unfriendly criticism and attack,” probably alluding to Jones, Kellogg, and others.²⁷⁷ Prescott was aware that some details in her writings were not necessarily wrong but difficult to verify, and he had no difficulties in omitting such details to avert criticism.

Objecting to the practice of some people in employing oral statements from Ellen White as a “club” to endorse a particular point, Prescott stated that such practices would “discredit the Spirit of prophecy” even more “than anything that the Battle Creek people can say.”²⁷⁸ Shortly afterward, in March 1908, he expressed deep concern about Jones’ agitation of the false crediting of an article to Ellen White because it could, as Prescott noted, “cast a suspicion upon Sister White’s writings.”²⁷⁹ Six months later C. C. Crisler, a literary assistant of Ellen White, forwarded an article about education to him, yet upon close examination he found the same matter in an article by Frederick Griggs who, it was

²⁷⁶ Holmes to Hayes, 24 September 1921; Irwin, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, 5–51. Thus Irwin argued that it must have been Gabriel who explained the state of the dead to Enoch. He further claimed that the spirit of prophecy had the purpose among others “to bring prosperity.” See Irwin, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, 9.

²⁷⁷ W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 1 December 1907, EGWCF, EGWE. C. C. Crisler replied to the letter and stated that Prescott’s “points . . . [were] all well taken.” “Things that [were] a matter of more or less controversy,” they tried “to touch as lightly as possible.” See C. C. Crisler to W. W. Prescott, 27 December 1907, EGWCF, EGWE.

²⁷⁸ W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 10 March 1908, EGWCF, EGWE. For the background of that statement, see Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 261, 262.

²⁷⁹ W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 22 March 1908, EGWCF, EGWE. See also p. 253 fn. 144.

later discovered, had used material from an Ellen White letter. Prescott decided to drop White's article to avoid attracting more criticism against her writings.²⁸⁰ At this time he was also heavily criticized by Claude E. Holmes for his routine editorial work when editing White's articles.²⁸¹

Meanwhile Prescott reinterpreted the *tāmîd* (daily/perpetual/continual) in Daniel 8 based on its Old Testament usage and the sanctuary typology. S. N. Haskell felt that Prescott's view collided with White's remarks in *Early Writings*, accusing him of undermining the authority of her writings. White urged both of them to refrain from using her writings to settle the issue,²⁸² and she reproved Prescott for his tendency to focus on insignificant minutiae, which led others to doubt and question established teachings.²⁸³ Prescott, on the other hand, urged Haskell to leave the matter as the agitation of his view would not only contradict "facts of authentic history" but also "destroy confidence in the

²⁸⁰ W. W. Prescott to C. C. Crisler, 4 October 1908, EGWCF, EGWE.

²⁸¹ Holmes to Hayes, 24 September 1921. At that time, Holmes was the editor of the *Bulletin*, a bimonthly periodical issued by the Young Men's Literary Society.

²⁸² Prescott preferred to read White's statement on "the daily" in *Early Writings* in context as it clarified in his view that she had not confirmed the particular Millerite interpretation of the term but their understanding of the time aspect. See W. W. Prescott to S. N. Haskell, 1 December 1907, William Warren Prescott Papers, box 1, fld 1, CAR. The history of the interpretation of the "Daily" in Adventism, including the controversy over "the correct" view of it, is discussed in Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 127; Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 214–38; Denis Kaiser, "The History of the Adventist Interpretation of the 'Daily' in the Book of Daniel from 1831 to 2008" (M.A. thesis, Andrews University, 2009); Denis Kaiser, "Ellen White and the 'Daily' Conflict," *Ellen White and Current Issues Symposium* 6 (2010): 6–34, 6–34; Gilbert M. Valentine, *The Prophet and the Presidents* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2011), 281–87; Denis Kaiser, "The Word, the Spirit of Prophecy, and Mutual Love: Lessons from the 'Daily' Controversy for Conflict Resolution," *Ministry*, December 2014, 16–19; Land, *Uriah Smith*, 245; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 290–92. Another study answers the question why early Sabbatarian Adventists refrained from accepting O. R. L. Crosier's view of the "Daily" that had some similarities to Prescott's so-called "new" view. See Denis Kaiser, "Guilt by Association: Why Sabbatarian Adventists Rejected O. R. L. Crosier's Interpretation of the Tāmîd in Dan 8," *Journal of Asia Adventist Studies* 16, no. 1 (2013): 33–49.

²⁸³ Ellen G. White to W. W. Prescott, 22 May 1908, Lt 166, 1908, EGWE.

spirit of prophecy.”²⁸⁴ He was deeply hurt and discouraged by the treatment that he received from Haskell and others.²⁸⁵

Valentine notes that Prescott was “pained . . . badly and [it] strained his relationship with Ellen White” when she urged him to leave his editorial position at the *Review and Herald* and engage in city evangelism in 1909.²⁸⁶ His sense of obligation led him to follow her advice, but he soon ceased his evangelistic efforts because the hurt caused by the fallout over the *tāmîd* and the burdens resulting from the severe sickness of his wife had taken their toll and increased the clouds of despair.²⁸⁷

One year later, W. C. White asked Prescott, then editor of the *Protestant* magazine, to suggest refinements²⁸⁸ for the new edition of Ellen White’s *Great Controversy*. He accepted the assignment reluctantly²⁸⁹ because he knew that some of his

²⁸⁴ W. W. Prescott to S. N. Haskell, 2 August 1908, PIC box 3090, GCA.

²⁸⁵ Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 241; Valentine, *The Prophet and the Presidents*, 285; McArthur, A. G. Daniells, 293–99.

²⁸⁶ Valentine, "Prescott, William Warren (1855-1944)," 495. Valentine suggests that “removing Prescott had become a necessary compromise” to keep Daniells in office as president of the General Conference, yet “Prescott was deeply hurt.” See Valentine, *The Prophet and the Presidents*, 287.

²⁸⁷ Gilbert M. Valentine, "W. W. Prescott: Editor Extraordinaire," *Adventist Review*, 5 December 1985, 11; Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 241–246, 262; Valentine, *The Prophet and the Presidents*, 288; Emmett K. Vande Vere, "William Warren Prescott: Administrator," in *Early Adventist Educators*, ed. George R. Knight (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), 131, 132; Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 335.

²⁸⁸ Arthur L. White suggests that the word “refinement” would better describe the work done in 1911 as the word “revision” gives the false impression that major textual changes had been made. See Arthur L. White, "W. W. Prescott and the 1911 Edition of the Great Controversy," White Estate shelf document no. 20, Washington, DC, 1981, 2; C. C. Crisler to H. C. Lacey, 20 September 1910, EGWCF, EGWE.

²⁸⁹ Arthur L. White and Alberto Timm assert that Prescott was reluctant to accept the request because of his belief in verbal inspiration. See Arthur L. White, "W. W. Prescott and the 1911 Edition of the Great Controversy," 3; Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915," 11; Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," 495. However, they seem to overlook that Prescott consistently rejected the verbal inspiration of Ellen White’s writings. Also, by that time, he no longer adhered to the verbal inspiration of Scripture. See pp.

prophetic interpretations differed from statements in the *Great Controversy*,²⁹⁰ and caring for his wife already put a significant strain on his capacity to labor.²⁹¹ After two or three weeks he submitted a list of 105 suggestions,²⁹² about half of which were accepted. Most of them dealt with “precision of expression or called for supporting references of Appendix Note explanations.”²⁹³ Prescott was shocked to find many statements that he

275-279, 281-284. In a later version of his document Arthur White nevertheless concedes that “we do not know precisely what his views were at that time [1910].”

²⁹⁰ He dreaded having to deal with such statements. Prescott stated that he believed that Babylon included all types of apostasy and was “headed up in the papacy.” The 1888 edition of the *Great Controversy* suggested “that Babylon could not mean the romish [*sic*] church.” See *Report of Bible Conference*, 1250, 1251; Prescott to Fletcher, 28 June 1929.

²⁹¹ Arthur L. White observes that Prescott’s mood and work began to deteriorate after 1909, yet he fails to take into account how the condition of his wife affected him. The disease appeared for the first time in early 1908 and a first surgery in March 1908 had brought significant relief. In the fall of 1909 Sarah F. Prescott suffered from another wave of a malignant disease which made a second surgery necessary in March 1910 which did not bring any relief. His wife’s health was seriously impaired and he had to care for her from March to June. A third surgery in May brought only temporary relief and on June 10 she passed away. Putting a strain on his time, energy, and mood, the condition of his wife and his care for her may have caused him to be reluctant to accept any further responsibilities. See A. G. Daniells, “Obituary: Sarah F. Prescott,” *Review and Herald*, 23 June 1910, 23; W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 25 August 1910, EGWCF, EGWE.

²⁹² Arthur L. White, “W. W. Prescott and the 1911 Edition of the Great Controversy,” 3; Patrick, “Author,” 94; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 301; Patrick, “Learning from Ellen White’s Perception and Use of Scripture,” 129. See W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 26 April 1910, EGWCF, EGWE. Thompson mistakenly places Prescott’s assistance with the historical statements in the *Great Controversy* in the 1880s. See Thompson, *Inspiration*, 268. Nevertheless, Prescott was not the only person asked to make suggestions; W. A. Spicer, W. A. Colcord, and others had been asked as well. See Valentine, *The Prophet and the Presidents*, 288.

²⁹³ Arthur L. White, “W. W. Prescott and the 1911 Edition of the Great Controversy,” 1. In his report Prescott suggested the need for proper source references for quotations and verbal conversations, more precision of language in some instances, replacing inaccurately translated quotations from originally foreign-language works with correct translations, and a few changes in prophetic interpretation. See Prescott to W. C. White, 26 April 1910. His remaining suggestions were more significant. Some of them even challenged positions set forth in the book, such as prophetic dates. After a careful review, they were not accepted but buttressed with proper documentation. See Arthur L. White, “The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915,” 15. In late 1914, Prescott contacted W. C. White again concerning one of his earlier suggestions for changes in the *Great Controversy*. He stated that the French phrase *Écrasez l’infâme* meant “crush the infamous thing” rather than “crush the wretch,” alluding to the tyranny of ecclesiasticism in France and not Christ. While he had pointed this matter out earlier, he now had found a specific primary source in support of his suggestion. See W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 30 November 1914, EGWCF, EGWE. Cf. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1911), 273. In contrast, historian Peter Gay notes that this battle cry was not just directed against the ecclesiastical system but “against Christianity

considered “loose and inaccurate,” feeling it would be quite an undertaking to define such remarks more precisely to harmonize them with “historical facts” and recent prophetic interpretation.²⁹⁴ The biggest shock to him was probably not the change of language, source references, etc.,²⁹⁵ but what he viewed as the reversal of a theological idea in the

itself, against Christian dogma in all its forms, Christian institutions, Christian ethics, and the Christian view of man.” See Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment, An Interpretation: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (1966; reprint, New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995), 59. W. C. White ignored Prescott’s suggestion. This is evident from the fact that the old reading continues to appear in the book. See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 273. I am indebted to Denis Fortin who pointed out the following: “The adjective *infâme* can be either feminine or masculine, depending on the noun it qualifies. Most of the times when it is repeated it refers to the Church but there is evidence that Voltaire referred to Christ, although that is no longer how it is used or understood. . . . [T]he French translation of the *Great Controversy* adds an appendix for this expression and gives a long list of how this expression was used by Voltaire about the time of the French Revolution. It is obvious that the translator, although faithful to Ellen White’s wording in the text of *Great Controversy*, sensed that an explanation was needed regarding how she used this expression and found support for claiming that it refers to Christ.” See Denis Fortin, e-mail message to Denis Kaiser, 15 September 2016; Ellen G. White, *La Tragédie des Siècles* (Dammarié-les-Lys, France: Vie et santé, 1992), 294, 754, 755.

²⁹⁴ Prescott to W. C. White, 26 April 1910. He stated that such a recent insight was the new “interpretation of the prophecy concerning the 1260 days” that he had adopted.

²⁹⁵ Interestingly, in July 1908, Prescott mentioned that Bro. Colcord had suggested to W. C. White a revision of the *Great Controversy* that would include the addition of bibliographic references for quotations, a suggestion that was regarded “favorably.” See W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, 27 July 1908, PIC box 3090, GCA. Later, he stated that Ellen White “freely consented to it” “when her attention was called to [it].” See Prescott to Fletcher, 10 November 1929. It is possible that this suggestion was considered when the revision work began two years later. On a different note, Knight regards Prescott’s experience with the revision of the *Great Controversy* as a major turning point in his view on inspiration, causing him to move away from “a rigid view” to a broader one. See Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 136. Alden Thompson states that “the request to ‘improve’ The Great Controversy resulted in a personal crisis for [Prescott],” but he does not specify the precise factors triggering that crisis. See Thompson, *Escape from the Flames*, 64. As he had never assumed the verbal inspiration of White’s writings, correction of language, specification of terminology, and replacing of source references did not seem to be an issue for him. In fact, changes of the language, omission of redundant phrases, etc. were part of his editorial routine when preparing Ellen White articles for publication in the *Review and Herald*. See pp. 264, 265, 268-270, 282, 283. All the examples that he mentioned at the 1919 Bible Conference could be viewed as changes of thoughts. Depending on someone’s tendency either to focus on minute details or to see the big picture, these examples may nevertheless appear quite different.

new edition.²⁹⁶ Nevertheless, Ellen White's assistants did not seem to interpret the respective changes as stringently as Prescott did.²⁹⁷

After the death of his wife, six weeks later, he "felt quite desperate" and thought of withdrawing entirely from public work to avoid anything that could strain his feelings.²⁹⁸ In August he received two letters from Ellen White, written two years earlier.²⁹⁹ The letters contained specific cautions against agitating the *tāmîd* in the *Review* and "making a mountain out of a molehill." He realized that, as Valentine notes, he had "underestimated the seriousness of Ellen White's concerns on the 'daily.'" Prescott was further perplexed and disturbed that the content was known to Haskell and others but not to him, yet he felt that his life and work might have taken a different direction had he known of its content.³⁰⁰

By 1911 Prescott's interest in the subject of verbal inspiration seemingly increased because he began to purchase numerous books on the subject and continued to

²⁹⁶ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1250, 1251; Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 282. Prescott pointed out that the statement about the identity of Babylon, mentioned in footnotes 252 and 290, was changed to "[Babylon] cannot refer to the Roman Church *alone*." See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1911], 383.

²⁹⁷ See Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915," 16, 17.

²⁹⁸ Daniells, "Obituary: Sarah F. Prescott," 23; Prescott to W. C. White, 25 August 1910. See also Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 262.

²⁹⁹ Ellen G. White to W. W. Prescott, 24 June 1908, Lt 224, 1908, EGWE; Ellen G. White to W. W. Prescott, 1 July 1908, Lt 226, 1908, EGWE. Valentine notes that "Ellen [White] had been undecided about the letters and had amended them several times but never sent them. W. C. White had eventually mailed them at his own initiative and on his own authority in August 1910." See Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 225. See also W. C. White to W. W. Prescott, 12 August 1910, EGWCF, EGWE.

³⁰⁰ Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 225, 226; Valentine, *The Prophet and the Presidents*, 270. Prescott stated, "Of course, it is a little difficult for me to understand why they were not sent to me at the time, if they were designed to be of any practical benefit. Now the circumstances have so completely changed that it does not seem that they can make any difference in my present course of action, as I have not been editor of the *Review* for more than a year, and am not doing any public work in this country." See Prescott to W. C. White, 25 August 1910.

do so for the next twenty-five years. He was apparently more interested in understanding the line of argumentation employed by conservative Protestant scholars of previous decades than staying informed about the most recent trends.³⁰¹

In the summer of 1912 Prescott began to dialogue with Arthur L. Manous, an evangelist in the South Carolina Conference, about an article that Manous had written on the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1840.³⁰² Prescott suggested that Ellen White's statement about that event was "based upon the usual interpretation of the prophecy, and [was] not intended to be an authoritative statement as against any facts of history."³⁰³

Addressing a change concerning that point in the *Great Controversy* in 1911, he wrote,

This, of course, raises the question whether statements of historical facts found in *Great Controversy* are infallibly correct, or whether such statements are based upon evidence and subject to correction if additional light appears concerning them. I hold the latter view, and I think the changes made in the revised edition amply justify this view.³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ Most books contain his name as well as the place and date of purchase. Some of the books that do not contain these purchase particulars may have been bought earlier, yet it is impossible to determine the time of the purchase because he frequently acquired books from used bookstores. The verifiably earliest purchased book on the inspiration of the Bible was Habershon, *The Bible and the British Museum*, purchased in London in January 1911. The verifiably latest purchased book on that subject was A. A. Hodge, *Popular Lectures on Theological Themes* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1887), acquired in Washington, D.C., in June 1936. While some of these books had been published just before he bought them, many were actually from the 1880s and 1890s. That he consulted and appropriated many of them is suggested by his methodical underlining. Prescott bequeathed them to the library of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Takoma Park, MD, most likely in the early 1940s. All these books are now in the holdings of the Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

³⁰² A. L. Manous, "Fulfillment of the Prophecy in the Downfall of the Turkish Empire," *Watchman*, August 1912, 489–94; W. W. Prescott to A. L. Manous, 25 July 1912, EGWCF, EGWE.

³⁰³ W. W. Prescott to A. L. Manous, 5 August 1912, EGWCF, EGWE.

³⁰⁴ W. W. Prescott to A. L. Manous, 15 September 1912, EGWCF, EGWE. See also Prescott to Fletcher, 28 June 1929. It seems that Prescott's reactions towards W. C. White were also slightly strained or reserved. See, e.g., his reply to the booklet on recreation: W. W. Prescott to W. C. White, 23 August 1912, EGWCF, EGWE; and his communications on the letterhead that White used because they threw a questionable light on his mother's work: Prescott to W. C. White, 23 August 1912; W. C. White to W. W.

Manous forwarded Prescott's remarks to Haskell who saw it as another evidence for the apostasy of some of the church's leaders.³⁰⁵

In April 1915, Prescott expressed his frustration and disillusionment in a letter to W. C. White.³⁰⁶ The decreasing health and death of several older church workers caused him to realize how little the church had accomplished.³⁰⁷ He still tried to digest the disheartening personal "shocks" of the past six to eight years and the realization that his life-work was ending on a rather negative note. He was further frustrated that no one seemed to care about correcting "serious errors" in denominational literature and the manner in which some of Ellen White's books had been produced and used. He stated,

The way your mother's writings have been handled and the false impression concerning them which is still fostered among the people have brought great perplexity and trial to me. It seems to me that what amounts to deception, though probably not intentional, has been practiced in making some of her books, and that no serious effort has been made to disabuse the minds of people of what was known to be their wrong view concerning her writings.³⁰⁸

Prescott, 9 September 1912, William Warren Prescott Collection, fld 10, CAR; W. C. White to W. W. Prescott, 26 September 1912, William Warren Prescott Collection, fld 10, CAR.

³⁰⁵ S. N. Haskell to J. N. Loughborough, 19 October 1912, EGWCF, EGWE.

³⁰⁶ The letter came in response to a letter from W. C. White three weeks earlier, in which the latter tried to comfort Prescott with the thought that his mother really loved and cared for him, yet he also mentioned to him that she was unable to really grasp the nature of the perplexities and things that burdened and saddened Prescott's heart. See W. C. White to W. W. Prescott, 12 March 1915, William Warren Prescott Collection, fld 11, CAR. Nevertheless, besides mentioning his frustration, Prescott also expressed his gratitude for the encouragement.

³⁰⁷ Prescott mentioned particularly the recent passing of his father and O. A. Olsen, as well as the decreasing health of Ellen White.

³⁰⁸ He added: "But it is of no use to go into these matters. I have talked with you for years about them, but it brings no change. I think, however, that we are drifting toward a crisis which will come sooner or later and perhaps sooner. A very strong feeling of reaction has already set in." See Prescott to W. C. White, 6 April 1915. See also Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 264; Patrick, "Author," 101, 102. The letter was written in confidence as is evident from his final handwritten remark: "I have written this myself, as I did not wish to dictate it to anyone." McGraw and Valentine suggest that Prescott attributed to W. C. White and his associates the "fostering [of] an over-idealized and less than honest view of the way his mother's books and articles had been prepared for publication." See Paul McGraw and Gilbert M. Valentine,

Rather than disagreeing with W. C. White on his mother's inspiration and authority,³⁰⁹ both Prescott and White agreed "that Mrs. White's authority should not be used to settle historical or doctrinal matters," as Valentine correctly attests. Their point of "disagreement [was] over the need to be more frank with the church membership about the methods Mrs. White adopted in her work and how to accomplish this openness."³¹⁰

In 1919, Prescott participated in the Bible Conference at Washington, D.C., to discuss theological and educational issues.³¹¹ He affirmed that White's writings were

"Legacy," in *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, eds. Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 313, 314.

³⁰⁹ Olson argues that Prescott was at one end of the continuum concerning views on White's inspiration and authority whereas Haskell was at the other end, and that W. C. White held a middle position between the two extremes. See Olson, *101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White*, 82–86. Outlining the interaction between Ellen White and Prescott, Arthur White seems to suggest that Prescott's letter was seen as an attack against W. C. White at a low point in Prescott's experience. As Prescott supposedly entertained the theory of verbal inspiration, he was shocked by his discoveries and therefore charged W. C. White with a cover-up. See Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915;" Jerry Moon, "White, William Clarence (1854-1937)," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 568. However, it has been shown above that Prescott had moved away from a belief in the verbal inspiration of Scripture already by the mid- or late-1900s. Thus both Olson and Arthur White based their estimation of the April 6, 1915 letter on a false assumption.

³¹⁰ Gilbert M. Valentine, "The Church 'Drifting Toward a Crisis': Prescott's 1915 Letter to William White," *Catalyst* 2 (2007): 31–94. Interestingly, in his letter to W. C. White, Prescott stated, "Responsibility rests upon us," including apparently him and W. C. White in the group of those who needed to inform the general church membership about the condition of some denominational books and the process of the production of some Ellen White books. See also McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 392. Valentine's observations are confirmed by W. C. White's response to Prescott's letter. W. C. White told Prescott that he had tried to explain several aspects concerning his mother's work to the church leaders at the fall council of the General Conference in 1913, yet his experiences at the council confirmed his impression that he needed to be more cautious, avoiding any "statements that were liable to be misrepresented and misunderstood," especially by "those harsh and misguided men who are plowing up and down on your [Prescott's] back." See W. C. White to W. W. Prescott, 7 May 1915, EGWCF, EGWE. See also Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 263.

³¹¹ Two sessions, "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in Our Teaching of Bible and History" and "Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy as Related to the Inspiration of the Bible," presented opportunities to discuss and possibly settle some of the sensitive issues in the church. It was during these discussions that Prescott made some important remarks about inspiration. For more information on the Bible Conference, see Campbell, "The 1919 Bible Conference and Its Significance for Seventh-day Adventist History and Theology."

beneficial, even in getting a better understanding of Scripture,³¹² yet he objected to the use of her writings as a final arbiter in biblical interpretation,³¹³ the placement of them above Scripture,³¹⁴ and their employment as an authority on historical details.³¹⁵ He felt that those handling her writings were too hesitant to issue a statement against the erroneous idea that everything she ever said and wrote was divinely inspired.³¹⁶ Prescott thought that most church members were not aware that there was “a difference between the works she largely prepared herself and what was prepared by others for sale to the public,” suggesting that the *Great Controversy* fell into the latter category.³¹⁷ He nevertheless emphasized that his personal experience with White’s counsel and guidance over the years, particularly in times of crisis, has strengthened his “faith in the Spirit of Prophecy.”³¹⁸ At the conference he also presented several studies on Christology that

³¹² *Report of Bible Conference*, 1198.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 1204.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1215, 1216. See also Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 139; Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 30; Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 629. McArthur phrased the core of Prescott’s remark quite well: “Prescott . . . brought up the sensitive matter that although most Adventists give little thought to whether Scripture was verbally inspired, to deny such inspiration to White’s writings invited suspicion. The interpretative bar, paradoxically, was set higher for her work.” See McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 395.

³¹⁵ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1202. See also Patrick, “Author,” 106. He asserted that “the author and editors of [the] *Great Controversy* have recognized the propriety of correcting statements when the facts required it.” He referred to several cases in which changes were made at his suggestion, yet he emphasized that these corrections were not his work but theirs and that he was unwilling “to draw a line between what was authoritative and what was not.” See *Report of Bible Conference*, 551-555, 1247, 1252. He also stated, “I talked to Eld. W. C. White about this matter, as I had something to do with this book, and he has told me that there was no claim that this book was to be an inspired authority on facts of history.” See *ibid.*, 561. While one case mentioned by him concerns an inaccurate reference, other cases are changes from a specific statement to a more general remark. One or two of the cases referred to by him may be seen as correction of historical mistakes. Prescott also suggested that “changes have been made in what was not historical extract [i.e., quotation] at all.” See *ibid.*, 1248.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1213, 1214.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1253, 1254.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 560.

were published in the book *The Doctrine of Christ* one year later. Two of these studies dealt with revelation and inspiration, but they were mostly stringing together quotations from Protestant writers and Ellen White. All statements affirmed the divine origin, reliability, and authority of Scripture, yet no overall theory of inspiration was advocated.³¹⁹

Prescott was aware of many church members who accused him and other leaders of “not believ[ing] the Testimonies.”³²⁰ J. S. Washburn and Claude E. Holmes had criticized him and Daniells previously,³²¹ yet after the Bible Conference and in the 1920s they became the major target of their attacks because of Prescott’s and Daniells’ orientation on prophetic interpretation, the nature of White’s inspiration, and the use of her writings.³²² Holmes accused Prescott of apostasy because the latter thought the wording could be changed and phrases could be omitted in preparing White’s writings for publication. He also criticized him for his stance on the need to revise some historical

³¹⁹ Prescott, *The Doctrine of Christ*, 7–10. Campbell suggests that this was the first Adventist source that mentioned *The Fundamentals*. See Campbell, “The 1919 Bible Conference and Its Significance for Seventh-day Adventist History and Theology,” 41. He nevertheless overlooks Haskell’s quotations on the subject of verbal inspiration from *The Fundamentals*, and references to, quotations from, and advertisements of, the volumes. See pp. 310, 311, 317, and esp. p. 310 fn. 406.

³²⁰ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1211, 1224, 551. See also McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 397.

³²¹ J. S. Washburn to W. W. Prescott, 24 May 1915, Claude E. Holmes Collection, box 1, fld 7, CAR. See also Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 262. On the suspicion of others against Prescott see McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 393.

³²² Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 139; Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 265, 283; Campbell, “The 1919 Bible Conference and Its Significance for Seventh-day Adventist History and Theology,” 89, 90. See also Claude E. Holmes to A. G. Daniells, 1 May 1922, CAR; G. B. Starr to A. G. Daniells, 20 August 1919, WCWCF, EGWE. On Holmes’ life and disputes with church leaders see Michael W. Campbell, “How Goes the Battle?: Claude E. Holmes, Inerrancy, and the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Theology” (Research paper, Andrews University, 2003). For more information on Prescott’s ideas concerning some of the prophetic dates, see Campbell, “The 1919 Bible Conference and Its Significance for Seventh-day Adventist History and Theology,” 129, 131, 132, 135-137.

statements in the *Great Controversy*, and for his objection to the practice of using her writings as an infallible and final interpreter of Scripture.³²³ As a result of such efforts, Prescott and others were sidelined by those who advocated the verbal inspiration of both Scripture and White's writings.³²⁴ Prescott further disliked the textbooks on the Bible published by Emmanuel Missionary College in 1926 and the teachings of B. G. Wilkinson and B. L. House on Bible versions, verbal inspiration, etc.³²⁵

Summary

The subject of inspiration was studied by Prescott from about 1890 to the mid-1930s, but he made most statements on the subject in private and unpublished sources. From the 1890s to the early 1900s he entertained a belief in the verbal inspiration of Scripture, yet he never seemed to apply that theory to Ellen White's writings. Students and church workers may have adopted the theory of Scripture's verbal inspiration through his efforts during that phase, but he played a less significant role in the origin of the theory among Adventists than previously assumed. By the late 1900s Prescott adopted a more flexible and thought-focused idea of inspiration while still maintaining Scripture's absolute reliability. He nevertheless avoided formulating a particular theory of inspiration in print.

³²³ Holmes to Hayes, 24 September 1921.

³²⁴ Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 130; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 402–404, 407; Thompson, *Inspiration*, 269. Prescott was also attacked for his advocacy of the doctrine of the Trinity and his interpretation of particular biblical prophecies. See Kaiser, "The History of the Adventist Interpretation of the 'Daily' in the Book of Daniel from 1831 to 2008," 98, 99; Pöhler, *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching*, 156, 157. See also W. W. Prescott to F. M. Wilcox, 17 November 1926, WCWCF, EGWE.

³²⁵ W. W. Prescott to W. A. Spicer, 4 January 1927, PGF box 3118, GCA; W. W. Prescott to W. A. Spicer, 27 May 1927, PGF box 3118, GCA; W. A. Spicer to W. W. Prescott, 5 July 1927, PGF box 3118, GCA; W. W. Prescott to W. A. Spicer, 13 September 1929, PGF box 3122, GCA.

In the mid-1900s he sought to protect Ellen White and her writings from the critical attacks of Jones and Kellogg, yet from the late 1900s to the 1920s he found himself attacked by those (Haskell, Washburn, Holmes, etc.) who insisted that Ellen White was verbally inspired and her writings were a final interpreter of Scripture and an authority on historical questions, all positions that Prescott had come to reject. W. C. White seemed to agree with Prescott's position, yet Prescott was frustrated that Ellen White and her literary staff refused to oppose these strict views of her inspiration. It has been shown that Prescott's difficulties with some changes in the *Great Controversy* did not result from his supposed belief in White's verbal inspiration rather than his conviction that her ideas were not to be changed, something that, in his view, had been done in a few cases. Disheartening experiences and disappointments gave rise to disillusionment and frustration, leading apparently to more reserved relations with Ellen White and W. C. White in the following years.

Reliance and Resilience: The Indispensability of Words for S. N. Haskell

Stephen N. Haskell (1833-1922) was a public and private evangelist at heart. He founded a number of institutions and headed several conferences. He served as a missionary to foreign countries and spearheaded efforts in evangelizing the big cities in the United States.³²⁶ In the early 1880s Ellen White told him several times to “do less preaching and more teaching.”³²⁷ As a result, his evangelistic endeavors were more

³²⁶ Jerry Moon, "Haskell, Stephen Nelson (1833-1922)," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 403, 404.

³²⁷ Ella M. Robinson, *S. N. Haskell: Man of Action* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1967), 65, 66.

characterized by attempts to help others to become familiar with the truths of the Bible. From 1894 to 1899 he served as a missionary in Africa and Australia. After the passing of his first wife Mary in 1894, he was encouraged by numerous letters from Ellen White. He proposed marriage to her but she saw a better companion for him in Hetty Hurd, whom he then married in 1897. Haskell popularized the question-and-answer style of the Bible reading method among Seventh-day Adventists, teaching it particularly through the *Bible Training School* (1902-1919), a periodical jointly edited by him and his wife Hetty. His books *Daniel the Prophet* (1901), *Seer of Patmos* (1905), *The Cross and Its Shadow* (1914), and the *Bible Handbook* (1919) were important evangelistic tools.³²⁸ Besides his strong emphasis on Scripture, Haskell was also a “staunch supporter of Ellen White.”³²⁹ He had a tremendous influence on current and prospective members by teaching them how to approach the Bible. This section will show that Haskell consistently taught the verbal inspiration of both Scripture and White’s writings, and the authoritative role of her writings as a final interpreter of the Bible.

Concept of Inspiration

George Knight notes that Haskell believed in the verbal-plenary inspiration of both the biblical writers and Ellen White.³³⁰ A belief in the plenary inspiration of Scripture does not necessarily entail the idea of the verbal inspiration of its writers, yet

³²⁸ Moon, "Haskell, Stephen Nelson (1833-1922)," 404; T. Joe Willey, "Death and Burial," in *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, eds. Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 297.

³²⁹ Moon, "Haskell, Stephen Nelson (1833-1922)," 403.

³³⁰ Knight, "Adventist Theology 1844 to 1994," 12; Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 107, 108.

Haskell seemed to equate both concepts. He saw numerous places in the Bible that attest its “plenary inspiration.”³³¹ In his view, “plenary inspiration” means that “the words” of the biblical writers “were the words of God.”³³² Asked whether “the scriptures [were] verbally inspired,” he answered, “Most surely they are. . . . If this principle is not true, of what use are the scriptures?”³³³ Later, he wrote, “If it [Scripture] is not verbally inspired and I am not to receive it as such, who is authorized to tell me what is inspired, and what is not? . . . If the words of the Bible are not to be taken as expressed, we would have no definite rule by which to go.”³³⁴

As Scripture was full of “evidences of the infinite mind” and God’s “infinite thoughts” that are unlimited in their application, Haskell concluded that the biblical writers simply spoke “the words of the divine mind.”³³⁵ As God’s mind was infinite, there was no prophecy that was merely of “any private or locally confined” significance.³³⁶ Hence, all Scripture had “been written by immediate inspiration of God,” resulting in “the absolute infallibility of the words the prophets used.”³³⁷ The verbal

³³¹ S. N. Haskell, "Bible Readers' Class," *Bible Training School*, August 1916, 46.

³³² S. N. Haskell, "Resurrection Taught by Writings of Moses," *Bible Training School*, July 1911, 13.

³³³ S. N. Haskell, "Question Box," *Bible Training School*, April 1915, 220. For another explicit affirmation of the verbal inspiration of Scripture see S. N. Haskell, "How Jesus Regarded the Words of the Prophets," *Bible Training School*, September 1911, 86.

³³⁴ S. N. Haskell, "Bible Readers' Class," *Bible Training School*, April 1917, 206, 207.

³³⁵ S. N. Haskell, "Prophecy in Bible History," *Bible Training School*, February 1910, 155. Similarly, he stated that “the words themselves express the thought of God.” See Haskell, "Resurrection Taught by Writings of Moses," 13.

³³⁶ Haskell to W. C. White, 21 November 1912.

³³⁷ Haskell, "How Jesus Regarded the Words of the Prophets," 85.

inspiration of Scripture did not extend to “every form of expression used by the translators, but [to] the original writing in the original language in which it was written.”³³⁸ As inspiration was breathing, God breathed through the prophet and controlled his tongue when he spoke (Daniel 10:17; 2 Samuel 23:2).³³⁹ Hence his use of the phrase “the pen of inspiration” in describing the divine-human production of the biblical books supposed not merely a figurative but possibly a more literal sense.³⁴⁰

As a result of that direct inspiration “the words of a prophet [have] the same authority as those spoken by Christ,” and hence “the testimony of all the prophets of God [are] of equal authority.”³⁴¹ Haskell believed that Ellen White’s writings have “the same authority as the Scriptures” as the Holy Spirit was the author of both sets of writings.³⁴² He was aware of the fact that she herself did not claim equality of authority, yet he thought that this was to avoid being placed in the same position as the Mormons put Joseph Smith. Seventh-day Adventists themselves should nevertheless accept her writings as “the words of God.” To others, however, Adventists were to prove everything from Scripture.³⁴³ Haskell distinguished, however, between the position held by leading

³³⁸ Haskell, "Bible Readers' Class," April 1917, 206. This resembles somewhat the idea given in [M. C. Wilcox], "Question Corner: Versions and Verbal Inspiration," *Signs of the Times*, 17 November 1909, 2.

³³⁹ Haskell to W. C. White, 21 November 1912.

³⁴⁰ S. N. Haskell, "Turkey," *Bible Training School*, January 1913, 14; S. N. Haskell, "The Sick Man of the East," *Bible Training School*, June 1913, 24.

³⁴¹ Haskell, "Question Box," 220.

³⁴² S. N. Haskell to Clinton Coon, 30 September 1920, WCWCF, EGWE.

³⁴³ Haskell to W. C. White, 21 November 1912. In his view, White’s writings or those of any prophet were not “to take the place of the Bible previously given, or even to give a new Bible. That is not their office.” Rather, it was their purpose “to develop the truths contained in the Bible or to place the truths in a new setting.” See S. N. Haskell to W. C. White, 8 January 1913, EGWCF, EGWE.

prophets and that of ordinary prophets. While both shared truths received directly from God, leading prophets had been given “a greater responsibility.”³⁴⁴ Explaining that hierarchy between prophets, he stated, “God never has had but one *leading* prophet at a time; the other prophets are subject to that one prophet. The other prophets can be, and are instructed by, that leading prophet. No others are allowed to correct the leading prophet, or any other prophet, for God uses them as His voice to His people.”³⁴⁵

Haskell’s understanding of the results of inspiration is illustrated by the reasons he gave for his belief “in the verbal inspiration of Sister White’s writings.” He wrote that her writings first helped develop a system of lost Bible truths. Second, her visions settled questions by pointing the early Adventist pioneers to the Bible. Third, like the ancient prophets she brought people back to the obedience to God’s law. Fourth, Haskell was not aware that any of her predictions had failed even though some took years to come to pass. Fifth, “her life was the most exemplary Christian” he ever saw. Sixth, events said to occur shortly before the close of probation were unfolding before her eyes. Seventh, those opposing her had either given up the faith or were on the path of doing so, whereas the Advent cause was going around the world just as she had predicted it in the late 1840s.³⁴⁶ Eighth, her writings “all bear the same ring” although she wrote them in different places. The last reason and “greatest proof” of the inspiration of her writings

³⁴⁴ S. N. Haskell to a conference president, 23 September 1919, WCWCF, EGWE. The identity of the recipient is unknown because the primary source does not give his name and does not contain sufficient details to identify the conference.

³⁴⁵ Haskell, "Question Box," 220.

³⁴⁶ Haskell to a conference president, 23 September 1919. He referred to passages such as Numbers 22; Matthew 19:7, 9; and Acts 17:30, 31.

was “the fact that there are no contradictions in her writings.”³⁴⁷ He considered “the statements of historical facts found in [the] *Great Controversy* . . . infallibly correct.”³⁴⁸ He believed that Ellen White only quoted from such works that express things as God had shown her.³⁴⁹ He nevertheless qualified his statements on White’s infallibility and the resulting issue of modifications of her writings as will be discussed in the next section. Stressing the language employed, he gave another “greatest evidence” of the inspiration of her writings when he wrote: “The simplicity of the writings of a prophet and the particular phraseology of the writings inspired by God is the greatest evidence of inspiration to my mind.”³⁵⁰

As “there is no prophecy of the scriptures that is of any private interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20),³⁵¹ Haskell seemed to view the Holy Spirit, as the one “who wrote the Word,” as “most competent to teach it.”³⁵² Hence the New Testament writers were inspired commentators of the writings of the Old Testament.³⁵³ He stated in other words that “a living prophet is an inspired commentary upon what God has previously spoken. He

³⁴⁷ S. N. Haskell to W. C. White, 4 November 1918, WCWCF, EGWE. See also Haskell to W. C. White, 21 November 1912.

³⁴⁸ S. N. Haskell to W. C. White, 23 October 1912, EGWCF, EGWE.

³⁴⁹ Haskell to W. C. White, 21 November 1912.

³⁵⁰ Haskell to W. C. White, 8 January 1913.

³⁵¹ Haskell, "Prophecy in Bible History," 155.

³⁵² As co-editor and publisher of the *Bible Training School* Haskell chose to reprint Clark’s reasoning in William Walton Clark, "Helpful Suggestions in Bible Study," *Bible Training School*, May 1919, 16.

³⁵³ S. N. Haskell, "The Lord’s Lesson by the Clean and Unclean Animals," *Bible Training School*, January 1903, 125; S. N. Haskell, "Mercy versus Muzzle," *Bible Training School*, September 1904, 60; Haskell, "Prophecy in Bible History," 155.

develops and applies the words inspired before.”³⁵⁴ Haskell argued that “the living prophet, therefore, becomes an infallible guide to the correct conclusion of what the dead prophet has said.”³⁵⁵ He probably had Ellen White in mind because he applied the term “living prophet” to her.³⁵⁶ In his view, the Spirit of Prophecy had been given, among others, to explain biblical expressions. If a particular interpretation had been confirmed by Ellen White, it was to be taken seriously. To ignore definitions and advice given by her would allow for choosing or rejecting them according to one’s own judgment.³⁵⁷

Objections to Other Views

Besides affirming the concept of verbal-plenary inspiration, Haskell also opposed almost every other theory of inspiration and even more extreme aspects of the verbal theory. He was also opposed to the correction of historical dates and events in the attempt to harmonize Ellen White’s writings with the assertions of historians, and to the modification of inspired writings by uninspired individuals.

Haskell understood the theory of thought inspiration as follows: “God inspired the thoughts, but had nothing in particular to do with the words in which those thoughts were

³⁵⁴ S. N. Haskell, “A Living Prophet,” *Bible Training School*, August 1912, 42. Similarly, he stated that prophets simply unfold the principles and messages presented by previous prophets. See S. N. Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 5,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 31 and 1 February 1893, 78. Likewise, he argued that God has placed the Spirit of Prophecy in the church “as a magnifying glass to make the truths referring to the remnant stand out more clear and distinct.” See S. N. Haskell to Allen Moon, 31 October 1915, PIC box 3108, GCA.

³⁵⁵ Haskell, “Resurrection Taught by Writings of Moses,” 13.

³⁵⁶ Haskell to Loughborough, 19 October 1912. See also the discussion of Haskell’s view of Ellen White as “infallible commentator” in Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 27.

³⁵⁷ S. N. Haskell to W. W. Prescott, 15 November 1907, William Warren Prescott Papers, box 1, fld 1, CAR.

clothed.”³⁵⁸ To support his objection to that theory, he quoted from another theologian who criticized the theory’s apparent denial of inspiration affecting the final product: “The theory that inspiration may be affirmed only of the main views or positions of Scripture, but neither of the words nor of the development of the thoughts, cannot, it seems clear, be harmonized with the Lord’s teaching.”³⁵⁹

He further rejected the idea that “there are any degrees of inspiration” because it was unimaginable to him that there could be a “discount on what God inspires,” depending on “whether it comes through Pilate in writing the condemnation of Christ, or through Moses, David, or Paul.”³⁶⁰ Haskell conceded that the biblical prophets, Christ, and Ellen White were influenced by circumstances to speak and write a message or work a miracle, but he felt that this factor did in no way belittle the extent of the divine origin of their messages and activities.³⁶¹ He argued that Ellen White sometimes had borne a testimony more from the perspective that God had impressed on her mind than from the actual circumstances, which in turn caused some to interpret her counsel as a contradiction or mistake.³⁶² He further wrote that the biblical writers came from different vocations and they all “illustrated the truth by things with which they were familiar, but

³⁵⁸ Haskell, "How Jesus Regarded the Words of the Prophets," 85.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

³⁶⁰ Haskell to Loughborough, 19 October 1912.

³⁶¹ Haskell to a conference president, 23 September 1919; Haskell to Loughborough, 19 October 1912.

³⁶² Haskell to W. C. White, 21 November 1912.

they are the words of God just the same.”³⁶³ Thus the humanity and individuality of the prophets are preserved, but they did not prevent the transmission of “the pure words of God.”³⁶⁴

Haskell vehemently objected to the assertion of the theory of partial inspiration that the biblical writings could be separated into “the divine and the human interests.”³⁶⁵ Thus he found it highly questionable to define the presence or absence of the phrase “I was shown” as an indicator for inspiration or lack of inspiration.³⁶⁶ The attempt to judge as such was futile as only “another prophet [would be able] to tell what is inspired and what was not inspired.”³⁶⁷ The practice of questioning White’s writings “on points of chronology or of dates,” especially in the context of prophetic interpretation, to harmonize her writings with the assertions of historians, who often disagreed with each other, was, in Haskell’s estimation, “forbidden.”³⁶⁸ He suggested that the opinion that such historical statements were “subject to correction, if additional light appears concerning them,” was “precisely the same reasoning [employed by] the higher critics of the Bible.” He argued that this reasoning “destroys the inspiration of the Testimonies.”³⁶⁹

³⁶³ S. N. Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 3,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 29 and 30, 1893, 31.

³⁶⁴ S. N. Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 10,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 6 February 1893, 214, 215.

³⁶⁵ Haskell, “How Jesus Regarded the Words of the Prophets,” 86.

³⁶⁶ Haskell to Loughborough, 19 October 1912.

³⁶⁷ S. N. Haskell to W. C. White and May L. White, 28 March 1919, WCWCF, EGWE.

³⁶⁸ Haskell to W. C. White, 23 October 1912. See also Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 114, 115.

³⁶⁹ Haskell to Loughborough, 19 October 1912.

The idea that the biblical writings were “merely human” was, in his view, equally wrong.³⁷⁰ Similarly, he objected to the idea that as Ellen White had no visions in her old age anymore, what she was writing could not be credited as coming directly from God as previously.³⁷¹ However, he conceded that he did not take the position that “Sister White is inspired when she converses with others,” not having all the facts and depending on what they tell her. He stated that this was true for biblical prophets because “they are human like other people.”³⁷² When Ellen White refused to lay claim to the title “prophet,” some interpreted her reaction finally as an acknowledgement that she had no prophetic authority whatsoever. Haskell quoted her respective statements, in which she stated that her work encompassed “more than the work of an ordinary prophet.” That statement led him to describe her as a leading prophet rather than an ordinary one. Nevertheless, he did not believe that everything Ellen White said and wrote had always been given “by a special revelation.”³⁷³ Neither did he believe that she as a person was “infallible.”³⁷⁴ Here he apparently referred to her common, everyday affairs.

Responding to the idea that verbal inspiration thwarted the possibility to change the language of inspired writings, Haskell suggested that it was possible for inspired writers to make such changes. Thus he asked, “Can a prophet re-write his own testimony, make changes in it, and yet it be verbally inspired?” As the biblical writers all told more

³⁷⁰ Haskell, "How Jesus Regarded the Words of the Prophets," 86.

³⁷¹ Haskell to W. C. White, 21 November 1912.

³⁷² S. N. Haskell to C. C. Crisler, August 14, [1907], WDF 107 no. 2, CAR.

³⁷³ Haskell to a conference president, 23 September 1919.

³⁷⁴ Haskell to Prescott, 15 November 1907; Haskell to W. C. White, 21 November 1912.

or less the same story, albeit in different ways, using different words, he concluded that “there are no definite rules that govern the workings of God’s Holy Spirit” and that “a prophet can re-write his own testimonies and further develop them, or condense them, and even make additions to what they have previously written—yet it all be inspired of the Lord.”³⁷⁵ As God changed some of his statements on some occasions, Haskell did not think that changes and modifications in White’s writings were problematic.³⁷⁶ However, he did not feel as positive about modifications in White’s writings when done by editorial workers. Thus he disliked the practice of omitting portions from her writings in the editorial process.³⁷⁷ He thought “it would hurt the sale of it [her old writings] if there were any changes made in it to bring it up to this time.” Although the rationale, that the lack of inspiration on the part of these workers disqualified them from making such changes, seems in harmony with Haskell’s concept of inspiration, he never seemed to express it in writing. Instead, he pointed to the potential ramifications of such changes. “But if the reading is changed, it would work against the book and also against your mother’s writings. . . . But if the writings of your mother was [*sic*] changed in its reading, it would be criticised [*sic*] and greatly hurt its circulation, as that is now one of the charges the unbelievers in the Spirit of Prophecy claims [*sic*].”³⁷⁸

³⁷⁵ S. N. Haskell, "Can a Prophet Re-write His Own Testimony?," *Bible Training School*, December 1912, 99.

³⁷⁶ Haskell to a conference president, 23 September 1919.

³⁷⁷ Haskell to W. C. White, 23 October 1912.

³⁷⁸ S. N. Haskell to W. C. White, 8 July 1920, WCWCF, EGWE.

Sources and Influences

Haskell's ideas may hark back to his understanding of a number of biblical passages and statements from Ellen White, yet he was probably also influenced in his understanding by W. W. Prescott, A. T. Jones, and other Protestant writers.

He was convinced that Scripture itself taught the absolute and infallible inspiration of the words employed by the biblical writers. Haskell argued that Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:17, 18 affirmed "the inspiration of *letters* of the Old Testament."³⁷⁹ Jesus' comments on Psalm 110 in John 10:34-36 were another example that seemed to support verbal inspiration.³⁸⁰ Haskell saw that theory also supported by several other passages.³⁸¹ The absence of the "I was shown" formula in some of Ellen White's writings did not disprove their inspiration because the "writers of the Gospel[s] and epistles" also never used that formula and were nevertheless inspired. He further insisted that although Paul had been informed about certain things by Chloe's household (1 Corinthians 1:11), he was nonetheless inspired.³⁸²

He felt vindicated in his view by statements found in Ellen White's writings. Thus remarks about God speaking through the Bible seemed to affirm his view of verbal inspiration.³⁸³ Her emphasis on the prophet as someone who "spoke by direct inspiration"

³⁷⁹ Haskell, "How Jesus Regarded the Words of the Prophets," 86 (emphasis original).

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

³⁸¹ Haskell, "Question Box," 220. Such passages were Hebrews 1:1, 2; 1 Peter 1:10, 11; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Daniel 10:11; and Luke 10:25, 26.

³⁸² Haskell to Loughborough, 19 October 1912.

³⁸³ Haskell to W. C. White and May L. White, 28 March 1919. The quotation ("Every chapter and every verse of the Bible is a communication from God to man") is taken from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 504. Similarly, the same idea was elaborated in a statement that he seemed to quote from

seemed to favor the same high view of Scripture that Haskell advocated.³⁸⁴ His objection to the theory of degrees of inspiration was supported by a reference to the *Testimonies*.³⁸⁵ And although his discussion of the “I was shown” indicator for inspiration and Paul being informed by Chloe’s household was allegedly based on Scripture, he referred to White’s discussion of these issues.³⁸⁶ Assuming that she “place[d] her writings on the same authority as the Scriptures,”³⁸⁷ he believed that she claimed verbal inspiration for her writings too, an assumption that was apparently corroborated by remarks about her messages as “the voice of God,” “Testimony of the Lord,” and “God speaking thru clay.” Haskell inferred that she placed “her testimonies on par with the prophets and apostles” when she wrote, “In ancient times God spake to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these last days by the testimony of His Spirit.”³⁸⁸ A particular statement from her on the divine origin of her writings was interpreted by him once more as a claim to

memory: “The Bible is God’s voice speaking to us, just as much as if we could hear it with our ears. If we realized this with what awe would we open God’s word and with what earnestness we would search the Scriptures.” See Haskell, “Bible Readers’ Class,” April 1917, 207, refers to Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:705, as the source of the quotation. The actual quotation is found in *ibid.*, 6:393. Italicizing differences to Haskell’s reading, it reads, “The Bible is God’s voice speaking to us, just as *surely as though* we could hear it with our ears. If we realized this, with what awe would we open God’s word, and with what earnestness *would we search its precepts!*” It seems that this statement is a slightly rewritten version of a statement originally written in Ellen G. White, “Message for the Church at Ashfield, New South Wales, Australia,” 4 October 1896, Ms 30a, 1896, EGWE, and later published in Ellen G. White, “A Decided Message,” *Home Missionary*, November 1897, 224.

³⁸⁴ Haskell to a conference president, 23 September 1919.

³⁸⁵ Haskell to Loughborough, 19 October 1912.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ Haskell to Clinton Coon, 30 September 1920.

³⁸⁸ Haskell to a conference president, 23 September 1919.

verbal inspiration.³⁸⁹ Further evidences for the Spirit's special working in her life were when he witnessed how she, while being in a very weak condition, was inexplicably empowered as she began to speak to a large audience,³⁹⁰ and when he saw the fruits of her evangelistic books in foreign mission fields.³⁹¹ In addition, he knew that when he accepted Ellen White's personal advice, despite his initial objections, it proved beneficial and wise.³⁹²

Haskell mentioned that D. M. Canright and A. T. Jones once shared his view of inspiration until they abandoned it, a step that he regarded as a major mistake. Discussing his view in the verbal inspiration of White's writings, he noted,

It was when Jones believed the Spirit of prophecy as I have here intimated, he was a strong man. It was the same with Canright. One thing is certain[:] those men who have been the strongest, and had with them a power that moved things were believers in the inspiration of your mother's testimony. I could not understand what to think if I should take any other view.³⁹³

Haskell intimated that they all shared a common belief. It has been difficult to determine Canright's precise concept of inspiration,³⁹⁴ but it could be ascertained above that Jones

³⁸⁹ Ibid. She wrote: "I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision—the precious rays of light shining from the throne." The same statement had also been employed by D. M. Canright four or five decades earlier. See pp. 172, 173.

³⁹⁰ S. N. Haskell to O. A. Olsen, 3 September 1891, PIC box 3062, GCA.

³⁹¹ S. N. Haskell to O. A. Olsen, 22 March 1890, PIC box 3060, GCA.

³⁹² See, e.g., S. N. Haskell to R. A. Underwood, 27 October 1889, PIC box 3059, GCA; S. N. Haskell to O. A. Olsen, 19 November 1891, PIC box 3062, GCA.

³⁹³ Haskell to W. C. White, 21 November 1912. He may have been referring to Canright and Jones when he stated shortly afterwards that he had been "quite intimate" with some who later apostatized by abandoning their belief in the inspiration of Ellen White's testimonies. See Haskell to W. C. White, 8 January 1913.

³⁹⁴ See pp. 155-157, 169-174.

and others connected to the *Signs of the Times* entertained a form of verbal inspiration.³⁹⁵ During that time Haskell functioned first as corresponding editor and later as special contributor for the *Signs*.³⁹⁶ In fact, the views held by Haskell and Jones show striking similarities. Haskell's remarks on Scripture as evincing the "infinite thoughts" of God are akin to Jones' statements that the words and expressions of the Bible contain "thoughts of eternal depth."³⁹⁷ Both believed in the verbal inspiration of the Bible and White's writings, and considered her writings as an infallible guide and commentator on Scripture.³⁹⁸ Nevertheless, their views display some different nuances. Haskell felt that the Holy Spirit, and by extension the Spirit of Prophecy, was "most competent" to explain the Bible, yet Jones went further by arguing that it was presumptuous for anyone else to explain Scripture.³⁹⁹ Finally, Haskell responded to some arguments espoused by Canright and Jones after their rejection of White's verbal inspiration. Examples are the assertion that White's refusal to claim the title "prophet" would prove her lack of prophetic authority,⁴⁰⁰ the assumption that she claimed special revelation for everything she ever said and wrote,⁴⁰¹ and the claim that her custom of rewriting her own writings

³⁹⁵ See pp. 231, 232, 234, 235.

³⁹⁶ A perusal of the *Signs of the Times* shows that Haskell served as corresponding editor from May 7, 1885 to January 14, 1889, and as special contributor from January 21, 1889 to at least June 2, 1890. Thus Haskell stood in the orbit of advocates of the theory of verbal inspiration as almost every other editor and contributor to the *Signs* during this period seemed to advocate a form of that theory. See pp. 231, 232.

³⁹⁷ See Haskell, "Prophecy in Bible History," 155; Jones, "The Third Angel's Message—No. 1," 6.

³⁹⁸ See pp. 224-228, 295-301.

³⁹⁹ See Jones, "The Gifts," 12; Haskell quoted Clark, "Helpful Suggestions in Bible Study," 16.

⁴⁰⁰ See pp. 243, 303, 304.

⁴⁰¹ See pp. 242, 303.

would disprove verbal inspiration.⁴⁰² There may have been a theological kinship between Haskell and the early Canright and Jones, but Haskell apparently adapted his views later to reply to their particular arguments after their alienation from Ellen White.

Some scholars suggest, based on W. C. White's historical reminiscences in 1928, that Haskell had been influenced by W. W. Prescott in the late 1880s or early 1890s.⁴⁰³ White had mentioned that Haskell had accepted the theory of verbal inspiration as a result of Prescott's influence during his presidency of Battle Creek College (1885-1894).⁴⁰⁴ Scholars have evidently overlooked, however, another letter from W. C. White from 1924, in which he described the surrounding events in greater detail. Thus Prescott had informed his students about finding a rare book and subsequently taught them Gausson's theory of inspiration. Dr. J. H. Kellogg purchased many copies of that book and "circulated them among the students." W. C. White suggested that, as a result, many ministers and teachers adopted that view of the verbal inspiration of the Bible, and "Haskell and a few others have taught the same regarding the verbal inspiration of the writings of Sister White."⁴⁰⁵ As Haskell himself saw a certain continuity in his views on inspiration, he may have perceived Prescott's emphasis on the verbal inspiration of Scripture as a welcome support and source of suitable arguments for his own views. W. C. White's reminiscences explain the dissemination of the verbal theory among Seventh-day Adventists, yet as he overlooked the earlier promotion of that theory by people (such

⁴⁰² See pp. 173, 304.

⁴⁰³ Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915," 3; Thompson, "Improving the Testimonies Through Revisions," 13-15; Thompson, *Inspiration*, 268; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 120; Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 133.

⁴⁰⁴ W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928.

⁴⁰⁵ W. C. White to Warren, 13 April 1924.

as A. T. Jones) at the *Signs of the Times*, his estimation of Prescott's influence on the origin of that view among Adventists seems to be exaggerated.

Haskell quoted from essays and articles of Protestant theologians who advocated verbal inspiration. In 1911, he quoted largely from an essay of the late William Caven on the verbal inspiration of the Old Testament as published in *The Fundamentals*, volume 4.⁴⁰⁶ Although the essay was originally published in the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* in 1892,⁴⁰⁷ Haskell was quoting from its recent appearance in the series of the *Fundamentals* as is evident from his source reference.⁴⁰⁸ As Caven's ideas closely resembled Haskell's own views, the latter made them available to an Adventist readership. In fact, when Caven drew a cautious conclusion regarding the words employed in a given passage ("If this is not verbal inspiration, it comes very near it."), Haskell turned it into a rhetorical question for his readers, albeit with a clear implication

⁴⁰⁶ See Haskell, "How Jesus Regarded the Words of the Prophets," 85, 86; William Caven, "The Testimony of Christ to the Old Testament," in *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, ed. [A. C. Dixon] (Chicago, IL: Testimony Pub. Co., [1910]), 4:59–61. Haskell was not the only Adventist who became aware of the volumes, but he was probably one of the first Adventist promoters of the volumes. For examples of references to, advertisements of, or reprints from *The Fundamentals*, see "An Important Publication," *Bible Training School*, February 1911, 177; "Book Notices: The Fundamentals. A Testimony," *Signs of the Times*, 14 February 1911, 11; Lee S. Wheeler, "Valuable to Workers," *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, 8 March 1911, 80; "Book Notices: The Fundamentals. Testimony Volume 4," *Signs of the Times*, 1 August 1911, 13; "The Hope of the Church," *Signs of the Times*, 19 March 1912, 16; "Losing Faith," *Signs of the Times*, 26 March 1912, 16; George F. Pentecost, "The Bible and the Believer," *Present Truth*, 16 April 1914, 256; George F. Pentecost, "The Bible and the Believer," *Present Truth*, 23 April 1914, 272; Dyson Hague, "The Doctrinal Value of the First Chapters of Genesis," *Bible Training School*, June 1914, 6; Dyson Hague, "The Doctrinal Value of the First Chapters of Genesis," *Present Truth*, 23 July 1914, 467, 468; "Missionary Volunteer Department: Senior Society Study," *Church Officer's Gazette*, January 1915, 10, 13; T. W. Medhurst, "The Standard of Christianity," *Review and Herald*, Extra No. 1, 11 January 1915, 1.

⁴⁰⁷ William Caven, "The Testimony of Christ to the Old Testament," *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 3, no. 11 (1892): 401–20.

⁴⁰⁸ Haskell, "How Jesus Regarded the Words of the Prophets," 86.

(“Is not this verbal inspiration?”).⁴⁰⁹ Eight years later, Haskell reprinted William Walton Clark’s “Helpful Suggestions in Bible Study.” Clark affirmed the full and equal “plenary verbal theory” and suggested that the Holy Spirit was the “most competent” interpreter of Scripture.⁴¹⁰ Thus Haskell seemed to have a theological affinity for the rising Fundamentalist movement in American Protestantism.

The Context of the Statements

Haskell’s statements on inspiration from the early 1890s to the early 1920s were made in diverse contexts. In the first decade he sought to encourage people to study the Bible. Later, he made more precise apologetic remarks against views that he deemed problematic.

According to Haskell’s recollection, it was in the 1860s that he came to believe that “the Bible was verbally inspired,” “the Spirit of Prophecy [was] as true as the Bible,” and “God gave an infallible message to fallible men to proclaim.”⁴¹¹

When Haskell worked in foreign mission fields in the 1880s and 1890s, he continued to interact with several people who advocated forms of verbal inspiration. From 1885 to 1890 he served first as corresponding editor and then as special contributor to the *Signs of the Times*, and interacted with E. J. Waggoner, A. T. Jones, and M. C. Wilcox, who all favored that theory.⁴¹² Haskell was present at the 1888 General

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.; Caven, “The Testimony of Christ to the Old Testament,” 59.

⁴¹⁰ Clark, “Helpful Suggestions in Bible Study,” 16, 17.

⁴¹¹ S. N. Haskell to I. H. Evans, 29 September 1915, quoted in Valentine, “The Church ‘Drifting Toward a Crisis,’” 54, 80, 81. I am indebted to Gilbert Valentine for this significant piece of information.

⁴¹² Haskell to W. C. White, 21 November 1912. See pp. 231, 232. On M. C. Wilcox see also M. C. Wilcox, *Questions and Answers Gathered from the Question Corner Department of the Signs of the Times*

Conference session and believed that Waggoner's position on the law in Galatians was correct.⁴¹³ His own activities in the following years were characterized by revivalistic efforts. After completing his work in Europe and South Africa, he toured through several countries in Asia and the South Pacific to explore opportunities for mission work.⁴¹⁴ During that time he thought more about writing a book on Bible study.⁴¹⁵ Meeting an Adventist minister who "questioned whether it was really the Spirit of God that had spoken" on a particular subject in Ellen White's writings was an experience that really frightened him.⁴¹⁶ Yet after returning to North America, Haskell's faith in her inspiration was strengthened as he witnessed how she, being in quite a weak condition, was invigorated once she began to speak to a large audience.⁴¹⁷ Meanwhile, from 1891 to 1893, Haskell collaborated with W. W. Prescott on the General Conference Committee on Education.⁴¹⁸ Prescott, on his part, had begun advocating the view of verbal

(Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 12; Timm, "History of Inspiration in the Adventist Church (1844-1915)," 188.

⁴¹³ Robinson, *S. N. Haskell*, 94; Haskell, "The Study of the Bible—No. 10," 217. In fact, in the 1880s Haskell also considered Jones a very valuable asset to the church's cause. See Knight, *A. T. Jones*, 19, 23.

⁴¹⁴ *Seventh-day Adventist Year Book for 1890* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1890), 66; *Seventh-day Adventist Year Book for 1891* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1891), 48, 85; *Seventh-day Adventist Year Book for 1892* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1892), 65.

⁴¹⁵ S. N. Haskell to O. A. Olsen, 3 July 1890, PIC box 3060, GCA. It seems that Waggoner's and Haskell's prioritizing of the gospel and the study of the Bible gained pace the following year, during the educational conference at Harbor Springs, MI, when church leaders and educators decided to expand these two emphases. See, e.g., Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 96; Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 98–102. Haskell had begun to develop a Bible reading method in 1883. For his explanation on the history of that method, see S. N. Haskell to M. E. Kern, 30 September 1915, WDF 221 no. 6, CAR.

⁴¹⁶ S. N. Haskell to O. A. Olsen, 19 June 1889, PIC box 3059, GCA.

⁴¹⁷ Haskell to Olsen, 3 September 1891.

⁴¹⁸ *Seventh-day Adventist Year Book for 1892*, 45, 56; *Seventh-day Adventist Year Book for 1893* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1893), 48, 61. Valentine traces the relation between Haskell and Prescott through the years, and he suggests that Haskell's suspicion of Prescott, arising after the latter's

inspiration among students at Battle Creek College about 1890. Although W. C. White asserted that Haskell had been influenced by Prescott, it rather seems that Prescott's agitation of the topic and Kellogg's distribution of a particular book on the subject encouraged Haskell to emphasize his own belief in verbal inspiration even more in light of the rise of higher critical thought.⁴¹⁹ Similarly, Haskell, together with Jones, Waggoner, Prescott, and O. A. Olsen, assisted the district superintendents in holding ministerial institutes.⁴²⁰ Haskell specifically emphasized the need to study Scripture for its own sake and was enthused with the idea of the Bible as the only textbook in education.⁴²¹ At the same time he was upset with those who questioned the reliability of portions of Ellen White's writings that did not harmonize with their reinterpretation of particular biblical prophecies.⁴²² Experiences with her advice convinced him of the superior inspired wisdom of her messages.⁴²³ At any rate, it is interesting to note that

blunder in supporting the false prophetic claimant Anna Rice Phillips about 1893/1894, never really disappeared. See Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 89, 90, 116, 117, 123, 181, 214. The same situation seemed to generate his increasing suspicion of Jones. See Knight, *A. T. Jones*, 79, 93, 112, 134, 135, 160, 161, 187, 195.

⁴¹⁹ W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928; W. C. White to Warren, 13 April 1924. See also Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 133, 134. Valentine shows that as Haskell had believed in the verbal inspiration of Scripture since the 1860s, W. C. White's recollection in the 1920s about events in the early 1890s seems to be somewhat blurred. See Valentine, "The Church 'Drifting Toward a Crisis'," 54. Arthur White assumed the accuracy of his father's memory, and subsequent scholars merely followed Arthur White's assertion. See Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915," 12–14; Thompson, *Inspiration*, 50.

⁴²⁰ *Seventh-day Adventist Year Book for 1892*, 62. See also S. N. Haskell to O. A. Olsen, 5 October 1892, PIC box 3064, GCA.

⁴²¹ S. N. Haskell to O. A. Olsen, 28 April 1892, PIC box 3064, GCA; S. N. Haskell to O. A. Olsen, 30 August 1892, PIC box 3064, GCA.

⁴²² S. N. Haskell to O. A. Olsen, 20 June 1892, PIC box 3064, GCA.

⁴²³ S. N. Haskell to O. A. Olsen, 22 June 1892, PIC box 3064, GCA; S. N. Haskell to O. A. Olsen, 12 July 1892, PIC box 3064, GCA; S. N. Haskell to O. A. Olsen, 4 August 1892, PIC box 3064, GCA; S. N. Haskell to O. A. Olsen, 12 September 1892, PIC box 3064, GCA; Haskell to Olsen, 5 October 1892.

Haskell acted in concert in various endeavors with several people that advocated a theory of inspiration akin to his own.⁴²⁴

During the ministerial institute and the General Conference session in early 1893, Haskell gave a series of ten lessons on the study of the Bible.⁴²⁵ He emphasized the need to receive “the word of God . . . as the voice of God to us as individuals.” Christ and the Spirit inspired the entire Bible, and church members were to be interested in “every word [that] God has ever spoken.”⁴²⁶ Instead of studying the Scriptures only by subjects, Haskell stressed the need to study it “by course,” from cover to cover.⁴²⁷ Besides stressing the importance of Bible study, he quoted Ellen White’s writings quite a bit.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁴ It is nevertheless important to note that Prescott’s view of verbal inspiration differed from Jones’ and Haskell’s view in that he seemed to limit it to the biblical writings whereas the other two extended it also to Ellen White’s writings. Knight notes that Haskell, Jones, and the early Prescott all advocated “inerrancy and verbalism.” See Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 192; Knight, “Adventist Theology 1844 to 1994,” 12. He also suggests that Jones and Haskell taught “verbal inspiration and inerrancy for both the Bible and the writings of Ellen White.” See Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 129. W. C. White seemed to indicate that Haskell’s belief in the verbal inspiration of his mother’s writings was only advocated by a small group of people. He felt that Haskell sought to convince him of his view because he “had a wonderful experience when adopting it” and “because a few men who have been strong in defense of the testimonies have shared that view.” See W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, 15 January 1913, EGWCF, EGWE.

⁴²⁵ “Program for the Institute,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 27 January 1893, 1. The ten lessons are cited in subsequent footnotes.

⁴²⁶ S. N. Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 1,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 27 and 28, 1893, 2. See also S. N. Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 2,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 29 and 30, 1893, 18; Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 3,” 30; S. N. Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 4,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 31 and 1 February 1893, 55, 57; S. N. Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 6,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, February 2 to 4, 1893, 95, 96; S. N. Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 7,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, February 2 to 4, 1893, 115–17; S. N. Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 8,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 5 February 1893, 135, 136; S. N. Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 9,” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 6 February 1893, 155.

⁴²⁷ Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 3,” 30; Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 4,” 57.

⁴²⁸ Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 2,” 18; Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 3,” 30–32; Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 4,” 53, 54, 56; Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 5,” 77, 79; Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 6,” 98; Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 8,” 136, 137; Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 9,” 157; Haskell, “The Study of the Bible—No. 10,” 212–214, 216, 217.

Further, he listened to Jones' argument for the use of her writings as an infallible interpreter of Scripture. Seemingly enthralled, Haskell wrote her that the attendees had heard a greater quantity of her writings in her absence than if she had been present.⁴²⁹

In the 1900s Haskell apparently tried to stay out of the church leaders' dispute with Kellogg and Jones,⁴³⁰ yet shortly afterwards he began to blame Prescott and A. G. Daniells for their policies and alleged disregard for White's counsel.⁴³¹ Already Haskell had begun to stress that the writings of later inspired writers were inspired commentaries on previous biblical writings.⁴³² Now, however, he began to lay more emphasis on the role of White's writings in the interpretation of biblical passages as his debate with the two church leaders over the proper interpretation of the *tāmīd* (continual, daily) in Daniel 8 intensified. He thought that any fresh interpretative attempts would ignore White's statement in *Early Writings* and hence the Spirit of Prophecy, which in his view had clearly settled the question of the *tāmīd*.⁴³³ Two years later he assured Ellen White that he

⁴²⁹ Haskell to Ellen G. White, 23 February 1893. See also Knight, *A. T. Jones*, 259. On his introduction of classes on Bible study at Avondale College in 1897, see McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 72.

⁴³⁰ See, e.g., Schwarz, *John Harvey Kellogg*, 190; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 204.

⁴³¹ Prescott to Haskell, 2 August 1908. Prescott, in turn, felt unfairly attacked as he had been trying to follow White's advice.

⁴³² Haskell, "The Lord's Lesson by the Clean and Unclean Animals," 125; Haskell, "Mercy versus Muzzle," 60.

⁴³³ George R. Knight, "The Case of the Overlooked Postscript: A Footnote on Inspiration," *Ministry*, August 1997, 9; Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 27; Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 127; Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 214–216, 222, 223; Kaiser, "The History of the Adventist Interpretation of the 'Daily' in the Book of Daniel from 1831 to 2008," 53 fn. 171, 54, 97, 98; Kaiser, "Ellen White and the 'Daily' Conflict," 15, 16, 30; Knight, "How to Read Ellen White's Writings," 67; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 292, 293. See, e.g., Haskell to Prescott, 15 November 1907; S. N. Haskell to A. G. Daniells, 27 January 1908, EGWCF, EGWE; S. N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, 30 May 1910, EGWCF, EGWE. J. N. Loughborough argued similarly when he wrote that those advocating the "new view" of the daily had abandoned their belief in White's testimonies. See J. N. Loughborough to D. A. Parsons, 25 September 1919, EGWCF, EGWE. Prescott tried to convince Haskell that his interpretation of the *tāmīd* was contrary to actual history and his use of White's statement in *Early Writings* was "designed to destroy confidence in the spirit of prophecy

would give “more for one expression in your testimony than for all the histories you could stack between here and Calcutta.”⁴³⁴ His articles in the *Bible Training School* continued to stress the infallible verbal inspiration of the prophets, the universal application of inspired writings, and the prophets’ role as inspired commentaries on previous inspired writings.⁴³⁵ He seemed to be intrigued by the arguments for the verbal inspiration of Scripture employed in the recently published volumes of *The Fundamentals*.⁴³⁶

When Ellen White’s *Great Controversy* received a facelift in 1911, some people felt that the book had undergone significant changes.⁴³⁷ In the summer of 1912, Arthur L. Manous, an evangelist in the South Carolina Conference,⁴³⁸ criticized a change that had been made concerning the time of Josiah Litch’s prediction of the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1840. Prescott had no difficulties with that change but sensed that Manous assumed that “statements on historical facts in *Great Controversy* [were] infallibly correct.” Prescott disagreed and suggested that “such statements [were] based upon

rather than to increase confidence in it.” See Prescott to Haskell, 2 August 1908. Haskell nevertheless disagreed and felt certain in his use of her writings.

⁴³⁴ Haskell to Ellen G. White, 30 May 1910. See also Olson, “Ellen G. White’s Use of Historical Sources in *The Great Controversy*,” 5; Thompson, “Questions and Perplexities Without End,” 9; Knight, “The Case of the Overlooked Postscript,” 10.

⁴³⁵ Haskell, “Prophecy in Bible History,” 155, 156; Haskell, “Resurrection Taught by Writings of Moses,” 13; Haskell, “How Jesus Regarded the Words of the Prophets,” 85, 86; Haskell, “A Living Prophet,” 42.

⁴³⁶ Haskell, “How Jesus Regarded the Words of the Prophets,” 86.

⁴³⁷ Valentine suggests: “So high was the risk of being misunderstood that it was apparently not until the [*Great Controversy* revision] project had been fully completed in January 1911 that he [W. C. White] was able even to mention the project to Haskell.” See Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 260.

⁴³⁸ H. E. Rogers, ed., *1911 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1911), 70.

evidence” and could be corrected “if additional light appear[ed].”⁴³⁹ Manous forwarded Prescott’s answer to Haskell who, in turn, suggested it matched “the same reasoning of the higher critics of the Bible,” causing the destruction of “the inspiration of the *Testimonies*.” He understood the statements as saying that the new edition had corrected historical mistakes and misapplications. While some of the changes expressed “the same thought” “in a less objectionable way,” the above rationale for changes led him to ask, “Has God set any man to rein up the spirit of God by contradictory historians?”⁴⁴⁰

On October 23, he forwarded that communication to W. C. White,⁴⁴¹ initiating a friendly debate about the subject of Ellen White’s inspiration over the course of the next four months. W. C. White explained his understanding of the Spirit’s *modus operandi* in his mother’s experience, outlined how her historical narratives developed from vision to publication, and stressed that she herself did not make any claim to verbal inspiration. Ellen White herself even signed his October 31 letter with the words, “I approve of the remarks made in this letter. Ellen G. White.”⁴⁴² Knight surmises that Haskell, however, probably never saw that particular carbon copy of the letter.⁴⁴³ W. C. White’s explanations did not convince Haskell, yet he felt “more free to write” him “on the

⁴³⁹ Prescott to Manous, 15 September 1912.

⁴⁴⁰ Haskell to Loughborough, 19 October 1912. See also Knight, “The Case of the Overlooked Postscript,” 10.

⁴⁴¹ Haskell to W. C. White, 23 October 1912.

⁴⁴² W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, 31 October 1912, EGWCF, EGWE. See also Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 135, 136; Arthur L. White, “The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915,” 12; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 6:365, 366. James Burry has verified that Ellen White never employed the term “verbal inspiration” in her published writings. See 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,” 47, 48.

⁴⁴³ Knight, “The Case of the Overlooked Postscript,” 10, 11; Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 108.

subject of inspiration” because W. C. White had promised to keep their correspondence confidential.⁴⁴⁴

In early January 1913, W. C. White recounted to Haskell that his mother had read his letter from October 31 and “was glad” he had written it just as he had,⁴⁴⁵ yet Haskell did not trust his word anymore. He felt that Ellen White’s son differed from him in his perception of the “use,” “object, and design of the Spirit of Prophecy.” He suggested that the view of inspiration that W. C. White held was “laying a foundation for a tremendous shaking on the *Testimonies*.” In his view, the church leadership was divided between those having “the most unlimited confidence” in Ellen White’s writings and those riding “in a shifting seat.”⁴⁴⁶ W. C. White stated, however, that many church leaders were “determined to stand loyally to the *Testimonies*,” but they were having difficulties holding church members loyal to them while “a few men of age and experience,” among them Haskell, were “pressing on them the theory of verbal inspiration.” He felt that the agitation of that theory contributed more than anything else to “the shaking of the *Testimonies*.”⁴⁴⁷ W. C. White continued to emphasize that his mother did not share Haskell’s belief in verbal inspiration, neither had his view been shared by his father or

⁴⁴⁴ W. C. White to Haskell, 31 October 1912; Haskell to W. C. White, 21 November 1912.

⁴⁴⁵ W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, 1 January 1913, EGWCF, EGWE. See also Knight, “The Case of the Overlooked Postscript,” 10.

⁴⁴⁶ Haskell to W. C. White, 8 January 1913. See also Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 107.

⁴⁴⁷ W. C. White to Haskell, 15 January 1913; W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, 7 February 1913, EGWCF, EGWE. See also Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 107, 108.

other early church leaders.⁴⁴⁸ On February 15, Haskell eventually backed down, but without giving up his view on inspiration. He wrote,

Now in regard to the Spirit of prophecy. You say that you are in harmony with your mother, and father, and leading brethren, etc. You also strongly intimate that my position and a few others will bring confusion. Well perhaps I had better from this time onward not say much about the spirit of prophecy. The work is not mine but the Lord's.⁴⁴⁹

Nevertheless, he continued to impress on the readers of the *Bible Training School* the necessity of plenary-verbal inspiration, the possibility for a prophet to rewrite his own writings, and the distinction between ordinary and leading prophets.⁴⁵⁰ Moreover, he continued to have implicit trust in the writings of Ellen White, using them alongside the Bible in substantiating his teachings.⁴⁵¹

In the 1910s and early 1920s Haskell sensed that an increasing number of ministers and church members had begun to question the inspiration and authority of Ellen White's writings, leading him to stress his view of her divine inspiration even more.⁴⁵² In 1918, he reminisced about the revision of the *Testimonies* in the early 1880s and argued that James White desired the improvement of the language but Ellen White

⁴⁴⁸ W. C. White to Haskell, 15 January 1913.

⁴⁴⁹ S. N. Haskell to W. C. White, 15 February 1913, EGWCF, EGWE.

⁴⁵⁰ Haskell, "Can a Prophet Re-write His Own Testimony?," 99; Haskell, "Question Box," 220, 221; Haskell, "Bible Readers' Class," August 1916, 46, 47; Haskell, "Bible Readers' Class," April 1917, 206, 207.

⁴⁵¹ Haskell to Allen Moon, 31 October 1915; S. N. Haskell to T. E. Bowen, 8 May 1917, SGF box 3293, GCA; S. N. Haskell to T. E. Bowen, 2 April 1917, SGF box 3293, GCA.

⁴⁵² S. N. Haskell to A. G. Daniells, 10 September 1912, PIC box 3104, GCA. Haskell felt, for example, that some of the church's leaders were trying to bring "everything under one central head of men," and thereby going against Ellen White's counsel. See S. N. Haskell to W. C. White, 20 January 1913, EGWCF, EGWE.

preferred to keep the original language.⁴⁵³ Several details in Haskell's recollection conflict, however, with contemporary sources and accounts, suggesting that his personal attitude towards the revision and statements from Ellen White on other subjects may have blurred his memory of the events.⁴⁵⁴ Haskell conceded that he had opposed changes in her writings at that time because he feared changes would attract the criticism of her detractors. One year later, in 1919, Haskell wrote W. C. White that many viewed her as a good woman, albeit not necessarily inspired.⁴⁵⁵ Six months later he replied to a conference president who had asked him whether he believed that her writings were as much verbally inspired as the Bible, a question that he answered with the words, "Yes, I do." Her writings were "magnify[ing] the literal reading of the Bible." That they recounted biblical history and contained numerous quotations from Scripture, "without introducing one new truth that does not originate in the Bible and without changing the

⁴⁵³ He wrote, "I remember what she told me in early times, that the time would come when there would be a demand for her old Testimonies such as there never has been before. It was when the question of revising her Testimonies was up. Your father [James White] had the idea they ought to be re-written so as to use better language than was formerly used. But a few of the brethren did not think so; we thought by rewriting them, as your father suggested, would only be an avenue whereby many of the objectors of our faith could criticize her writings. Your mother said we needed the writings just as they were originally given in order to meet objections before we got through." See Haskell to W. C. White, 4 November 1918.

⁴⁵⁴ As Ellen White had evidently agreed with the revision of the *Testimonies* and had, in fact, desired a more far-reaching updating of the language, Haskell may have misinterpreted her remark about the need of "her old Testimonies." Since the *Testimonies* of the first twenty years were out of print by the early 1880s, she may have simply stressed the need to restart their circulation. A few other details seem to be incorrect. The revision of the *Testimonies* was discussed at the General Conference session in 1883, two years after the passing of James White. Further, Haskell did not seem to be aware anymore that W. C. White's first wife was directly involved in the revision work and W. C. White himself was actively engaged in the discussion at the session. In the early 1880s Adventist leaders and Ellen White saw the need to reprint her early publications and *A Word to the "Little Flock"* to silence the criticism coming from those who suggested that her early writings had been suppressed, yet they did not extend the need for keeping the text of the *Testimonies* as original as possible. Some ministers, among them Haskell, suggested nevertheless to keep the language as it was because they were afraid of the same group of critics. See above on p. 149.

⁴⁵⁵ Haskell to W. C. White and May L. White, 28 March 1919.

most literal reading of a simple text,” were for him “the strongest proof . . . to prove her writings are as much inspired as the Bible.”⁴⁵⁶

Summary

Haskell’s published and unpublished writings from the late 1880s to the early 1920s evince a continuity in his view on the nature, manner, and result of divine inspiration. Until the turn of the century he seemed to discuss primarily the inspiration of the biblical writings, whereas afterwards he began to address the inspiration of Ellen White’s writings. His efforts to arouse interest in studying the Bible, particularly in his published writings, often occurred in the context of revivalistic endeavors. His perception of White’s inspiration in the earlier years nevertheless corresponded with that of the biblical writings. He maintained a belief in the plenary-verbal inspiration of both the writings of the Bible and White.

He suggested that the Spirit of Prophecy, referring to White’s writings, was best suited to interpret Scripture, yet he did not argue, as A. T. Jones did, that no one else should interpret the Bible. If Ellen White had already commented on a biblical passage, Haskell considered any divergent interpretation as a disregard for the divine origin and authority of her writings. Similarly, he felt that all parts of her writings, historical remarks and quotations included, were infallibly inspired and were never to be corrected. He made these remarks and manifested that attitude during the controversy about the *tāmîd* from 1907 to 1910 and after the revision of the *Great Controversy* from 1912 to 1913. Haskell continued to agitate his views on the verbal inspiration concerning both

⁴⁵⁶ Haskell to a conference president, 23 September 1919. See also Knight, "The Case of the Overlooked Postscript," 11.

sets of writings until the end of his life in 1922, and LeRoy Edwin Froom remarked six years after Haskell's death that the theory of verbal inspiration was enjoying a continued existence among Seventh-day Adventists because it had been publicly advocated by Haskell, Loughborough, and G. A. Irwin.⁴⁵⁷

Recapitulation and Refinement: The Humanity of Ellen G. White

From 1891 to 1901 Ellen White resided in Australia where she wrote some of her most influential books about Jesus and salvation.⁴⁵⁸ Shortly after her return to the United States she encountered one of the severest controversies of her life when theological, personal, and institutional tensions arose in the wake of the Kellogg crisis from 1902 to 1907. These tensions gave rise to skepticism and perplexities among church members and workers, which Ellen White and her associates felt urged to address. It seems that more than ever before she was faced with people who maintained extreme attitudes and perceptions of her inspiration. In her last fifteen years she completed her nine-volume series of the *Testimonies for the Church*⁴⁵⁹ and published some other important works on

⁴⁵⁷ L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 29 July 1928, WCWCF, EGWE. Knight suggests that it was through the advocacy of verbal inspiration by Haskell and Jones that Adventism had been seriously impacted. See Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 129.

⁴⁵⁸ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, [1892]; Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1896); Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1898); Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1900).

⁴⁵⁹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7 (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1902); Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1904); Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1909).

diverse topics.⁴⁶⁰ The revision of her masterpiece *The Great Controversy*⁴⁶¹ in 1911 was another significant endeavor that attracted some criticism as the changes conflicted with more strict views of inspiration. Her statements on inspiration during that time were usually responses to misunderstandings and criticism. Ellen White's death in 1915 brought her prophetic ministry to a close, leaving church leaders to wonder about the future significance of her unpublished writings and the unfamiliar lack of prophetic guidance for the church.

Unlike other sections of this study, in this section the context of Ellen White's statements is placed before the description of her concept of inspiration, her objections to other views, and the sources and influences to avoid misunderstandings.

The Context of the Statements

Ellen White's statements were made against the backdrop of several events and developments, such as the rise of theological liberalism in Protestant Christianity, the crisis involving Dr. J. H. Kellogg and A. T. Jones, perplexities arising in the minds of some associated with them, E. S. Ballenger's rejection of the *Testimonies*, and the revision of the *Great Controversy* in 1911.

⁴⁶⁰ Ellen G. White, *Education*; Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*; Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles in the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911); Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students Regarding Christian Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913); Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers: Instruction for All Who Are "Laborers Together with God"* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1915).

⁴⁶¹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1911].

During her Australian years and in the early 1900s she repeatedly affirmed the divine inspiration, authority, and reliability of the biblical text in response to the biblical criticism spreading in broader Protestant Christianity.⁴⁶²

In the early 1900s Kellogg's promotion of pantheistic views and his endeavors to gain influence over the leadership and institutions of the denomination brought him in direct conflict with Ellen White. She addressed the dangerous course he was taking and warned others of his influence, yet Kellogg questioned the reliability of her testimonies about him as they seemed to conflict with his memory and perception.⁴⁶³ Through the influence of Kellogg and Jones many people began to question White's writing too.⁴⁶⁴ Thus from 1902 to 1906 Ellen White wrote numerous letters, some of which were published, to clarify the understanding of her inspiration. Most of these restated the ideas explained in her previous publications. In March 1906, Ellen White invited several perplexed individuals to "specify . . . their objections and criticisms." Her letter was written against the backdrop of the Kellogg crisis as she mentioned Kellogg, Jones, and several other people that associated with them.⁴⁶⁵ On April 19, David Paulson wrote that White's emphasis on the divine origin of her writings in *Testimonies for the Church*, no. 31,⁴⁶⁶ and his training at Battle Creek College, had led him to conclude that her oral and

⁴⁶² See, e.g., Ellen G. White, "The Bible God's Inspired Word [Part 2]," *Bible Echo*, 26 August 1895, 268; Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 39; Ellen G. White, *Education*, 227.

⁴⁶³ Rendalen, "Mrs. White vs. the Facts."

⁴⁶⁴ See pp. 249-255, 270, 271.

⁴⁶⁵ Ellen G. White, "Those Who Are Perplexed Regarding the Testimonies Relating to the Medical Missionary Work," Lt 120, 1906. The individuals mentioned Dr. Kellogg, Jones, G. C. Tenney, [C. L.] Taylor, Paulson, Sadler, Judge Arthur and others who had "perplexities and grievous things in their minds regarding the testimonies."

⁴⁶⁶ See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:67.

written statements had “absolutely no human side” and were as “inspired as the ten commandments.” Nevertheless, her remarks about the reform dress vision and other subjects had made him realize about the year 1900 that she had never claimed such an inspiration. As he considered it presumptuous to judge between the human and the divine, he interpreted some of her statements, standing in seeming contradiction with his memory, as conditional predictions. He asserted that he never sought to turn anyone away from her writings and thought that she herself declined that overly verbal view of inspiration, yet as some people accused him of rejecting her *Testimonies*, he wondered if he was to return to his former position.⁴⁶⁷ On June 14, she replied to Paulson’s letter and suggested that neither she nor any of the early pioneers had ever made such claims for her writings. Then she quoted at length from the preface of the *Great Controversy* and from *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, encouraging him to consider the concept of inspiration outlined in these sources.⁴⁶⁸ Her letter to him was published in two installments in the *Review* on August 30 and September 6.⁴⁶⁹

W. S. Sadler, another person who replied to her, described his own difficulties in his April 26 letter. He had assumed that “all communications from [her] were

⁴⁶⁷ David Paulson to Ellen G. White, 19 April 1906, EGWCF, EGWE. Suggesting that many church leaders disagreed with his position, he acknowledged that he “held that view with absolute tenacity against innumerable objections raised to it by many who were occupying prominent positions in the cause.” Some scholars mistakenly suggest that Paulson still advocated the theory of verbal inspiration when he was writing Ellen White in the spring of 1906. See Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 105; Burt, “Revelation and Inspiration,” 40.

⁴⁶⁸ Ellen G. White to David Paulson, 14 June 1906, Lt 206, 1906, EGWE. She quoted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1888], c, d; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:63-65, 67-71, 73-76, 82. And she also asked him to read Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:654-691.

⁴⁶⁹ Ellen G. White, “Correct Views Concerning the Testimonies [Part 1],” 8-9; Ellen G. White, “Correct Views Concerning the Testimonies [Part 2],” 7-8.

Testimonies” and “all [her] writings were from the same divine source.”⁴⁷⁰ On July 6, Ellen White wrote him and referred him to a statement in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4. She warned him of the dangers exerted by some in the medical work and encouraged him to study the Bible on the nature of God and the subject of salvation.⁴⁷¹ Shortly afterwards she received a very kind communication from him that he had written on July 5. He expressed his deep appreciation for her and his confidence in her work, suggesting that he only desired to receive answers to be able to help others.⁴⁷² Thus on July 8 she sent him a second letter in which she stressed the divine origin of her writings, objected to “classifying the character of the testimonies,” clarified her use of the title “messenger,” and explained the production and circulation of her testimonies.⁴⁷³ One day later she wrote another letter to him in which she quoted several statements from previous writings about questions of trust and doubt in God’s messages.⁴⁷⁴

In 1907, Charles Stewart published the so-called “blue book,”⁴⁷⁵ a document that utilized quotations and letters from Ellen White to discredit her claim of divine inspiration. Ellen White saw parallels to the Snook-Brinkerhoff movement in the 1860s

⁴⁷⁰ W. S. Sadler to Ellen G. White, 26 April 1906, EGWCF, EGWE.

⁴⁷¹ Ellen G. White to W. S. Sadler, 6 July 1906, Lt 224, 1906, EGWE.

⁴⁷² W. S. Sadler to Ellen G. White, 5 July 1906, EGWCF, EGWE.

⁴⁷³ Ellen G. White to W. S. Sadler, 8 July 1906, Lt 225c, 1906, EGWE.

⁴⁷⁴ Ellen G. White to W. S. Sadler, 9 July 1906, Lt 234, 1906, EGWE. She quoted from Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, [1896], 133-135, 142, 143; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1888], 527; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:255; 4:232, 233; 5:68, 69. She also added a statement from Uriah Smith from 1887 in which he explained his former perplexities and his confidence in White’s prophetic gift.

⁴⁷⁵ [Charles E. Stewart], *A Response to an Urgent Testimony from Mrs. Ellen G. White Concerning Contradictions, Inconsistencies and Other Errors in Her Writings* (n.p.: Liberty Missionary Society, 1907).

and suggested that it was useless to attempt to reply and enlighten the people connected with the Kellogg faction.⁴⁷⁶

At the same time that Kellogg and his associates were leaving the denomination, church leaders began to engage in discussions about the identity of the *tāmîd* (daily, perpetual, continual) in Daniel 8:11-13. While Prescott and Daniells referred to their understanding of the biblical usage of the Hebrew term, Haskell and others pointed to a statement Ellen White had made almost sixty years earlier, suggesting that her statement should settle the discussion. She requested them to refrain from using her writings to support any position because she had not received any instruction on the point in question. She further encouraged the two groups to conduct a mutual, open, and prayerful study of Scripture to arrive at a unified position.⁴⁷⁷

Then in 1909, she wrote a manuscript in response to E. S. Ballenger's statements that he had lost confidence in the testimonies and her inspiration because at one time she had stated "that the [Paradise Valley] sanitarium contained forty rooms, when there were really only thirty-eight." She stressed that it would be "a great mistake" to "mix the sacred and the common," and explained the difference as follows.

He should send me the written words and see if I can call to mind this special statement which was not a testimony. The information given, concerning the number of rooms in the Paradise Valley Sanitarium, was given not as a revelation from the Lord, but simply as a human opinion. There has never been revealed to me the exact number of rooms in any of our sanitariums; and the knowledge I have obtained of such things I have gained by inquiring of those who were supposed to know. In my words when speaking upon these common subjects, there is nothing to lead minds to

⁴⁷⁶ As reported in W. W. Prescott to A. G. Daniells, 4 February 1908, PIC box 3090, GCA.

⁴⁷⁷ See Kaiser, "Ellen White and the 'Daily' Conflict," 13–23; Kaiser, "The Word, the Spirit of Prophecy, and Mutual Love," 16–19.

believe that I receive my knowledge in a vision from the Lord and am stating it as such.⁴⁷⁸

All these incidents illustrate that Ellen White had to respond to people whose understanding of inspiration—everything she wrote and said was divinely inspired—brought them in conflict with the difference between the common and the sacred in White’s experience.

The same year the denominational publishing houses informed Ellen White that the old electro-type plates for the *Great Controversy* “were so worn out that the book must be reset and new plates made.” The opportunity was used to enhance the old edition with illustrations, new appendix notes, the omission of the biographical notes, the enlargement of the general index, the change of archaic or unnecessarily offensive expressions, the adaptation of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, and the introduction of historical references.⁴⁷⁹ In fact, when Ellen White learned of the request of the colporteurs to have historical references introduced, she instructed her workers to “hurry up and insert the historical references. She also instructed . . . [them] to verify the quotations, and to correct any inaccuracies found; and where quotations were made from passages that were rendered differently by different translators, to use that translation which was found to be most correct and authentic.”⁴⁸⁰ In a “few instances,” they also

⁴⁷⁸ Ellen G. White, "A Confusion of the Sacred and the Common," 5 March 1909, Ms 107, 1909, EGWE.

⁴⁷⁹ Ellen G. White to F. M. Wilcox, 25 July 1911, Lt 56, 1911, EGWE; W. C. White to Our General Missionary Agents, 24 July 1911, WCWCF, EGWE. See also Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings*, 31. C. C. Crisler to Guy Dail, 3 January 1911, EGWCF, EGWE, stated that it was not the purpose of the task to introduce new historical matter into the *Great Controversy*, but just to verify the existing references.

⁴⁸⁰ W. C. White to Our General Missionary Agents, 24 July 1911.

replaced some old quotations with “new quotations from historians, preachers, and present-day writers” because they were “more forceful” or because they could not find the old quotations. W. C. White stated: “In each case where there has been such a change, Mother [Ellen White] has given faithful attention to the proposed substitution, and has approved of the change.”⁴⁸¹ She was not only informed of the ongoing revision and asked to approve the results, but she stated that the revision was, in fact, based on her own wishes, decisions, and instruction.⁴⁸²

Following the 1909 General Conference session⁴⁸³ she interacted less directly with church leaders and the membership at large. Much correspondence was filtered through her son W. C. White who, through the desire to protect her health from too much tension and excitement, read to her incoming letters and replied to them in her name. Meetings with visitors who desired to receive advice from her became less frequent.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸¹ Ibid. When Ellen White was confronted with the fact that some quotations could not be verified by any available sources, she stated, “What I have written regarding the arrogance and the assumption of the papacy [*sic*], is true. Much historical evidence regarding these matters has been designedly destroyed; nevertheless, that the book may be of the greatest benefit to Catholics and others, and that needless controversies may be avoided, it is better to have all statements regarding the assumptions of the pope and the claims of the papacy stated so moderately as to be easily and clearly proved from accepted histories that are within the reach of our ministers and students.” Quoted in *ibid.* When historical references could not be found but the same idea was found in a different book, she was informed about this and replied, “Use the one [quotation] you can give reference to, so that the reader of the book, if he wishes to go to the source and find it, can do so.” See Ellen G. White to F. M. Wilcox, 27 July 1911, Lt 57, 1911, EGWE.

⁴⁸² Ibid. A unique exception was the inclusion of a chapter on the Reformation in Spain in the Spanish translation of the 1911 edition of the *Great Controversy*. The chapter was written by Eduardo Forga and its insertion was approved by Ellen White because it made the theme of the book more applicable to readers of Spanish heritage. A footnote indicates that the chapter was not written by her. See Viera, *The Voice of the Spirit*, 92, 93.

⁴⁸³ This session was the last one that she attended. See Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 6:197; Moon and Kaiser, “For Jesus and Scripture,” 79.

⁴⁸⁴ See Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 437, 438; Moon and Kaiser, “For Jesus and Scripture,” 70; Moon, “White, William Clarence (1854-1937),” 567, 568.

In 1913, two years before Ellen White's death, she and her staff issued the pamphlet *The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies to the Church*.⁴⁸⁵ The pamphlet contained six letters that she had previously sent to different individuals to clarify questions about the inspiration and authority of her writings.⁴⁸⁶ That document outlined and clarified various aspects of her inspiration and the role of her writings, presenting them in their original literary and historical context. She nevertheless neglected to bequeath a systematic discourse of the nature, manner, and results of her view and experience of the divine-human process of inspiration and of the distinction between the sacred and the common in her life.

Concept of Inspiration

Ellen White emphasized the divine origin and the reliability of both the biblical writings and her own writings. She nevertheless also explained the human side of inspired peoples' lives both under inspiration and in mundane situations.

She believed that "the whole Bible" was inspired.⁴⁸⁷ Talking about the biblical records, she continued to use phrases such as "the inspired word,"⁴⁸⁸ "the inspired

⁴⁸⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies to the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913).

⁴⁸⁶ The pamphlet contained the following letters: Ellen G. White to Sadler, 8 July 1906 [pp. 3-9]; Ellen G. White to F. M. Wilcox, 23 October 1907, Lt 371, 1907, EGWE [pp. 10-16]; Ellen G. White, Diary entry for 18 August 1899, Ms 189, 1899, EGWE [pp. 17-19]; Ellen G. White to George I. Butler, 30 October 1906, Lt 348, 1906, EGWE [pp. 19-24]; Ellen G. White, Paragraphs and Diary Entries on Various Subjects, Ms 31, 1889 [p. 24]; Ellen G. White, "Regarding the Testimonies," 10 October 1911, Ms 23, 1911, EGWE [p. 25].

⁴⁸⁷ Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 39; Ellen G. White, "The Bible God's Inspired Word [Part 1]," *Bible Echo*, 19 August 1895, 259.

⁴⁸⁸ See, e.g., Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 39; Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 303; Ellen G. White, "The Bible God's Inspired Word [Part 1]," 259; Ellen G. White, "The Bible God's Inspired Word [Part 2]," 268; Ellen G. White, "The Bible God's Inspired Word [Part 3]," *Bible Echo*, 2 September

words,⁴⁸⁹ “the revealed word,”⁴⁹⁰ “the Spirit that indited the word,”⁴⁹¹ “the pen of inspiration,”⁴⁹² the “unerring pen of inspiration,”⁴⁹³ and “the language of inspiration.”⁴⁹⁴

Ellen White used the verb “to indite,” which may carry the meaning “to dictate,” yet she seemed to use the term generally in the sense “to direct” and “to compose” in describing

1895, 275; Ellen G. White, "Ministering Spirits," *Bible Echo*, 10 December 1900, 794; Ellen G. White, "Daniel," *Bible Training School*, November 1912, 82; Ellen G. White, "Letter to Believers on Pitcairn Island," *Review and Herald*, 4 August 1896, 481; Ellen G. White, "The Glory of the Cross," *Review and Herald*, 29 April 1902, 8; Ellen G. White, "Search the Scriptures," *Review and Herald*, 22 March 1906, 8; Ellen G. White, "As Ye Have Received . . . So Walk," *Review and Herald*, 19 August 1909, 8; Ellen G. White, "Changed into His Image," *Review and Herald*, 5 December 1912, 3; Ellen G. White to Bro. Hare and Sister Hare, 19 December 1896, Lt 34, 1896, EGWE.

⁴⁸⁹ Ellen G. White, *The Captivity and Restoration of Israel: The Conflict of the Ages Illustrated in the Lives of Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1917), 393; Ellen G. White, "Ye Are My Witnesses," *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, 5 July 1905, 305; Ellen G. White, "God to be Glorified in Our Work," *Youth's Instructor*, 18 July 1895, 226.

⁴⁹⁰ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles in the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, 272; Ellen G. White to James Edson White, 14 August 1898, Lt 136a, 1898, EGWE; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 8:114; Ellen G. White, "Eat the Word," *Bible Training School*, March 1903, 145; Ellen G. White, "The Bible in Our Schools," *Review and Herald*, 17 August 1897, 514; Ellen G. White, "Apollos at Corinth," *Review and Herald*, 17 August 1911, 4.

⁴⁹¹ Ellen G. White, "The Bible God's Inspired Word [Part 2]," 268. See also Ellen G. White, "Take Heed How Ye Hear: Characteristics of the True Teacher—Sanctified Ears—The Power of Language," *Bible Echo*, 14 August 1899, 265.

⁴⁹² See, e.g., Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles in the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, 71, 174, 240, 578; Ellen G. White, *The Captivity and Restoration of Israel*, 68, 93, 546; Ellen G. White, "Lessons From the Life of Solomon—No.17: Give Unto the Lord the Glory Due Unto His Name," *Review and Herald*, 11 January 1906, 8; Ellen G. White, "A Warning Against Hypocrisy," *Review and Herald*, 2 February 1911, 5. Juan Carlos Viera notes 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.” See Viera, *The Voice of the Spirit*, 81.

⁴⁹³ Ellen G. White, "Lessons From the Life of Solomon—No.17," 8.

⁴⁹⁴ Ellen G. White, "Witnesses of God," *Signs of the Times*, 8 October 1902, 2.

how the Spirit moves believers to pray for particular things.⁴⁹⁵ She affirmed that God was the ultimate author of Scripture,⁴⁹⁶ and that it was “wholly divine in its origin.”⁴⁹⁷

Her statement that Scripture was a divine-human product⁴⁹⁸ could be read as contradicting her affirmation of its complete divine origin. She clarified, however, that it was the thoughts expressed in the Bible that were of purely divine origin.⁴⁹⁹ She stated that the biblical “penm[e]n selected the most expressive language” to convey such thoughts while admitting that they could only be presented in “imperfect speech” as “infinite ideas cannot be perfectly embodied in finite vehicles of thought.” Thus while Scripture was “perfect” “in its simplicity,” its language could reflect God’s thoughts only imperfectly.⁵⁰⁰ Christ presented the minds of the biblical writers with “figures and illustrations” that were familiar to them.⁵⁰¹ Similarly, God may impress the minds of different people “with the same thought, but each may express it in a different way, yet

⁴⁹⁵ See, e.g., Ellen G. White, “How to Receive God’s Blessing,” *General Conference Bulletin*, 2 April 1903, 55; Ellen G. White, “The Prayer that God Accepts,” *Review and Herald*, 9 February 1897, 81; Ellen G. White, “The Work in Nashville; Its Encouragements and Needs,” *Review and Herald*, 7 September 1905, 8; Ellen G. White, “Early Counsels on Medical Work—No. 4: Blessings Through Prayer,” *Review and Herald*, 23 April 1914, 3; Ellen G. White to Bro. Rubble, J. A. Burden, and I. H. Evans, 7 May 1911, Lt 22, 1911, EGWE; Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 189; Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 175; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:467.

⁴⁹⁶ Ellen G. White, “The Bible God’s Inspired Word [Part 1],” 259; Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, 2 July 1900, Lt 92, 1900, EGWE.

⁴⁹⁷ Ellen G. White, “The Bible God’s Inspired Word [Part 2],” 268.

⁴⁹⁸ Ellen G. White to Paulson, 14 June 1906.

⁴⁹⁹ Ellen G. White, “The Bible God’s Inspired Word [Part 2],” 268.

⁵⁰⁰ Ellen G. White to A. J. Sanderson, 12 September 1901, Lt 121, 1901, EGWE. See also Burt, “Revelation and Inspiration,” 38.

⁵⁰¹ Ellen G. White, “The Bible God’s Inspired Word [Part 1],” 259.

without contradiction.”⁵⁰² Each having their own individuality, character, knowledge, and experience, they dwelled on such points that their “constitution and education fitted [them] to appreciate” and expressed them “according to the development of their minds by the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁰³ When they expressed their “own personal impressions” of the thoughts or scenes, the Holy Spirit assisted them in communicating these. Yet their writings displayed their distinct styles, “the stamp of the mind and character,” and the marks of their individuality.⁵⁰⁴ Their accounts were in perfect harmony⁵⁰⁵ but not uniform because their minds were “not cramped, as if forced into a certain mold” or “as if cast in an iron mold.”⁵⁰⁶ By employing different writers, God adapted the presentation of his message to the “necessities” and “comprehension” of its recipients.⁵⁰⁷

She suggested that the Apostle Paul had received some messages from God that he could not pass on to church members because they would misunderstand and misapply them, yet “the messages that God gave him to bear to the churches” were “molded” by everything he had been shown.⁵⁰⁸ Previously received revelations helped him to judge the

⁵⁰² Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, 5 April 1900, Lt 53, 1900, EGWE. See also Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings*, 22.

⁵⁰³ Ellen G. White to Haskell, 5 April 1900. See also Ellen G. White, “The Bible God’s Inspired Word [Part 1],” 259.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁵ Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 39; Ellen G. White, “The Bible God’s Inspired Word [Part 1],” 259.

⁵⁰⁶ Ellen G. White to Haskell, 5 April 1900.

⁵⁰⁷ Ellen G. White, “The Bible God’s Inspired Word [Part 1],” 259; Ellen G. White, “To Every Man His Work,” 16 August 1907, Ms 87, 1907, EGWE. See also Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 62; Knight, “How to Read Ellen White’s Writings,” 71.

⁵⁰⁸ Ellen G. White to A. G. Daniells and W. W. Prescott, 30 July 1903, Lt 161, 1903, EGWE. See also Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings*, 18.

character of developments in a church even when he learned of the respective situation from trusted church members rather than from a direct, immediate revelation.⁵⁰⁹

Ellen White was fully convinced that the Holy Spirit was the author of her writings.⁵¹⁰ She stressed that God was the “originator” of such books as *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Desire of Ages*, and the *Great Controversy* because the “instruction” contained in these books had been given to her during her lifetime.⁵¹¹ As a result, they contained “clear, straight, unalterable truth” that was “not of human production.”⁵¹² She nevertheless insisted that the Bible alone was to be the rule of faith and practice.⁵¹³ As the *Testimonies* were to bring believers to the Bible, which was to be their “guide,” “the *Testimonies* [were] not by any means to take the place of the Word.”⁵¹⁴ Her writings

⁵⁰⁹ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles in the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, 302.

⁵¹⁰ Ellen G. White to Kellogg, 2 July 1900; Ellen G. White to Sadler, 8 July 1906; Ellen G. White to [Stephen T.] Belden and [Melvina] Belden, 30 January 1905, Lt 39, 1905, EGWE.

⁵¹¹ Ellen G. White, "An Open Letter from Mrs. E. G. White to All Who Love the Blessed Hope," *Review and Herald*, 20 January 1903, 15; Ellen G. White, *Words of Encouragement to Workers in the Home Missionary Field* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1904), 5.

⁵¹² Ellen G. White to Walter Harper, 26 December 1904, Lt 339, 1904, EGWE.

⁵¹³ Ellen G. White to George I. Butler, 1 June 1903, Lt 105, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White, *Education*, 180; Ellen G. White, *The Captivity and Restoration of Israel*, 537.

⁵¹⁴ Ellen White giving an address in G. A. Irwin and L. A. Hoopes, "President's Address," *General Conference Bulletin*, 3 April 1901, 25; quotation in W. A. Spicer, *The Spirit of Prophecy in the Advent Movement: A Gift That Builds Up* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1937), 30; Ellen G. White, "An Open Letter from Mrs. E. G. White to All Who Love the Blessed Hope," 15; Ellen G. White to A. J. Sanderson, 27 September 1901, Lt 130, 1901, EGWE. See also Clifford R. Jones, "Ellen White and Scripture," 46–49.

were a “lesser light” pointing and leading people to the “greater light,” the Bible.⁵¹⁵ She stated therefore that the words of Scripture alone were to “be heard from the pulpit.”⁵¹⁶

In her visions and dreams she saw at times pictorial illustrations involving a particular person.⁵¹⁷ As the time of such pictures and scenes was often not revealed, she did not know whether they were showing an actual occurrence or a warning to avoid something.⁵¹⁸ She repeatedly spoke of receiving divine assistance in the writing process. Sometimes she had forgotten details of previous revelations, but at the time needed her memory was revived and the scenes as well as the relevant instruction came back “sharp and clear, like a flash of lightning.” While the Spirit “recalled” these scenes “forcibly” to her mind, it was not “a new vision.”⁵¹⁹ She nevertheless continued to consult the works of other writers as a literary mine “to describe and illustrate the scenes and messages,” and sometimes she employed them as an aid “to locate time and place of certain scenes that she had seen in vision.”⁵²⁰ God’s appeal to her conscience to “never deviate from the

⁵¹⁵ Ellen G. White, "An Open Letter from Mrs. E. G. White to All Who Love the Blessed Hope," 15; Ellen G. White, *Words of Encouragement to Workers in the Home Missionary Field*, 6; Ellen G. White, "The Canvasser-Evangelist," *Southern Watchman*, 2 February 1904, 78; Ellen G. White, "The End of All Things Is at Hand," [*Australasian*] *Union Conference Record*, 15 March 1905, 5.

⁵¹⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Captivity and Restoration of Israel*, 626.

⁵¹⁷ Ellen G. White, Sermon/Faith, Patience, and Hope, 25 February 1894, Ms 16, 1894, EGWE; Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, 28 October 1903, Lt 239, 1903, EGWE.

⁵¹⁸ Douglass, "Ellen White as God's Spokesperson," 87. John Harvey Kellogg accused her, for example, of making false statements about the alleged construction of a particular building, yet blue prints already existed as came out later.

⁵¹⁹ Ellen G. White, *The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies to the Church*, 24. Similarly, as she reminisced about her experience in writing the *Great Controversy*, she stated that the scenes about which she was writing were frequently presented to her in “visions of the night, so that they were fresh and vivid” in her mind. See Ellen G. White to F. M. Wilcox, 25 July 1911.

⁵²⁰ Kaiser, "How Ellen White Did Her Writing," 120. Her use of sources in preparing the *Desire of Ages* (1898) has been examined extensively by Veltman. See Veltman, "Full Report of the Life of Christ Research Project."

truth *under any circumstances*⁵²¹ seems to negate the idea of a full divine control of the transmission of revealed ideas and messages. She conceded that in a few cases she may have written too strongly.⁵²²

She perceived herself as “a poor writer,” being keenly aware of her inability to formulate revealed things perfectly to avoid possible misunderstandings and misinterpretations.⁵²³ Trying to recall “the very words and expressions” heard in a dream, she hesitated for a moment until “the appropriate words” came to her mind.⁵²⁴ At times, in her attempt to find the best language to express an idea, the ideal word came to her mind and she chose to use it.⁵²⁵ In some cases, when looking at a document later on, she was astonished to find the clear final product in her own handwriting.⁵²⁶ She nevertheless conceded that inspiration did not generate perfect language as she acknowledged

⁵²¹ Ellen G. White, "A Messenger," 26 July 1906, 8 (emphasis original).

⁵²² Ellen G. White, Talk before Representative Brethren, in the Battle Creek College Library, 1 April 1901, Ms 43a, 1901, EGWE. See also Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 60, 61.

⁵²³ Ellen G. White to W. W. Prescott and Sarah F. Prescott, 18 January 1894, Lt 67, 1894, EGWE. She stressed that the Holy Spirit assisted her in writing her books as she felt incapable of bringing out the truth in these books. See Ellen G. White, "A Messenger," 26 July 1906, 8, 9; Ellen G. White to Sadler, 8 July 1906; Ellen G. White to [Stephen T.] Belden and [Melvina] Belden, 30 January 1905.

⁵²⁴ Ellen G. White to James Edson White, 29 March 1904, Lt 123, 1904, EGWE. See also Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings*, 22.

⁵²⁵ Ellen G. White to W. C. White, 26 August 1907, Lt 265, 1907, EGWE. See also Ellen G. White to James Edson White and Emma L. White, 10 March 1907, Lt 90, 1907, EGWE. She also stated, “While I am writing out important matter, He is beside me, helping me. He lays out my work before me, and when I am puzzled for a fit word with which to express my thought, He brings it clearly and distinctly to my mind.” See Ellen G. White to G. A. Irwin, 18 July 1902, Lt 127, 1902, EGWE. See also Knight, *Meeting Ellen White*, 42; Burt, "Revelation and Inspiration," 41; Viera, *The Voice of the Spirit*, 36, 37; Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings*, 22.

⁵²⁶ Ellen G. White to O. A. Olsen, [May] 12, 1895, Lt 59, 1895, EGWE; Ellen G. White to S. M. I. Henry, 1 December 1898, Lt 118, 1898, EGWE.

receiving help from her literary assistants in “correcting grammatical errors and eliminating needless repetition,” and in “preparing articles for publication.”⁵²⁷

To ensure the accuracy of the final result, Ellen White sought to read every manuscript before forwarding it to the printer.⁵²⁸ Sometimes she felt free to omit statements that, albeit perfectly true, might have been utilized by some to injure and hurt others.⁵²⁹ There were other cases in which for a time she avoided sharing messages or parts of them with their intended addressee. Thus at times she held off sending “very clear-cut, decided reproof” until her attempts to change the attitude of the person had truly proven unsuccessful. Sometimes she was divinely instructed to avoid placing testimonies in the hands of the actual addressees because they would misinterpret them as supporting their course. At other times she withheld portions of a message until the circumstances showed that the time had come for them to be used. And in some cases she counselled with church leaders about the wisdom of reading certain portions before a congregation.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁷ Ellen G. White to Sadler, 8 July 1906. For more information on her literary assistants, their responsibilities, and guidelines, see W. C. White, “How Ellen White’s Books Were Written, Addresses to Faculty and Students at the 1935 Advanced Bible School,” unpublished manuscript, Angwin, CA, June 18 and 27 July 1935, CAR, 18–23; Coon, “EGW’s Use of Literary Assistants: The Prophet as a Writer;” Kaiser, “How Ellen White Did Her Writing,” 120–122.

⁵²⁸ Ellen G. White to Mary Foss, 10 August 1902, Lt 133, 1902, EGWE; Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, 20 February 1901, Lt 32, 1901, EGWE.

⁵²⁹ Ellen G. White to Kellogg, 20 February 1901.

⁵³⁰ Ellen G. White to Sadler, 8 July 1906. See, e.g., also Ellen G. White, *Southern Work* (1898; reprint, Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1966), 72; Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings*, 19.

Furthermore, she sometimes refused to issue a statement on a subject because she had not received any particular insight from God.⁵³¹ Aware that some people considered any word coming from her as inspired, she frequently declined giving “assent or dissent to propositions . . . submitted to” her.⁵³² It may be that over time she became more cautious in sharing her opinion on matters. She thought that her training by God over the course of several decades had sharpened her judgment in the application of previous revelations to particular cases.⁵³³ Yet in one particular situation, after giving advice based on her application of a previous revelation, she was divinely corrected and compelled to revise her counsel.⁵³⁴ Ellen White distinguished between common and sacred matters, suggesting that not everything she said and wrote was inspired. She felt free to state her wishes and said frankly, “I speak not by commandment.”⁵³⁵ Another time she shared some information that she had “not [received] as a revelation from the Lord, but simply as a human opinion.”⁵³⁶ She generally distinguished between “sacred,” “religious subjects” and “common, everyday topics” such as matters concerning the family,

⁵³¹ Ellen G. White quoted in C. C. Crisler to E. E. Andross, 8 December 1914, WDF 164, EGWE; Ellen G. White to D. A. Parsons, 13 June 1909, Lt 96, 1909, EGWE. See also Ellen G. White to S. M. I. Henry, 21 June 1899, Lt 96, 1899, EGWE. This was especially true when people sought to use her statements to settle matters of biblical interpretation. See, e.g., Kaiser, “The Word, the Spirit of Prophecy, and Mutual Love,” 16, 17.

⁵³² Ellen G. White to W. C. White, 8 May 1907, Lt 162, 1907, EGWE.

⁵³³ Ellen G. White to Fannie Bolton, 26 November 1895, Lt 115, 1895, EGWE.

⁵³⁴ Ellen G. White to Brethren in Positions of Responsibility, 26 December 1902, Lt 208, 1902, EGWE, reported in Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, 326. See also Douglass, “Ellen White as God’s Spokesperson,” 90, 91; Viera, *The Voice of the Spirit*, 29, 30.

⁵³⁵ Ellen G. White to Johannes J. Wessels, Jr. and Ruby E. Wessels, 18 May 1897, Lt 129, 1897, EGWE. See also Arthur L. White, “Common or Uninspired Writings,” 5, 6. In that letter she encouraged the Wessels to seek the Lord for themselves to discover his will for them.

⁵³⁶ Ellen G. White, “A Confusion of the Sacred and the Common,” Ms 107, 1909.

household, and place.⁵³⁷ As she discussed that distinction, especially in response to other views, it will be explained in more detail further below.

Objections to Other Views

Ellen White directed her criticism against views at both ends of the theories-of-inspiration continuum. On the one hand, she opposed views that excluded the humanity of the inspired individual and misunderstood her function. On the other hand, she objected to unqualified distinctions between the divine and human, the supposed influence of her literary assistants over her writings, and the theological criticism against the reliability of Scripture.

Confronted with the idea that the Testimonies have “absolutely no human side,” that “every word” she had ever spoken or written “in public or private” “regardless of circumstance, place, or manner” was “as verbally inspired as the ten commandments [*sic*] or the sermon on the mount,” she insisted that neither she nor any of the early Adventist pioneers had “made any such claims.”⁵³⁸ Hence she objected to the equating of her writings with the Decalogue and the idea of their general verbal inspiration.⁵³⁹

As she believed that Scripture was the foundation of faith and practice, she objected to attempts to employ her writings to settle theological conflicts and matters of

⁵³⁷ Ellen G. White to James Edson White and Emma L. White, 10 September 1903, Lt 201, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White to James Edson White and Emma L. White, 11 September 1903, Lt 202, 1903, EGWE; Ellen G. White, “A Confusion of the Sacred and the Common,” Ms 107, 1909. See also Pfandl, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 55. For a list of the “common” topics in that September 10 “family letter” see Arthur L. White, “Common or Uninspired Writings,” 3.

⁵³⁸ Paulson to Ellen G. White, 19 April 1906; Ellen G. White to Paulson, 14 June 1906; Ellen G. White, “Correct Views Concerning the Testimonies [Part 1],” 8.

⁵³⁹ Burt, “Revelation and Inspiration,” 40.

biblical interpretation.⁵⁴⁰ Although some called her a “prophet,” she preferred the designation “messenger” because she felt that her work included “much more than the word ‘prophet’ signifies” and that the term “prophet” was generally connected to people of doubtful reputation.⁵⁴¹

Realizing that Ellen White was not “infallible or inspired in every thought, word, and action,” some suggested the need to distinguish between the “human” and the “divine.”⁵⁴² She did not feel ready to “answer Yes or No” because either answer could have been misunderstood and misconstrued to support a disregard for her messages of divine truth or to lead into extremes.⁵⁴³ As she saw inspiration as a divine-human process, she described the difference between uninspired and inspired material as one of the “common” and the “sacred” rather than the “human” and the “divine.”⁵⁴⁴ She similarly objected to the attempts of some people to weigh and classify “the character of the testimonies” based on “their own mind and judgment.”⁵⁴⁵ Any efforts to treat her

⁵⁴⁰ See, e.g., Kaiser, “The Word, the Spirit of Prophecy, and Mutual Love,” 16, 17.

⁵⁴¹ Ellen G. White, “A Messenger,” 26 July 1906, 8; Ellen G. White to Olsen, 30 January 1905. Similarly, she stated, “My commission embraces the work of a prophet, but it does not end there. It embraces much more than the minds of those who have been sowing the seeds of unbelief can comprehend.” See Ellen G. White to the Elders of the Battle Creek Church, 17 July 1906, Lt 244, 1906, EGWE. See also Pfandl, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 58; Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings*, 29, 30.

⁵⁴² Paulson to Ellen G. White, 19 April 1906.

⁵⁴³ Ellen G. White to Paulson, 14 June 1906.

⁵⁴⁴ Ellen G. White, “A Confusion of the Sacred and the Common,” Ms 107, 1909. See also Burt, “Revelation and Inspiration,” 42.

⁵⁴⁵ Ellen G. White to Sadler, 8 July 1906.

messages “as a common thing,” attributing to them “mistakes” or even “falsehoods,” received her decided opposition.⁵⁴⁶

Some claimed that her literary assistants were “permitted to add matter or change the meaning of the messages,” yet Ellen White rejected such claims.⁵⁴⁷ She insisted that her copyists did “not change [her] language.”⁵⁴⁸ She further stated, “I read over all that is copied, to see that everything is as it should be. I read all the book manuscript before it is sent to the printer.”⁵⁴⁹

She was aware that critical theology was gaining influence among theologians and pastors in American Protestant Christianity. Believing that the whole Bible was inspired, she rejected the practice of questioning and rejecting specific portions of Scripture because they seemed to conflict with the discoveries and hypotheses of science and history. A reading of 2 Timothy 3:16 that allowed for uninspired portions in Scripture was seen by her as a poor misreading of Paul’s intended meaning. A proper understanding of science and history could, in her view, only be obtained by insights gained from the Bible and the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵⁰ Ellen White suggested that the “dissecting,

⁵⁴⁶ Ellen G. White to the Brethren in the Ministry and in the Medical Missionary Work, 24 April 1903, Lt 73, 1903, EGWE.

⁵⁴⁷ Ellen G. White to Sadler, 8 July 1906; Ellen G. White, *The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies to the Church*, 4.

⁵⁴⁸ Ellen G. White to G. A. Irwin, 23 April 1900, Lt 61a, 1900, EGWE.

⁵⁴⁹ Ellen G. White to Foss, 10 August 1902.

⁵⁵⁰ Ellen G. White, "The Bible God's Inspired Word [Part 2]," 268; Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 39.

conjecturing, [and] reconstructing,” as done by higher critics in the schools, robbed the Bible of its “power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives.”⁵⁵¹

Sources and Influences

In talking about inspiration and objecting to other views, Ellen White found confirmation in various biblical passages and also made frequent use of her previous writings.

She was convinced that the text of the biblical writings clearly reflected the diverse personalities, individualities, experiences, and education of their writers. The reports of the Gospel writers who all went “over the same history,” albeit in diverse manners, evidently supported that perception.⁵⁵² The Apostle Paul’s writings seemed to provide much support for her experiences and views. She understood 2 Timothy 3:16 as clearly supporting the inspiration of the whole Bible.⁵⁵³ She further suggested that Paul was able to assess particular situations based on previous revelations.⁵⁵⁴ Another example from the experience of Paul was her assertion that although some divine messages were withheld by him from church members to avoid misunderstandings and misapplications, these messages nevertheless shaped other messages that God gave him for the churches.⁵⁵⁵ When she sought to keep someone else from misinterpreting her personal

⁵⁵¹ Ellen G. White, *Education*, 227. See also Thompson, "Improving the Testimonies Through Revisions," 14.

⁵⁵² Ellen G. White to Haskell, 5 April 1900.

⁵⁵³ Ellen G. White, "The Bible God's Inspired Word [Part 2]," 268.

⁵⁵⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles in the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, 302.

⁵⁵⁵ Ellen G. White to Daniells and Prescott, 30 July 1903.

wish as a divine injunction, she alluded to Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 7:6, 12, "I speak not by commandment."⁵⁵⁶ She apparently assumed that like her, Paul experienced the "common" and the "sacred" in his life.

It seems that many of her ideas on inspiration had already appeared in one form or another in her previous writings. Thus she felt that the preface to the *Great Controversy* and relevant sections in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, were particularly and sufficiently clear to provide a correct understanding of the nature and manner of inspiration.⁵⁵⁷ Her remarks about the diversity of the Gospel writers resembles ideas discussed once again in the preface of the *Great Controversy*.⁵⁵⁸ White's explanations about imperfect human language, employed by the biblical penmen to describe infinite thoughts, shows similarities to her paraphrase of Calvin E. Stowe's remarks on inspiration.⁵⁵⁹ Also the idea of a "lesser light" pointing towards a "greater light" had been used by her already earlier. In 1873 she drew a comparison between Jesus—the greater light—and John the Baptist—the lesser light—who prepared and led his contemporaries to Christ.⁵⁶⁰ A little bit later she used the same terminology to describe the relationship

⁵⁵⁶ Ellen G. White to Johannes J. Wessels and Ruby E. Wessels, 18 May 1897.

⁵⁵⁷ Ellen G. White to Paulson, 14 June 1906; Ellen G. White, "Correct Views Concerning the Testimonies [Part 1]," 8. The passages quoted and referred to were from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1888], c-d; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:63-65, 67-71, 73-76, 82, 654-691.

⁵⁵⁸ See Ellen G. White to Haskell, 5 June 1900; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1888], c-d.

⁵⁵⁹ See Ellen G. White to Sanderson, 12 September 1901; Ellen G. White, "Objections to the Bible," Ms 24, 1886.

⁵⁶⁰ Ellen G. White, "John's Mission and Death," *Review and Herald*, 8 April 1873, 130.

between the Old and New Testaments.⁵⁶¹ In each case one entity points to another greater entity, yet their messages all derive from the same divine source. Nevertheless, the “greater light” always functions as the reference point.⁵⁶² While her statement on Paul’s assessment of particular situations based on previously received revelations was certainly based on Paul’s writings, these ideas had been previously published in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5.⁵⁶³

Summary

Both published and unpublished writings of Ellen White from 1895 to 1915 show a continuity in her view of inspiration. She explained the different aspects of the divine-human interaction during the inspiration process and continued to emphasize the divine origin of her writings. Yet more than ever before she had to stress the private or common sphere in her life, a clarification that became necessary because church members and workers increasingly assumed that everything she had written and said was divinely inspired. Her explanations and clarifications were usually based on biblical illustrations, her previous writings, and examples from her own experience. While previously she had to reprove those who advocated too flexible theories of inspiration, now she saw herself confronted with those who, based on inflexible views of inspiration, were perplexed and confused because these views conflicted with their perception of her as a person and

⁵⁶¹ Ellen G. White, "Christ and the Law: or, The Relationship of the Jew and the Gentile to the Law," *Signs of the Times*, 25 August 1887, 513.

⁵⁶² See Coon, "Inspiration/Revelation, What It Is and How It Works," 21–23. Although Coon also concludes that White did not employ that analogy to suggest different degrees of inspiration, he utilizes other metaphors to interpret the analogy without analyzing how she used the analogy of “lesser light” and “greater light” in other instances.

⁵⁶³ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles in the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, 302. See also Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:65, 66. See also p. 203.

particular details in her writings. Over the years Ellen White refined her statements on inspiration to answer questions and doubts. No one theory of inspiration is able to explain her experience and view of inspiration. She described inspiration as a process in which the Holy Spirit operated in multiple ways, albeit not always in the same manner, to communicate a message.

Conclusion

The present chapter dealt with the views of inspiration that Alonzo T. Jones, W. W. Prescott, Stephen N. Haskell, and Ellen G. White entertained from the 1890s to the conclusion of their active work for the church. In addition, the chapter also described their objections to other views, possible sources and influences, and the contexts in which they made their statements. All of them influenced how church members and workers perceived the inspiration of both Scripture and Ellen White.

After the demise of Butler's view of degrees of inspiration and White's sojourn in Australia in the 1890s, the influence of a word-oriented, verbal view of inspiration increased among Adventists. The same is true for the ideas that White's writings were verbally inspired and a final interpreter of Scripture. Jones and Haskell had held to the verbal inspiration of Scripture since at least the mid-1880s. Prescott adopted that theory in the early 1890s and promoted it among students and church workers at Battle Creek, yet his involvement in the production of White's writings may have prevented him from applying the idea of verbal inspiration to her writings too. By 1893 Jones and Haskell also began to advocate the verbal inspiration of White's writings and the crucial role of her writings in interpreting the Bible.

After White's return to the United States in 1900, American Adventists were increasingly confronted with the common sphere in White's life and a more nuanced, diverse experience of inspiration. The discussions over her inspiration in the early 1900s commenced with the Kellogg crisis and concluded with the refinement of the *Great Controversy*. It was during these events that questions arose about the validity of either someone's personal assumptions about inspiration or Ellen White's prophetic claim altogether. Jones' assumption that inspiration focused on words, produced absolute perspicuity, and extended to all spheres of life brought him in conflict with the reality in White's experience and eventually caused him to abandon his belief in her special inspiration rather than his assumptions. As a result, he began to criticize her and her writings.

Confronted with certain phenomena in the production of her writings that differed from his assumptions, Prescott eventually reevaluated and modified his concept of inspiration on both Scripture and Ellen White. He adopted a more thought-based view of inspiration. Similarly, his personal biblical and historical studies led him to question the absolute factual and exegetical authority of her writings.

Haskell maintained his basic assumptions without any major changes throughout his career, yet about 1908 he started to attack those who sought to find a moderate position, which he perceived as undermining the inspiration and authority of White's writings. As the belief in the verbal-plenary inspiration of both Scripture and Ellen White became the primary identifier for those claiming loyalty towards White's writings, they increasingly assailed those who held a dynamic, thought-focused view of inspiration.

Jones, Prescott, and Haskell all assumed that their views on inspiration were grounded in Scripture, but each of them also read the writings of other Protestant writers, fellow Adventists, and Ellen White, and they processed the ideas found in these writings differently. Some of their statements were made in the context of the rise of biblical criticism and Modernism in American Protestant Christianity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, yet the majority of their remarks were made in private communications concerning the loyalty to and authority of White's writings. Meanwhile Ellen White repeated and refined several of her previous ideas. The distinction of the common and the sacred in her life was one aspect that she needed to clarify a number of times because church members were questioning her inspiration as a result of exaggerated assumptions about divine inspiration.

The next chapter will document developments after the death of Ellen White in 1915 and various attempts to preserve her legacy.

CHAPTER 4
PERCEPTIONS OF DIVINE INSPIRATION IN
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGY
FROM 1915 TO 1930

Introduction

In the early twentieth century tensions increased between conservative and liberal Protestant theologians. Starting among conservative Presbyterian theologians at Princeton Theological Seminary, the movement spread to conservative theologians in other Protestant denominations in North America.¹ From 1910 to 1915 a series of pamphlets entitled *The Fundamentals* was published to emphasize the foundational Christian beliefs that had been under attack by liberal theologians.² Special emphasis was laid on the verbal and inerrant inspiration of the original writings of the Old and New Testaments.³ By the 1920s the conflict increased and became known as the Fundamentalist-Modernist

¹ Evans, *Histories of American Christianity*, 246-249, 263-266; Jewett and Wangerin, *Mission and Menace*, 165, 166; Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*.

² The five fundamentals were: (1) the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture; (2) the virgin birth of Christ; (3) the substitutionary death of Christ; (4) the bodily resurrection of Christ; and (5) the historicity of miracles as recorded in the Bible. See, e.g., Evans, *Histories of American Christianity*, 247, 275; Koester, *Fortress Introduction to the History of Christianity in the United States*, 137; Butler, Wacker and Balmer, *Religion in American Life*, 324, 325; Miller, *Piety and Profession*, 410.

³ See, e.g., "The Fundamentals," *Journal and Messenger*, 25 December 1919, 6, 7; "The Doctrinal Statement of the World Conference on Christian Fundamentals, May 25-31, 1919," *Christian Workers Magazine*, January 1920, 382.

Controversy.⁴ Meanwhile, as the absence of Ellen White in the 1890s may have allowed for a spreading of the theory of verbal inspiration among Seventh-day Adventists in North America, her renewed presence in the United States in the 1900s facilitated a more personal interaction with her and prompted numerous people to review their perception of divine inspiration. The varying responses—to reject her inspiration, to maintain a verbal inspiration view, or to adopt a thought-focused view of inspiration—marked the parameters for the tensions among Adventists in future decades.

The death of Ellen White in 1915 brought Adventists face to face with a new reality—the denomination without direct prophetic guidance. Some church members inquired about the need for a new living prophet. Others wondered how the rich literary corpus of her unpublished writings was to be treated. The manner of preserving Ellen White’s legacy depended largely on how different people conceptualized the inspiration, role, and authority of her writings. A. G. Daniells had worked closely with Ellen White during her time in Australia and consulted her frequently during his General Conference presidency. He continued to serve in that position until 1922 and shaped the appearance and trajectory of the denomination unlike any other president in the twentieth century.

Unlike Daniells, J. S. Washburn did not hold a formal leadership position. He was a minister and evangelist who had received Ellen White’s support on various occasions in the 1890s and 1900s. It was his evangelistic zeal in what he perceived as the defense of

⁴ Evans, *Histories of American Christianity*, 273–80; Marsden, *Religion and American Culture*, 193–98; Koester, *Fortress Introduction to the History of Christianity in the United States*, 150–53; Jewett and Wangerin, *Mission and Menace*, 190, 197–199; Butler, Wacker and Balmer, *Religion in American Life*, 325–29; Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*.

White's inspiration and prophetic authority that lent his efforts significance in the affairs of the church in the 1910s and 1920s.

Serving as editor of the *Review and Herald* for thirty-three years, F. M. Wilcox's editorial tenure of the oldest and most significant Adventist weekly periodical was second only to that of Uriah Smith. As a son of the "messenger of the Lord," W. C. White had worked more closely and confidentially with Ellen White than anyone else alive at her death. Many church members and workers perceived him as the authority on what his mother had believed and said. All of them were in their fifties and sixties, and they had known Ellen White personally and shared how they perceived her inspiration and legacy. The statements and remarks that Daniells, Wilcox, and others made concerning the inspiration of Scripture and Ellen White at the 1919 Bible Conference evoked varying responses and reactions, having ramifications into the late 1920s.⁵

All these individuals had a considerable impact on how Seventh-day Adventist members, ministers, and leaders saw the nature, manner, and role of divine inspiration. The present chapter looks at A. G. Daniells, J. S. Washburn, F. M. Wilcox, and W. C. White, primarily after 1915, and what views they affirmed or opposed, the ideas and sources that may have influenced them, and in what contexts they made their statements.

Navigating Through Extremes: The Endeavors of Arthur G. Daniells

Arthur Grosvenor Daniells (1858-1935) initially worked as a minister and missionary, but he became known primarily as an administrator. After his active

⁵ Michael W. Campbell has written a doctoral dissertation on the 1919 Bible Conference and subsequent discussions. See Campbell, "The 1919 Bible Conference and Its Significance for Seventh-day Adventist History and Theology."

engagement in city mission evangelism, he was called to ministry in New Zealand in 1886. For a few years he served as president of the New Zealand Conference. Subsequently he was president of the Australian Conference (1892-1895), Central Australian Conference (1895-1897), and the Australasian Union Conference (1897-1901). In 1900, he returned to the United States and became the church's longest-serving president of the General Conference (1901-1922). It was under his leadership that the church experienced unprecedented global growth.⁶ Afterwards he was secretary of the General Conference (1922-1926) and director of the Ministerial Association (1922-1931) that issued the influential *Ministry* magazine.⁷ During his Australian years and the first fifteen years of his General Conference presidency, Daniells followed Ellen White's counsel and worked closely with her and her son W. C. White. Although the vocal advocacy of his views on inspiration during the 1919 Bible Conference may have jeopardized his reelection three years later, his views nevertheless seem to have influenced some quarters in the Adventist Church. Being "a close friend and confidant" of Ellen White, he was chosen as one of her trustees.⁸

⁶ Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 124, 130-132; Schwarz, "The Perils of Growth, 1886-1905," 103; Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 273, 274; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 40, 50, 74, 87.

⁷ Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 388.

⁸ McGraw and Valentine, "Legacy," 307; James R. Nix, "The History and Work of the Ellen G. White Estate," in *Understanding Ellen White: The Life and Work of the Most Influential Voice in Adventist History*, ed. Merlin D. Burt (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 215. F. M. Wilcox wrote, "With the exception of W. C. White, . . . , probably no other living man has had such close touch with the work of Mrs. E. G. White as did Elder Daniells." See F. M. Wilcox's introductory note to A. G. Daniells, "The Spirit of Prophecy[—No. 1]," *Review and Herald*, 20 March 1930, 3.

Concept of Inspiration

In discussing his views of inspiration Daniells made some remarks about the inspiration of Scripture, yet most of them concerned different questions regarding the inspiration of Ellen White.

Daniells emphasized that the Bible was the “inspired infallible work of the living God.” He noted that the biblical writers held some false beliefs but never taught these as divine instructions. The reception of divine revelations that contradicted their personal beliefs usually caused them to modify them.⁹ Scripture could “fundamentally” be understood and was “primarily” to be interpreted through Scripture.¹⁰

Regarding Ellen White, Daniells stressed that she held a very high view of Scripture. Everywhere in her writings, Scripture was presented as “the Book of all books, the supreme and all-sufficient guide for the whole human family.”¹¹ Scripture was stressed in her writings as the rule of faith and practice. White’s writings further magnified biblical truths heretofore buried. He suggested that they did not teach “a single biblical or theological error.”¹² Answering the question whether “the explanations of Scripture that she [Ellen White] gives” are “dependable,” Daniells said, “I have always felt that they were.” He did not exclude, however, the possibility that “in some very

⁹ A. G. Daniells to F. E. Dufty, [1920], WCWCF, EGWE; A. G. Daniells, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation: The Position of the Spirit of Prophecy Between 1844 and 1851, as Revealed in Original Sources of Our Early Documents and Periodicals," *Review and Herald*, 25 November 1926, 3.

¹⁰ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1195, 1194.

¹¹ Daniells to Dufty, [1920].

¹² *Report of Bible Conference*, 1191, 1210.

critical matters there may be some difficulties.”¹³ Daniells believed in the divine origin of White’s prophetic gift,¹⁴ suggesting that phrases such as “I have been shown” were indicative of special revelation through an angel or in a vision.¹⁵ Her prophetic claim was validated by the fruits of her ministry, which he regarded as the strongest proof of its divine origin.¹⁶ Especially in later years, when “her public visions became less frequent and finally ceased,” “it was possible to judge her claims,” wholly apart from the physical phenomena, by the character and content of her publications and works.¹⁷ He observed that with time her revelations became more comprehensive, detailed, and clearer.

Daniells distinguished between the sacred and the common realm in her life.

I know positively that she carried on a line of correspondence with relatives and friends for which she made no claim of inspiration whatsoever. In many replies to questions sent to her, she frankly acknowledged her inability to throw light on the subjects presented. At the same time she did write letters or messages for which she claimed inspiration. It was the latter to which she referred in *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 63-67.¹⁸

Hence some of her advice was based on her own judgment, yet she sometimes modified it, stating that she had received divine instruction a few days later.¹⁹ Considering the nature of progressive revelation and inspiration as she experienced them, Daniells suggested that it was White’s duty to revise her publications accordingly to reflect

¹³ Ibid., 1194.

¹⁴ Ibid., 943, 1190.

¹⁵ Ibid., 1205.

¹⁶ Ibid., 1190.

¹⁷ Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, 273. See also in Land, "Biographies," 325.

¹⁸ Daniells to Dufty, [1920].

¹⁹ Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, 326. See also in Douglass, "Ellen White as God's Spokesperson," 90, 91.

increased precision, more comprehensiveness, or new emphases in her writings.²⁰ In addition, as she sometimes employed equivocal wording, it was necessary to modify the language and clarify or eliminate mistakable parts to avoid possible misinterpretations.²¹

Daniells thought that such improvements could also be made by uninspired literary assistants under Ellen White's direction.²² Furthermore, he did not ascribe infallibility to White's writings on historical events or the historical quotations that she utilized.²³ Daniells agreed that "the final proof of the Spirit of Prophecy [was] its spiritual value rather than its historical accuracy."²⁴ He suspected that she would have agreed to revise such historical statements to harmonize them with proven facts.²⁵ Despite his confidence in the general reliability of White's writings in different areas, he noted that she was not "an authority on history . . . or a dogmatic teacher on theology," and that it was "left [to] pastors and evangelists and preachers to work out all these problems of Scripture and of theology and of history."²⁶

²⁰ Daniells to Dufty, [1920].

²¹ Daniells, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation," 25 November 1926, 6; A. G. Daniells, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation, Second Series, No. 2: The Position of the Spirit of Prophecy Between 1844 and 1851, as Revealed in Original Sources of Our Early Documents and Periodicals," *Review and Herald*, 13 February 1930, 6.

²² *Report of Bible Conference*, 1189.

²³ *Ibid.*, 1202-1204, 1212. Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 630, states that Daniells conceded that Ellen White's treatments of historical topics may have contained some inaccuracies in detail but that her overall interpretation of the events was reliable.

²⁴ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1213.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1212.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1202-1204.

Objections to Other Views

Besides a few brief remarks on the unsafe instruction rendered by bitter opponents such as Thomas Paine and Robert G. Ingersoll in understanding Scripture,²⁷ Daniells addressed numerous issues relating to a verbal and inerrant view of inspiration. As might be expected, many of these objections were made against D. M. Canright's charges in his *Life of Mrs. E. G. White* and against the widespread existence of verbal views of inspiration among church members.

Daniells emphasized that "Mrs. White never laid claim to verbal inspiration nor perfection of diction. All through her life she expressed regret because language seemed inadequate to express the wonders of the great plan of redemption."²⁸ Referring to the common sphere in her life, Daniells declared the idea that "every line she writes, even in a private letter, is directly inspired by God," as blatantly wrong.²⁹ He further rejected the plagiarism charge against Ellen White. He knew that she had made use of other authors in *Sketches from the Life of Paul* and the *Great Controversy* without always giving credit and using quotation marks. The themes and subject matter discussed in these books were unique. Besides utilizing other authors' words and thoughts, she also made use of her vast corpus of writings. Her preface to the latter work nevertheless clearly explained the procedure and her reasons for it. Daniells conceded that it was probably not the best way of doing it. The publication of another edition of the *Great Controversy* and the book

²⁷ Daniells to Dufty, [1920].

²⁸ Ibid. See also Daniells, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation, Second Series, No. 2," 6; *Report of Bible Conference*, 1189; Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 629.

²⁹ Daniells to Dufty, [1920].

Acts of the Apostles in 1911 rectified that problem.³⁰ Addressing a similar issue of honesty and sincerity, he denied the assertion of some that White had employed the phrase “I have been shown” when she had learned the respective information through other people.³¹

He also objected to the accusation that White assumed the same role for Adventists that Joseph Smith had for the Mormons, i.e. being “the only infallible oracle.” Her writings and teachings had to be tested by the Bible.³² Thus he turned against the practice of employing statements from White to “prove” the veracity of certain doctrinal or exegetical positions.³³ To argue that her writings were “the only safe interpreter of the Bible,” as was supposedly done by A. T. Jones, was “a false doctrine, a false view.”³⁴ Similarly, as noted by McGraw and Valentine, Daniells did not view her as a “dogmatic teacher” or an “authority” on matters of history and theology.³⁵ Discussing the belief of Millerite believers in the “shut door” shortly after the disappointment in 1844, he nevertheless insisted,

³⁰ Daniells to Dufty, [1920]; A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, 24 June 1907, EGWCF, EGWE. See also Poirier, “Ellen White and Sources,” 148; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 401. Similarly, McArthur points out that Daniells was aware that many church members held erroneous assumptions on how White’s historical works were written. See McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 384.

³¹ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1205.

³² Daniells to Dufty, [1920]. Schwarz and Greenleaf point out that Daniells reprimanded ministers who fostered a popular view of White’s writings that made them practically a “part of the sacred canon, resulting in the habit of testing the Bible by Ellen White.” See Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 630.

³³ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1195, 1202-1204. See also Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 629; Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 140.

³⁴ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1195–1198. See also Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 140; Timm, “A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000),” 501.

³⁵ McGraw and Valentine, “Legacy,” 313; *Report of Bible Conference*, 1202–1204. Thus, Daniells argued, she also never ascribed a special authority to the King James Version or any other Bible version. See *Report of Bible Conference*, 1205.

We have no statements from Mrs. E. G. White claiming that it had been revealed to her in vision that probation for the world had closed, and that there was no longer salvation for the unsaved. There is a vast difference between holding a personal belief regarding a question, and declaring that this belief has been obtained by a direct revelation from the Lord.³⁶

Daniells also suggested that her later writings did not contradict or set aside her earlier teachings and fundamental truths.³⁷

There were two extremes—casting doubt on the *Testimonies* or making unwarranted, unrealistic claims for them—and he cautioned Adventist teachers against adopting either of them.³⁸ He did not want to undermine anyone’s confidence in White’s prophetic gift, and aware of how she produced her writings, he admitted, “If I were driven to take the position that some do on the testimonies, I would be shaken.”³⁹ In fact, those claiming “too much” for her writings tended to be shaken in their faith when they discovered, for example, her practice of using other authors.⁴⁰ As the faith of Adventist ministers was not shaken by differing details in the historical accounts of the books of Samuel and Chronicles, they should not allow minor inaccuracies in White’s writings to shake their faith.⁴¹ He suggested that her writings were not to be employed as a test of

³⁶ Daniells to Dufty, [1920].

³⁷ Daniells, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation," 25 November 1926, 3. Compare also *Report of Bible Conference*, 1191, 1210.

³⁸ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1208.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 943, 1190, 1211. McGraw and Valentine note that Daniells did not say one thing that would “create doubts,” or would “in any way depreciate the value of the writings of the spirit of prophecy.” See McGraw and Valentine, "Legacy," 313.

⁴⁰ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1203. Daniells also stated that the reception of such false views by students will create conflicts with teachers who deal with White’s writings honestly. See *ibid.*, 1215.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1222, 1223. See also Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 630.

fellowship before or after admission to the church to allow people to examine them for themselves.⁴²

Sources and Influences

Daniells' views on inspiration were shaped and influenced by his reading of the Bible, close collaboration and experience with Ellen White, knowledge of the views of other Adventist thinkers, and his consultation of the works of other Protestant authors.

In his Bible study he came across a difference in detail between 2 Samuel 23:8 and 1 Chronicles 11:11, suggesting the existence of such minor insignificant differences in the inspired biblical text.⁴³ He also saw the difference between the personal views and the revealed knowledge illustrated in the experience of the Apostle Peter and others. Thus he stated,

[They] believed that the gospel message they were to proclaim was to be confined to the Jewish nation; that the Gentile world was not included in the purpose of God, nor in His commission to them. They not only believed this, but clung to it tenaciously. None of them, however, declared that this had been revealed to them in a vision or revelation from God. But in time the Apostle Peter was given a vision by the Lord on this subject, and the instruction he received through that vision squarely contradicted the personal views he had held and taught. This, with additional revelations, finally led him and all the disciples to abandon their first views and adopt a correct theory. But they were so cautious and slow in making changes that it took years to get into the full light.⁴⁴

His experience with Ellen White and his reading of her writings seems to have had a huge impact on Daniells' conception of the nature and manner of divine inspiration. In the late 1870s he and his wife lived with the Whites for six months when he was

⁴² Daniells to Dufty, [1920].

⁴³ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1222.

⁴⁴ Daniells to Dufty, [1920].

serving James White as secretary. He learned to appreciate both of them.⁴⁵ He got to know her as a “level-headed,” “well-balanced” person who was far from being a “fanatic” or an “extremist.”⁴⁶ During his Australian years he collaborated closely with Ellen White, learned to appreciate her superior advice, and saw how she produced her publications. It was during that period that his personal views of her prophetic gift were settled.

After their return to the United States, he continued to benefit from her counsel. Some of his experiences with her initially generated questions and fears, but they eventually strengthened his belief in her divine inspiration.⁴⁷ Daniells stated that he knew “from many years of close association” with her that she never claimed the direct inspiration of everything she ever wrote or that she would be the only infallible oracle.⁴⁸ In 1902, when he proposed the closing of the Southern Publishing Association to avoid debts, Ellen White agreed with him, yet a few days later she corrected her counsel as a result of divine instruction.⁴⁹ Through his personal interaction with her and her son W. C.

⁴⁵ Ibid. See also McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 28, 29.

⁴⁶ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1219, 1220.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 944. See also Valentine, *The Prophet and the Presidents*, 263. In Australia Daniells saw how the *Desire of Ages* was written and how Ellen White utilized the writings of other authors. He felt that many church members had false impressions about the origin of her works. See *Report of Bible Conference*, 1241–1243; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 393.

⁴⁸ Daniells to Dufty, [1920]; Daniells, “The Shut Door and the Close of Probation, Second Series, No. 2,” 6.

⁴⁹ Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, 326. See also Douglass, “Ellen White as God’s Spokesperson,” 90, 91. In fact, she wrote, “During the night following our interview in my house and out on the lawn under the trees, October 19, 1902, in regard to the work in the Southern field, the Lord instructed me that I had taken a wrong position.” See Ellen G. White to Brethren in Positions of Responsibility, 26 December 1902.

White, he knew that she revised her publications⁵⁰ and that her secretaries had put her writings “in proper grammatical shape.”⁵¹ She had never claimed verbal inspiration.⁵² She wove historical details into her interpretation of prophecy but was willing to correct such details as she saw fit.⁵³ Similarly, he knew that she did not want to be seen as a historian, nor did she want her writings to be elevated above history books.⁵⁴ Through research in and reading of her writings Daniells was able to develop a better understanding of certain aspects of White’s view of inspiration. Thus a careful comparison of her early and later works attested to the progressive nature of White’s inspiration and disproved the charge of “suppression.”⁵⁵ An examination of every statement from her on the “shut door” from 1844 to 1851 convinced him of what she really believed and wrote.⁵⁶ He also felt that his objection to employing White’s writings as a test of church fellowship were supported by her.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Daniells, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation, Second Series, No. 2," 6.

⁵¹ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1189.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 1243. See also Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," 501.

⁵³ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1203, 1212.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1207, 1202-1204. Daniells also remarked that it was important to remember that historians often have different historical data and suggest different interpretations that result in contradictory perceptions of the past. The statements of a historian are therefore not necessarily the last word on a certain subject.

⁵⁵ Daniells to Dufty, [1920]; Daniells, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation," 25 November 1926, 6; Daniells, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation, Second Series, No. 2," 6.

⁵⁶ Daniells to Dufty, [1920]. See the revised form of the arguments in Daniells, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation," 25 November 1926, 3–8.

⁵⁷ Daniells to Dufty, [1920]. See also Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:668.

Some statements made by other Adventist, or former Adventist, writers either influenced Daniells' considerations about inspiration or gave him opportunities to formulate his views. He knew that it was the early Adventist pioneers who had searched the Bible and discovered the doctrines rather than Ellen White who supposedly gave all the instruction.⁵⁸ Seemingly unaware of the 1883 General Conference resolution concerning the revision of the *Testimonies*, he was grateful when F. M. Wilcox pointed him to that resolution.⁵⁹ Daniells emphasized that neither James White nor W. C. White ever claimed verbal inspiration for Ellen White.⁶⁰ His acquaintance and cooperation with several likeminded individuals may have strengthened his convictions too. Pöhler correctly notes the fact that neither Daniells, "Prescott, W. C. White, nor F. M. Wilcox regarded Ellen White as an infallible interpreter of the Bible."⁶¹ Two examples will be mentioned to show Daniells' response to the views of former Adventists. He was aware of A. T. Jones' experience, who began to doubt White's inspiration after realizing that her writings contained "words" which God had not directly given her and that assistants helped her in the choice of language.⁶² Furthermore, shortly after Canright's *Life of Mrs. E. G. White* came out, Daniells was asked to formulate his objections to Canright's

⁵⁸ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1196. Daniells stated that even White's *Early Writings* pointed this out. See also Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 140.

⁵⁹ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1209.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1243. See also Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," 501.

⁶¹ Pöhler, *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching*, 233 fn. 2.

⁶² *Report of Bible Conference*, 1208.

charges against White's claim to divine inspiration. Those charges therefore set the parameters for Daniells' responses.⁶³

The lengthy quotations from Joseph Parker's explanations on inspiration in his work *The People's Bible* suggests that Daniells also consulted the works of other Protestant authors.⁶⁴

The Context of the Statements

For about twenty-five years A. G. Daniells had ample opportunities to familiarize himself and collaborate with Ellen White. He appreciated her advice and support during his Australian years⁶⁵ and his presidency of the General Conference.⁶⁶ He experienced her wisdom and guidance during the Kellogg crisis (1902-1907).⁶⁷ His skillful reply to A. T. Jones' charges against Ellen White's alleged practice of plagiarism in 1907 is an

⁶³ Daniells to Dufty, [1920].

⁶⁴ Ibid. See Joseph Parker, *The People's Bible: Discourses Upon Holy Scripture*, vol. 1 (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1885), ix, x, 8, 10, 11.

⁶⁵ Moon, W. C. *White and Ellen G. White*, 239, 240; Schwarz, "The Perils of Growth, 1886-1905," 77; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 91, 162; Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 215; Knight, A. T. *Jones*, 258; Valentine, *The Prophet and the Presidents*, 210-18; Moon and Kaiser, "For Jesus and Scripture," 63, 67; McArthur, A. G. *Daniells*, 63-65.

⁶⁶ Moon, W. C. *White and Ellen G. White*, 240; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 214; Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 316; Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 112; Valentine, *The Prophet and the Presidents*, 218-303; Moon and Kaiser, "For Jesus and Scripture," 72, 75-80; Butler, "A Portrait," 21.

⁶⁷ Schwarz, "The Perils of Growth, 1886-1905," 104-111; Gary Land, "Shaping the Modern Church, 1906-1930," in *Adventism in America: A History*, ed. Gary Land, rev. ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 122-126; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 201-03; Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 267-72; Schwarz, *John Harvey Kellogg*, 185-94; Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 306; Knight, A. T. *Jones*, 212-78; Valentine, *The Prophet and the Presidents*, 270; Moon and Kaiser, "For Jesus and Scripture," 73, 74, 76, 77; Butler, "A Portrait," 22; Brian C. Wilson, *Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and the Religion of Biologic Living* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), 81, 109-111, 134. On the power struggles during the Kellogg crisis see Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 111-24; Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 114-18.

exemplary illustration of the deep confidence that he had developed in her spiritual leadership over the years. Daniells saw the need to inform church members about the reasons for White's literary customs, which is why he recommended to her son W. C. White to issue a statement.⁶⁸ In the years after Ellen White's death he frequently responded to inflexible and unrealistic views of divine inspiration.

On October 31, 1915, M. C. Wilcox, editor of the *Signs of the Times*, suggested organizing a meeting for church workers to study and agree on certain subjects that heretofore had been the cause of dispute and strife.⁶⁹ Although Daniells considered it an excellent idea,⁷⁰ it was not until 1919 that such a conference materialized. He noted the presence of advocates of both thought inspiration and verbal inspiration in the church and at the conference.⁷¹ He desired that the meetings would identify "the great essentials, the fundamentals" rather than magnify differences.⁷² The selected group of educators, editors, and administrators displayed a "remarkable frankness" in stating their views during the open discussions.⁷³ Many of Daniells' statements on divine inspiration stem

⁶⁸ Daniells to W. C. White, 24 June 1907. Patrick presents Daniells' recommendation to W. C. White as irritated and blunt advice, yet the literary context of the statement suggests otherwise. See Patrick, "Author," 102. Daniells stated that he had already met the charges of plagiarism, yet as he felt that the Whites could more easily explain the background and reasons for the practice, it was easier for them to issue a statement to refute those charges.

⁶⁹ [M. C. Wilcox] to A. G. Daniells and I. H. Evans, 31 October 1915, PIC box 3109, GCA.

⁷⁰ A. G. Daniells to M. C. Wilcox, 15 December 1915, PIC box 3109, GCA. McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 398, suggests that Daniells received his inspiration for such a conference from the Fundamentalist conference that took place around the same time. As noted above, the idea came originally from M. C. Wilcox, yet it is possible that the example of these conferences encouraged Daniells to follow their pattern and organize one for Seventh-day Adventists too.

⁷¹ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1227, 1228.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 9; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 387.

⁷³ Pöhler, *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching*, 158.

from that Bible Conference. His remarks were characterized by a willingness to openly share his experiences with and views on Ellen White's inspiration to promote what he saw as a "more factual, realistic understanding of her role and authority than those who tended to oversimplify, idealize, and absolutize her work."⁷⁴ Aware that church members questioned his and W. W. Prescott's belief in the divine inspiration of Ellen White because they did not advocate her verbal-inerrant inspiration, he supported and defended his colleague.⁷⁵ Unable to agree on the hermeneutical presuppositions, the participants chose to refrain from publicizing their uncertainties and differences.⁷⁶

The publication of Canright's *Life of Mrs. E. G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Prophet* in 1919 confronted a new generation of Adventists with a comprehensive array of old and new arguments against White's prophetic claim.⁷⁷ As Daniells had frequently voiced his disapproval of the book, F. E. Dufty, secretary and treasurer of the Quebec Conference, asked him to clarify his critique and answer nine specific questions. In early

⁷⁴ McGraw and Valentine, "Legacy," 313. Daniells nevertheless expressed his confidence in the divine inspiration of Ellen White, as Douglass and McArthur note, yet not everyone believed him. See Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 517; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 394, 395, 397.

⁷⁵ See Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 281, 282.

⁷⁶ Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 631. For more information on the Bible Conference, see Molleurus Couperous, "The Bible Conference of 1919: Introduction," *Spectrum* 10, no. 1 (1979): 23–26; Bert Haloviak and Gary Land, "Ellen White and Doctrinal Conflict: Context of the 1919 Bible Conference," *Spectrum* 12, no. 4 (1982): 19–34; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 434–41; Campbell, "The 1919 Bible Conference and Its Significance for Seventh-day Adventist History and Theology;" Michael W. Campbell, "Sifting Through the Past: The 1919 Bible Conference, and How It Still Shapes Our Church Today," *Adventist Review*, 28 January 2010, 16–19. Timm asserts that the records of the 1919 Bible Conference were not brought to public attention because "the church leadership at large did not follow Daniells' views of inspiration," yet he seems to overlook the fact that church leaders and teachers who attended the meeting were afraid of the ramifications that publicizing of the minutes among the laity would have. See Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844–2000)," 502.

⁷⁷ D. M. Canright, *Life of Mrs. E. G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Prophet: Her False Claims Refuted* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Pub. Co., 1919).

1920 Daniells explained why he thought the book was “unfair, misleading, and untrustworthy.” Besides providing comprehensive answers to Dufty’s questions, he noted that for fifteen years the General Conference had tried to acquire copies of every early Adventist document and to interview eyewitnesses or their descendants because they wanted to examine the criticism against Adventists and Ellen White closely and thoroughly.⁷⁸ At the 1921 Fall Council in Minneapolis, Minn., Daniells read the “vital parts” of the letter to the delegates who requested it be reprinted.⁷⁹

Daniells was one of the trustees of Ellen White’s estate, but he, like F. M. Wilcox and C. H. Jones, was not fully aware of the nature and role of the trustees.⁸⁰ They thought that the letters and manuscripts should remain in the vault and not be used or released.⁸¹ Surmising that Daniells sought to withhold important testimonies from the church,

⁷⁸ Daniells to Dufty, [1920]. McArthur mistakenly refers to him as “F. G. Duffy” instead of “F. E. Dufty.” Cf. McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 400, 401; and H. E. Rogers, ed., *1918 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1918), 46; H. E. Rogers, ed., *1919 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1919), 48. Interestingly, Dufty apparently left church employment sometime in the summer of 1919 as his name no longer appears in the year books, the *Eastern Canadian Messenger*, or the *Review and Herald* after September 1919. The September 23, 1919 issue of the *Eastern Canadian Messenger* contains the last mention of him: “We are pleased to announce the arrival of our new secretary, Miss Madge Miller, of Washington, D. C., who will at once enter upon her duties as secretary and treasurer of the Quebec Conference, the position formerly held by Brother Dufty who has served with credit.” See F. C. Webster, “Notice,” *Eastern Canadian Messenger*, 23 September 1919, 3.

⁷⁹ See A. G. Daniells to O. Montgomery and F. M. Wilcox, 28 July 1926, WCWCF, EGWE. Timm suggests that Daniells’ views on inspiration were not reflected in publications in the 1920s and 1930s, seemingly signifying the resistance of denominational leaders to his views. See Timm, “A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000),” 502. He overlooks the fact, however, that church leaders requested the publication of his explanations from his letter to Dufty, which contained all basic points of his talks at the 1919 Bible Conference. These points and examples appeared in articles, pamphlets, and a book from 1926 to 1936, as will be shown further below.

⁸⁰ Gilbert M. Valentine, *The Struggle for the Prophetic Heritage: Issues in the Conflict for Control of the Ellen G. White Publications, 1930-1939* (Muak Lek, Thailand: Institute Press, 2006), 42. Valentine cites a letter from A. G. Daniells to General Conference Officers, 17 October 1932, GCA.

⁸¹ Valentine, *The Struggle for the Prophetic Heritage*, 49; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 401, 402, 436-439. Valentine notes that Daniells was aware of the fact that some of the unpublished material dealt with him personally. See Valentine, *The Struggle for the Prophetic Heritage*, 41, 42.

Claude Holmes and J. S. Washburn collected every unpublished manuscript from Ellen White they could find. As information from the Bible Conference leaked out, they felt confirmed in their suspicion that Daniells opposed their belief in the verbal inerrant inspiration of White's writings.⁸² Keenly aware of Daniells' position on the *tāmîd* or "daily" in Daniel 8, they saw him as undermining the divine origin and authority of White's writings.⁸³ In December 1921, Daniells made a last, albeit unsuccessful, attempt to reconcile with Washburn.⁸⁴ Washburn and Holmes circulated pamphlets to unseat Daniells from the General Conference presidency in 1922. His reelection failed as he was lacking sufficient support among the delegates.⁸⁵ His unprecedented tenure (twenty-one years) as well as his controlling leadership style, among other reasons, also contributed to

⁸² Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 283; McGraw and Valentine, "Legacy," 312; Patrick, "Author," 106; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 402, 403.

⁸³ See pp. 379, 384, 385. See also Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 139.

⁸⁴ He apologized for his "injudicious," "free," and "careless" criticism of Washburn's behavior, yet he also encouraged him to reconcile with those in the church whom he had wronged through his tract *The Startling Omega and Its True Genealogy* and in other ways. See A. G. Daniells to J. S. Washburn, 26 December 1921, WCWCF, EGWE. One month later Daniells forwarded that letter to W. C. White who, in turn, was glad about Daniells' attempts to bring about reconciliation. W. C. White also mentioned that he was very pleased with his response to Dufty, so much so that he had read it to a number of other people, and asked if he had made any additions to it yet. See A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, 3 February 1922, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, 9 February 1922, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁸⁵ Land, "Shaping the Modern Church, 1906-1930," 130; Pöhler, *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching*, 157 fn. 1; Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 139; Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 283; Valentine, *The Struggle for the Prophetic Heritage*, 31; Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 122; McGraw and Valentine, "Legacy," 314; Patrick, "Author," 106; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 405-12. Daniells' failed reelection was sometimes interpreted as a sign of a shift towards inerrant verbal inspiration in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the 1920s. However, Daniells and the former General Conference secretary, W. A. Spicer, merely swapped offices. Daniells served as secretary for four years, and many other people in leadership positions opposed the theory of inerrant verbal inspiration as will be seen further below. Nevertheless, there was a strong current of verbal inspiration in the church.

the delegates' desire for a change.⁸⁶ It was nevertheless difficult for him to simply forget the “slanderous political tactics and the damaging smear campaign” against him.⁸⁷

Before beginning his new assignment as director of the Ministerial Association, “Daniells looked at his own spiritual condition” and “studied intensively the published writings of Ellen White.” Struck by the emphasis that she placed on the righteousness through faith in Christ, he stressed the need of a personal relationship with Christ in ministerial institutes in North America.⁸⁸ Thus at the Autumn Council in 1925 he encouraged ministers to study the Bible and the writings of Ellen White.⁸⁹ L. E. Froom, former editor of the *Watchman*, joined Daniells and assisted him in the preparation of literature. The book *Christ Our Righteousness* (1926) was published as a result and *Ministry* magazine, conceived by Daniells and edited by Froom, was born in January 1928.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ See McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 402–15.

⁸⁷ Valentine, *The Struggle for the Prophetic Heritage*, 31. A. T. Jones' slighting comments about Daniells in the *American Sentinel*, illustrating his personal animosity towards the former General Conference president, may have hurt Daniells even more. See Knight, *A. T. Jones*, 281.

⁸⁸ Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 388, 389; Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, 392–96. See also A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, 1 January 1923, WCWCF, EGWE; A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, 23 June 1926, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁸⁹ *Quiet Hints to Ministers*, no. 2 (1925).

⁹⁰ Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, 397–402; Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 389. Pöhler suggests that the subject of righteousness by faith experienced a renewed emphasis in the church in the twentieth century through the influence of Daniells' *Christ Our Righteousness*. See Pöhler, *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching*, 154 fn. 2. Knight notes, however, that this book was not the only one and not the first, but it was one among several books that addressed righteousness by faith in the 1920s. See Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 142–44.

Meanwhile, in the April-May 1926 issue of the *Gathering Call*, E. S. Ballenger raised charges against Ellen White regarding her initial belief in the “shut door.”⁹¹ In fact, responding to an article on the same subject by W. A. Spicer,⁹² the issue printed an earlier correspondence between Ballenger and J. N. Loughborough on the “shut door.”⁹³ Daniells and Froom seemed exasperated at the way Loughborough and Spicer had handled the issue which “created far more perplexity than the problem itself.”⁹⁴ Both had repeated the erroneous “assertion that Seventh-day Adventists held the ‘open door’ and First Day Adventists the ‘shut door’ view.”⁹⁵ Although Daniells’ letter to Dufty six years earlier had primarily addressed Canright’s assertions on the same issue in his *Life of Mrs. E. G. White*, his arguments, for all practical purposes, also refuted Ballenger’s charges.⁹⁶

⁹¹ E. S. Ballenger, "Correspondence with J. N. Loughborough Over the Shut Door," *Gathering Call*, April-May 1926, 82–88; E. S. Ballenger, "Mrs. White Copied from Other Authors Without Giving Them Credit," *Gathering Call*, April-May 1926, 92–94. For more information on the origins of the *Gathering Call*, see Edwards and Land, *Seeker After Light*, 186–89.

⁹² E. S. Ballenger, "An Open Letter to W. A. Spicer, President of the General Conference," *Gathering Call*, April-May 1926, 81. He responded to statements made in W. A. Spicer, "Moments With Old-Time Volumes and Our Pioneers—No. 2: The Shut Door and the Open Door," *Review and Herald*, 1 April 1926, 5–7.

⁹³ Ballenger, "Correspondence with J. N. Loughborough Over the Shut Door," 82–88. It was a slightly improved version of the correspondence’s initial publication in E. S. Ballenger, "A Correspondence Between Eld. E. S. Ballenger and Eld. J. N. Loughborough," *Gathering Call*, March 1919, 2–6.

⁹⁴ Daniells to Montgomery and F. M. Wilcox, 28 July 1926. See also L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 8 August 1926f, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁹⁵ Ibid. See also Daniells to W. C. White, 23 June 1926. In fact, Spicer repeated his point in W. A. Spicer, "Moments With Old-Time Volumes and Our Pioneers-No. 4: The Spirit of Prophecy and the World Work," *Review and Herald*, 15 April 1926, 5; W. A. Spicer, "Moments With Old-Time Volumes and Our Pioneers-No. 5: Spreading Light Amid Conflict," *Review and Herald*, 22 April 1926, 4, 5. Even Claude Holmes felt that Spicer “failed in his attempt” to provide a proper explanation, expressing his hope that Daniells would handle the subject correctly. See Claude E. Holmes to W. C. White, 31 October 1926, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁹⁶ See, e.g., A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, 7 May 1926, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to L. Currow, 12 July 1926, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, 22 June 1926, WCWCF, EGWE; Daniells to W. C. White, 23 June 1926.

He turned them into an article for the *Review* and had numerous people review it to ensure accurate source quotations and appropriate formulations.⁹⁷ W. C. White found the study “exceedingly useful” and fully supported it.⁹⁸ In fact, he suggested its printing as soon as possible in both article and tract form as it would then carry some form of authority and have a lasting influence.⁹⁹ Some church leaders felt differently and, while acknowledging the accuracy of Daniells’ arguments, they were hesitant to approve publishing something that contradicted the statements by Loughborough and Spicer.¹⁰⁰ F. M. Wilcox nevertheless published the article in late November.¹⁰¹ Shortly afterwards the article was reprinted in the pamphlet *The Shut Door and the Close of Probation*.¹⁰²

During the next few years Daniells presented numerous studies on Ellen White and her writings that confirmed the belief in the divine working in her life and ministry.¹⁰³ He occasionally expressed the desire “to write a pamphlet or a series of articles on the spirit of prophecy,” supposedly to “check some of the fanatical positions

⁹⁷ Daniells to Montgomery and F. M. Wilcox, 28 July 1926; A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, 16 August 1926, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁹⁸ W. C. White to Froom, 18 August 1926.

⁹⁹ W. C. White to F. M. Wilcox, 20 October 1926, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Froom, 18 August 1926.

¹⁰⁰ Daniells to W. C. White, 16 August 1926.

¹⁰¹ F. M. Wilcox to W. C. White, 11 October 1926, WCWCF, EGWE; Daniells, “The Shut Door and the Close of Probation,” 25 November 1926, 3–8. Interestingly, while the article mentioned neither Ballenger nor Loughborough and Spicer, it more or less began with assertions from Canright’s *Life of Mrs. E. G. White* to which Daniells responded. See Canright, *Life of Mrs. E. G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Prophet*, 103.

¹⁰² A. G. Daniells and F. M. Wilcox, *The Shut Door and the Close of Probation, and Walking in Advancing Light* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, [1926]).

¹⁰³ See, e.g., L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 15 January 1928, WCWCF, EGWE.

of the radicals and the ultra-liberal tendencies of certain others.”¹⁰⁴ Froom and others urged him to write a book on the gift of prophecy and the thought seemed to impress him as especially younger ministers asked with increasing frequency perplexing questions concerning the inspiration of Ellen White.¹⁰⁵ In late 1929, Daniells was disappointed that he was unable to make much progress on the book, yet, at the behest of F. M. Wilcox, he prepared another series of articles on Ellen White and the shut door for the *Review*.¹⁰⁶ Following a seven-part series by Wilcox on the shut door, Daniells’ previous article on the same subject was successively reprinted as a series of four articles from February 6 to 27, 1930.¹⁰⁷ Sometime later the series was published in pamphlet form, titled *The Faith of the Pioneers*.¹⁰⁸ Daniells began making progress on the book project. Wanting to see a

¹⁰⁴ L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 21 January 1925, WCWCF, EGWE. McArthur suggests, “It seems likely that Daniells initiated the project,” when the General Conference Committee authorized the writing of a “comprehensive book on the Spirit of Prophecy” in 1930. See McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 440. While it is certainly true that Daniells had been pondering the idea of writing something about that subject, it was apparently the encouragement and urging of Froom, W. C. White, and others that convinced him of the need to actually write it.

¹⁰⁵ L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 22 December 1927, WCWCF, EGWE; L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 21 January 1928, WCWCF, EGWE; L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 15 April 1929, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to L. E. Froom, 26 April 1929, WCWCF, EGWE.

¹⁰⁶ L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 25 November 1929, WCWCF, EGWE.

¹⁰⁷ A. G. Daniells, “The Shut Door and the Close of Probation, Second Series, No. 1: The Position of the Spirit of Prophecy Between 1844 and 1851, as Revealed in Original Sources of Our Early Documents and Periodicals,” *Review and Herald*, 6 February 1930, 4, 5; Daniells, “The Shut Door and the Close of Probation, Second Series, No. 2,” 4–6; A. G. Daniells, “The Shut Door and the Close of Probation, Second Series, No. 3: The Position of the Spirit of Prophecy Between 1844 and 1851, as Revealed in Original Sources of Our Early Documents and Periodicals,” *Review and Herald*, 20 February 1930, 6–8; A. G. Daniells, “The Shut Door and the Close of Probation, Second Series, No. 4: The Position of the Spirit of Prophecy Between 1844 and 1851, as Revealed in Original Sources of Our Early Documents and Periodicals,” *Review and Herald*, 27 February 1930, 7, 8.

¹⁰⁸ F. M. Wilcox and A. G. Daniells, *The Faith of the Pioneers: Relating to the Shut Door and the Close of Probation, and the Teaching of the Spirit of Prophecy on These Questions* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, [1930]). That pamphlet contains the same text as the previous pamphlet, except for the insertion of the heading “All Statements Available,” which appears in the article series in 1930 but not in either the article or the pamphlet from 1926. See Daniells, “The Shut Door and the Close of Probation,” 25 November 1926, 4; Daniells and Wilcox, *The Shut Door and the Close of Probation, and Walking in*

volume that could “forward unity” within the church, “silence the lips of opposers,” and “place this blessed gift in its true and rational setting,”¹⁰⁹ Froom became nevertheless worried as Daniells planned to merely “deal with interesting and convincing experiences that he had with Sister White.”¹¹⁰ Having conversed with Daniells and W. C. White about the nature and manner of inspiration,¹¹¹ Froom felt that Daniells would be the person to steer believers past the pitfalls of “the verbal inspiration of Sister White’s writings” and “the other extreme” to “a strong, Scriptural, reasonable presentation, in harmony with the facts and in harmony with the historical position, in harmony with the understanding of

Advancing Light, 6; and cf. Daniells, “The Shut Door and the Close of Probation, Second Series, No. 1,” 5; Wilcox and Daniells, *The Faith of the Pioneers*, 45. It may also be that the pamphlet was published in late 1931 or early 1932. See “[Note on The Faith of the Pioneers],” *Review and Herald*, 14 January 1932, 48; “[Advertisement] Inexpensive Literature of Unusual Value: Faith of the Pioneers,” *Review and Herald*, 2 February 1933, 23. Nevertheless, Daniells’ brief comments on the two pamphlets seems to suggest that the printing of the second pamphlet had occurred much earlier. See A. G. Daniells, “The Shut Door and the Close of Probation: An Important Statement from Mrs. E. G. White,” *Review and Herald*, 14 January 1932, 30.

¹⁰⁹ L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 28 September 1930, WCWCF, EGWE.

¹¹⁰ L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 22 April 1930, WCWCF, EGWE. A series of articles dealing with such experiences was published in the spring of 1930. See Daniells, “The Spirit of Prophecy[—No. 1],” 3, 4; A. G. Daniells, “The Spirit of Prophecy—No. 2,” *Review and Herald*, 27 March 1930, 10–12; A. G. Daniells, “The Spirit of Prophecy—No. 3,” *Review and Herald*, 3 April 1930, 10–12; A. G. Daniells, “The Spirit of Prophecy—No. 4: Remarkable Leadings in the Establishment of the Australasian Missionary College,” *Review and Herald*, 10 April 1930, 9–11; A. G. Daniells, “The Spirit of Prophecy—No. 5: Remarkable Leadings in the Establishment of the Australasian Missionary College,” *Review and Herald*, 17 April 1930, 9, 10; A. G. Daniells, “The Spirit of Prophecy—No. 6: Remarkable Leadings in the Establishment of the Australasian Missionary College,” *Review and Herald*, 24 April 1930, 11, 12. W. C. White probably referred to those articles when he wrote, “I am pleading with the Review and Herald Managers and the Officers of the General Conference, that . . . the articles that Elders Wilcox and Daniells are running through the *Review* regarding the Spirit of Prophecy and its influence upon the growing work of our people, ought to be published in book form so that a minister could have it complete to use when needed.” See W. C. White to Anna L. Hindson, 29 April 1930, WCWCF, EGWE.

¹¹¹ For Froom’s correspondence with W. C. White see, e.g., L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 6 January 1925, WCWCF, EGWE; Froom to W. C. White, 21 January 1925; L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 3 February 1926, WCWCF, EGWE; L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 29 March 1926, WCWCF, EGWE; L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 20 April 1926, WCWCF, EGWE; Froom to W. C. White, 8 August 1926; Froom to W. C. White, 15 January 1928; L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 18 January 1928, WCWCF, EGWE; Froom to W. C. White, 15 April 1929; Froom to W. C. White, 25 November 1929; Froom to W. C. White, 22 April 1930; Froom to W. C. White, 28 September 1930.

those who have had the closest contacts with the manifestation of this gift in the remnant church.”¹¹²

C. H. Watson, then president of the General Conference, made three or four attempts to awaken “a more enthusiastic interest on the part of A. G. Daniells in the work of the [White] estate,” as Valentine points out. In 1931, Daniells eventually moved to California, allowing for monthly meetings of the White Estate board and enabling him to gain a new grasp of the work.¹¹³ In January 1932, another article on the “shut door” appeared from Daniells’ pen that made available a previously unknown letter from Ellen White to Loughborough, in which she acknowledged her initial belief in the “shut door” and stressed her denial of ever receiving a vision “that no more sinners would be converted.”¹¹⁴

The struggle within Seventh-day Adventist church leadership to actually understand the history of the shut door and the theological development between 1844 and the early 1850s contributed largely to the conflict over the years. Daniells’ experience is a clear example of how this confusion was combined with uncertainty regarding Ellen White and inspiration.

¹¹² Froom to W. C. White, 28 September 1930.

¹¹³ Valentine, *The Struggle for the Prophetic Heritage*, 50; Arthur L. White, “The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915,” 27.

¹¹⁴ Daniells, “The Shut Door and the Close of Probation,” 14 January 1932, 30–32. The letter was printed in transcribed and handwritten form. It was a letter from Ellen G. White to Loughborough, 24 August 1874.

Daniells' book eventually appeared in 1936 under the title *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*.¹¹⁵ Discussing the gift of prophecy in the Old and New Testaments, the history of Christianity, and in Ellen White's experience, Daniells affirmed, as McGraw and Valentine observe, "his confidence in the validity and usefulness of Ellen White's unique spiritual gift—even if it was not inerrant."¹¹⁶ Repeating some of his earlier arguments, Daniells emphasized that White's visions were not given as a basis for doctrine or a substitute for Bible study. He further pointed out that light was revealed progressively.¹¹⁷ However, he never witnessed the publication of his book as he had died on March 22, 1935.¹¹⁸

Summary

The examination of Daniells' statements in published and unpublished sources from 1915 to the early 1930s shows much continuity in his views on the nature, manner, and result of divine inspiration. His collaboration with Ellen White and her son W. C.

¹¹⁵ Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*. McArthur correctly suggests that Daniells' correspondence with Dufty contributed, among other factors, to the writing of the book *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*. See McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 400, 401. For information on the development of the book and discussions about its line of argument, see *ibid.*, 440–48, and see p. 399. Fortin shows the defectiveness of Daniells' thesis of a continuous line of prophets throughout Christian history. He concludes that Daniells' "examples simply support the idea of the possibility of the gift of prophecy through the centuries, but lack tangible evidence." See Denis Fortin, "The Reformers and the Gift of Prophecy," in *The Gift of Prophecy in Scripture and History*, eds. Alberto R. Timm and Dwain N. Esmond (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 2015), 230, 231.

¹¹⁶ McGraw and Valentine, "Legacy," 314. Daniells repeated some of his previous arguments, such as, for example, the fact that even biblical writers held some false views although they never claimed to have received them through inspiration. See Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, 254–56. He also repeated White's change of advice concerning the closing of the Nashville publishing house after receiving a divine correction. Yet he stressed that all these experiences confirmed his confidence in the gift. See *ibid.*, 325–29.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 274–76.

¹¹⁸ P. T. Magan, "Life Sketch of Arthur Grosvenor Daniells," *Review and Herald*, 18 April 1935, 2.

White helped him understand the operation of the Holy Spirit in her experience and literary work. As a result, he felt that many church members and some church workers maintained unwarranted, unrealistic views such as verbal inspiration and inerrancy. His objections against those views became especially evident in his remarks at the 1919 Bible Conference and his letter to Dufty, which became the basis for his response to Canright's charges in *Life of Mrs. E. G. White*, and Ballenger's attacks in the *Gathering Call* as well as for numerous articles on Ellen White's prophetic gift, inspiration, the shut door, and so forth in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Daniells opposed the idea that the Holy Spirit inspired her under all and any circumstances, suggesting that there existed a private sphere in her life too. While he believed that her overall interpretation of Scripture was true and reliable, he did not think that her interpretation exhausted the meaning of a given passage. Likewise, while he believed that her overall interpretation of historical events was reliable, he did not ascribe infallibility to every historical detail and quotation found in her writings. He further suggested that subsequent revelations motivated her to reflect in her writings the increased precision, greater comprehensiveness, and new emphases of these revelations. Daniells' urge to inform the church about new insights in prophetic interpretation and proper assumptions concerning White's writings may have been among the reasons for people such as Holmes and Washburn to successfully campaign against another presidential term for Daniells. The termination of his General Conference presidency provided him, however, with more time to study Ellen White's writings and to employ his publications to guide church members and workers through extremes on both ends—strict views of White's inspiration and criticism against her inspiration.

Evangelistic Zeal and Militance: Judson S. Washburn

Judson S. Washburn (1863-1955) was a Seventh-day Adventist minister, evangelist, and missionary. He grew up in the same community as Arthur G. Daniells and was a nephew of George I. Butler, both of whom served as presidents of the General Conference.¹¹⁹ From 1891 to 1902 he served as a missionary in Great Britain, where he was “probably the most effective Seventh-day Adventist public evangelist.”¹²⁰ He was encouraged by the support that he received from Ellen White for his innovative evangelistic methods.¹²¹ After his return to the United States, he played a leading part in the move of the denominational headquarters from Michigan to Washington, D.C. in 1903.¹²² He later served as a minister and evangelist in Tennessee (1906-1913), Eastern Pennsylvania (1914-1920), Ohio (1921-1923), and the Columbia Union (1924-1932). In 1910, he became interested in the traditional Adventist interpretation of the *tāmîd* (continual, daily) in Daniel 8, which led him to join S. N. Haskell and others in advocating that interpretation. After the death of Ellen White in 1915, Washburn perceived the need to defend the inspiration of her writings against critical influences. His agitation of a more verbal view of inspiration and other theological subjects influenced

¹¹⁹ J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 28 May 1912, PIC box 3105, GCA; McArthur, A. G. *Daniells*, 402.

¹²⁰ Whidden, *E. J. Waggoner*, 325.

¹²¹ Michael W. Campbell, "Washburn, Judson Sylvanus (1863-1955)," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 540.

¹²² McArthur, A. G. *Daniells*, 158–160, 163, 228; Jonathan Butler, "The Seventh-day Adventist American Dream," *Adventist Heritage* 3, no. 1 (1976): 9.

the theological assumptions of many church members and even church-political sentiments within the denomination.¹²³

Concept of Inspiration

While Washburn made a few remarks about the inspiration of Scripture, the majority of his comments dealt with the inspiration of Ellen White's writings. Scholars have observed that Washburn advocated an inerrantist position concerning both the Bible and White's writings.¹²⁴

He suggested that as Hebrew was the language that God had used to communicate with ancient Israel, the biblical writings were given "in God's own language."¹²⁵ White's writings were "as truly the inspired, authoritative word of God" as was the Bible. Thus, he argued, "When it is proven that the *Testimonies* bear the Bible test, then we know that they are the inspired word of the Lord, as truly as the Bible and on the same level. The Bible is God's general word, for all time and for every people. The *Testimonies* are God's special word, for this special time and people."¹²⁶ Since he viewed her writings as a final, infallible interpreter of Scripture, interpretations of biblical passages that seemingly contradicted statements from White were to be disregarded and rejected.¹²⁷ Her writings

¹²³ Campbell, "Washburn, Judson Sylvanus (1863-1955)," 540, 541. See also "[Obituary:] Judson S. Washburn," *Review and Herald*, 25 August 1955, 26, 27.

¹²⁴ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 139, 141; McGraw and Valentine, "Legacy," 312; Campbell, "Washburn, Judson Sylvanus (1863-1955)," 541.

¹²⁵ J. S. Washburn, "God's Hymn Book," *Review and Herald*, 3 June 1915, 4, 5; J. S. Washburn, "God's Hymn Book," *Bible Training School*, November 1915, 12. He suggested, on the other hand, that the proponents of the new view of the *tāmīd* thought that "the Lord was unfortunate in the use of language." See J. S. Washburn to S. N. Haskell, 9 February 1910, EGWCF, EGWE.

¹²⁶ J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 1 May 1922, WCWCF, EGWE.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

were entirely in harmony with Scripture, and all parts of them, whether on history, health, or theology, were inspired.¹²⁸ The *Testimonies* were either all from the Lord or all from the devil.¹²⁹

Objections to Other Views

Washburn primarily objected to ideas relative to the inspiration of Ellen White that allowed for a lesser degree of accuracy or that saw a difference in authority between Scripture and her writings. Responding to the idea that her writings were not on par with Scripture, he wrote, “At a recent Institute, you held up the Bible in the one hand and the *Testimonies* in the other and said, ‘We do not test the Bible by the *Testimonies*, but we do test the writings of Sister White by the Bible. Therefore the *Testimonies* do not stand on the same level with the Bible.’ That is simple Higher Criticism.”¹³⁰

Since Washburn believed that the Spirit of Prophecy gave special revelations and divinely inspired messages, he objected to the assertion that every believer rather than merely a few individuals had the Spirit of Prophecy.¹³¹ Suggesting that everything Ellen White had written was divinely inspired, Washburn warned against the view that “some things” written by her were not *Testimonies*.¹³² A number of other assertions were rejected by him as well, including that Ellen White had been “changeable and utterly

¹²⁸ J. S. Washburn to Claude E. Holmes, 18 April 1920, WCWCF, EGWE.

¹²⁹ J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 16 November 1906, PIC box 3083, GCA.

¹³⁰ Washburn to Daniells, 1 May 1922.

¹³¹ Washburn to Daniells, 14 February 1907.

¹³² Washburn to Daniells, 16 November 1906.

unreliable,” that “there were imperfect statements in the *Testimonies*,”¹³³ or that her writings were “not inspired as to history, . . . health reform, or . . . theology.”¹³⁴ As her statement in *Early Writings* concerning the *tāmîd* seemed plain enough to him, allegedly supporting the old interpretation of the term, he declared that everyone who advocated the new interpretation of that term and passage from Daniel 8 had turned against Ellen White and shown his/her disbelief in her divine inspiration and authority in interpretational matters.¹³⁵ The beauty of the language in her writings was, in his view, not a human product—either by her or her literary assistants—but a result of divine inspiration. Thus he wrote,

While I was living in Washington, D. C., Sister White wrote me under date of September 18, 1890, a very remarkable letter of nine pages. At the urgent request of friends, this letter has been photographed and printed, so that every one can have a copy in Sister White’s own hand-writing. It is sometimes said that the beauties of her wonderful books were not her work bu[t] that of her secretaries. This letter in her own hand-writing proves that statement false. That this divine inspiration, the supernatural beauty, warmth and tenderness of the messages of one so evidently unschooled in worldly wisdom, did not come in any degree from any human source, but from God Himself, this uncorrected, uncensored letter in her own hand-writing,—this wonderful letter so filled with the very breath of heaven, the Holy Spirit forever demonstrates.¹³⁶

All of his objections were intended to restrain any critical attempts to diminish a belief in the divine authority and utter trustworthiness of White’s writings.

¹³³ Washburn to Daniells, 1 May 1922; J. S. Washburn to W. C. White, 5 September 1910, Claude E. Holmes Collection, box 1, fld 7, CAR; Washburn to Haskell, 9 February 1910.

¹³⁴ Washburn to Holmes, 18 April 1920.

¹³⁵ Ibid. See also Washburn to Haskell, 9 February 1910. Addressing Daniells, he wrote, “Those who are changing the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist, sealed by the Divine Spirit of Prophecy, are committing a grievous sin against God and His people that God only can forgive, after true repentance. . . . My father was a faithful, firm believer in the original Third Angel’s Message. He looked with horror on the ‘new’ theory of the ‘Daily,’ and the whole brood of new doctrines that go with it, as held by Waggoner and Prescott, and by yourself.” See Washburn to Daniells, 1 May 1922.

¹³⁶ J. S. Washburn, “An Inspired Letter,” *Columbia Union Visitor*, 15 November 1923, 3; Washburn to W. C. White, 5 September 1910.

Sources and Influences

It is a difficult task to determine the sources and underlying influences for Washburn's concept of inspiration, yet a few similarities to other writers and contemporary events can be detected. His reading of Ellen White's writings seems to have been one major influence in his understanding of her inspiration. The 1919 Bible Conference and Claude E. Holmes' communications to him around 1920 seem to have triggered some of his other statements on inspiration.

His confidence in White's writings was strengthened through his reading of her testimonies and writings.¹³⁷ When, in 1890, he received an "uncorrected, uncensored letter in her own hand-writing," he felt that it was sufficient proof of her divine inspiration because "this wonderful letter [was] so filled with the very breath of heaven." In his view, it further disproved the assertion that her assistants had written her books.¹³⁸ He believed that a number of his ideas appeared already in her earlier writings. Thus, already in 1860, she had emphasized that there was "no half-way work" concerning her writings; the testimonies originated either with the Holy Spirit or with the devil.¹³⁹ Similarly, Washburn stated that her *Testimonies* were either all from the Lord or from the devil.¹⁴⁰ As Ellen White had frequently affirmed the divine origin and reliability of her

¹³⁷ Washburn himself referred to an interview he had with Ellen White in Ottawa, Kans., shortly after the 1888 General Conference session, as a turning point in his life. Since then he had complete trust in her divine inspiration. See 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 Biblical Scholars in New York City, 14 November 1979), 29, 30.

¹³⁸ Washburn, "An Inspired Letter," 3.

¹³⁹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:230.

¹⁴⁰ Washburn to Daniells, 16 November 1906.

writings, Washburn felt encouraged in his view that her writings were on a par with Scripture and in his blatant critique of those objecting to that position.¹⁴¹

Washburn stated that he fully endorsed Holmes' view of inspiration,¹⁴² drafted in response to statements made during the 1919 Bible Conference. In fact, his reply to a letter from Holmes shows a particular like-mindedness. The latter had stated his belief that White's writings were "the word of the Lord" and "Scripture," that everything she had written was divinely inspired, and that her writings on "history, theology, and health reform" were inerrantly inspired,¹⁴³ all ideas that Washburn affirmed in his reply. It is important to note that their remarks came in response to Daniells' statements that White's writings might contain a few minor mistakes on inconsequential matters, statements that Washburn interpreted as a complete denial of her inspiration.¹⁴⁴

The Context of the Statements

The majority of J. S. Washburn's statements on divine inspiration stem from his interaction with and critique of A. G. Daniells and W. W. Prescott. While their relations were quite positive and collegial between 1900 and 1910,¹⁴⁵ they became severely strained after 1910.

¹⁴¹ Washburn to Claude E. Holmes, 18 April 1920; Washburn to Daniells, 1 May 1922.

¹⁴² Washburn to Claude E. Holmes, 18 April 1920.

¹⁴³ Claude E. Holmes, *Have We an Infallible Spirit of Prophecy?* (Washington, DC: Author, 1920), 1–11.

¹⁴⁴ Washburn to Claude E. Holmes, 18 April 1920.

¹⁴⁵ See also Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily'," 29.

Washburn's early correspondence suggests a deep confidence in Ellen White's prophetic gift and her writings,¹⁴⁶ as well as his conviction that Daniells felt similarly towards her writings.¹⁴⁷ Even a seeming mishap did not seem to shake his trust in either Daniells or Prescott. Thus, in 1903, a letter from her had supposedly slipped through Prescott's hands before it was published, yet Washburn was apparently willing to give Daniells and Prescott the benefit of the doubt.¹⁴⁸ Matters were cleared up to his satisfaction when he learned through W. C. White that the letter had, in fact, been taken back to his mother for her to add more material.¹⁴⁹ During the Kellogg crisis Washburn, like Daniells and Prescott, defended Ellen White's testimonies against the attacks of Kellogg and his allies in Battle Creek, Mich. He was pleased with and supported Daniells' responses to A. T. Jones.¹⁵⁰ He explained the background of some testimonies to strengthen the confidence of such who had been prejudiced by Kellogg and Jones against her writings.¹⁵¹ Washburn felt that Jones was the originator and influence behind some of the critical publications against Ellen White.¹⁵² He was further instrumental in

¹⁴⁶ See, e.g., J. S. Washburn to Sister, 20 April 1904, PIC box 3077, GCA; J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 27 July 1906, PIC box 3083, GCA.

¹⁴⁷ J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 20 February 1907, PIC box 3087, GCA.

¹⁴⁸ J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 15 February 1903, PIC box 3073, GCA. Ellen White had written a letter to the *Review and Herald* for the Washington church. Such letters helped Washburn to raise funds to purchase the property on which the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church, Washington Missionary College, and Washington Sanitarium were built. See Campbell, "Washburn, Judson Sylvanus (1863-1955)," 541.

¹⁴⁹ J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 25 February 1903, PIC box 3073, GCA.

¹⁵⁰ J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 23 May 1906, PIC box 3083, GCA; Washburn to Daniells, 27 June 1906.

¹⁵¹ Washburn to Daniells, 16 November 1906.

¹⁵² Washburn to Daniells, 14 February 1907; Washburn to Daniells, 24 February 1907.

moving the denominational headquarters from Battle Creek to Washington, D.C. Being a member of the Committee on the Memorial Church Fund, he frequently asked for donations for the new church building in the nation's capital.¹⁵³ To strengthen the call for donations, he urged Daniells to request letters of support for that project from Ellen White.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, Washburn issued a compilation of quotations from her writings to motivate church members to give for the work in the South.¹⁵⁵ In addition, he was encouraged to see Daniells' willingness to talk with her and W. C. White about the work among African Americans in the South.¹⁵⁶ In 1908, his confidence in her advice was strengthened when she replied to a request from him by expressing her hope that he would continue working in the South.¹⁵⁷ When Irving A. Ford avoided reading those parts of her testimony that dealt with him personally to the workers in Nashville, Washburn became upset about Ford's suppression and disregard for portions of her writings.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 3 September 1906, PIC box 3083, GCA; J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 10 October 1906, PIC box 3083, GCA; J. S. Washburn, Call for Donations for the Church in Washington, D.C., [1906], PIC box 3083, GCA.

¹⁵⁴ J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 20 October 1907e, PIC box 3087, GCA; J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 3 November 1907, PIC box 3087, GCA; J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 4 November 1907, PIC box 3087, GCA.

¹⁵⁵ Daniells felt that the compilation was somewhat one-sided, yet Washburn explained that it was only to be circulated in the South and a more comprehensive version was to be circulated in the North. See J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 2 December 1906, PIC box 3083, GCA. See also J. S. Washburn, "The Appeal of the Spirit of Prophecy in Reference to the Southern Work," [1906], PIC box 3083, GCA.

¹⁵⁶ Washburn to Daniells, 20 October 1907.

¹⁵⁷ J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 11 February 1908, PIC box 3091, GCA; J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 5 March 1908, PIC box 3091, GCA; J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 31 May 1908, PIC box 3091, GCA; J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 10 July 1908, PIC box 3091, GCA.

¹⁵⁸ Washburn to Daniells, 11 February 1908.

Two years later Washburn joined S. N. Haskell, J. N. Loughborough, and others in complaining about Daniells' and Prescott's agitation of the new view of the *tāmîd*.¹⁵⁹ This episode brings to view the basic fracture point between Washburn and them. He considered their "pushing" of the subject as a disregard of Ellen White's apparent affirmation of the traditional view of the term in *Early Writings* and her request to cease discussing the subject altogether. For the next five years Washburn's correspondence was characterized by frequent accusations against the motives and activities of these church leaders. Prescott and his *Protestant Magazine* became special targets of his charges because he felt that Prescott's adjustments of prophetic times "set his own authority above the Spirit of Prophecy" and cast a shadow of doubt on all writings of Ellen White. In 1915 Washburn even circulated a document containing his correspondence with Prescott on the magazine.¹⁶⁰ Prescott felt particularly hurt by "most cruel things" that Washburn had said about him.¹⁶¹ W. C. White tried to convince Washburn, albeit unsuccessfully, that while it was not entirely clear to what Millerite prophetic chart his mother was referring in *Early Writings*, she evidently stressed the time aspect of the *tāmîd* rather than a particular definition of the term. W. C. White further stated that she had cautioned both sides in the controversy to refrain from using her writings to support either view and was disappointed that some would "challenge or question the loyalty to

¹⁵⁹ Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily'," 30, 31.

¹⁶⁰ Washburn to W. C. White, 5 September 1910; W. W. Prescott to J. S. Washburn, 24 May 1915, Claude E. Holmes Collection, box 1, fld 7, CAR; Washburn to Prescott, 24 May 1915.

¹⁶¹ Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 233.

the *Testimonies* of those who [were] holding new views regarding the 'Daily.'"¹⁶² When Daniells explained his difficulty to fully grasp some of Ellen White's statements, Washburn inferred that Daniells "evidently" "thought" that she was "a very uncertain, unreliable individual."¹⁶³ In 1912 Daniells thwarted plans by the Atlantic Union Conference leaders to move Washburn to Boston to engage in city missions. Washburn thought that Daniells' reasons were not only unsatisfactory but also contrary to Ellen White's counsel, cementing in his opinion the idea that Daniells had plotted against him and the Spirit of Prophecy.¹⁶⁴ He insinuated that Daniells obstructed his engagement in city missions because he was preoccupied with his view of the *tāmîd*.¹⁶⁵ While he desired to maintain their friendship,¹⁶⁶ he conceded that he was "rather a troublesome [friend] at times."¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Washburn continued to employ White's writings to prove the disloyalty of Prescott and others to her writings.¹⁶⁸ His bitter and antagonistic campaign against Prescott throughout the Southern Union Conference caused church leaders to

¹⁶² W. C. White to J. S. Washburn, 27 October 1910, Claude E. Holmes Collection, box 2, fld 12, CAR.

¹⁶³ Washburn to W. C. White, 5 September 1910. See also Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily,'" 31.

¹⁶⁴ J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 12 May 1912, PIC box 3105, GCA; Washburn to Daniells, 28 May 1912; J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 4 July 1912, EGWCF, EGWE.

¹⁶⁵ Washburn to Daniells, 4 July 1912; J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 22 July 1912, PIC box 3105, GCA.

¹⁶⁶ J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 27 September 1912, PIC box 3105, GCA.

¹⁶⁷ J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 7 October 1912, PIC box 3105, GCA.

¹⁶⁸ Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 261.

summon him to the denominational headquarters on account of “his divisive activities,” yet even this failed to “deter him.”¹⁶⁹

After the death of Ellen White in 1915, Washburn developed an increasing interest in the study of her testimonies, trying to obtain as many of her published and unpublished materials as possible.¹⁷⁰ Claude E. Holmes, a young linotype operator at the Review and Herald publishing house,¹⁷¹ was similarly interested in acquiring unpublished testimonies. In the following years Holmes became Washburn’s “closest ally.”¹⁷² Both were united by their desire to defend the absolute inerrancy of White’s inspiration¹⁷³ and to expose the disregard that specific church leaders had for her writings. They interpreted the initial no-release policy of White’s unpublished writings in the years after her death as an attempt by the leadership to withhold important testimonies from circulation. Following a miscommunication in 1917, Holmes gained access to and made copies of numerous unpublished testimonies from Ellen White in the General Conference vault. When asked to return them, he chose to leave church employment. Nevertheless, in subsequent years he and Washburn utilized these materials against Daniells and other

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 254, 255.

¹⁷⁰ Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily'," 30.

¹⁷¹ Michael W. Campbell, "Holmes, Claude E. (1881-1953)," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 413. In 1916, Holmes was, in fact, an associate editor of the *Review and Herald* and *Liberty* magazine, and until 1918 he served as a member of the Religious Liberty Association. See H. E. Rogers, ed., *1916 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1916), 15, 192, 195; Rogers, *1918 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination*, 15.

¹⁷² McArthur, A. G. *Daniells*, 403. See also Campbell, "Washburn, Judson Sylvanus (1863-1955)," 541.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

leaders because they believed they had undermined the authority and inspiration of White's writings.¹⁷⁴

Meanwhile Washburn requested more information from W. C. White about the production of *Sketches from the Life of Paul* and the *Great Controversy* because some people had made charges of plagiarism and illicit modifications. Washburn assured him that he had no question about these things but desired to receive information to help others.¹⁷⁵

A number of issues relating to the inspiration of Ellen White and the role of her writings were discussed during the 1919 Bible Conference. Neither Washburn nor Holmes were present at the meetings, yet they probably obtained information from some attendees. Statements by Daniells, Prescott, and others spurred Holmes to write a letter to Washburn on April 1, 1920.¹⁷⁶ Aware of White's use of other sources, he suggested that while she as a person was not an authority on history, health, and theology, her inspiration enabled her to choose such things from the works of other writers that were true and as a result her statements on these subjects became authoritative. In addition, he

¹⁷⁴ McGraw and Valentine, "Legacy," 312; Campbell, "Holmes, Claude E. (1881-1953)," 413. When D. M. Canright published this incident in his book *Life of Mrs. E. G. White*, Holmes requested the publisher to eliminate the respective statements from the book as he felt that his character was misrepresented. See Claude E. Holmes to Standard Pub. Co., 25 April 1926, WCWCF, EGWE. See also Claude E. Holmes to W. C. White, [1926], WCWCF, EGWE.

¹⁷⁵ J. S. Washburn to W. C. White, 7 December 1916, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to J. S. Washburn, 3 January 1917, WCWCF, EGWE. Claude Holmes also looked closer into the copyright issues of some of the works that Ellen White had utilized and the changes made in the 1911 edition of the *Great Controversy*. See Claude E. Holmes to Library of Congress, Copyright Office, 21 April 1921, WCWCF, EGWE; Library of Congress Copyright Office to Claude E. Holmes, 28 April 1921, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Claude E. Holmes, January 1, 191[9], WCWCF, EGWE.

¹⁷⁶ Michael Campbell outlines how information about the discussions at the Bible conference may have come to Holmes. See Campbell, "The 1919 Bible Conference and Its Significance for Seventh-day Adventist History and Theology," 90 fn. 2.

stressed, “I draw no line between the so-called human and divine; they are all Scripture to me.”¹⁷⁷ Shortly afterwards Holmes published his letter as a pamphlet for general circulation.¹⁷⁸ On April 18, Washburn replied to Holmes’ communication. First, he concurred with Holmes’ thoughts on Ellen White’s inspiration.

I was deeply interested in your letter of April 1, on the subject of the inspiration of the writings of Sister White, and most heartily indorse [*sic*] every word you have written. You have laid down fundamental principles that are vital, not only on the question of the inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy, but on the question of the inspiration of [the] Bible itself. It would be just as reasonable and logical to take the position that the Bible is not inspired on history, astronomy or theology, as to take the position that the writings of Sister White are not inspired on history, theology and health reform.¹⁷⁹

He continued by accusing Prescott of having originated entirely “new and strange teachings” in the church such as the doctrine of the Trinity¹⁸⁰ and the new view of the

¹⁷⁷ Claude E. Holmes to J. S. Washburn, 1 April 1920, CAR. Holmes emphasized that Ellen White’s “*Testimonies* are Scripture to me.” See Claude E. Holmes to W. C. White, 18 January 1919, WCWCF, EGWE. See also Holmes to W. C. White, 31 October 1926. Writing to W. C. White in October, he objected to influences that “undermine faith in your mother’s writings as the word of the Lord. Nevertheless to me they are Scripture.” See Claude E. Holmes to W. C. White, [September/October 1919], WCWCF, EGWE. Interestingly, both times W. C. White avoided commenting on Holmes’ equation of his mother’s writings with Scripture. See W. C. White to Claude E. Holmes, 5 March 1919, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Claude E. Holmes, 5 October 1919, WCWCF, EGWE. In 1926, Holmes wrote in a similar manner that for him all of Ellen White’s communications were “instruction from the Lord for them and the church.” See Claude E. Holmes to Sarah McEnterfer, 3 July 1926, WCWCF, EGWE.

¹⁷⁸ Holmes, *Have We an Infallible Spirit of Prophecy?*

¹⁷⁹ Washburn to Holmes, 18 April 1920. Washburn thought that the 1919 Bible Conference was “the most terrible thing that had ever happened in the history of this denomination.” See Washburn to Daniells, 1 May 1922.

¹⁸⁰ The history of the transition from Antitrinitarianism to Trinitarianism in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is outlined in Jerry Moon, “The Adventist Trinity Debate, Part I: Historical Overview,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41, no. 1 (2003): 113–29; Merlin D. Burt, “Demise of Semi-Arianism and Anti-Trinitarianism in Adventist Theology (1888–1957)” (Term paper, Andrews University, 1996); Merlin D. Burt, “History of the Seventh-day Adventist Views on the Trinity,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17, no. 1 (2006): 125–39; Denis Kaiser, “The Reception of Ellen G. White’s Trinitarian Statements By Her Contemporaries, 1897–1915,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 50, no. 1 (2012): 25–38.

tāmîd.¹⁸¹ He campaigned against him and other Adventist teachers because he considered that doctrinal package as a part of an Omega apostasy that undermined the inspiration and authority of White's writings.¹⁸² General Conference workers were "shocked and chagrined" about Washburn's "bitter attack" and "gross misstatements."¹⁸³ Washburn did not rule out the possibility that he may have used some harsh and unfortunate expressions, yet he nevertheless asked Holmes to print twenty-four copies in loose-leaf form, with the intent of exposing existing conditions and principles rather than individuals.¹⁸⁴ Trying to reconcile with his old friend Washburn, Daniells apologized for his "injudicious" and "careless" criticism, but also remarked that some of Washburn's accusations were false and unchristian.¹⁸⁵ Feeling that Daniells' letter could bring about a change of attitude, W. C. White "rejoice[d]" about his attempts to reconcile.¹⁸⁶ Still convinced that Daniells denied the divine inspiration of Ellen White's writings, Washburn and Holmes continued to campaign against him and Prescott. In May 1922, Washburn's response¹⁸⁷ was printed by Holmes alongside Daniells' letter and

¹⁸¹ The history of the conflict over the *tāmîd* in Daniel 8 is described in my master's thesis. See Kaiser, "The History of the Adventist Interpretation of the 'Daily' in the Book of Daniel from 1831 to 2008."

¹⁸² Washburn to Holmes, 18 April 1920. See also Holmes to Hayes, 24 September 1921 (printed in leaflet form).

¹⁸³ M. E. Kern to W. C. White, 9 March 1921, WCWCF, EGWE. W. C. White likewise felt "deep regret that such a letter should have been written." See W. C. White to M. E. Kern, 17 March 1921, WCWCF, EGWE.

¹⁸⁴ J. S. Washburn to A. G. Daniells, 10 February 1921, WCWCF, EGWE.

¹⁸⁵ Daniells to Washburn, 26 December 1921.

¹⁸⁶ W. C. White to Daniells, 9 February 1922.

¹⁸⁷ Washburn to Daniells, 1 May 1922.

Washburn's earlier letter to Holmes from April 1920 in a pamphlet¹⁸⁸ that they distributed among the delegates and attendees of the 1922 General Conference session.¹⁸⁹

Washburn and Holmes would continue to vilify Daniells, Prescott, and other leaders for the remainder of their lives.¹⁹⁰ In 1923 Washburn stressed that the traditional view of the *tāmîd* was correct because it was taught in Uriah Smith's *Thoughts on Daniel and Revelation* and as Ellen White had repeatedly endorsed that book, it was "in the same class as *Great Controversy* and *Patriarchs and Prophets*."¹⁹¹ Three years later, when Daniells' *Christ Our Righteousness* appeared, Washburn's pamphlet was reprinted and thus Washburn continued to charge Daniells, as McArthur notes, for his failure to regard White's writings "as an infallible guide and at least equal to the Scriptures."¹⁹² As Daniells and Prescott continued to promote their "apostate" views on the *tāmîd*, Washburn kept accusing them for their lack of respect for her testimonies.¹⁹³ In 1930 Washburn expressed his continued animosity towards Daniells when he wrote to the newly elected General Conference president C. H. Watson that he should not feel he was

¹⁸⁸ J. S. Washburn, *The Startling Omega and Its True Genealogy* (Philadelphia, PA: Author, 1922).

¹⁸⁹ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 139; Campbell, "Holmes, Claude E. (1881-1953)," 413; Valentine, *The Struggle for the Prophetic Heritage*, 31; Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily'," 32-34; Campbell, "The 1919 Bible Conference and Its Significance for Seventh-day Adventist History and Theology," xiv-xv fn. 2, 99.

¹⁹⁰ Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 312, 316, 324-326. See also George R. Knight, "Adventists and Change," *Ministry*, October 1993, 11.

¹⁹¹ J. S. Washburn to Meade McGuire, 18 February 1923, Claude E. Holmes Collection, box 1, fld 7, CAR.

¹⁹² McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 425.

¹⁹³ J. S. Washburn to Claude E. Holmes, 21 May 1929, Claude E. Holmes Collection, box 1, fld 7, CAR.

bound in any way to Daniells' policies.¹⁹⁴ In his battle against the influence of biblical criticism and new theology in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Washburn had become increasingly alienated from church leaders. Yet, as Knight notes, his and Holmes' position on the verbal and inerrant inspiration of Ellen White subsequently dominated the church as both ministers and lay members "all too often" employed her writings as the "greater light . . . rather than the Bible."¹⁹⁵

Summary

From 1905 to 1930 J. S. Washburn shared his views on inspiration in private correspondence with other Adventists. That denominational periodicals do not contain articles from him on the subject of inspiration may be explained by their unwillingness to promote his views and/or from his own decision not to expose himself and his views to the Adventist public through that venue.

Washburn was opposed to any idea or argument that would potentially diminish a belief in the authority and reliability of Ellen White's writings. Thus he upheld a belief in the inerrant verbal inspiration of her writings. While he was aware of the fact that she as a person was not infallible, he suggested that one should not judge whether some things written by her were inspired, thus negating any difference between the common and the sacred in her life. In addition to these views of inspiration, he stressed that White's writings contained no "imperfect statements" and were a final, infallible interpreter of Scripture. Since church leaders such as A. G. Daniells and W. W. Prescott advocated the new interpretation of the *tāmīd* in Daniel 8 and opposed the idea that the Bible or White's

¹⁹⁴ J. S. Washburn to C. H. Watson, 3 May 1930, PGF box 3124, GCA.

¹⁹⁵ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 141.

writings were inerrantly verbally inspired, a strained and then conflicted relationship developed between them and Washburn after 1910—and particularly after the 1919 Bible Conference. His alienation from them drove him closer to Claude Holmes and others who also held more strict views of inspiration. Holmes published and circulated Washburn's April 1920 letter to him, a document that probably helped thwart Daniells' plans for another presidential term. Washburn and Holmes appear to have had a real but limited influence in the leading circles of the denomination.

Honesty and Encouragement: The Writing Ministry of F. M. Wilcox

Francis McLellan Wilcox (1865-1951) was an evangelist, editor, administrator, and writer. After he worked in city mission work in New York City from 1886 to 1890, he edited the *Sabbath School Worker* (1891-1893) and the *Home Missionary* (1893-1897). Subsequently he served as chaplain at the Boulder Sanitarium in Boulder, Colo. In 1909, he became an associate editor of the *Review and Herald*, and two years later he became its chief editor, a position he held until 1944. Appointed by Ellen White's last will as one of the original five trustees of her estate, he served in that position for thirty-six years following her death in 1915. Wilcox interacted closely with Ellen White and her son W. C. White, seeking advice for his work and finding suitable articles for publication.¹⁹⁶ Some of his works had a tremendous influence on the denominational position concerning the inspiration of Ellen White. Church historian L. E. Froom depicts

¹⁹⁶ "Wilcox, Francis McLellan (1865-1951)," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 570; Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, 417.

him as “the personification of Adventism” because he was accepted by all parties in the church and was able to formulate a balanced statement of beliefs that everyone could accept.¹⁹⁷ Given his position as editor of the *Review*, his views on divine inspiration played a decisive role in shaping church members’ perception of inspiration.¹⁹⁸

Concept of Inspiration

The publications and correspondence of F. M. Wilcox contain numerous statements about the inspiration of the biblical writers and Ellen G. White, yet he refrained from explicitly affirming a particular theory of inspiration. His implicit remarks and his objections to other views are nevertheless a good indication of his concept of inspiration.

He stated that the Bible as the product of inspiration was “a union of the human with the divine.”¹⁹⁹ God revealed “great, infallible,” and “holy themes” through inspired writers.²⁰⁰ The writings of the New Testament were “on a parity” with those of the Old Testament, presenting a “perfect and harmonious whole.”²⁰¹ The biblical writers were nevertheless “sinful by nature” and “fallible in judgment,” “compassed with human frailties and weaknesses of character.” Sometimes they had difficulties comprehending

¹⁹⁷ Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, 417, 418.

¹⁹⁸ Land, “Shaping the Modern Church, 1906-1930,” 128.

¹⁹⁹ F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10]: The Question of Verbal Inspiration,” *Review and Herald*, 18 October 1928, 11; F. M. Wilcox, “The Holy Scriptures: Their Divine Origin,” *Review and Herald*, 9 August 1928, 4.

²⁰⁰ F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10],” 11.

²⁰¹ F. M. Wilcox, *The Holy Scriptures* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, [1933]), Our Day Series, no. 1.

the truths presented to their minds.²⁰² The Holy Spirit guided them in expressing the divine revelation but their own individuality and style were preserved in the final product. Their language fell “short of the great theme,” despite divine assistance.²⁰³ When expressing “their personal judgment,” they sometimes “erred, yet as soon as divine inspiration convinced them of their error, they were more than willing to change their counsel.”²⁰⁴ The messages mediated through Scripture were of divine rather than human origin as the Holy Spirit spoke through them.²⁰⁵ While Wilcox affirmed that all Scripture was given by divine inspiration, he also noted that some inspired matter did not make it into the biblical canon, suggesting that inspired writings may differ in scope or purpose. Thus some of the messages had only a “local application” and were “suited [only] to a particular time or occasion,” whereas others were to serve as “the great spiritual guidebook for all nations, times, and conditions.”²⁰⁶ Some of these more universal messages were predictions about the “distant future.”²⁰⁷ Scripture was to be the “rule of

²⁰² F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10]," 11; F. M. Wilcox, "The Holy Scriptures," 9 August 1928, 3.

²⁰³ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10]," 11. This suggests that Wilcox did not hold the notion of inerrancy as defined by Fundamentalist Christians at the time although, in one instance, he employed the phrase “the divine inerrancy of the Scriptures.” He may have used it in an unqualified sense in that flyer. See F. M. Wilcox, *The Holy Scriptures*, [1933].

²⁰⁴ F. M. Wilcox, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 7]: Faith of the Early Fathers Regarding These Questions," *Review and Herald*, 30 January 1930, 6, 7.

²⁰⁵ F. M. Wilcox, "The Holy Scriptures," 9 August 1928, 4. He referred to several unique qualities of Scripture that differed from all other human literature in a variety of ways: unity; simplicity and sublimity; adaptability to all ages, nations, and tongues; impartiality; mysteries and infinitude; accurate predictions; and endurance. See F. M. Wilcox, "The Holy Scriptures," 9 August 1928, 3; F. M. Wilcox, *The Holy Scriptures*, [1933].

²⁰⁶ F. M. Wilcox, "The Holy Scriptures," 9 August 1928, 3; F. M. Wilcox to L. E. Froom, 5 August 1928, L. E. Froom Reference Files box 3874, fld "Tests of Fellowship," GCA.

²⁰⁷ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 6]: Mrs. White's Own Statement Regarding Her Work," *Review and Herald*, 20 September 1928, 16. He also suggested that some

faith and practice”²⁰⁸ and “the great test book, or standard, of every claim in doctrine and in revelation.”²⁰⁹ Commenting on discussions about the precise manner of inspiration both in Adventism and in other churches, he wrote,

We know at the present time of earnest Christians who believe in what is termed the “verbal,” or word-for-word, inspiration of the Scriptures of Truth. On the other hand, we know of other Christians equally earnest who do not believe in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, but in “thought,” or idea, inspiration. Both believe equally that the Scriptures are the inspired, infallible word of God. In the experience of both classes the Bible is the court of final appeal, and they are conscientiously endeavoring, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, to bring their lives into conformity with its divine precepts. Now, in our judgment, for one class to charge the other with disbelief of the Bible because of difference of opinion as to the technical features of inspiration, would be ungenerous and un-Christian.²¹⁰

Discussions about the technicalities of inspiration were therefore not significant enough to provoke a quarrel.²¹¹ (An ostensible affirmative statement of verbal inspiration will be discussed below in the context section.)²¹² The study of Scripture was to be primarily for practical purposes. Scripture was to be compared with Scripture, with prayer for the Holy

prophecies applied first to the time of the prophets, but as the Old Testament people served as a type for God’s end-time people, their instruction often had “a fuller and more particular application to present-day conditions.” See F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 9],” *Review and Herald*, 11 October 1928, 10.

²⁰⁸ F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 7]: Relation of Mrs. E. G. White’s Writings to the Bible,” *Review and Herald*, 27 September 1928, 17.

²⁰⁹ F. M. Wilcox, “The Holy Scriptures,” 9 August 1928, 3. See also F. M. Wilcox, “The Editor’s Mail Bag,” *Review and Herald*, 19 January 1922, 5; F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 2]: The Work and Writings of Mrs. E. G. White,” *Review and Herald*, 23 August 1928, 9.

²¹⁰ F. M. Wilcox, “The Editor’s Mail Bag,” 6; F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 13],” *Review and Herald*, 15 November 1928, 5.

²¹¹ F. M. Wilcox, “The Editor’s Mail Bag,” 6.

²¹² See pp. 416-419.

Spirit to enlighten one's understanding.²¹³ "The crowning proof of the inspiration of the Bible" was, in his view, "the transformation it works in the lives of men."²¹⁴

Wilcox believed that the "gift of prophecy . . . ha[d] been manifested in the life and work of Mrs. E. G. White."²¹⁵ He compared her with the great teacher Samuel, the great reformer Elijah, and the special messenger John the Baptist.²¹⁶ Considering her prophetic claim and the supernatural aspects of receiving a vision, her work either "bore the credentials of Heaven or the stamp of Satan."²¹⁷ Hence her writings had to be tested by Scripture, "the great standard" and "great test of all truth and doctrine." And as they were in harmony with the Bible and exalted Scripture "as the one rule of faith," they had to be accepted as coming from God.²¹⁸ Thus her writings "must stand or fall together." One could not accept some portion because he agreed with it, while discrediting another part when he disagreed.²¹⁹

²¹³ F. M. Wilcox, "The Study of the Bible: Aided by the Writings of the Spirit of Prophecy," *Review and Herald*, 3 February 1921, 2.

²¹⁴ F. M. Wilcox, "The Holy Scriptures," 9 August 1928, 4.

²¹⁵ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 2]," 9.

²¹⁶ Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 6]," 16; F. M. F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 8]: The Source of Mrs. White's Inspiration," *Review and Herald*, 4 October 1928, 11. See also Land, "Shaping the Modern Church, 1906-1930," 128; Jeffrey A. Gang, "F. M. Wilcox and the Spirit of Prophecy: A Study of His Teaching Concerning the Authority and Role of Ellen White and the Spirit of Prophecy from 1915 to 1930" (Research paper, Andrews University, 1994), 16.

²¹⁷ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 6]," 16. See also F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 8]," 11.

²¹⁸ F. M. Wilcox to Froom, 5 August 1928; F. M. Wilcox, "The Editor's Mail Bag," 5; F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 2]," 9. He stressed that White's writings were in harmony with the Scriptures and stated, "The *Testimonies* present no general truth which may not be found in the word of God, in principle, if not in detail." See F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 7]," 17.

²¹⁹ F. M. Wilcox to Brother, 30 January 1928, WCWCF, EGWE; F. M. Wilcox, "Reviewing and Obeying the Book of the Law," *Review and Herald*, 7 June 1923, 5.

Wilcox nevertheless clearly distinguished between divine inspiration and Ellen White as a person. He stressed that she herself “never claimed infallibility for her personal opinions and beliefs, nor perfection in her life, nor even perfect understanding of all that was given her of God.” If she made a mistake and was corrected, she was more than willing to change it. Like her fellow believers, she grew in knowledge. Also, she did not always “catch the fullness of the divine thought at first.”²²⁰ Wilcox emphasized, however, that one had to distinguish between “her own personal viewpoint” and “what was given her by divine revelation.” “Her instruction to the church was based upon the latter.”²²¹ In visions and dreams, “pictures of conditions that existed” on earth and in heaven were “brought before her mind.” Guided by the Holy Spirit, she “wrote out these scenes according to her best judgment.”²²² Wilcox observed that while her later revelations were in harmony with the earlier ones, they usually made them “more clear and comprehensible.”²²³

Yet, he stressed that Ellen White did not claim “perfection of expression in communicating to others” what had been “revealed to her.”²²⁴ She felt that some of the statements in her writings had led to misunderstanding and confusion. To improve the

²²⁰ F. M. Wilcox, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 7]," 6. See also F. M. Wilcox, "The Gift of the Spirit of Prophecy," *Review and Herald*, 10 June 1915, 7.

²²¹ F. M. Wilcox, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 7]," 7.

²²² F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10]," 11. He also pointed out that in her early experience she often had public visions whereas in later years, after her divine call had been accepted by the church, she received more visions of the night (dreams). See F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 2]," 9.

²²³ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10]," 12.

²²⁴ F. M. Wilcox, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 7]," 6.

expression of “the thoughts given her of God,” she changed the language, explained the thought more fully, or eliminated the statement altogether.²²⁵ Such changes in her writings were made by herself and others, but always under her supervision.²²⁶ Suggesting that her writings might still contain “ambiguous expressions,” Wilcox recommended reading these in light of “other clear and definite statements.”²²⁷

He added that some of her later books were rewritten compilations from her former publications.²²⁸ In this regard he noted that her writings were not all written with the same scope and audience in mind. Thus, for publication in her books, she selected such documents as “were of general application and best fitted and designed for general circulation” because some testimonies were not intended for everyone to read²²⁹ or were “local in [their] primary application.”²³⁰ On the other hand, her early works on the great controversy theme had been written for the Adventist church, whereas her Conflict of the Ages series was prepared “for a world circle of readers.”²³¹ Commenting on the relationship of White’s writings to the Bible, he emphasized that her writings were not

²²⁵ F. M. Wilcox, “The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 7],” 6; F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10],” 11; F. M. Wilcox, “The Gift of the Spirit of Prophecy,” 7.

²²⁶ F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10],” 11; F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 11]: An Illustration of the Changes Made in the Revision of Mrs. White’s Books,” *Review and Herald*, 25 October 1928, 6.

²²⁷ F. M. Wilcox, “The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 7],” 7.

²²⁸ F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 7],” 17.

²²⁹ F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 8],” 12.

²³⁰ F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 9],” 10.

²³¹ F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10],” 12.

“an addition to the Scriptures.”²³² He felt that they were “a spiritual commentary” on the Bible and the plan of redemption, expressing the “great principles” of divine truth in greater detail and helping the church to obtain a better understanding of Scripture.²³³

Objections to Other Views

Wilcox raised objections against a number of different ideas and views across the spectrum from more loose to more strict views on inspiration. Many of the objections address principles on how to read and use the writings of Ellen White. His attempts to distance himself from a variety of views also gives an idea of the concept that he himself may have held.

Referring to Thomas Paine (1737-1809) and Robert G. Ingersoll (1833-1899), who criticized minor details in the writings of Moses, Wilcox bemoaned the fact that they focused “only [on] the human element in God’s work [and] failed to recognize God working through the human.”²³⁴ Similarly, he objected to attempts to “find technical errors or inconsistencies” in Ellen White’s writings. Many who followed that path eventually made shipwreck of their faith.²³⁵ He opposed the assertions of some who stressed that the time in which she wrote and the language she employed were so

²³² F. M. Wilcox, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 7]," 6; F. M. Wilcox, "The Testimony of Jesus [No. 9]: Not an Addition to the Bible," *Review and Herald*, 7 September 1933, 5, 6.

²³³ F. M. Wilcox, "The Study of the Bible," 2; F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 7]," 17, 18; F. M. Wilcox, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 7]," 6.

²³⁴ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 8]," 12.

²³⁵ F. M. Wilcox, "The Gift of the Spirit of Prophecy," 7. See also F. M. Wilcox, "Common Sense in Religious Faith," *Review and Herald*, 5 February 1920, 7, 8.

different from the present day that her instruction should either be modified or ignored. Wilcox felt that the conditions remain relatively similar.

He also suggested that one should not ignore the principle underlying a particular counsel simply because the specific circumstances have changed in which that counsel was given. Likewise, he urged church members not to focus on one specific statement on a particular topic while ignoring other more comprehensive statements on the same subject.²³⁶

Another view that Wilcox raised objections against was A. G. Daniells' thesis of a continuous line of prophets in Christian history. First, he argued that Ellen White never referred to such individuals as Martin Luther and Huldrych Zwingli as prophets in the proper sense of the word. Second, he stressed that by extending the definition of a prophet in that manner, the concept of prophetic ministry and divine inspiration was blurred. Criticism and doubt would be the result rather than faith and confidence.²³⁷

Wilcox further felt that the "specious reasoning and hypercritical distinctions" utilized to ascribe inspiration to some of White's testimonies while denying inspiration to others was confusing the minds of many people concerning "the character and value" of her messages.²³⁸ Similarly, he wondered why Ellen White's articles and communications should be distinguished from her books as uninspired material. He did "not [want to] say,

²³⁶ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 9]," 10.

²³⁷ McArthur, A. G. *Daniells*, 444–47. The thesis was the basic line of argument that permeates Daniells' book *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*. Although Wilcox tried to prevent its publishing, it came out in 1936. See Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*.

²³⁸ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 8]," 11. In the same vein, he criticized those who "gladly" utilized White's statements to further their own agendas and goals while rejecting statements from her that crossed their will and ideas. See F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 9]," 10, 11.

by any means, that every letter that Mrs. White ever wrote was written under the inspiration of the Spirit of Lord.” He also did not want to assert “that what she said in ordinary conversation was necessarily directed of God.” Wilcox concluded that “if she was true to her sacred trust, she would not send out merely personal letters as messages from the Lord.” Either her claim in that respect was to be accepted, or her writings were to be rejected altogether.²³⁹

In contrast, other people tried to force overly strict views of inspiration on their fellow believers. Thus Wilcox insisted that Ellen White’s writings did “not constitute for the remnant church a new Bible.” They were “in no sense . . . to take the place of the Bible, by which their character is judged and their source is determined.”²⁴⁰ He declared, “I never have placed the Spirit of Prophecy in a parity with the Bible.”²⁴¹ Similarly, he rejected the ideas that her writings were “an addition to the canon of the Bible” or that they were to reveal “new light on fundamental truth.”²⁴² He also suggested that “Sister White has not been set in this church as a historian or as a theologian.”²⁴³

²³⁹ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 8]," 11, 12; F. M. Wilcox, "The Testimony of Jesus [No. 8]: Of Human or Divine Origin," *Review and Herald*, 31 August 1933, 11.

²⁴⁰ F. M. Wilcox, "The Study of the Bible," 2. See also Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 431.

²⁴¹ F. M. Wilcox to Froom, 5 August 1928.

²⁴² F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 7]," 17. See also F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 8]," 11; F. M. Wilcox, "The Study of the Bible," 2.

²⁴³ While W. C. White thought that Wilcox’s statement was “undoubtedly true,” he suggested to change the language to avoid misunderstandings. See W. C. White to F. M. Wilcox, 27 April 1915, WCWCF, EGWE; Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily'," 50. Wilcox also stated that “I would like to ask Brother Daniells if it could be accepted as a sort of rule that Sister White might be mistaken in details, but in the general policy and instruction she was an authority.” See *Report of Bible Conference*, 1246; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 440.

Wilcox affirmed, "I have never believed the verbal inspiration of the *Testimonies*."²⁴⁴ He likewise emphasized that Ellen White never claimed verbal inspiration for her writings and that the early Adventist pioneers never believed that her writings were verbally inspired.²⁴⁵ (A seemingly contrary statement from Wilcox's pen will be discussed below in the context section.)²⁴⁶ Nevertheless, he urged church members to refrain from exalting their views of certain technicalities of inspiration as a test of orthodoxy. No one was to judge a fellow believer for his view of such technicalities if that person accepted and obeyed the divinely inspired messages.²⁴⁷

In fact, some who entertained a more verbal understanding of inspiration had accused Ellen White of omitting "thoughts and sentences and even paragraphs" from her writings. Wilcox replied that she had never claimed the ability to perfectly comprehend and communicate what she had been shown by God. She had tried to describe these revelations to the best of her ability, yet some of these things were "sometimes misunderstood and even misinterpreted." He argued that it was therefore even "her duty to make such changes as her judgment dictated."²⁴⁸ Wilcox criticized the practice of some who, without authorization, selected personal testimonies and circulated them in the

²⁴⁴ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1229. See also Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 137.

²⁴⁵ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10]," 11; F. M. Wilcox, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 7]," 6; F. M. Wilcox, "The Testimony of Jesus [No. 12]: Verbal Inspiration and Suppression," *Review and Herald*, 19 October 1933, 6; F. M. Wilcox, "The Testimony of Jesus [No. 13]: Changes in Revision," *Review and Herald*, 26 October 1933, 8; F. M. Wilcox, "The Holy Scriptures," 9 August 1928, 4.

²⁴⁶ See below on pp. 414-417.

²⁴⁷ F. M. Wilcox, "The Editor's Mail Bag," 6; F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 13]," 5.

²⁴⁸ F. M. Wilcox, "The Testimony of Jesus [No. 12]," 7.

church because they could not comprehend why she would have withheld some testimonies from the public in the first place.²⁴⁹ He further stressed that it was problematic to pay more attention to unauthenticated reports of what she had supposedly said to someone than to what she had actually written.²⁵⁰

Sources and Influences

Wilcox believed that his view of inspiration was based on the teachings of the Bible, the views and practice of Ellen White, and the historic teaching of leading Adventist thinkers. He also made frequent use of his own writings.

He pointed out that Scripture offers sufficient proof of the divine origin of its messages.²⁵¹ Some passages even referred to inspired writings that were not included in the biblical canon.²⁵² Wilcox also saw evidence for the fallibility and imperfection of the people that God used to transmit his message. Thus the prophet Nathan gave as if from God counsel based on his personal judgment, yet he immediately changed his counsel once God corrected him. The apostles Peter and Paul were fallible human beings when they were divided in opinion concerning the Gentiles. It was not until Peter received a vision that he was able to comprehend these matters.²⁵³ Later, Peter remarked that some

²⁴⁹ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 8]," 12.

²⁵⁰ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 5]: The Historical Teaching of the Church (Continued)," *Review and Herald*, 13 September 1928, 5, 6.

²⁵¹ F. M. Wilcox, "The Holy Scriptures," 4. He cited or quoted such passages as 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21; 3:15, 16; and 1 Corinthians 2:13.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 3. He cited Joshua 10:13; 1 Chronicles 29:29; and 2 Chronicles 13:22; 20:34.

²⁵³ F. M. Wilcox, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 7]," 7.

inspired writers were “weak in conception of divine truth,” causing them to search their own writings to better comprehend them (1 Peter 1:10-12).²⁵⁴

Wilcox also saw examples in the Bible for the inspiration of the thoughts rather than the very words. After Jeremiah’s “written testimony” was burned by the king, he followed God’s instruction to write down again “all the words that were in the first roll,” but “added besides unto them many like words (Jeremiah 36:20-32).”²⁵⁵ Wilcox further pointed to the fact that Baruch, Jeremiah’s literary assistant, was charged with influencing his master (Jeremiah 36:17, 18; 43:1-3) and thus actually being responsible for the messages, a charge that reminded Wilcox of accusations made against Ellen White and her assistants.²⁵⁶ That Ezekiel felt unable to describe the glory and majesty of God and his throne, in Wilcox’s view, not only illustrated the imperfection of human language to perfectly describe divine realities, but also showed the impossibility of a general verbal inspiration.²⁵⁷ Yet as soon as the biblical prophets had provided evidence of their divine call and the fruits of their ministry had demonstrated its divine origin, their message had to be accepted and God’s people no longer tested every single testimony.²⁵⁸

His understanding of Ellen White’s view of inspiration was formed by reading her writings, and by his personal acquaintance with her and the production of her writings.

Wilcox emphasized that she wanted people to consider that only messages for which she

²⁵⁴ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10]," 11. See also F. M. Wilcox, "The Holy Scriptures," 9 August 1928, 3, 4.

²⁵⁵ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10]," 11.

²⁵⁶ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 8]," 11.

²⁵⁷ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10]," 11.

²⁵⁸ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 8]," 11.

claimed inspiration were indeed inspired.²⁵⁹ They were to be regarded as being either from Heaven or from Satan.²⁶⁰ He nevertheless stressed that she herself rejected a verbal inspiration of her writings and affirmed the inspiration of the thoughts.²⁶¹ He quoted at length from the preface to *The Great Controversy* concerning the manner of inspiration²⁶² and the process of preparing material for the book.²⁶³ Being aware of “the way in which Sister White’s works were brought together and her books compiled,”²⁶⁴ he felt that White’s practice of publishing her writings reflected the inspiration of the thoughts rather than the words. The progression of the great controversy theme in her three series of books—*Spiritual Gifts*, vols. 1 and 3; *Spirit of Prophecy*, vols. 1-4; and the Conflict of the Ages Series—illustrated her belief that the presentation of truth could be improved.²⁶⁵ He said that she herself emphasized that her writings were not to give new light on fundamental truth and should not be treated as an addition to Scripture, but were given to

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 12. See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:67, 691. Timm interprets a remark by Wilcox on the inspiration of the “message itself” as an affirmation of verbal inspiration, yet he seems to overlook Wilcox’s emphasis in other articles on inspired thoughts rather than inspired words. Thus Wilcox seemed to understand the term “message” rather in the sense of thoughts. See Timm, “A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000),” 504.

²⁶⁰ F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 6],” 16; F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 8],” 12. See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:671, 672, 691.

²⁶¹ Wilcox referred to her explanation of the reform dress vision in 1867, and her response to David Paulson, in which she objected to the idea of a general verbal inspiration of all her writings. See F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 12],” 6; Ellen G. White, “Questions and Answers,” 8 October 1867, 260; Ellen G. White, “Correct Views Concerning the Testimonies [Part 1],” 8.

²⁶² F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10],” 11; F. M. Wilcox, “The Holy Scriptures,” 9 August 1928, 4. See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1911], v–vii.

²⁶³ F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 7],” 17, 18. See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1911], x–xii.

²⁶⁴ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1229.

²⁶⁵ F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10],” 12.

point believers to the Bible and to aid them in understanding biblical principles.²⁶⁶ He suggested that one should allow Ellen White to explain the circumstances in which her counsel was given.²⁶⁷ That is why he reprinted, for example, an entire article to allow her to explain her visionary experience and the reasons why she refrained from using the title “prophet.”²⁶⁸ Wilcox emphasized that she herself objected to exalting unauthenticated reports over her actual writings,²⁶⁹ and that she had authorized specific people to choose what personal testimonies were to be circulated.²⁷⁰

Wilcox also appropriated the teachings and ideas of early Adventist writers. Thus his line of argument for the perpetuity of the prophetic gift follows their explanations.²⁷¹ In three articles he outlined “the historical teaching” that Adventists had held throughout their history, documenting through numerous representative and lengthy quotations from the *Review* from 1855 to recent times their affirmation of White’s prophetic gift and the

²⁶⁶ F. M. Wilcox, "The Study of the Bible," 2; F. M. Wilcox, "The Position and Work of Mrs. E. G. White," *Review and Herald*, 17 March 1921, 3–6; F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 7]," 17. See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:661, 663-665, 667, 668; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1911], vii.

²⁶⁷ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 9]," 11. See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:234; 5:658-661, 688; 9:54.

²⁶⁸ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 6]," 15, 16. See Ellen G. White, "A Messenger," 26 July 1906, 8, 9.

²⁶⁹ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 13]," 6. See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:696.

²⁷⁰ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 8]," 12. See Ellen G. White, "The Remnant Church Not Babylon [No. 1]," *Review and Herald*, 22 August 1893, 530, 531; Ellen G. White, "The Remnant Church Not Babylon [No. 2]," *Review and Herald*, 29 August 1893, 546, 547; Ellen G. White, "The Remnant Church Not Babylon [No. 3]," *Review and Herald*, 5 September 1893, 562, 563; Ellen G. White, "The Remnant Church Not Babylon [No. 4]," *Review and Herald*, 12 September 1893, 578, 579.

²⁷¹ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 1]: The Divine Promise," *Review and Herald*, 16 August 1928, 9. See also above on pp. 43, 44.

supreme role of Scripture as the basis of faith and practice.²⁷² James White, for example, argued that the acceptance of Scripture leads to an acceptance of the spiritual gifts.²⁷³ Uriah Smith's answers to objections against Ellen White's visions seemed to be useful too.²⁷⁴

Wilcox emphasized that the General Conference was able to recommend the improvement of the language and grammar in the *Testimonies for the Church* in 1883 because they believed that inspiration generally imparted thoughts and only in rare cases words.²⁷⁵ He saw the same concept reflected in several of Smith's articles, quoting them at length.²⁷⁶ Knight suggests that Wilcox's view of her writings as a "spiritual commentary" on Scripture closely resembles the positions of A. T. Jones, Claude

²⁷² F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 3]: The Historical Teaching of the Church," *Review and Herald*, 30 August 1928, 10, 11; F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 4]: The Historical Teaching of the Church (Continued)," *Review and Herald*, 6 September 1928, 12, 13; F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 5]," 9, 10. Wilcox quoted from the following documents: Bates, Waggoner, and Cornell, "Address of the Conference Assembled at Battle Creek, Mich., Nov. 16th, 1855," 79; James White, "The Gifts—Their Object," *Review and Herald*, 28 February 1856, 172, 173; Uriah Smith, "Do We Discard the Bible by Endorsing the Visions?," *Review and Herald*, 13 January 1863, 52; Smith, "The Visions—Objections Answered," 9, 10; Andrews, "Our Use of the Visions of Sr. White," 64, 65; George I. Butler, "Visions and Prophecy: Have They Been Manifested Among Seventh-day Adventists? [No. 1]," *Review and Herald*, 12 May 1874, 172, 173; I. H. Evans, "The Character of the Message," *Review and Herald*, 29 July 1915, 4, 5; A. G. Daniells, "Life Sketch of Sister E. G. White," *Review and Herald*, 5 August 1915, 4–8; W. A. Spicer quoted in E. R. Palmer, "The Writings of Mrs. E. G. White," *Review and Herald*, 19 July 1928, 16.

²⁷³ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 7]," 17. See James White, "Gifts of the Gospel Church," *Review and Herald*, 3 October 1854, 61.

²⁷⁴ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 2]," 9, 10. See Smith, "The Visions—Objections Answered," 9.

²⁷⁵ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10]," 12; F. M. Wilcox, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 7]," 6; F. M. Wilcox, "The Testimony of Jesus [No. 12]," 6. See Butler and Oyen, "General Conference Proceedings," 27 November 1883, 741.

²⁷⁶ F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10]," 12; F. M. Wilcox, "The Testimony of Jesus [No. 12]," 6, 7. See Smith, "A Miracle Called for," 649; Smith, "Suppression and the Shut Door," 456; Smith, "Which Are Revealed, Words or Ideas?," 168, 169.

Holmes, and J. S. Washburn.²⁷⁷ However, instead of viewing her as the final exegetical authority in matters of biblical interpretation, Wilcox portrayed her writings as providing practical spiritual guidance in a believer's life.²⁷⁸ His position is thus closer to the more moderate view of W. C. White and W. W. Prescott. He seemed to align himself closer to W. C. White by seeking to formulate matters in a way so as to strengthen the believers' faith.²⁷⁹ Concerning changes made in the 1911 edition of the *Great Controversy*, Wilcox quoted lengthy portions from the correspondence of W. C. White and his mother.²⁸⁰

He frequently made use of his previous writings in drafting new articles on slightly different subjects. On August 4, 1928 he had written a letter in which he explained some of his ideas on inspiration and (allegedly) explicitly affirmed verbal inspiration.²⁸¹ A subsequent article on the Spirit of Prophecy, published four days later, employs almost the same wording and argument, yet it rejects the idea of verbal inspiration, suggesting that his strong affirmation of that concept in the letter may have been a *lapsus linguae*.²⁸² (This document will be discussed in the following section.) Several sentences on the divine origin of Scripture and the following quotation from the preface of the *Great Controversy* appear unchanged in another article two months

²⁷⁷ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 140, 141.

²⁷⁸ F. M. Wilcox, "The Study of the Bible," 2, 6.

²⁷⁹ See above pp. 397, 398. He quoted W. C. White's address to the General Conference Council on October 30, 1911. See F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 11]," 5.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 5, 6. See also W. C. White to General Conference Council, 30 October 1911, WCWCF, EGWE; Ellen G. White to F. M. Wilcox, 25 July 1911.

²⁸¹ F. M. Wilcox to Froom, 5 August 1928.

²⁸² See F. M. Wilcox, "The Holy Scriptures," 9 August 1928, 3, 4. As the article was presumably already written and set in type when he wrote his letter to Froom, the ideas in his letter probably reflect the content of his article.

later.²⁸³ An article in November 1928 reused in a slightly revised form an earlier article on the difficulty of focusing too much on the technicalities of inspiration.²⁸⁴

The Context of the Statements

Shortly after the controversy with Dr. J. H. Kellogg and A. T. Jones had subsided and at a time when various church workers debated the true meaning of the *tāmîd* and the loyalty of church leaders to Ellen White's writings, F. M. Wilcox became the editor of the *Review and Herald*, and it was in this function and in that venue that the majority of his statements on inspiration were made.

Although Ellen White's published books were still freely available after her death on July 16, 1915, the *Review* no longer contained weekly "words of admonition and counsel."²⁸⁵ Church members wondered if there was more to know than what had been previously revealed. Thus some asked Wilcox whether God would not call someone to succeed her.²⁸⁶ Seemingly in answer to such queries Margaret M. Rowen (1881-1955) claimed to receive visions and asserted that Ellen White had predicted her ministry. Yet

²⁸³ See F. M. Wilcox, "The Holy Scriptures," 9 August 1928, 4; F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10]," 11.

²⁸⁴ See F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 13]," 5, 6; F. M. Wilcox, "The Editor's Mail Bag," 5-7.

²⁸⁵ F. M. Wilcox, "Our Refuge in Sorrow," *Review and Herald*, 29 July 1915, 6.

²⁸⁶ F. M. Wilcox, "Prophetic Succession," *Review and Herald*, 19 August 1915, 3. In the early 1920s, Wilcox reported that "nearly a dozen" individuals claimed the prophetic gift and had contacted the staff of the *Review*, urging them to publish their testimonies. He replied that God had not revealed anything about a prophetic successor and suggested that it was up to Him. He further took the opportunity to outline the principles to test any new prophetic claimant. See F. M. Wilcox, "Prophetic Succession," *Review and Herald*, 6 September 1923, 3.

at least since 1926 it was obvious that her claims were flawed and deceptive.²⁸⁷ The events of World War I caused others to develop fanciful interpretations of the biblical prophecies that Wilcox felt the need to disprove.²⁸⁸ In early 1919, Wilcox agreed with W. C. White that his mother's *Testimonies* should be circulated more widely and the income from the sale of her books be used to improve them.²⁸⁹ A couple months later he learned that some people, possibly Claude Holmes and J. S. Washburn, sought to obtain copies of unpublished testimonies and circulate them. While their agenda was unclear to him, he felt that their manner of utilizing them was calculated to "create unrest and confusion."²⁹⁰ He wrote, "I should feel quite differently over this propaganda if some of those directly concerned in it were zealous well-balanced Seventh-day Adventists, but some of them are quite far from this, and they fail to exemplify in their own experience the very instruction they are endeavoring to hold up before others by their unwise course."²⁹¹ He urged W. C. White to write some explanations in the *Church Officer's Gazette* because it should come from him rather than any other person.²⁹² By December he had received several

²⁸⁷ In March 1926, B. F. Fullmer, a disenchanted follower of Rowen, confessed that he had smuggled a forged manuscript into a manuscript drawer in the vault of the Ellen G. White Estate in November 1919. See Michael W. Campbell, "Rowen, Margaret Matilda (Wright) (1881-1955)," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 503, 504. Two months later Wilcox referred to three confessions that had been made concerning Rowen's false claims. See F. M. Wilcox, "A Threefold Confession of Guilt," *Review and Herald*, 13 May 1926, 2.

²⁸⁸ F. M. Wilcox, "Guarded Utterances," *Review and Herald*, 6 September 1917, 3, 4; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 366.

²⁸⁹ F. M. Wilcox to W. C. White, 18 March 1919, WCWCF, EGWE.

²⁹⁰ F. M. Wilcox to W. C. White, 19 August 1919, WCWCF, EGWE.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *Ibid.* It does not seem that W. C. White actually wrote something on that subject for the *Church Officer's Gazette*.

manuscripts for the *Review* that contained apocryphal Ellen White statements, yet it was difficult to verify whether White had ever said or written these things. He concluded that many people were fascinated by mysterious and hidden matters rather than by clear and public statements. He further felt that those who employed such statements tended to accuse church leaders and to destroy rather than strengthen faith.²⁹³ This may explain why Wilcox, together with C. H. Jones and A. G. Daniells, all trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate, thought that her unpublished writings should not be published.²⁹⁴

Meanwhile, in the spring and summer of 1919, as conservative Protestant Christians in North America organized theological conferences, Seventh-day Adventists also arranged a Bible Conference for selected teachers, editors, and administrators. In May, Wilcox and others attended a conference on Christian Fundamentals in Philadelphia, Penn. He later outlined the doctrinal statement that the attendees adopted, suggesting that Adventists could “for the most part” agree with these “fundamental principles.” His rendition of both the Fundamentalist and the Adventist doctrines of Scripture show that the latter lacks an affirmation of verbal inspiration and inerrant original autographs (see table 1).²⁹⁵

²⁹³ F. M. Wilcox, "Seeking the Marvelous," *Review and Herald*, 18 December 1919, 3.

²⁹⁴ McArthur, A. G. *Daniells*, 437.

²⁹⁵ F. M. Wilcox, "A Conference on Christian Fundamentals," *Review and Herald*, 19 June 1919, 2, 5, 6. Valentine seems to miss that difference and suggests that Wilcox's editorial "strongly support[ed] the declarations about the 'inerrancy' and 'verbal inspiration' of Scripture made at the recent interdenominational conference on Christian fundamentals." See Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 282. On a different note, Daggy shows some further disagreements between the Fundamentalist and the Adventist positions. Accordingly, Fundamentalists stressed the inspiration of the writings rather than the writers, the general inspiration of words rather than merely thoughts, and that the writers were the pen rather than the penmen of God. 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), 52–55.

Table 1. Comparison of the doctrines of Scripture²⁹⁶

<i>Doctrinal Statement of World Conference on Christian Fundamentals</i>	<i>Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists</i>
We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as verbally inspired of God, and inerrant in the original writings, and that they are of supreme and final authority in faith and life.	That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by the inspiration of God, and contain a full revelation of his will to men, and are the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

In July 1919, Wilcox attended the Adventist Bible Conference in Washington, D.C.²⁹⁷ He was pleased with the collegial spirit and positive attitude among the participants, yet he bemoaned the fact that some strange ideas had been voiced and that some questions could not be settled as the organizers had hoped. He thought that it would have been appropriate for W. C. White to add his perspective to some of the discussions if he had been there.²⁹⁸ Wilcox suggested that Ellen White took the same care to insure the accuracy of historical details in the 1911 edition of the *Great Controversy* that she took in preparing *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 1, in 1860, by consulting other people.²⁹⁹ He

²⁹⁶ F. M. Wilcox, "A Conference on Christian Fundamentals," 5, 6.

²⁹⁷ McArthur mistakenly suggests that "Francis [M.] Wilcox "had called for such a gathering" "as early as 1913." See McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 386. Land and Haloviak prove that it had been M. C. Wilcox who made that suggestion. See Haloviak and Land, "Ellen White and Doctrinal Conflict," 27, 28, 34 en. 46. See also [M. C. Wilcox] to Daniells and Evans, 31 October 1915.

²⁹⁸ F. M. Wilcox to W. C. White, 25 July 1919, WCWCF, EGWE. See also Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 283. Wilcox stated later that they had discussed the different topics for three weeks and "separated each feeling . . . even more decided than before in the view which he entertained," yet there was a "good brotherly feeling" because they "differed kindly, and this was a big step in the right direction." See F. M. Wilcox to W. C. White, 19 August 1919.

²⁹⁹ *Report of Bible Conference*, 558, 559. Talking about the testimonials of eyewitnesses in the back of *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, Wilcox stated, "Some of these, in their testimonials say that that incident was correct with this exception. Another says this was correct with this exception." In addition, he also quoted from White's letter to him on July 25, 1911. See Ellen G. White to F. M. Wilcox, 25 July 1911.

openly rejected the verbal inspiration of Ellen White's *Testimonies* and expressed his general agreement with A. G. Daniells' talk. He nevertheless felt that some statements during the conference were calculated to destroy rather than strengthen faith, particularly if they were introduced at the schools and in the church at large.³⁰⁰ Although he considered Daniells' report in the *Review* quite meager, he concluded that it was probably better to say nothing more.³⁰¹

About two years later, Wilcox was attacked by Washburn because he had attended "that secret Bible Council" that "was the most unfortunate thing our people ever did." Washburn surmised that Wilcox was "losing the simplicity of [his] faith." Washburn notified Wilcox that he "expect[ed] nothing but a cruel relentless, slanderous war to the death," because he accused Daniells of apostasy concerning the *tāmîd* and Ellen White. Yet, Wilcox "showed little sympathy for Washburn's views," as McArthur notes.³⁰² In the months leading up to the 1922 General Conference session, the attempts by Washburn and Holmes to overturn Daniells intensified.³⁰³ In subsequent years, Wilcox

³⁰⁰ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1229, 1230. Wilcox emphasized, "I have never believed [in] the verbal inspiration of the *Testimonies*." Timm interprets Wilcox's question to Prescott, "Do you believe that a man who doesn't believe in verbal inspiration of the Bible believes the Bible?," as a reaction to or questioning of Daniells' opposition to the verbal inspiration of White's writings. See Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," 501. Considering Wilcox's negative remark on verbal inspiration above, he nevertheless seemed to agree with Daniells concerning his denial of a verbal inspiration of White's writings. Since Wilcox did not seem to distinguish between the inspiration of the Bible writers and Ellen White, his question may have served to clarify Prescott's argument. See *Report of Bible Conference*, 1216.

³⁰¹ F. M. Wilcox to W. C. White, 19 August 1919.

³⁰² J. S. Washburn to F. M. Wilcox, 3 July 1921, GCA; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 406; Haloviak and Land, "Ellen White and Doctrinal Conflict," 31.

³⁰³ See pp. 389, 390.

continued to bemoan the circulation of unauthorized publications that encouraged “a spirit that is opposed to order, to system, and to organization.”³⁰⁴

Meanwhile, in January 1922, Wilcox replied to inquiries about the church’s prevalent attitude towards Ellen White’s writings. He suggested that the technical differences between “verbal” inspiration and “thought” inspiration were insignificant as long as proponents of both views accepted and obeyed her counsel. While there were always church members that questioned her writings, the church’s general position had not changed.³⁰⁵

In June, Wilcox replied to a request from W. C. White who wondered why his mother’s unpublished writings should not be made available in some form. Wilcox sent him a list of eight objections, while acknowledging that not all of them represented his own views.³⁰⁶ W. C. White answered some of the objections and clarified that the

³⁰⁴ F. M. Wilcox, "Shall We Use Independent Publications in Our Missionary Work?," *Review and Herald*, 15 May 1924, 9, 10.

³⁰⁵ F. M. Wilcox, "The Editor’s Mail Bag," 5, 6.

³⁰⁶ The objections were as follows. First, Ellen White lived a long life and literary assistants aided her to put “her instruction in a permanent form.” Second, there was no definite divine instruction concerning the future of her work and thus one should not mistake her personal wish for the continuation of her work as a divine instruction. Third, as her writings were searched many times in preparing publications, there was probably no additional instruction left that was not already available in her publications. Fourth, as the responsibility for any publication of her manuscripts would rest on those supervising her manuscripts, they would be subject to the charge of manipulating or modifying her manuscripts to suit their own or someone else’s agenda. Fifth, the questioning of these new publications would also discredit the regular previous publications. Sixth, as the publication of these manuscripts would encourage unauthorized individuals to also publish their copies of unpublished manuscripts, many erroneous and inaccurate statements might be circulated. Seventh, as many church members did not even possess Ellen White’s basic books, it would make more sense to try to get these into their homes rather than issuing new writings and giving rise to charges that it was “done for commercial purposes.” Eighth, although she stated that God had “endowed her son with special wisdom to act as her assistant . . . [and] good judgment as to the use to be made of her writings,” she also made her trustees “the custodians” of her writings. However, as she did not clarify “how far this commission of her son extends,” it was unclear whether the “responsibility of what should be done with the writings of Sister White and with her unpublished manuscripts [would] rest primarily with her son or . . . with the trustees.” See F. M. Wilcox, "Statement Made by Elder F. M. Wilcox, at the Request of Elder W. C. White," 29 June 1922, WCWCF, EGWE.

responsibility for his mother's writings, published and unpublished, lay with the trustees, not with her son. Yet, given his personal acquaintance with her and her work, he knew her wishes and plans probably better than anyone else living, which is why her trustees would do well to listen to "his testimony" regarding these.³⁰⁷ It seems that this correspondence and further dialogue convinced Wilcox and other trustees that a controlled release of unpublished manuscripts was acceptable.

In 1924 Wilcox requested sample letters from W. C. White for reproduction in a special number of the *Review*.³⁰⁸ He was particularly intrigued by an "intimate" and "most beautiful" letter from Ellen White to her husband James from April 7, 1880,³⁰⁹ which was then published in its entirety in the *Review* on September 18, 1924.³¹⁰ One year later he remarked that although the General Conference Committee was initially strongly against publishing anything from White's manuscripts, they now felt that "exceptions should be made to this." Wilcox added, "I think one or two manuscripts were incorporated into the book *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, and I believe these brethren will see light in putting out some of this vital matter for the benefit of our medical workers."³¹¹

³⁰⁷ W. C. White to F. M. Wilcox, 9 July 1922, WCWCF, EGWE.

³⁰⁸ W. C. White to F. M. Wilcox, 18 August 1924, WCWCF, EGWE. See also F. M. Wilcox to W. C. White, 19 July 1925, WCWCF, EGWE.

³⁰⁹ F. M. Wilcox to W. C. White, 9 September 1924, WCWCF, EGWE. Reference is made here to Ellen G. White to James White, 7 April 1880, Lt 20, 1880, EGWE.

³¹⁰ Ellen G. White, "Facsimile of a Letter Written by Mrs. E. G. White to Her Husband, Elder James White," *Review and Herald*, 50th Anniversary Missions Number, 18 September 1924, 60. The letter was reprinted four years later. See in F. M. Wilcox, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 12]: Camera and Pen Pictures of Mrs. E. G. White," *Review and Herald*, 1 November 1928, 11, 12.

³¹¹ F. M. Wilcox to W. C. White, 29 May 1925, WCWCF, EGWE. He probably referred to the manuscripts on "suspension of students" and "correct school discipline" in Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals*

In the summer of 1928, Wilcox began to change his personal policy on technical discussions concerning divine inspiration. Whereas before he had pointed proponents of both verbal and thought inspiration to the practical issues of acceptance of and obedience to the inspired writings, he now publicly affirmed a particular position that had been entertained by Ellen White and the early Adventists.³¹² On August 5, 1928 Wilcox replied to a letter from L. E. Froom and some of his remarks seem to affirm the verbal inspiration of Scripture and White's writings.³¹³ He wrote, "In my judgment, the historical teaching of the denomination is in favor of verbal inspiration of the Testimonies. This is the position I have always taken myself with reference to the subject. Indeed, I hold to verbal inspiration of the Bible."³¹⁴ That these plain remarks may nevertheless have been a *lapsus linguae* is suggested by several facts. First, his strong affirmations of his (alleged) continuous belief in verbal inspiration stand in contrast with

on Christian Education: Instruction for the Home, the School, and the Church (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1923), 277-284, 454-466.

³¹² See also Gang, "F. M. Wilcox and the Spirit of Prophecy," 21.

³¹³ F. M. Wilcox to Froom, 5 August 1928. I am indebted to Gilbert Valentine whose article turned my attention to that letter and who made available to me scanned copies of it. Knight suggests that Wilcox "shifted" his "position in the opposite direction during the 1920s" by moving from a rejection to an acceptance of the verbal inspiration of the Bible and White's writings. See Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 136, 137. Valentine notes that the two concepts seemed to overlap in that letter. He suggests that Wilcox probably meant to say "that the revelation was expressed in words" when he utilized the "unhelpful term" "verbal inspiration." See Valentine, "The Church 'Drifting Toward a Crisis'," 55, 57.

³¹⁴ F. M. Wilcox to Froom, 5 August 1928. In addition, his omission of articles before the term "verbal inspiration" may suggest that the letter was written in haste. Froom possibly responded to Wilcox's statement, but I am unaware of the existence of such a reply. In the summer and fall of 1928, Froom himself engaged in a dialogue with W. C. White in which he stressed his own rejection of a verbal inspiration of Ellen White and mentioned various historical details that also appear in Wilcox's articles. See L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 26 July 1928, WCWCF, EGWE; L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 29 July 1928, WCWCF, EGWE; L. E. Froom to T. H. Starbuck, 30 July 1928, WCWCF, EGWE; L. E. Froom to Dores E. Robinson, 31 July 1928, WCWCF, EGWE; L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 4 October 1928, WCWCF, EGWE; L. E. Froom to Friends, 2 January 1929, WCWCF, EGWE; L. E. Froom to C. McReynolds, 14 January 1929, WCWCF, EGWE.

his previous assertion to “have never believed the verbal inspiration of the Testimonies”³¹⁵ and the following remarks, directly after the above statement.

I believe in thought inspiration as applied to both the Bible and the Testimonies. I believe, however, that in the overruling providence of God, the Bible was so safeguarded that the writers of the Bible conveyed the thought of God. I never have placed the Spirit of Prophecy on a parity with the Bible, and yet I cannot help but believe that Sister White was a prophet to the church in her day, the same as Jeremiah was a prophet to the church in his day.³¹⁶

Second, numerous remarks in the letter show striking terminological connections to an article that appeared in the *Review* four days later—yet, it was probably written prior to the letter—but the Ellen White quotations in that article are incompatible with verbal inspiration (see table 2).³¹⁷

³¹⁵ *Report of Bible Conference*, 1229.

³¹⁶ F. M. Wilcox to Froom, 5 August 1928. This section shows some resemblance to arguments found in F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 8],” 11.

³¹⁷ See F. M. Wilcox, “The Holy Scriptures,” 9 August 1928, 3. The article quotes five paragraphs on the manner of inspiration from the preface of the *Great Controversy*. See F. M. Wilcox, “The Holy Scriptures,” 9 August 1928, 4; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, [1911], v–vii.

Table 2. Comparison of documents from August 5 and 9, 1928

August 5, 1928 Letter	August 9, 1928 Article
<p>The writings of the prophets of old which constitute the canon of sacred scripture, were brought together under the providential leadings of God.</p> <p>Evidently not all the writings of the prophets of old were collected in the Sacred Book.</p> <p>God, in His providence, selected from the writings of those prophets that which contained the expression of His Divine will best suited to constitute a great spiritual guidebook for all nations, times, and conditions.</p> <p>There were many prophetic writings which, for some good reason, He did not include in the sacred canon, such as the book of Jasher, Nathan the Prophet, Gad the Seer, the book of Jehu, and others.</p> <p>Of these we know little or nothing to-day except the names.</p> <p>Nor do I believe that even all that Jeremiah or Isaiah or other canonical prophets wrote were included in the canon.</p> <p>The wisdom of God made that selection which would meet the needs of the church in every period and which in every age would prove a groundwork for “[quotation from 2 Timothy 3:16)].”</p> <p>From among many inspired books and documents the sacred canon was signalized by being set apart and safeguarded in the sifting processes of time by God’s overruling providence. It occupies therefore a unique position among the books of divine revelation of past periods and constitutes the great test book of every claim of the great doctrine of revelation.</p>	<p>These writings, in time, under the providential leadings of God were brought together, and constituted the canon of Sacred Scripture as we have it at the present time.</p> <p>Not all the writings of these inspired men were collected in the sacred book.</p> <p>God in His providence selected from the writings of the prophets those portions which contained that expression of His divine will best suited to constitute a great spiritual guidebook for all nations, times, and conditions.</p> <p>There were many prophetic writings which for some good reason He did not include in this collection. The Bible mentions “the book of Jasher” (Joshua 10:13); “the book of Samuel the seer,” “the book of Nathan the prophet,” “the book of Gad the seer” (1 Chron[icles] 29:29), “the story of the prophet Iddo” (2 Chron[icles] 13:22), “the book of Jehu” (2 Chron[icles] 20:34), and others.</p> <p>Of these we know little or nothing to-day except the names.</p> <p>Nor can we be sure that there was included in the Sacred Canon even all that Jeremiah, or Isaiah, or other canonical prophets wrote.</p> <p>The wisdom of God made that selection which would meet the needs of the church in every period, and which in every age would prove a groundwork “[quotation from 2 Timothy 3:16)].”</p> <p>From among many inspired books and documents the Sacred Canon was signalized by being set apart and safeguarded in the sifting processes of time by God’s preserving and overruling providence. It occupies, therefore, a unique position among the books of divine revelation of past periods, and constitutes the great test book, or standard, of every claim in doctrine and in revelation.</p>

Third, Wilcox wrote several articles in the next two and a half months that explicitly opposed verbal inspiration, emphasizing that neither Ellen White nor the early Adventists (“the teaching of the church . . . throughout its history”) held that view.³¹⁸ Fourth, contrary to the idea that Wilcox might have believed in verbal inspiration until his letter to Froom and thus prior to those articles, he clearly rejected verbal inspiration before that time. In fact, he emphasized that he had always opposed the view of verbal inspiration.³¹⁹

For the next three months, starting on August 16, Wilcox published a series of thirteen articles on the gift of prophecy and divine inspiration as manifested in the experience of Ellen White. Many of his statements on inspiration come from these articles. While they sought to establish these teachings on a biblical basis, he intended to show that the early Adventists and Ellen White opposed the theory of verbal inspiration and advocated the position that he held.³²⁰ Three years later these articles appeared in

³¹⁸ Wilcox stated, “Mrs. White never claimed verbal inspiration for her writings,” and “The view of inspiration expressed in the [1883] resolutions of the General Conference, has been the teaching of the church, so far as we know, throughout its history.” See F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10],” 11, 12. A quotation from W. C. White reads, “Mother has never laid claim to verbal inspiration, and I do not find that my father, or Elders Bates, Andrews, Smith, or Waggoner put forth this claim.” See F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 11],” 5. Shameerudeen takes note of these statements. See Cliffmond Shameerudeen, “The Seventh-day Adventist Reaction to the Fundamentalist Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy/Verbal Inspiration from 1915 to 1930” (Research paper, Andrews University, 2011), 14.

³¹⁹ At the 1919 Bible Conference Wilcox expressed his position as follows, “I have never believed [in] the verbal inspiration of the *Testimonies*.” See *Report of Bible Conference*, 1229.

³²⁰ F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 1],” 9; F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 2],” 9, 10; F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 3],” 10, 11; F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 4],” 12, 13; F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 5],” 9, 10; F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 6],” 15, 16; F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 7],” 17, 18; F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 8],” 11, 12; F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 9],” 10, 11; F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 10],” 11, 12; F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 11],” 5, 6; F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 12],” 11, 12; F. M. Wilcox, “The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church [No. 13],” 5, 6. It is this article series that leads Gang to the conclusion that Wilcox “strongly opposed the entire concept of verbal inspiration.”

slightly revised form in the book *Divine Revelation*.³²¹ Meanwhile, shortly after publishing his article series, Wilcox also published articles by other Adventist writers who shared their personal experiences with White's guidance in the history of the denomination.³²²

Responding to questions and criticism raised by E. S. Ballenger,³²³ in late 1929, Wilcox prepared a series of articles on beliefs in the shut door and the close of probation among early Sabbatarian Adventists. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject he consulted more than a dozen church leaders and workers because he wanted to provide an answer that was honest, balanced, and less susceptible to criticism, something that he felt had not always been done.³²⁴ The series of seven articles appeared from December 19,

See Gang, "F. M. Wilcox and the Spirit of Prophecy," 24. Timm arrives at a similar conclusion, yet as he presumes that Wilcox had advocated the verbal inspiration of White's writings before, he suggests that "Wilcox moved perceivably away from his previous understanding of verbal inspiration." See Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," 506.

³²¹ F. M. Wilcox, *Divine Revelation: The Prophetic Gift* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, [1931]); "[Advertisement] Divine Revelation: The Prophetic Gift, by F. M. Wilcox," *Review and Herald*, 27 August 1931, 23.

³²² A. G. Daniells, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church: Leadings of the Spirit of Prophecy in This Movement," *Review and Herald*, 29 November 1928, 8, 9; E. R. Palmer, "The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church: A Well of Sweet Water and Then a Sanitarium," *Review and Herald*, 20 December 1928, 14, 15.

³²³ In December 1925, Wilcox was in contact with E. S. Ballenger (1864-1955) to clarify some matters concerning his brother's (A. F. Ballenger) separation from the church. See F. M. Wilcox to E. S. Ballenger, 27 December 1925, A. F. Ballenger, E. S. Ballenger, and Donald E. Mote Papers, box 78, fld 10, CAR. For more information on E. S. Ballenger and his brother A. F. Ballenger and their criticism against Ellen White, see Burt, "Bibliographic Essay on Publications About Ellen G. White," 163; Gary Land, "Ballenger, Edward Stroud (1864-1955)," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 303; Gary Land, "Ballenger, Albion Fox (1861-1921)," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 302, 303.

³²⁴ F. M. Wilcox to W. A. Spicer, 26 November 1929, PGF box 3122, GCA. He pointed out that in a quotation from Joseph Bates concerning the shut door, J. N. Loughborough had left out a portion without providing omission marks, a fact that had brought criticism of his book. See F. M. Wilcox to W. C. White and C. H. Jones, 30 December 1929, WCWCF, EGWE. In 1921 he had chosen to reject an article from Loughborough because the latter had claimed that after the great disappointment the early pioneers had not believed in a shut door. Wilcox pointed out that their writings show that they did believe in a shut door, yet

1929 to January 30, 1930.³²⁵ Here he repeated some of the objections against verbal inspiration that he had already brought forward fifteen months earlier. He asserted, "Mrs. White never claimed for her own writings verbal inspiration. Nor was this believed by the fathers of the church." These remarks were followed by supportive quotations from her writings and those of early Adventists.³²⁶

As Modernism penetrated American universities, Wilcox grew increasingly worried about the fact that many Adventist students and teachers attended these institutions. Most classes contained elements that were seemingly intended "to instill the doctrine of evolution and undermine faith and respect for the Bible." While he was afraid that such critical sentiments would find entrance into Adventist schools,³²⁷ "entire churches were stirred up and . . . college students were lining up their teachers as to whether they were 'fundamentalist' or 'modernist.'"³²⁸ In 1931, Wilcox drafted a

Loughborough joined the church later and did not know these things from his own experience. See F. M. Wilcox to J. N. Loughborough, 30 October 1921, J. N. Loughborough Collection, box 4, fld 14, CAR.

³²⁵ F. M. Wilcox, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 1]: Faith of the Early Believers Regarding These Questions," *Review and Herald*, 19 December 1929, 3–5; F. M. Wilcox, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 2]: Faith of the Early Believers and Regarding These Questions," *Review and Herald*, 26 November 1929, 4, 5; F. M. Wilcox, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 3]: Faith of the Early Believers Regarding These Questions," *Review and Herald*, 2 January 1930, 9, 10; F. M. Wilcox, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 4]: Faith of Early Believers Regarding These Questions," *Review and Herald*, 9 January 1930, 7–9; F. M. Wilcox, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 5]: Faith of the Early Believers Regarding These Questions," *Review and Herald*, 16 January 1930, 27–29; F. M. Wilcox, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 6]: Faith of Early Believers Regarding These Questions," *Review and Herald*, 23 January 1930, 7, 8; F. M. Wilcox, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 7]," 6, 7.

³²⁶ F. M. Wilcox, "The Shut Door and the Close of Probation [No. 7]," 6, 7.

³²⁷ F. M. Wilcox to C. H. Watson, 16 October 1930, PGF box 3124, GCA. One year earlier he had written, "Seventh-day Adventists, with their historical belief in the Divine Word, should count themselves the chief of Fundamentalists today." See F. M. Wilcox, "Forsaking the Foundations of Faith: The Changing Emphasis in Religious Belief," *Review and Herald*, 28 November 1929, 14.

³²⁸ Haloviak and Land, "Ellen White and Doctrinal Conflict," 32. See F. M. Wilcox to C. H. Watson, 17 April 1932, RG 21, Special Files, Columbia Union Folder, GCA.

statement of fundamental beliefs, in which he affirmed the inspiration of the Bible and its role as “the only unerring rule of faith and practice,”³²⁹ yet as Knight notes, the statement did not mention “inerrancy or verbal inspiration.”³³⁰ Two years later Wilcox issued a series of eighteen articles on “the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12:17; 19:10).³³¹ He asked in one of the articles, “Are the writings of Mrs. White verbally inspired? Was she given the exact words in which her thoughts are expressed?” Then he responded, “She never made any such claim. Indeed, she states very positively that such was not the case. Nor did the pioneers in this movement ever believe or teach verbal inspiration for the writings of the messenger of the Lord.”³³² After describing the resolutions of the 1883

³²⁹ H. E. Rogers, ed., *1931 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1931), 377-380, esp. 377.

³³⁰ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 138. Knight expressed some surprise that “inerrancy or verbal inspiration” are missing in the statement although Wilcox, in his view, still “firmly believed in the verbal inspiration of the Bible.” He overlooks, however, Wilcox’s frequent denials of verbal inspiration and affirmations of thought inspiration.

³³¹ F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 1]: The Sacred Canon, The Foundation of Christian Doctrine and the Test of Christian Experience,” *Review and Herald*, 6 July 1933, 6, 7; F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 2]: The Sacred Canon, Further Evidences of Inspiration,” *Review and Herald*, 13 July 1933, 9, 10; F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 3]: The Gifts of the Spirit,” *Review and Herald*, 20 July 1933, 8, 9; F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 4]: A Movement of Prophecy,” *Review and Herald*, 27 July 1933, 8, 20; F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 5]: Concord of Church Teaching,” *Review and Herald*, 3 August 1933, 5, 6; F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 6]: Teachings of the Church in Recent Years,” *Review and Herald*, 10 August 1933, 5, 6; F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 7]: Recognizing the Divine Call,” *Review and Herald*, 17 August 1933, 5, 6; F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 8],” 10, 11; F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 9],” 5, 6; F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 10]: No Claim of Infallibility,” *Review and Herald*, 5 October 1933, 8–10; F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 11]: Science Confirms Revelation,” *Review and Herald*, 12 October 1933, 9, 10; F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 12],” 6, 7; F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 13],” 8, 9; F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 14]: The Extent of Mrs. E. G. White’s Visions,” *Review and Herald*, 2 November 1933, 7–9; F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 15]: A Balanced Acceptance,” *Review and Herald*, 16 November 1933, 2, 7; F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 16]: Relation to Church Fellowship,” *Review and Herald*, 23 November 1933, 4, 5, 11; F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 17]: Opposition Fulfills Prophecy,” *Review and Herald*, 30 November 1933, 10, 11; F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 18]: The Personal Touch,” *Review and Herald*, 7 December 1933, 5-7, 17.

³³² F. M. Wilcox, “The Testimony of Jesus [No. 12],” 6.

General Conference session, he concluded, “The view of inspiration in the resolutions of the General Conference has been the teaching of the church, so far as we know, throughout its history.”³³³ The following year these articles appeared in the book *The Testimony of Jesus*, which was reprinted ten years later with an additional chapter that made two previously unpublished testimonies of Ellen White available to the wider public.³³⁴

Summary

The majority of F. M. Wilcox’s statements on inspiration between 1915 and the early 1930s appeared in published articles. It was nevertheless not until 1928 that he opposed the idea of the verbal inspiration of Scripture and Ellen White’s writings in his publications. Prior to that time, he sought to be conciliatory and suggested that the technicalities of inspiration were insignificant when compared to the practical aspects of faith in the reliability of inspired writings and their authority in one’s life. By emphasizing the need to obey Scripture and White’s writings, he attempted to unite opponents of both verbal and thought inspiration in one common goal. Thus Jeffrey A. Gang may be correct in his estimation that Wilcox functioned as a “great mediator” for the church in the 1920s.³³⁵

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ F. M. Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus*, [1934]; F. M. Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus*, [1944]. Burt notes that Wilcox addressed difficult questions in his book, and that it was “reprinted in 1944, because of high demand.” See Burt, “Bibliographic Essay on Publications About Ellen G. White,” 165. The manuscripts that were made available were Ellen G. White, “Objections to the Bible,” Ms 24, 1886; Ellen G. White, “The Guide Book,” Ms 16, 1888. See also F. M. Wilcox, *The Testimony of Jesus*, [1944], 11–18; Timm, “A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000),” 507.

³³⁵ Gang, “F. M. Wilcox and the Spirit of Prophecy,” 20.

By referring to examples found in Scripture and White's writings and pointing to the witness of early Seventh-day Adventist leaders, Wilcox tried to develop a nuanced perspective of the diverse operations of the Holy Spirit in the inspiration process. While he intended to stay away from formulating a particular theory, Wilcox may, in fact, have coined the term "thought inspiration" as it came to be used by Seventh-day Adventists.³³⁶ Probably more than Daniells, W. C. White, or any other Adventist writer at the time, Wilcox did more to steer the church past extremes on both ends of the spectrum (denial of White's inspiration vs. an unrealistic defense of her inspiration). He attempted to strengthen an honest and realistic faith in her inspiration and to value the gift for which it was given. Like Daniells, Wilcox wrote several articles dealing with issues (for example, the "shut door," suppression, and plagiarism) raised by E. S. Ballenger in the *Gathering Call*. During the agitation of these issues, Wilcox may have felt impelled to start educating church members and workers in a both realistic and faith-affirming view of Ellen White's writings.

However, Wilcox may also be the most misunderstood individual in this study because most of his unequivocal negations of the verbal inspirationist position were heretofore unknown, so that his one (seemingly) explicit affirmation of verbal inspiration has become the lens through which everything else he wrote was interpreted.

³³⁶ Denton E. Rebok, *Divine Guidance in the Remnant of God's Church* (Pune, India: Oriental Watchman Pub. House, 1955), 27, 123. Similarly, Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 439.

Talking from Experience: The Cautious Education of W. C. White

William Clarence White (1854-1937) was the third son of James S. White and Ellen G. White. In his early adulthood he assisted his father in the establishment of the Pacific Press Publishing Association. After the passing of his father in 1881, W. C. White often accompanied his mother on her travels and assisted her in the publishing of her books in English and foreign languages. In addition, he served in a variety of administrative positions. In 1883, he became a member of the General Conference Committee, holding that position for most of his life. After the General Conference session in 1888, he was the acting General Conference president for about six months. When the Whites moved to Australia in 1891, he became the “district superintendent” for Australia, New Zealand, and the islands of the South Pacific. He helped establish the Australasian Union Conference, local conferences, and Avondale College, and served on numerous boards over the years. In his mother’s last years he became a much sought after counsellor and representative who was often contacted to bring certain inquiries to his mother’s attention and then share her replies.³³⁷ When Ellen White died, he, along with A. G. Daniells, C. C. Crisler, C. H. Jones, and F. M. Wilcox, was placed in charge of the estate of his mother’s writings.³³⁸ As acting officer of the Ellen G. White Estate he published several of his mother’s posthumous books.³³⁹ Because of his close relationship

³³⁷ Moon, "White, William Clarence (1854-1937)," 564, 565, 568; Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915," 23.

³³⁸ Nix, "The History and Work of the Ellen G. White Estate," 215; McGraw and Valentine, "Legacy," 307.

³³⁹ Ellen G. White, *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1922); Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1923); Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health, and Instruction to Medical Missionary Workers*

to her and his personal insights into her experience, church leaders and ministers frequently sought his advice on diverse matters, including the topic of inspiration.³⁴⁰ As W. C. White attained his knowledge about his mother's experience with divine inspiration primarily through his personal association and work with her, these influences and sources will be mentioned in the sections on the concept and the objections to avoid duplication in the section on the sources and influences.

Concept of Inspiration

W. C. White discussed multiple aspects of the inspiration of his mother, ranging from her visionary experiences to the production of her publications. He acknowledged that the Holy Spirit provided assistance without exerting a restrictive type of control over Ellen White. This section will describe these aspects in their natural order from vision to printed page.

He distinguished between visions on the great controversy theme and those addressing the condition of individuals, congregations, conferences, and institutions, which Ellen White referred to as "testimonies." The great controversy was initially shown her as "a brief outline," and later it was repeatedly "presented to her in panoramic scenes."³⁴¹ He noted that "In a few of these scenes, chronology and geography were clearly presented, but in the greater part of the revelation the flash light scenes which

(Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1923); Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1923).

³⁴⁰ That role ceased mostly after her death. See Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915," 23. However, during the 1920s the number of inquiries on matters of inspiration increased again as the study below will show. Jerry Moon states, "[W. C. White's] role as her presentative during her life prepared him to be an expositor of her writings and principles to a broader audience after her death." See Moon, "White, William Clarence (1854-1937)," 568.

³⁴¹ W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928.

were exceedingly vivid and the conversations and the controversies which she heard and was able to narrate, were not marked geographically or chronologically.”³⁴² Even the visions concerning individuals and groups sometimes presented past, present, and future events “in one view” so that Ellen White was unaware whether something had already transpired or not.³⁴³

Talking about her early work in the mid and late 1840s, W. C. White stated that she related these events “in a very brief way to the little companies of Adventists with whom she frequently met.” Then she presented portions of these representations to “various congregations . . . in varied language and differing in forms of presentation, according to the needs of the congregation and the amount of time [available].” He suggested that these circumstances resembled the experience of the Apostle Paul who related his conversion experience in various ways to different audiences. Similarly, she “wrote letters to friends and to acquaintances presenting such portions of the great truths revealed to her as she considered to be most helpful to the individual, or the group, to whom she was writing.”³⁴⁴ In fact, as she was writing letters to individuals, she was reminded of scenes in the lives of Old and New Testament characters and she included such descriptions because the principles also applied to the recipients of her letters.³⁴⁵ In

³⁴² Ibid. See also W. C. White to Our General Missionary Agents, 24 July 1911.

³⁴³ W. C. White to L. D. Trott, 7 June 1922, WCWCF, EGWE. See also Douglass, “Ellen White as God’s Spokesperson,” 87.

³⁴⁴ W. C. White to T. E. Bowen, 18 November 1925, WCWCF, EGWE.

³⁴⁵ W. C. White, “Confidence in God,” *General Conference Bulletin*, 1 June 1913, 221.

one instance, W. C. White observed that a vision of thirty seconds caused her to “diligently” write letters for about two weeks.³⁴⁶

W. C. White held that as his mother wrote down what she had seen, inspiration generally gave her specific thoughts that she had to put into words.³⁴⁷ She “never claimed perfection in the matter of putting into words the thoughts that God gave her.”³⁴⁸ As she had not been “trained in literary work,” she did not have “a fixed style,” except perhaps that “her very first writings” were characterized by “simplicity.” Nevertheless he also found in her writings many portions expressed in beautiful language.³⁴⁹ W. C. White suggested that even her physical and emotional state influenced the quality and depth of her literary productions. When Ellen White “was wearied or perplexed,” she produced “grammatical errors,” “labored constructions,” and “broken passages.”³⁵⁰ Her personal experience with suffering aided her, however, in writing on particular scenes of Christ’s life.³⁵¹

³⁴⁶ Douglass, “Ellen White as God’s Spokesperson,” 85, 86.

³⁴⁷ W. C. White to Earnest A. Raymond, 31 March 1927, WCWCF, EGWE.

³⁴⁸ In addition, he suggested that some statements in her articles were therefore only “an imperfect representation of her thought.” See *ibid.*

³⁴⁹ W. C. White to G. E. Hutches, 17 March 1929, WCWCF, EGWE. An example that W. C. White mentioned to Hutches was when W. W. Prescott visited Ellen White in Australia, she was writing the book *Desire of Ages*. He read some chapters and thought they were “very interesting and very beautiful,” except their style was unlike Ellen White’s. A comparison with the original manuscripts nevertheless revealed that most of these came verbatim from White’s pen.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.* See also W. C. White to L. E. Froom, 14 January 1925, WCWCF, EGWE; Butler, “A Portrait,” 18.

³⁵¹ W. C. White to W. A. Spicer, 23 July 1929, PGF box 3122, GCA.

As the time came to write down the “flash light views,” these “came back to her mind with freshness and clearness.”³⁵² Yet some things were brought back to Ellen White’s memory through other means. W. C. White stated that by reading the standard works of historians and biographical works, “there was brought vividly to her mind scenes presented clearly in vision but which were through the lapse of years and her strenuous ministry dimmed in her memory.”³⁵³ He further reminisced that visiting historical places in Central Europe in the mid-1880s refreshed her memory of specific scenes relative to the great controversy.³⁵⁴ Sometimes she received letters from church members who informed her about the conditions in a particular place. That intelligence reminded her of past visions and she wrote from her memory what she had seen in the past.³⁵⁵ At other times, eye witnesses gave her notes of what she had said while in vision, and she gratefully accepted these notes.³⁵⁶

According to W. C. White, two further circumstances led Ellen White to consult “the Bible and history and the writings of men who had presented the life of our Lord.”³⁵⁷ First, she sought “to get the chronological and geographical connection” from such works because the scenes in the visions “were [usually] not marked geographically or

³⁵² W. C. White to J. C. Stevens, 25 July 1919, WCWCF, EGWE.

³⁵³ W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928.

³⁵⁴ W. C. White to Froom, 14 January 1925; W. C. White to Stevens, 25 July 1919.

³⁵⁵ W. C. White, "On the Spirit of Prophecy," 2 June 1913, 235.

³⁵⁶ W. C. White to M. A. Hollister, 5 July 1919, WCWCF, EGWE.

³⁵⁷ W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928. See also W. C. White to Our General Missionary Agents, 24 July 1911.

chronologically.”³⁵⁸ Sometimes certain scenes were not included in her writings because she “did not know where to put [them].”³⁵⁹ When pointed to statements in other books showing the historical relation, she nevertheless decided to use these statements.³⁶⁰ W. C. White believed that “God ha[d] given her discernment” in the choice of statements from other writers to avoid errors “regarding all matters essential to salvation.”³⁶¹ However, he did “not know” if “this pertain[ed] to every quotation included in her books.”³⁶² He

³⁵⁸ W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928. See also Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings*, 33, 110, 111; Lake and Moon, “Current Science and Ellen White,” 218. W. C. White reminisced that his mother often “gave a partial description of some scene presented to her, and when Sister Mary Ann Davis made inquiry regarding time and place, Mother referred her to what was already written in the books of Elder Smith and in secular histories.” See W. C. White to Haskell, 31 October 1912. However, he also knew that she had “read from the works of Hanna, Fleetwood, Farrar, and Geikie,” and “Andrew’s, particularly with reference to chronology.” See W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928.

³⁵⁹ W. C. White, “The Visions of Ellen G. White,” 17 December 1905, shelf document, EGWE. See also W. C. White to Stevens, 25 July 1919; Lake and Moon, “Current Science and Ellen White,” 218; Douglass, “Ellen White as God’s Spokesperson,” 88.

³⁶⁰ W. C. White to Froom, 14 January 1925. Thus he reminisced, “One Sabbath afternoon, while we were in Basel, I was reading Wiley’s history of the Reformation . . . she took up the narrative and described the experience with all the clearness and vividness of one who had seen it and she brought in a number of very interesting features not mentioned by Wiley. After she had finished her description of the scene, I said, ‘Mother have you read that in Wiley’s?’ She said, ‘No, but I saw it in vision.’ . . . Then I said, ‘Why did you not write that out and include it in your first edition of *Great Controversy*?’ and she said, ‘Because I did not know its relation to other parts of the history, but now that I know when and where it occurred, I will write out what was presented to me and it can be incorporated in the next edition of the book.’” See W. C. White to Stevens, 25 July 1919.

³⁶¹ W. C. White to W. W. Eastman, 4 November 1912, WCWCF, EGWE. See also W. C. White to E. E. Andross, 18 June 1920, WCWCF, EGWE; Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 433; Haloviak, “In the Shadow of the ‘Daily,’” 50, 51; Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 110; Lake and Moon, “Current Science and Ellen White,” 219; Patrick, “Author,” 97. Interestingly, W. C. White stated that his mother “admonished [him] not to tell others.” He concluded “that she saw how this might lead some of her brethren to claim too much for her writings as a standard with which to correct historians.” See W. C. White to Andross, 18 June 1920. About the same time, he wrote, “There has been a long and bitter controversy on the part of some as to whether the quotations that have been made in mother’s writings from historians should be considered infallible, and all historical reckonings be brought in harmony with them. It was not mother’s plan or purpose to write books which should be used to correct history and chronology; the aim of her books is to bring out the great facts regarding the plan of redemption, and she has used historical quotations to illustrate the character of the controversy.” He nevertheless believed, for example, that the Millerite movement was led by God and that the fundamental prophetic dates were correct, despite the fact that there were errors in the teachings of William Miller and his associates in some minor points of the prophecies. See W. C. White to W. J. Harris, 9 December 1920, WCWCF, EGWE.

³⁶² W. C. White to Andross, 18 June 1920.

“could not agree” that the historical details, points of chronology, and quotations derived from these books “were ultimately authoritative,”³⁶³ at least his mother had never claimed it.³⁶⁴ He did not think that her writings contained any real contradictions.³⁶⁵ But he also did not believe that “chronology” was “essential to the salvation of man” because even the Bible contained some “disagreements and discrepancies.”³⁶⁶ Second, Ellen White utilized the language and descriptions found in these works³⁶⁷ because “she always felt most keenly the results of her lack of school education”³⁶⁸ and wanted “to strengthen the conviction” of her readers through such clear descriptions.³⁶⁹ Third, she also “read from

³⁶³ Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 434; Lake and Moon, "Current Science and Ellen White," 219, 220. See also Timm, "Understanding Inspiration," 13. For the original statements see White; W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, 4 November 1912, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Eastman, 4 November 1912.

³⁶⁴ W. C. White to General Conference Council, 30 October 1911; W. C. White to Andross, 18 June 1920. See also Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915," 29; Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," 495; Timm, "Understanding Inspiration," 13; Lake and Moon, "Current Science and Ellen White," 217.

³⁶⁵ W. C. White to L. E. Froom, 6 April 1926, WCWCF, EGWE.

³⁶⁶ W. C. White to Haskell, 31 October 1912. He further stated, “If it should be found by faithful study that she has followed some exposition of prophecy which in some detail regarding dates we cannot harmonize with our understanding of secular history, it does not influence my confidence in her writings as a whole any more than my confidence in the Bible is influenced by the fact that I cannot harmonize many of the statements regarding chronology.” See W. C. White to Eastman, 4 November 1912. See also Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 433; Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily'," 50, 51.

³⁶⁷ W. C. White to Stevens, 25 July 1919.

³⁶⁸ W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928. The statement is also printed in Ellen G. White *Selected Messages*, 3:460; Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915," 18. See also W. C. White to Stevens, 25 July 1919. W. C. White suggested, “She found it both a pleasure and a convenience and an economy of time to use their language fully or in part in presenting those things which she knew through revelation. . . . [in] many of her manuscripts as they come from her hand quotation marks were used. In other cases they were not used; and her habit of using parts of sentences found in the writings of others and filling in a part of her own composition, was not based on any definite plan nor was it questioned by her copyists and copy writers until about 1885 and onward.” See W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928.

³⁶⁹ W. C. White to Andross, 18 June 1920. Eight years later he wrote, “Her use of the language of the historians was not for the sake of bringing into the book something that had not been revealed to her but

the best religious papers” and “cut out hundreds of articles and pasted them into scrapbooks, thinking they would be useful in days to come.”³⁷⁰ W. C. White pointed out that she read the works of other authors before rather than during the production of her publications.³⁷¹ He nevertheless felt that a presentation of that matter to the broader public needed more study for it to be a properly nuanced explanation.³⁷²

W. C. White nuanced his remarks concerning the production of his mother’s writings by stating that “there were not more than two or three [books] that were treated exactly alike” in their production.³⁷³ Reminiscing about the early years, he wrote,

After James White had begun the publication of a periodical, Mrs. White wrote from time to time articles for publication, or selected from the letters which she had written portions which she considered appropriate for publication. She had not instruction from Heaven that would lead her to feel that the exact wording used in one letter to a friend, or the exact wording used in an article published in a periodical, must be followed in later publications.³⁷⁴

He knew, for example, that *Steps to Christ* (1892) consisted of selections taken from several of her articles published in the early and late 1880s.³⁷⁵ *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* “was made up of material left over from [the] *Desire of Ages* manuscript

was an effort to utalize [*sic*] in the best language she could find, the description of scenes presented to her.” See W. C. White to F. C. Gilbert, 15 July 1928, WCWCF, EGWE.

³⁷⁰ W. C. White to L. E. Froom, 14 February 1926, WCWCF, EGWE. He stated further that she obtained these periodicals by asking the editors of the *Review* and the *Signs* to pass along to her their exchange papers once they did not need them anymore.

³⁷¹ W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928.

³⁷² W. C. White to L. E. Froom, 1 May 1926, WCWCF, EGWE.

³⁷³ W. C. White to Hutches, 17 March 1929.

³⁷⁴ W. C. White to Bowen, 18 November 1925.

³⁷⁵ W. C. White to Froom, 18 August 1926.

because the book . . . [had been] growing too large.”³⁷⁶ He stated that many “most precious passages that had been written first in letters to members of the General Conference Committee and to conference presidents, regarding situations which were illustrated by the experiences of . . . Old and New Testament characters,” were later reused in the production of her articles and books. Finding these documents was a task for her assistants.³⁷⁷

While in her early years Ellen White’s principal helper was her husband,³⁷⁸ after his death she employed a staff of literary assistants to assist her in various tasks. W. C. White believed that she had received divine guidance in both choosing her assistants and terminating the employment of others.³⁷⁹ She needed these assistants to correct her poor

³⁷⁶ W. C. White to L. E. Froom, 20 September 1926, WCWCF, EGWE.

³⁷⁷ W. C. White, "Confidence in God," 221.

³⁷⁸ W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928. See also Patrick, "Author," 93.

³⁷⁹ W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928; W. C. White to Hutches, 17 March 1929. The names and descriptions of these assistants are mentioned in W. C. White to Hutches, 17 March 1929. See also Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 110, 111, 117, 118; Norma J. Collins, "Literary Assistants," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 942, 943; Kaiser, "How Ellen White Did Her Writing," 120, 121. Two illustrations that W. C. White mentioned specifically when talking about the divine guidance that Ellen White received concerning her assistants were her niece, Mary C. Clough, and Mary Ann Davis. Clough assisted her in preparing *Spirit of Prophecy*, vols. 2 and 3, yet when preparing *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, she had a dream in which she was instructed to “no longer employ her niece as her book editor.” The public praise and acknowledgement that Clough received as a newspaper reporter had made her unfit for work where she needed “spiritual discernment.” Davis, on the other hand, began to work for his mother after the death of his father. Ellen White “received assurance through revelation that Sister Davis would be a conscientious and faithful helper.” “The last work done by Sister Davis was the selection and arrangement of the matter used in *Ministry of Healing*.” See W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928. For more information on the literary assistants and W. C. White relative to the production of Ellen White’s books, see Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 221–26; Knight, *Meeting Ellen White*, 78–81; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 108–23; Butler, "A Portrait," 18.

grammar,³⁸⁰ to condense writings to meet the publishers' requests for brevity,³⁸¹ and to improve "labored constructions."³⁸² Some of her assistants worked as copyists, others as copy-editors, and a few as editorial compilers.³⁸³

W. C. White remarked that as Ellen White grew older, she did less and less actual writing and depended more on her workers to find specific materials.³⁸⁴ In 1913, he stated

³⁸⁰ W. C. White to V. E. Hendershot, 18 July 1919, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Kern, 17 March 1921; W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928; W. C. White to Hutches, 17 March 1929; W. C. White to Brother, 29 January 1932, Q&A 43-E-1, EGWE. See also Butler, "A Portrait," 18; Patrick, "Author," 93. Commenting on the "necessity of editing," he wrote, "In a large percentage of her writings, there was clearness, force, and good arrangement with occasional grammatical errors: in a smaller percent of her writings, there were passages, clear, forceful, logical, and in rhetorical expression, and there were other passages where the thought was clear, but the language was broken." See W. C. White to Froom, 14 January 1925.

³⁸¹ W. C. White to Froom, 14 January 1925; W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928; W. C. White to Hutches, 17 March 1929. He remembered that the difficulty with the amount of the material prepared for the *Desire of Ages* (1898) was solved by publishing some of the material in *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (1896) and *Christ's Object Lessons* (1900). See W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928. Interestingly, when W. C. White compiled material for *Counsels on Health* (1923), he initially intended "to use a large portion of the matter in *Christian Temperance*," published originally in 1890, yet as he discovered that much of that material had been compiled from the *Testimonies*, he decided to provide the original statements as they appeared in the *Testimonies* rather than in their condensed form in *Christian Temperance*. See W. C. White to L. E. Froom, 9 July 1926, WCWCF, EGWE.

³⁸² W. C. White to Hutches, 17 March 1929.

³⁸³ W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928. Concerning her copyists and copy-editors, he wrote, "She wrote very rapidly, and oftentimes very fully, and her secretaries were entrusted with the work of copying and preparing these writings for publication. Their work consisted in correction of grammatical sentences, the elimination of repetition, proper paragraphing, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization; and also they were instructed to rearrange paragraphs so that the important truths presented would appeal most strongly to the reader. Mother's secretaries were never instructed to add to the matter, nor were they permitted to change the thought, or to bring in their own thoughts." See W. C. White to Harris, 9 December 1920. He also stated that her "workers of experience . . . [were] authorized to take a sentence, paragraph, or section from one manuscript where the thought was clearly and fully expressed, and incorporate it with another manuscript where the same thought was expressed but not so clearly." See W. C. White to G. A. Irwin, 7 May 1900; Collins, "Literary Assistants," 942.

³⁸⁴ W. C. White, "On the Spirit of Prophecy," 2 June 1913, 235. Thus he remembered, "Many times when she would receive letters containing questions she would say to her secretary, 'I have written on that subject, but it is not clear in my mind. Please look up what I have written and bring it to me.' After studying what she had written upon a given subject when the matter was fresh on her mind, she would make selections of paragraphs or pages to be used in her answer to the letter presenting the same question, the second, or third, or fourth time." See W. C. White to G. M. Smith, 6 March 1924, WCWCF, EGWE.

that after searching for statements on specific subjects in her letters, manuscripts, and previous publications, her workers brought

them together in manuscripts. After these are gathered, and grouped into chapter form, the manuscript is always submitted to mother. She reads it over carefully. Up to the present time every chapter of every book, and all the articles for our periodicals—unless they happen to be reprints—have passed through her hands, and have been read over by her. Sometimes she interlines; sometimes she adds much matter; sometimes she says, “Can not you find more on this subjects?” And then, when more has been found, and added, the manuscript is recopied, and handed back to her again for examination. And when she finally signs it and returns it to use we are permitted to send it out. . . . Of course, at the beginning of the work on each book, we talk over the plan, and she gives general directions; and then she gives counsel as the work goes forward.³⁸⁵

He further emphasized that she wrote with particular audiences in mind.³⁸⁶ She desired to avoid misunderstandings³⁸⁷ and to increase the comprehensiveness of her expositions.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁵ W. C. White, "Confidence in God," 221.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ W. C. White suggested that Ellen White chose to omit her statements on amalgamation in later publications because she realized they were misunderstood and misused. He added, “It was the fear that wicked men, with hatred in their hearts, for certain races of men, better than themselves, would misapply and misuse it to the injury of those they hate.” See W. C. White to W. G. Kneeland, 18 January 1924, WCWCF, EGWE. Another illustration of that freedom was her decision to have certain statements modified in the *Great Controversy*. W. C. White wrote, “Previous to the publication of this [1911] edition, papists in many countries had been able to debar the circulation of the book; therefore she modified some of the more striking statements regarding the papacy and the pope, explaining her action in doing so by saying [‘]There is sufficient [evidence] in the book to show the character of the papacy without these very severe statements. It is better that ten thousand people should have the book without these statements than that only one thousand should have the book with these statements in.[’]” She also said, [‘]What I have written regarding the papacy is true; much history has been destroyed by the Roman Catholic church, nevertheless it is better that my statements regarding the work of the papacy should be so conservative that the book will not be debarred from sale in strongly Catholic countries.[’]” See W. C. White to Bowen, 18 November 1925.

³⁸⁸ W. C. White stated that as she desired to present what she saw “in its completeness,” she usually “wrote it out fully and conscientiously.” See W. C. White to Froom, 14 January 1925. Of course, the comprehensiveness of her descriptions depended largely, as described above, on what she could remember, whether she knew where and when specific events occurred, what audience she was addressing, and whether the occasion permitted it.

She felt perfectly free in writing additional delineations and expositions and in leaving out in her later statements, words, sentences, and paragraphs that she knew had been misunderstood and misapplied, or that would be spared for other reasons.³⁸⁹

Finally, W. C. White remarked, his mother reviewed her articles and books, and “was remarkably acute in detecting any error made by copyists or by copy editors.” “In her very last years, her supervision was not so comprehensive” anymore, yet she nevertheless pointed out what needed emphasis and what could be omitted, particularly as abridgements of her books were prepared for translation into other languages.³⁹⁰

Objections to Other Views

W. C. White objected to views that differed from his perception of the Holy Spirit’s operation in his mother’s experience. It could be argued that these views of inspiration range along a spectrum from too much divine control to too much human control. A closer look shows, however, that the majority of these views presupposed that God would be more directly in control of the inspiration process. This assumption led some people to question Ellen White’s inspiration because she took more freedom in the production of her writings than they were willing to grant.

He frequently opposed the practice of attributing “verbal inspiration” to Ellen White’s writings because he felt that was “more than she claims for it, more than Father ever claimed for it, more than Elder [J. N.] Andrews, [J. H.] Waggoner, or [Uriah] Smith

³⁸⁹ W. C. White to Froom, 18 November 1925.

³⁹⁰ W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928. For his involvement in translation projects in the 1880s see, for example, Kaiser, "Ellen G. White's Life of Christ," 131–48. For W. C. White's own report of the history of the translation of his mother's books into other languages see W. C. White to M. N. Campbell, 9 May 1926, WCWCF, EGWE.

ever claimed for it.”³⁹¹ Seeing clear differences to their views, W. C. White asserted that S. N. Haskell’s teachings were “in harmony with the views of Prof. [Louis] Gaussen.”³⁹² He added, “Sister White never accepted the Gaussen theory regarding verbal inspiration, either as applied to her own work or as applied to the Bible.”³⁹³ Recalling conversations about Gaussen’s theory, he wrote, “When this matter was discussed in her presence, she sometimes said if that were true, it would make our all[-]wise God responsible for some very strange statements which we find in the Holy Bible.”³⁹⁴ He suggested that pressing that theory on church leaders and members did “more to bring the shaking over the Testimonies than any other one element in the work.”³⁹⁵

J. N. Loughborough’s idea that everything found in the *Desire of Ages*, *Great Controversy*, and *Patriarchs and Prophets* “was given . . . directly from heaven,” was similarly objectionable to W. C. White, who argued, “I have seen Mother struggle for hours writing from memory that which when under the special influence of the Spirit of God she could have written in a few minutes.”³⁹⁶ W. C. White thought that one of his

³⁹¹ W. C. White to Haskell, 31 October 1912. See also W. C. White to Haskell, 15 January 1913; W. C. White to Haskell, 7 February 1913; W. C. White to Warren, 13 April 1924; W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928; W. C. White to Froom, 21 January 1929. Arthur White and George Knight note this fact in their writings. See Arthur L. White, “The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915,” 12; Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 106, 109, 110.

³⁹² W. C. White to Warren, 13 April 1924.

³⁹³ W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928. See also W. C. White to Froom, 21 January 1929.

³⁹⁴ W. C. White to Warren, 13 April 1924.

³⁹⁵ W. C. White to Haskell, 15 January 1913; W. C. White to Haskell, 7 February 1913. He also wrote, “I believe that the influence of mother’s work is in some ways injured by the claims made by a few of our brethren as to what her work meant to the church—claims which mother never made, nor ever consented to.” See W. C. White to E. E. Andross, 5 October 1920, WCWCF, EGWE.

³⁹⁶ W. C. White to Gilbert, 15 July 1928.

mother's statements was often misunderstood—"I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision—the precious rays of light shining from the throne."³⁹⁷ He considered it an affirmation of "the heavenly origin of the truths brought out in her articles" rather than a claim to have written "with an inspired pen."³⁹⁸

Responding to proponents of verbal inspiration who charged him with having "made a thousand changes in some of her [revised] books," he stated that "these changes were made by conscientious christian [*sic*] proof readers, and not by W. C. White."³⁹⁹ In fact, when discussing translation policies with the president of the European field, he clarified that translations should be neither overly literal nor too free. He was "desiring a true and correct translation of the thought." He added, "This does not mean changing the argument of the author, it does not mean bringing in additional history which the author did not use, it does not mean leaving out a part of the author's argument."⁴⁰⁰ These remarks are indicative of his assumption that inspiration was working on the thoughts rather than the words, which allowed for changes of the language provided the ideas are

³⁹⁷ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:67.

³⁹⁸ W. C. White to J. W. Norwood, 13 May 1923, WCWCF, EGWE. Ten years earlier he had written concerning that statement from *Testimonies*, vol. 5, "From my conversations with men and women, I have learned that many understand this last statement to mean that every article, every testimony, is the writing out of a presentation given then and there; and therefore some conclude that because they continue to see articles in the papers, mother is writing today just as much as she used to write years ago. The facts are these: At the present time mother is writing very little." See W. C. White, "On the Spirit of Prophecy," 2 June 1913, 235.

³⁹⁹ W. C. White to Hendershot, 18 July 1919. The same day he sent another letter to Hendershot, in which he quoted the resolution of the General Conference from 1883 on the revision of the *Testimonies* and the working of inspiration. He further stated that the *Testimonies* "have not been changed," but they were only freed from "grammatical errors when the volumes were republished in their present form." See W. C. White to Brother, 29 January 1932.

⁴⁰⁰ W. C. White to L. R. Conradi, 3 July 1916, WCWCF, EGWE.

maintained. W. C. White stated that was also why she had no particular concern for a specific Bible translation.⁴⁰¹

W. C. White further pointed out that “her own experience led her to a belief in plenary inspiration,”⁴⁰² apparently distinguishing between that concept and verbal inspiration. However, the belief in plenary inspiration did not necessarily eliminate the possibility of a private, common sphere in her life. W. C. White suggested that she sometimes gave advice “not as a commandment, but as a suggestion based upon the presentations which God ha[d] given her from time to time regarding the situation” in certain places.⁴⁰³ He made this point even more clear in the following statement,

Mother never made the claim, as some have said, that everything she ever wrote at any time was inspired. I told them that Mother, like every other prophet of God, had her own private life, and spoke and wrote about matters of finance, about her household, her farm, her chickens, her horses, and her dairy, and that there was no claim that she was speaking regarding these matters with the voice of inspiration.⁴⁰⁴

He nevertheless considered it highly problematic to introduce a similar difference in those writings for which she had claimed inspiration. He therefore objected to the idea that the absence of phrases such as “I saw” or “I was shown” indicated that the ideas were not inspired but her own.⁴⁰⁵ To say that only the *Testimonies*, and not her other

⁴⁰¹ W. C. White to Froom, 21 January 1929.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, 26 July 1912, WDF 65a, CAR.

⁴⁰⁴ W. C. White to J. W. Watt, 7 March 1915, WCWCF, EGWE. See also Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 414.

⁴⁰⁵ W. C. White to Brother, 29 January 1932. He referred the recipient specifically to Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:62, 67, 654-691.

books, were produced by inspiration was likewise wrong.⁴⁰⁶ Questioned about Ellen White's attitude towards Butler's earlier ideas on degrees of inspiration,⁴⁰⁷ W. C. White stated that he did not remember much of what she had said concerning Butler's articles. He only stated, "My memory of the matter is that she was not in harmony with all he wrote, and that she expressed some regrets regarding what he had written. She did not think that men could analyze this question of inspiration, and specify regarding degrees of inspiration."⁴⁰⁸ Although W. C. White objected to different degrees of inspiration and to denying inspiration to writings his mother had claimed inspiration for, he suggested that the scope of her collection of inspired writings differed from that of the biblical writings because these were a "collection of inspired writings winnowed," whereas Ellen White's writings contained many things that "corresponded to the writings of the prophets and scribes that were essential to the people of God when given but which did not find place in the canon of Scripture."⁴⁰⁹

When some ministers were disappointed that Ellen White failed to write a decisive interpretation of the *tāmīd* in Daniel 8, W. C. White concluded that God desired to have this matter settled through "a thorough study . . . of the Bible and history" rather

⁴⁰⁶ W. C. White to Brother, 29 January 1932. To support his position he quoted from Ellen G. White, *Colporteur Evangelist* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1920), 36; Ellen G. White to Harper, 26 December 1904; Ellen G. White to [Stephen T.] Belden and [Melvina] Belden, 30 January 1905.

⁴⁰⁷ E. E. Andross to W. C. White, 13 September 1921, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁴⁰⁸ W. C. White to Andross, 21 September 1921.

⁴⁰⁹ W. C. White to R. A. Underwood, 6 July 1921, WCWCF, EGWE. See also Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily'," 45.

than “by a revelation.”⁴¹⁰ He pointed out that some people had used the *Testimonies* instead of the Bible because they felt it was easier than presenting it directly from Scripture. In some cases, the Bible even contained clear, strong, and definite statements that could hardly be misunderstood or misapplied.⁴¹¹ W. C. White was not categorically against quoting her writings in sermons; quite the opposite was true.⁴¹² Putting her writings before Scripture was nevertheless a practice that he commented on as follows, “These things have grieved mother, and she has often advised our ministers to use the Bible first in presenting truths that were of a character to call for decided reforms; then to read the Testimonies as another witness to the same truths.”⁴¹³ To use Ellen White’s writings to prove certain points to those unfamiliar with her writings was similarly unprofitable.⁴¹⁴

W. C. White stated that while she was glad that the book *Healthful Living* (1896), compiled by David Paulson, M.D., was well received by teachers of health reform, “she

⁴¹⁰ W. C. White to P. T. Magan, 31 July 1910, WCWCF, EGWE. Thus Knight notes correctly that W. C. White did not view his mother as a final interpreter of Scripture. See Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 27, 28. In a similar way, W. C. White stated, “The Bible is our first authority in everything. The Testimonies are exceedingly helpful in understanding present duty, but when the Bible is neglected and the Testimonies are used, there is danger of using them unwisely.” See W. C. White to Guy Dail, 29 August 1929, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁴¹¹ W. C. White to D. D. Voth, 22 September 1921, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Dail, 29 August 1929.

⁴¹² W. C. White to Voth, 22 September 1921; W. C. White to Paul E. Scoggins, [1927], WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Brother, 24 June 1929, PGF box 3122, GCA. In fact, in 1929, he printed a couple two-page leaflets on a number of subjects, with rounded corners for them to slip easily into a preacher’s Bible or loose-leaf notebook. See W. C. White to Brother, 24 June 1929; W. C. White to Guy Dail, 1 September 1929, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁴¹³ W. C. White to Voth, 22 September 1921.

⁴¹⁴ W. C. White to Voth, 22 September 1921; W. C. White to Guy Dail, 12 November 1925, WCWCF, EGWE. W. C. White nevertheless affirmed to Dail that this did not negate the truthfulness and reliability of her writings.

expressed her sorrow” that lay people became confused and took some extreme positions because the book contained so many brief statements disconnected from their literary and historical context.⁴¹⁵ Discussing the same issue, W. C. White reminisced that “Mother often stated that she had never been commissioned of God to write proverbs, and that her writings to be properly understood should be read in their setting.”⁴¹⁶ The idea that brief statements could be applied to any situation allowed for applying of such statements to places and conditions very different from the original setting, and thus making them teach things inconsistent with her teachings in general.⁴¹⁷

A statement that received much attention was W. C. White’s remark that his mother “never claimed to be an authority on history.”⁴¹⁸ In 1912, he asserted that she “never thought that the readers would take it [*Great Controversy*] as an authority on historical dates and use it to settle controversies, and she does not now feel that it ought

⁴¹⁵ W. C. White to L. E. Froom, 5 February 1928, WCWCF, EGWE. Five years earlier W. C. White had stated that his mother thought it would be best to prepare such a book under her supervision, yet she did not have the time to do it then. Urged by the brethren in Battle Creek to consent to have Paulson prepare the book without any delay, she finally agreed to it. She neither condemned it nor approved it. See W. C. White to Clarence Santee and G. M. Aldway, 5 January 1923, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid. See also Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily'," 45. In 1929, W. C. White wrote this remarkable note to Guy Dail, “I believe as you do that such a setting forth of circumstances under which testimonies were given or the history of the time in which they were given, would be exceedingly valuable to our people. I will promise to do my best to encourage the General Conference Committee to appoint a working committee of three to take this matter in hand.” See W. C. White to Guy Dail, 28 August 1929, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁴¹⁷ W. C. White to Bowen, 18 November 1925. See also Knight, "How to Read Ellen White's Writings," 75, 76.

⁴¹⁸ W. C. White to Our General Missionary Agents, 24 July 1911. Scholars who quoted that statement were Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings*, 29; Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915," 12; Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 432, 433; Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 115; Timm, "Understanding Inspiration," 13; Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," 495; Lake and Moon, "Current Science and Ellen White," 217.

to be used in that way.”⁴¹⁹ When reviewing a manuscript by F. M. Wilcox, W. C. White responded to the statement, “Sister White has not been set in this church as a historian or as a theologian.” He noted that this was “undoubtedly true” if considered merely in a “technical sense” of the words. In a broader sense, however, a historian was “one who writes, compiles, or relates history,” a description that fit his mother. Thus he qualified,

Sister White, as a teacher of sacred truth, has not been led to a technical treatment of theological questions, but has given such views of the love of God and the plan of salvation, and of man’s duty to God and to his fellow men, that when presented to the people, arouse the conscience, and impress upon the hearer of saving truths of the Word of God. She says, “The written testimonies are not to give new light, but to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed.” In the technical sense of the word, Sister White is not a historian. She has not been a systematic student of history and chronology, and she has never intended that her works should be used to settle controversies over historical dates. But as one who relates history, one “in whose work the character and spirit of an age is exhibited in miniature,” she is a historian whose works teach valuable lessons from the past for the present and the future.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁹ W. C. White to Haskell, 31 October 1912. See also W. C. White to Haskell, 4 November 1912. This statement has been quoted in Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 432, 433; Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 115. Similarly, he stated to W. W. Eastman that his “mother never wished our brethren to treat them [her writings] as an authority regarding the details of history or historical dates.” See W. C. White to Eastman, 4 November 1912. See also Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 432, 433; Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 115; Timm, “Understanding Inspiration,” 13; Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings*, 33, 34, 37. W. C. White noted, in fact: “Did mother’s use of an extract from a historian place the seal of infallibility on the writings of that historian, or upon that particular quotation[?] Mother never claimed this, and it grieved [*sic*] her when she heard that some of her brethren were making this claim.” He added, “If we cannot absolutely know just how far to go in our claim for her work, in its various phases, I think it is better to claim less than we believe, than to claim more. Regarding the great points at issue, we are sure. Regarding minor details, let us be cautious and conservative, and in many cases God will work out an answer to our queries that will confirm confidence, and strengthen faith.” See W. C. White to Andross, 18 June 1920. According to him, she did not want her writings to be used to prove the correctness of one historian over another. See W. C. White to L. E. Froom, 18 February 1932, WCWCF, EGWE; Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 116.

⁴²⁰ W. C. White to F. M. Wilcox, 27 April 1915. See also Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 434; Haloviak, “In the Shadow of the ‘Daily,’” 50. He made an important nuancing remark to stress that the descriptions taken from other books only illustrated the scenes she had seen: “You ask if Sister White was dependent upon history as any other writer would have been and having read that history and being acquainted with it she wrote the history appearing in these books. I answer emphatically, no. The scenes presented to her were very comprehensive.” See W. C. White to Stevens, 25 July 1919.

W. C. White concluded that it would be “a great mistake if we lay aside historical research and endeavor to settle historical questions by the use of Mother’s books as an authority when she herself does not wish them to be used in any such way.”⁴²¹

A number of other ideas were opposed by W. C. White because they implied that her writings and literary habits conflicted with a belief in her inspiration. Such assertions often depended on the assumption that in the inspiration process the Holy Spirit exerted a dominating influence over an inspired writer. He referred to an incident in the mid-1840s in which his mother saw seven moons surrounding a planet, that some identified as Jupiter, and that it was discovered later that this planet had actually more moons. Instead of seeing her statement as a mistake, W. C. White stressed God’s providence in permitting “her to see only the seven moons because the people with whom Sister White was associated understood that that was the number of Jupiter’s moons.” The vision was not so much to teach them astronomy, but to convince them of the authenticity of her prophetic insight.⁴²²

The subject of plagiarism was an issue that was continually raised by Ellen White’s critics, and W. C. White had to respond to it frequently. Besides explaining her reasons for utilizing the works of other writers,⁴²³ W. C. White clarified some other aspects. Being unacquainted with literary standards, she sometimes used quotation marks

⁴²¹ W. C. White to Haskell, 31 October 1912. Ellen White endorsed the statements of her son by adding the words, “I approve of the remarks made in this letter, Ellen G. White.” Moon notes that there would be no room for “historical investigation, verification, and correction of quotations, that went into the 1911 edition of [the] *Great Controversy*,” if her statements on historical details were authoritative. See Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 434.

⁴²² W. C. White to Dail, 12 November 1925.

⁴²³ See pp. 428-431.

in her manuscripts and sometimes she did not. The publishers chose to have these omitted, but her opponents criticized the absence of quotation marks. It was not until some people complained about the apparent “injustice [done] to other publishers and writers” that “she made a decided change.”⁴²⁴

Some asserted that in writing her testimonies Ellen White had been influenced by information received from others. W. C. White replied that he had seen how she refrained from reading certain letters before writing a testimony because she wanted to avoid being prejudiced.⁴²⁵ Others argued that the beauty and eloquence of Ellen White’s writings had to be attributed to the work of her literary assistants rather than to divine inspiration. W. C. White objected to such statements and suggested that all of her copyists, except for Fannie Bolton,⁴²⁶ would say that “the most beautiful parts” in her writings “were almost wholly as she had written them.”⁴²⁷ Some people asserted that she had assembled the *Desire of Ages*, yet W. C. White stressed that Mary Ann Davis had been the one who

⁴²⁴ W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928. See also W. C. White to Stevens, 25 July 1919; W. C. White to Gilbert, 15 July 1928.

⁴²⁵ W. C. White to Frank E. Belden, 23 February 1903, PIC box 3073, GCA.

⁴²⁶ For more information on Fannie Bolton and her claims, see Robert W. Olson, "Bolton, Frances "Fannie" (1859-1926)," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 316–318; "The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents," shelf document, EGWE.

⁴²⁷ W. C. White to Hutches, 17 March 1929. Some people asserted that after a vision Ellen White “jot[ted] down” about ten manuscript pages that her assistants condensed to about one printed page. W. C. White replied that she usually “wrote it out fully and conscientiously” because it was “her uniform desire” to present it “in its completeness.” She nevertheless complied with the publishers’ desire for brevity in her articles and books and thus “the copyists were permitted to eliminate repetitions,” a circumstance that W. C. White “often regret[ted]” when reading her books as “the original fullness” of some subjects was no longer present. He felt inclined that “the average amount of abbreviations” fell “between twenty and forty percent.” See W. C. White, to Froom, 14 January 1925. Later, he stated that the above idea might be considered true regarding the work done on the *Ministry of Healing* and *Christ’s Object Lessons*, yet it would be an exaggeration to apply it to the handling of her manuscripts in general. Here W. C. White replied to an idea purported in a presentation given by his son-in-law D. E. Robinson. See W. C. White to L. E. Froom, 17 February 1925, WCWCF, EGWE. See also Froom to W. C. White, 21 January 1925.

arranged the manuscript, and that she had accurately presented what came from Ellen White's pen.⁴²⁸ Others circulated the rumor that Herbert C. Lacey allegedly claimed authorship of some portions of the *Desire of Ages* or its introduction. W. C. White stated,

When I met Brother Lacey in San Francisco, just as he was sailing to the Orient, I told him that I had heard these reports, and he said that they were incorrect. I told him that my memory of the matter was this, that in the selection and arrangement of what mother had written, Sister Davis was much perplexed regarding the proper grouping of material to form the introduction to *Desire of Ages*, and that she submitted to Brother Lacey and to two or three others the manuscripts which she had prepared, with other material, and asked them to carefully read the matter and to give her counsel and help in the arrangement of the introduction. I said to Brother Lacey, "Was there anything further than this that you were asked to do?" He said, "No, of course not." And he gave me plainly to understand that he did not make the claim that he had written new matter to be included in this introduction.⁴²⁹

Finally, W. C. White cautioned a church leader that those "criticiz[ing] the writings of Ellen White" should not automatically be seen as "objector[s] to the Spirit of prophecy." Some people's views of inspiration led them to question his mother's experience, but they did not necessarily mean to reject the prophetic gift or the Holy Spirit.⁴³⁰

Sources and Influences

Most of W. C. White's perceptions of divine inspiration resulted from his personal experience with his mother as described in the previous two sections. Besides these insights gained from his observation of her experience, talks with her, and his close

⁴²⁸ W. C. White to Froom, 20 September 1926.

⁴²⁹ W. C. White to Harris, 9 December 1920.

⁴³⁰ W. C. White to W. A. Spicer, 11 December 1929, WCWCF, EGWE.

engagement in the production of her publications,⁴³¹ he placed special emphasis on specific biblical passages, statements in Ellen White's writings, resolutions of early Seventh-day Adventists, and other Protestant writers. He further referred correspondents to particular formal statements that he had issued in the past.

W. C. White referred to the Apostle Paul as a biblical example for an inspired writer who adapted his report of a vision. Accordingly, as Paul relayed the experience of his visionary encounter with Jesus to different audiences, he used varying language and appropriate parts in describing that encounter.⁴³²

Three different Ellen White documents found frequent mention in W. C. White's replies to inquirers. The first document was his mother's preface to the *Great Controversy*, which clarified her rationale for utilizing the works of other writers.⁴³³ The second document was her reply to the letter of David Paulson from January 14, 1906, in which she stressed that one needed to distinguish between the sacred and the common

⁴³¹ In the early 1900s, he had helped Ellen White, for example, in the compilation of material on particular subjects from the bulk of her previous writings for publication as pamphlets. See W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, 27 February 1903, PIC box 3073, GCA; W. C. White to H. E. Osborne, 5 March 1903, PIC box 3073, GCA; W. C. White to Secretary of the Illinois Tract Society, 9 March 1903, PIC box 3073, GCA.

⁴³² W. C. White to Bowen, 18 November 1925. See also W. C. White to Froom, 21 January 1929.

⁴³³ W. C. White, "On the Spirit of Prophecy," 2 June 1913, 234, 235; W. C. White to Warren, 13 April 1924; W. C. White to S. J. Lashier, 28 April 1924, WCWCF, EGWE. In fact, he noted, "Most of you have *Great Controversy* in your homes. You will find this statement in the introduction. That introduction is worthy of much more study than it has received. Carefully studied, it will answer many of the questions that arise over this subject. . . . It is my belief, brethren, that if we faithfully study these statements regarding the method by which God communicates to his servant, and the method of writing out the light imparted, that we will find an answer to many of our questions regarding the character of the writings of Mrs. White." See W. C. White, "On the Spirit of Prophecy," 2 June 1913, 234, 335.

sphere in her writings.⁴³⁴ The third document that W. C. White referred to occasionally was the little pamphlet *The Writing and Sending Out of the Testimonies* (1913).⁴³⁵

W. C. White referred repeatedly to the resolution of the General Conference to revise Ellen White's *Testimonies* in 1883.⁴³⁶ The statement declared that Adventists believed inspiration imparted "the thoughts and not (except in rare cases) the very words in which the ideas should be expressed."⁴³⁷ In addition, he quoted or cited a number of times statements on the subject of inspiration from Uriah Smith, in which the former editor of the *Review* discounted the idea of a general inspiration of the words.⁴³⁸

An introduction that Henry Alford, Dean of Canterbury Cathedral from 1857 to 1871, had written for a Bible translation appealed to W. C. White because it presented "the view of plenary Inspiration rather than verbal Inspiration."⁴³⁹

⁴³⁴ W. C. White, "On the Spirit of Prophecy," 2 June 1913, 234, 235; W. C. White to Stevens, 25 July 1919; W. C. White to Norwood, 13 May 1923; W. C. White to Warren, 13 April 1924; W. C. White to S. J. Lashier, 30 April 1924, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Hutches, 17 March 1929.

⁴³⁵ W. C. White, "On the Spirit of Prophecy," 2 June 1913, 233; W. C. White to Hutches, 17 March 1929.

⁴³⁶ W. C. White to Stevens, 25 July 1919; W. C. White to Norwood, 13 May 1923; W. C. White to Warren, 13 April 1924; W. C. White to Lashier, 30 April 1924.

⁴³⁷ See Butler and Oyen, "General Conference Proceedings," 27 November 1883, 741.

⁴³⁸ W. C. White to Norwood, 13 May 1923; W. C. White to Warren, 13 April 1924; W. C. White to Lashier, 30 April 1924. W. C. White apparently referred most of them to one specific article although he used slightly different titles ("A Criticism Answered," and "An Intrusion Answered"). However, there is no article with either of these titles. Two articles carry titles that come close to the above ones. See Smith, "The Visions—Objections Answered," 12 June 1866, 9, 10; Smith, "The Visions—Objections Answered," 31 July 1866, 65–67. That W. C. White was probably referring to Smith's article in the *Review* of October 18, 1887 seems to be supported by the fact that, despite using the title "A Criticism Answered," W. C. White referred to that particular date. See W. C. White to Lashier, 30 April 1924; Smith, "A Miracle Called for," 649. In that letter he also referred to another article from Uriah Smith in which the latter objected to the inspiration of Ellen White's words. See Smith, "Which Are Revealed, Words or Ideas?," 168, 169.

⁴³⁹ W. C. White to Warren, 13 April 1924. Besides distinguishing between the two views of inspiration, Alford defined plenary inspiration as follows, "The inspiration of the sacred writers I believe to have consisted in the fullness of the influence of the Holy Spirit specially raising them to, and enabling them for, their work,—in a manner which distinguishes them from all other writers in the world, and their

There were further several documents that W. C. White frequently shared with those asking questions concerning the changes made to the *Great Controversy* in 1911.⁴⁴⁰ While he himself was the author of these documents, they nevertheless make reference to his mother's experience and received her explicit approval. Thus they point out influences for his personal views of inspiration although they technically do not constitute his sources or influences. These documents were his letters to the General Missionary Agents on July 24, 1911, and the Publishing Committee of the Pacific Press on July 25, 1911, as well as his address to the General Conference Committee on October 30, 1911.⁴⁴¹

The Context of the Statements

The near lack of formal definitions of inspiration in W. C. White's publications should not be mistaken for a disinterest in the subject in general. His correspondence is

work from all other works. The men were full of the Holy Ghost—the books are the pouring out of that fullness through the men,—the conservation of the treasure in earthen vessels. The treasure is ours, in all its richness: but it is ours as only it can be ours,—in the imperfections of human speech, in the limitations of human thought, in the variety incident first to individual character[,] and then to the manifold transcription and the lapse of age. . . . I would earnestly impress on my readers . . . that the MEN were INSPIRED, the BOOKS are the RESULTS OF THAT INSPIRATION.” While Alford believed that the Bible was correct “in matters of fact and doctrine,” he still saw the biblical writers “exhibiting different styles of writing, taking hold of the truth from different sides.” He stated that the Holy Spirit assisted them and brought back things to their minds. However, he did not believe that inspiration dictated “the *arrangement to be adopted* and the *chronological notices to be given*.” “There [were] certain minor points of accuracy or inaccuracy, of which human research suffices to inform men, and on which, from want of that research, it is often the practice to speak vaguely and inexactly.” “The same,” he argued, “may be said of citations and dates from history.” See Henry Alford, *The New Testament for English Readers: Containing the Authorized Version, with Marginal Corrections of Readings and Renderings, Marginal References, and a Critical and Explanatory Commentary*, vol. 1, pt. 1 (London, Cambridge, UK: Rivingtons; Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1863), 27, 21-24 (emphasis original).

⁴⁴⁰ W. C. White to Stevens, 25 July 1919; W. C. White to Norwood, 13 May 1923; W. C. White to G. E. Hutches, 9 April 1929, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to G. B. Starr, 17 September 1929, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁴⁴¹ W. C. White to Our General Missionary Agents, 24 July 1911; W. C. White to the Members of the Publication Committee, 25 July 1911, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to the General Conference Council, 30 October 1911.

filled with explanatory statements as he sought to educate inquirers on the particulars of Ellen White's experience of inspiration and strengthen their faith in the divine origin of the messages in her writings. These years may be divided into three general periods that show W. C. White move from attempts to publicly educate people (1911-1913) to adopting a more cautious role (1914-1923) to privately informing inquirers in a comprehensive manner (1924-1930s).

Public Education (1911-1913)

As the revision of the *Great Controversy* came to a close in the summer of 1911, Ellen White, her son W. C., and her literary staff anticipated that the changes would be criticized. The "Scholarly Historians" would not be satisfied with the number of changes whereas the "Stalwarts" would argue that they "had no right to make any change or correction whatever."⁴⁴² After the completion of the revision, in late July, W. C. White prepared circular letters for the publishing houses to educate the church about the revision process and the changes made.⁴⁴³ The publishing houses "preferred[, however,] to keep quiet for fear of unsettling the plans of some of their agents." W. C. White "always thought that it would have been best to have the whole matter thoroughly discussed then, and let everybody know just what had been done, and why."⁴⁴⁴ On

⁴⁴² W. C. White to Andross, 18 June 1920. Valentine also mentions that some people desired more changes. See Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 259. Discussing changes concerning historical statements on New England's "Dark Day" (1780) in the 1911 edition of the *Great Controversy*, W. C. White mentioned to Froom that his mother agreed to the replacement of some generalized quotations with more nuanced quotations as suggested by Prescott. See W. C. White to Froom, 14 January 1925.

⁴⁴³ W. C. White to Our General Missionary Agents, 24 July 1911; W. C. White to the Members of the Publication Committee, 25 July 1911.

⁴⁴⁴ W. C. White to Andross, 18 June 1920.

October 30, he presented a comprehensive report on the revision project at the fall council of the General Conference. During that meeting he stated that his mother “never claimed to be an authority on history,”⁴⁴⁵ a statement that “has become a classical exhibit” in discussions “touching on the inspiration of the E. G. White writings,” as Arthur White notes.⁴⁴⁶ The changes in the book, discussions on chronological details of prophetic interpretation, and the question of Ellen White’s use of historians triggered ruthlessly candid dialogues with S. N. Haskell and W. W. Eastman in late 1912 and early 1913.⁴⁴⁷ On October 31, W. C. White stressed in his reply to Haskell that the claim for the verbal inspiration of his mother was going contrary to her own views and experience.⁴⁴⁸ Before mailing the letter, he gave it to Ellen White to read. She was pleased with it and approved its content by signing the letter.⁴⁴⁹ Nevertheless, on

⁴⁴⁵ W. C. White to the General Conference Council, 30 October 1911; Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 429; Timm, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration (1844-2000)," 495; Lake and Moon, "Current Science and Ellen White," 217. The document was reprinted in Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3:433-440. Interestingly, Ellen White supported his report and stated, "I think he has presented the matter correctly and well." See Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3:123, 124; Poirier, "Ellen White and Sources," 148. Poirier notes that W. C. White’s presentation afforded him an opportunity to explain his mother’s use of historians and the role of her assistants in supplying correct references to quotations. See Poirier, "Ellen White and Sources," 148. Timm describes that statement as “the most influential statement toward a trustworthiness-limited-to-salvation concept.” See Timm, "Understanding Inspiration," 13.

⁴⁴⁶ Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings*, 29.

⁴⁴⁷ The literary history of W. C. White’s drafts in response to Haskell’s and Eastman’s letters is outlined very well in Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 431–34.

⁴⁴⁸ W. C. White to Haskell, 31 October 1912. See also Knight, *Reading Ellen White*, 107. His letter came in response to a letter from Haskell. It should nevertheless be noted that W. C. White tried to work for unity and indicated that united views and efforts would cause hundreds to “back up our testimony regarding the integrity of the work by personal experiences which will have mighty weight with the people.” See W. C. White to Haskell, 15 January 1912; W. C. White to Haskell, 7 February 1913.

⁴⁴⁹ W. C. White reported, “When that letter was written, I placed it in mother’s hand as I had many other such letters. I handed it to her without comment, with the hope that if there was anything in it that was wrong or misleading, she would call my attention to it. The next day I asked for the letter that I might mail it, and I asked if she had read it. She said Yes, she had read it, and she was glad I had written to you just as I had.” See W. C. White to Haskell, 1 January 1913. Ellen White’s approval is evident from her statement

November 4, W. C. White went over it one more time and slightly adapted it before sending it to Haskell.⁴⁵⁰ That letter formed the basis for a further elaboration of the subject of inspiration and Ellen White's use of historians in a letter that he wrote to Eastman on the same day.⁴⁵¹

During the 1913 General Conference Session W. C. White endeavored to educate church members and leaders.⁴⁵² In two presentations he discussed her experience of inspiration, the compiling process, the production of her writings, and the erroneous idea that everything she had written was inspired or revealed. The presentations, which contained lengthy quotations from Ellen White's 1906 letter to David Paulson and the preface of the *Great Controversy*, were subsequently published in the *General Conference Bulletin*.⁴⁵³

On October 25 and 27, at the 1913 Autumn Council, he tried to answer numerous questions concerning "independent enterprises" and "the use of the *Testimonies*." With his explanations cut short in the end, he felt that a number of his remarks were "liable to

and signature at the end of the letter: "I approve of the remarks made in this letter, Ellen G. White." See W. C. White to Haskell, 31 October 1912. See also Lake and Moon, "Current Science and Ellen White," 218.

⁴⁵⁰ W. C. White to Haskell, 4 November 1912. See also Lake and Moon, "Current Science and Ellen White," 218, 219.

⁴⁵¹ W. C. White to Eastman, 4 November 1912. Through an oversight the letter was not sent out until November 26, 1912. See unknown to W. W. Eastman, 26 November 1912, WCWCF, EGWE. Moon notes that W. C. White's second letter became "the prototype for a letter to W. W. Eastman on the same date in which White continued to develop his exposition." See Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 433. See also Lake and Moon, "Current Science and Ellen White," 219.

⁴⁵² For more information on the events, see Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily'," 46, 47; Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 338–42; Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 431. Eight years later he mentioned these talks to Crisler. See W. C. White to C. C. Crisler, 25 September 1921, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁴⁵³ W. C. White, "Confidence in God," 218–21; W. C. White, "On the Spirit of Prophecy," 2 June 1913, 233–235. See also Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 338–40.

be misunderstood.”⁴⁵⁴ Subsequently, he wrote to those involved in the discussions in order to clarify the meaning of his remarks. Some presumed that testimonies always resulted from direct revelation, and as W. C. White refused to classify Ellen White’s letter to Watson in any way, the report was circulated that he “said it was not a testimony.”⁴⁵⁵ Blamed by W. W. Prescott two years later for avoiding to educate the public on the production of Ellen White’s writings,⁴⁵⁶ W. C. White remarked, “I have felt that it was my duty to be cautious in the matter of making statements that are liable to be misrepresented and misunderstood. My feelings regarding this were considerably confirmed by the experiences of the council meeting in Washington in the autumn of 1913.”⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁴ Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 341, 342.

⁴⁵⁵ W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, 31 December 1913, WCWCF, EGWE. See also W. C. White to Watt, 7 March 1915; Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily'," 46, 47; Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 414. In his attempt to clarify some of the things said at the Autumn Council in 1913 he wrote a clarification to a participant as late as March 1915. He stated, “I have sometimes said that I did not understand that all testimony was inspiration, and I referred to the writings of the apostle Paul. Some was history, some revelation, some exhortation, and some argument. He did not claim that all he wrote was the record of revelations from heaven; but all his writings were together constituted his testimony to the church, and I have regarded Mother’s writings in a similar way.” See W. C. White to Watt, 7 March 1915. See also Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily'," 47.

⁴⁵⁶ Prescott to W. C. White, 6 April 1915.

⁴⁵⁷ W. C. White to Prescott, 7 May 1915. See also Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915," 30. In this context, Valentine notes that at the 1913 General Conference session, W. C. White “had made explanations intended to broaden the church’s understanding of Ellen White’s work, but the delegates had misunderstood what he said. As a result, he had become more cautious. How to broaden the church’s understanding without destroying confidence in her prophetic gift was extremely difficult.” See Valentine, *W. W. Prescott*, 263. Considering the above details, it seems, however, that White’s remark to Prescott referred to his experience at the fall council in October 1913 rather than the General Conference session six months earlier. Valentine is nevertheless correct on W. C. White’s goal to educate the church on matters of inspiration.

Cautious Communication (1914-1923)

Feeling more inclined to be cautious concerning his remarks about his mother's inspiration, W. C. White was occupied with preparing abridgements of and selections from her writings for translation into foreign languages after the death of his mother in 1915 until the early 1920s.⁴⁵⁸

W. A. Colcord's separation from the church in 1914 and his subsequent criticism had more repercussions than previously known.⁴⁵⁹ He criticized G. A. Irwin's *The Mark*

⁴⁵⁸ W. C. White to G. W. Caviness, 23 February 1916, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Martha D. Amadon, 22 August 1916, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to C. J. Burgess, 24 August 1916, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Maggie Bree, 24 August 1916, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to R. C. Porter, 24 August 1916, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, 1 October 1916, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to George I. Butler, 1 January 1917, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Lillian Belden Gilbert, 16 January 1917, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to S. N. Curtis, 11 December 1917, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Dail, 1 September 1929. See also Moon, "White, William Clarence (1854-1937)," 568, 569. He knew that translations varied in quality. See W. C. White to Danish-Norwegian Advisory Committee, 1 March 1917, WCWCF, EGWE. Through his involvement in the translation of his mother's works W. C. White knew about the difficulty of translating some words and phrases into other languages. In preparing abridgements, they sometimes omitted a few paragraphs and inserted a few words to make better connections without changing the ideas. See W. C. White to Burgess, 24 August 1916; W. C. White to Dail, 12 November 1925; W. C. White to L. E. Froom, 13 December 1934, Q&A 43-C-4, EGWE. Some selections had already been created and produced in the early years of the century. He mentioned specifically selections from the testimonies that L. R. Conradi had produced for the German-speaking people in 1903/1904. See, for example, W. C. White to L. E. Borle, 25 October 1918, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to L. H. Christian, 15 August 1919, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁴⁵⁹ Colcord had become estranged from denominational leaders over various financial issues. He further began to question Ellen White's literary practices as a result of a misunderstanding. W. C. White explained a crucial experience that occurred in 1913. "Sister White was never very systematic in the handling of her letters and manuscripts, and sometimes on her tables would be found portions of letters written by her and portions of letters written to her in a state of confusion." When C. C. Crisler left for the General Conference council in that year, he gathered all kinds letters and manuscripts laying around, thinking they might be referred to in the council. After his arrival in Washington, D.C., he realized that "two or three pages of a letter from W. A. Colcord was associated with letters written by Sister White. Colcord being present, recognized the portions of his letter and jumped to the conclusion that they might be intended to be used as the utterances of Sister White. This was not intended and never could have happened. They were never sent forth to our people as the utterances of Sister White and never would have been sent so forth because a critical examination of material would have made it plain that it was foreign material and only associated with Sister White's writings because of the disorderly location of material on her table." See W. C. White to L. E. Froom, 28 April 1928, WCWCF, EGWE. Here, W. C. White clarified to Froom what had happened after the latter had learned about the incident in a six-hour interview with Colcord. See L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 19 April 1928, WCWCF, EGWE.

of the Beast⁴⁶⁰ for exalting Ellen White's writings as "'the only infallible interpreter' of the Bible."⁴⁶¹ Colcord knew otherwise as he had been involved in the revision of some of the denominational books from 1910 to 1914.⁴⁶² He further circulated the rumor that White's *Sketches from the Life of Paul* (1883)⁴⁶³ had to be discontinued when it was discovered that she had borrowed heavily from *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, originally written by W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson,⁴⁶⁴ and its publisher demanded the withdrawal of White's book.⁴⁶⁵ Colcord therefore questioned her inspiration severely.⁴⁶⁶ He was professedly even "assisting D. M. Canright in the writing of his book,

⁴⁶⁰ G. A. Irwin, *The Mark of the Beast: Of What Does It Consist and When Is It Received?* (Angwin, CA: Pacific Union College Printing Dep., [1911]); Geo. A. Snyder, "Mark of the Beast, of What Does It Consist, and When Is It Received?," *Pacific Union Recorder*, 2 March 1911, 16.

⁴⁶¹ W. A. Colcord to W. C. White, 27 August 1916, WCWCF, EGWE; W. A. Colcord to Vesta J. Farnsworth, 27 December 1929, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁴⁶² W. A. Colcord, "A Statement and Confession," *Review and Herald*, 8 February 1934, 24.

⁴⁶³ Ellen G. White, *Sketches from the Life of Paul*.

⁴⁶⁴ The book was originally published in London in 1851. See William J. Conybeare and John S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1851-1852). In subsequent years and decades it was reprinted in multiple editions in both England and the United States.

⁴⁶⁵ Claude E. Holmes to W. C. White, 17 February 1917, WCWCF, EGWE. The rumor was not new. Charles Stewart had already raised the charge of plagiarism concerning *Sketches from the Life of Paul* in his "Blue Book" in 1907. See Stewart, *A Response to an Urgent Testimony from Mrs. Ellen G. White Concerning Contradictions, Inconsistencies and Other Errors in Her Writings*, 70-75, 80. Interestingly, in 1907, W. C. White faulted himself for his "lack of experience in the publishing work that such acknowledgement was not made." See Poirier, "Ellen White and Sources," 147, 148; W. C. White to M. N. Campbell, 30 July 1907, EGWCF, EGWE. A helpful comparison between the two books and discussion of the implications is found in Fortin, "Plagiarism," 1031-1034. For the history of the book see Jack Blanco, "Sketches from the Life of Paul," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 1168.

⁴⁶⁶ A. G. Daniells felt that Colcord behaved "unreasonably and ungentlemanly." See A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, 9 October 1916, WCWCF, EGWE. See also Colcord to W. C. White, 27 August 1916.

*Life of Mrs. E. G. White.*⁴⁶⁷ W. C. White sought to get to the bottom of Colcord's claims concerning *Sketches from the Life of Paul* to answer inquiries of disturbed church members and workers, among them Claude Holmes and J. S. Washburn.⁴⁶⁸ Holmes had just asked W. C. White how he could obtain his mother's unpublished writings and was referred by him to the General Conference.⁴⁶⁹ Interestingly, W. C. White answered Holmes' questions but consistently avoided commenting on his repeated affirmations that to him Ellen White's writings were "Scripture" and "the word of the Lord."⁴⁷⁰ Beyond stating that he saw more ministers and church leaders encourage members to read her

⁴⁶⁷ Colcord, "A Statement and Confession," 24. Twenty years later he repented of his actions that resulted from, what he termed, "when roots of bitterness are allowed to spring up," and was again received into membership of the church in early 1934. About two years later he passed away. See W. W. Prescott, "[Obituary] W. A. Colcord," *Review and Herald*, 2 January 1936, 21.

⁴⁶⁸ W. C. White to F. M. Wilcox, 1 April 1917, WCWCF, EGWE; Washburn to W. C. White, 7 December 1916; Holmes to W. C. White, 17 February 1917. W. C. White was not aware of any evidence for the claim that the publisher of the *Life and Epistles of St. Paul* had threatened to sue the *Review and Herald* and was sure that whatever correspondence had taken place between the two publishers, it did not influence the history of Ellen White's work. See W. C. White to Stevens, 25 July 1919; W. C. White to F. M. Wilcox, 1 April 1917.

⁴⁶⁹ Claude E. Holmes to W. C. White, 17 June 1916, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Claude E. Holmes, 25 June 1916, WCWCF, EGWE. Since Holmes was criticizing church leaders as Colcord had initially done and was now looking into some of the difficult issues of Ellen White's writings, Daniells was afraid that he would follow the footsteps of Colcord. See A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, 10 November 1919, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁴⁷⁰ Holmes to W. C. White, 18 January 1919; Holmes to W. C. White, [September/October 1919]; Holmes to W. C. White, 31 October 1926. Holmes wrote in one instance, "I am an absolute believer in the divine inspiration of your mother's writings. I draw no line between the human and the divine; it is all or nothing with me." See Holmes to W. C. White, 17 June 1916. W. C. White's direct replies to these letters all answer every question and fulfill every request, yet in no case did he respond or comment on Holmes' view of inspiration. See W. C. White to Holmes, 25 June 1916; W. C. White to Holmes, 5 March 1919; W. C. White to Holmes, 5 October 1919. The same pattern is seen in another example. One writer despised revised editions such as the 1915 edition of *Gospel Workers* because he did "not like to drink from fountains which are made unclean by the feet of unfaithful ones." W. C. White complied with his request without commenting on these remarks. See Ernest Hartmann to W. C. White, 24 May 1917, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Ernest Hartmann, 10 June 1917, WCWCF, EGWE. Similarly, six years later, he avoided answering Rippey's direct question if he considered the 1911 edition of the *Great Controversy* "being dictated by the Spirit of God as much as the first edition." He nevertheless sent him the circular on the changes in the 1911 edition of the book and stressed that the changes were "carefully supervised and heartily approved" by Ellen White. See J. A. Rippey to W. C. White, 3 January 1922, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to J. A. Rippey, 27 March 1923, WCWCF, EGWE.

writings than ever before, a fact generally overlooked by those who were exalting themselves to judge and condemn their brethren,⁴⁷¹ W. C. White avoided anything that could have brought him in conflict with Holmes and was therefore able to maintain his position of trust and positive influence with Holmes.

At the same time, a group of people met regularly in Washington, D.C., to study the Bible and unpublished testimonies in order to criticize and condemn church leaders.⁴⁷² W. C. White suggested that this group was largely inspired by the writings of A. T. Jones and A. F. Ballenger.⁴⁷³ They claimed that the General Conference Committee was suppressing Ellen White's unpublished testimonies. W. C. White felt that they misunderstood how his mother's writings had come about.⁴⁷⁴ He perceived the two approaches to her unpublished writings—making them available irrespective of their scope and purpose vs. locking all these materials up—problematic and thought that a judicious use of some previously unpublished materials was in perfect harmony with his mother's wish of publishing compilations from her manuscripts.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷¹ W. C. White to Claude E. Holmes, 5 October 1919.

⁴⁷² W. C. White to Dores E. Robinson, 17 July 1919, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, 6 June 1921, WCWCF, EGWE. In that letter to Haskell, W. C. White stated that these church members had quoted some testimonies from memory, but he noted, "Many of them I could not remember of ever having heard. They sounded harsh and denunciatory, and different from my memory of what had been written on the subject."

⁴⁷³ W. C. White to A. W. Anderson, 9 June 1919, WCWCF, EGWE. He further distanced himself from the practice of those who used his mother's testimonies to beat others. See W. C. White to E. H. Harris, 28 July 1919, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁴⁷⁴ W. C. White to J. M. Cole, 8 June 1919, WCWCF, EGWE; Anderson to W. C. White, 20 August 1919.

⁴⁷⁵ Nix, "The History and Work of the Ellen G. White Estate," 218; McGraw and Valentine, "Legacy," 309; McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 437–39. Most trustees, except for C. C. Crisler and W. C. White, thought that her unpublished writings should not be made available.

Meanwhile, the 1919 Bible Conference, taking place in Washington from July 1 to August 1, provided selected teachers, editors, and administrators a confidential forum for the discussion of several controversial topics. As a member of the General Conference Committee W. C. White was invited and encouraged to attend the conference,⁴⁷⁶ yet he was unable to attend.⁴⁷⁷ He was nevertheless eager to obtain more information about the event,⁴⁷⁸ yet news came in only gradually and fragmentary.⁴⁷⁹ Several years later, after

⁴⁷⁶ W. E. Howell to Brother, 13 May 1919, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to W. E. Howell, 21 May 1919, WCWCF, EGWE; W. E. Howell to W. C. White, 28 May 1919, WCWCF, EGWE; W. E. Howell to Brother, 3 June 1919, WCWCF, EGWE. Arthur L. White mistakenly suggests that W. C. White was not invited to the 1919 Bible Conference. See Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915," 25.

⁴⁷⁷ McArthur, A. G. *Daniells*, 386, 387. Douglass surmises that W. C. White chose not to go because the program did not show anything directly related to Ellen White. In addition, he suggests that "for many church leaders, at the Conference and in the field, W. C. White was suspect, and had been for twenty years, as being one of the 'liberals.'" See Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, 438, 439. It is certainly true that a person like S. N. Haskell disapproved of W. C. White's literary assistance to his mother. See Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White*, 361. That this was a reason for W. C. White not to attend the Bible Conference is nevertheless questionable. At the same time, conservative people such as Holmes, Washburn, and the study group in Washington, D.C., considered him still an authority on his mother's writings although he himself felt no commission from God to be an interpreter of the *Testimonies* any more than other church leaders. See W. C. White to R. A. Underwood, 5 May 1918, WCWCF, EGWE. Also, many Bible teachers and the General Conference leaders (Daniells, Howell) encouraged him to attend. His general work, the program of the conference, and its potential for tensions may have persuaded W. C. White to skip this event. Moon suggests that his absence was primarily work-related. See Moon, "White, William Clarence (1854-1937)," 568, 569.

⁴⁷⁸ W. C. White stated that he was "hungry for more news about the Bible Institute" and was hoping to "get it at the Boulder Meeting." See W. C. White to F. M. Wilcox, 27 August 1919, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁴⁷⁹ On July 20, A. G. Daniells optimistically remarked that after the close of the conference the participants stood "together more unitedly and firmly for all the fundamentals than when we began the meeting." See A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, 20 July 1919, WCWCF, EGWE. Five days later F. M. Wilcox noted that "some strange ideas [were] presented" and the discussions failed to bring the attendees any nearer to a settlement of the questions, yet he felt that the meeting was pervaded by a kind, brotherly spirit. See F. M. Wilcox to W. C. White, 25 July 1919. See also F. M. Wilcox to W. C. White, 19 August 1919. On September 5, his son-in-law, D. E. Robinson, who had attended the Bible Conference, sent him a report about it which contained far more information than anything else that W. C. White had heard from other people. The report seemed to be quite positive, yet its actual content remains obscure because the letter was terminally misplaced. See W. C. White to Dore E. Robinson, 28 September 1919, WCWCF, EGWE. The letter from D. E. Robinson to W. C. White, dated 5 September 1919, was originally in the WCWCF in the Ellen White Estate, but it was at some point transferred to the Document File on the "Washington Conference 1919," where it is no longer located. More than a year later W. C. White still had

learning details from various people, he felt that, in attempting to counter extreme views on one side of the question, some participants had made “extravagant and misleading” statements in the other direction. Now he tried to clarify some misconceptions concerning the entire process from vision to publication, the role of Ellen White’s literary assistants, and the history of the *Great Controversy*.⁴⁸⁰

Private Comprehensive Responses (1924-1930s)

From 1924 to 1930 W. C. White corresponded with several individuals, among them Luther Warren and LeRoy Edwin Froom, who asked questions concerning the inspiration of Ellen White’s writings. W. C. White’s replies provide considerable insight into his perception of his mother’s inspiration. In April 1924, Warren thus asked him to clarify the difference between his and Haskell’s view on inspiration. W. C. White provided a candid answer and sought to avoid any conflict as he outlined the history of the theory of verbal inspiration among Adventists, a theory that, in his view, neither his mother nor the early pioneers had advocated.⁴⁸¹ A longstanding correspondence developed in these years between him and Froom. The latter consulted him on such matters as the manner of her inspiration, the process from vision to published page, Ellen White’s reading habits and use of literary sources, the work of her literary assistants, the

received only fragmentary information, the perspective of which depended largely on whom he was asking. See W. C. White to Harris, 9 December 1920.

⁴⁸⁰ W. C. White to Froom, 14 January 1925. His letter came in response to Froom’s inquiry for White’s opinion on “a few points that were brought out at the time of the 1919 Bible Conference.” See Froom to W. C. White, 6 January 1925.

⁴⁸¹ W. C. White to Warren, 13 April 1924. He referred Warren to three distinct documents: Ellen G. White to Paulson, 14 June 1906; Butler and Oyen, “General Conference Proceedings,” 27 November 1883, 741; and an article by Uriah Smith supposedly entitled “A Criticism Answered.” It seems that this was a reference to Smith, “A Miracle Called for,” 649. See the discussion on pp. 445, 446 fn. 437.

1911 revision of the *Great Controversy*, omissions and editorial changes, and the 1919 Bible Conference.⁴⁸² Working for the ministerial association and later serving as editor of the newly launched *Ministry* magazine, Froom received “with increasing frequency” inquiries as young ministers wanted to understand the particulars of inspiration.⁴⁸³

During the same period, W. C. White interacted with several individuals who either held verbal views of inspiration or had been confused by critical charges. In 1924, A. N. Dugger, General Conference president of the Church of God (Seventh Day), published a challenge to Seventh-day Adventists. As church leaders were at a loss how to respond, W. C. White was asked to reply to the assertions.⁴⁸⁴ Dugger claimed that Ellen

⁴⁸² See, e.g., Froom to W. C. White, 6 January 1925; W. C. White to Froom, 14 January 1925; Froom to W. C. White, 21 January 1925; W. C. White to Froom, 17 February 1925; Froom to W. C. White, 3 February 1926; W. C. White to Froom, 14 February 1926; L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 23 February 1926, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Froom, 6 April 1926; Froom to W. C. White, 20 April 1926; W. C. White to Froom, 1 May 1926; L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 15 June 1926, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Froom, 9 July 1926; Froom to W. C. White, 8 August 1926; W. C. White to Froom, 18 August 1926; L. E. Froom to W. C. White, 8 September 1926, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Froom, 20 September 1926; Froom to W. C. White, 22 December 1927; W. C. White to Froom, 8 January 1928; Froom to W. C. White, 15 January 1928; Froom to W. C. White, 21 January 1928; W. C. White to Froom, 5 February 1928; Froom to W. C. White, 19 April 1928; W. C. White to Froom, 28 April 1928; Froom to W. C. White, 26 July 1928; Froom to W. C. White, 29 July 1928; Froom to W. C. White, 4 October 1928; W. C. White to Froom, 21 January 1929; Froom to W. C. White, 27 January 1929; Froom to W. C. White, 15 April 1929; W. C. White to Froom, 26 April 1929; Froom to W. C. White, 25 November 1929; Froom to W. C. White, 22 April 1930; Froom to W. C. White, 28 September 1930; W. C. White to Froom, 13 December 1934. See also Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915," 27. Fortin quotes particularly from W. C. White's letters to Froom on January 8, 1928 and December 13, 1934. See Fortin, "Plagiarism," 1030.

⁴⁸³ Froom to W. C. White, 15 April 1929. See also Froom to W. C. White, 6 January 1925; Froom to W. C. White, 15 June 1926. That their relations were not always harmonious is suggested by the following incident. In early 1926, Froom and W. C. White corresponded about Ellen White's reading habits to answer questions by participants in the reading course. The question was not generated by the issue of her use of literary sources, but by some Adventists' claim that one should read only the Bible and her writings. When Froom put W. C. White's reply into leaflet form and quoted it at length in the *Review*, W. C. White reacted somewhat disgruntled because had he been informed about the use of his answers, he would have put more effort into providing a more thorough response. See Froom to W. C. White, 3 February 1926; W. C. White to Froom, 14 February 1926; L. E. Froom, "Reading Course Whys and Wherefores," *Review and Herald*, 1 April 1926, 14; W. C. White to Froom, 1 May 1926.

⁴⁸⁴ S. J. Lashier to W. C. White, 15 April 1924, WCWCF, EGWE. So far I have been unable to locate an original copy of Dugger's "challenge." Lashier also mentioned a tract that raised numerous

White had plagiarized the works of other authors and attempted to prove that point again based on her *Sketches from the Life of Paul*.⁴⁸⁵ As the question had come up repeatedly in the last few years, W. C. White was able to provide more definite information about the history of the book and the groundlessness of the charges.⁴⁸⁶ In the fall of 1925, he was

questions. See Jacob Brinkerhoff, et al., *The Visions of the Late Mrs. E. G. White, and the Disappointment of 1844* (Stanberry, MO: Church of God Pub. House, [1924]).

⁴⁸⁵ See W. C. White to Lashier, 28 April 1924. It seems that Dugger wrote his arguments, in fact, based on memory or hearsay because he referred to “Cony Barn Houston *Life of Paul*.” W. C. White pointed out that such a book existed neither in English nor in any other language. Answering the question whether Ellen White had claimed to have written her writings “with an inspired pen” and that she was “absolutely under the control of the Spirit,” W. C. White quoted the following documents: Ellen G. White to Paulson, 14 June 1906; Smith, “A Miracle Called for,” 649; Smith, “Which Are Revealed, Words or Ideas?,” 168, 169; Butler and Oyen, “General Conference Proceedings,” 27 November 1883, 741.

⁴⁸⁶ W. C. White to Lashier, 28 April 1924. Lashier subsequently contacted Dugger and asked him if the challenge was truly an accurate description of his position, a question that Dugger answered in the affirmative. See A. N. Dugger to S. J. Lashier, 16 May 1924, WCWCF, EGWE; S. J. Lashier to W. C. White, 17 July 1924, WCWCF, EGWE. Replying to several inquiries concerning the book, W. C. White repeatedly stated the following points. In 1881 and 1882 the Sabbath school focused on the Life of Christ and in connection to it members read John Cunningham Geikie’s *The Life and Words of Christ* and Ellen White’s *Spirit of Prophecy*, vols. 2 and 3. Starting in 1883, the Sabbath school was supposed to be studying the Acts of the Apostles. *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* by Conybeare and Howson was found in the library of almost every pastor and Sunday School superintendent. W. C. White stated, “It was through my efforts chiefly that the book *Life and Epistles of St. Paul* was purchased by the thousand from the Boston Publisher and were sold to our people everywhere, and clubbed with the *Signs of the Times*. Many of our people who enjoyed the reading of this book declared that they also wanted what Sister White had written on the ‘Life of Paul’ in book form. The Publishers demanded that the copy be prepared at a set time and Mrs. White in her haste to meet the demand for the copy at an early date, gathered together a portion of what she had written upon the Acts of the Apostles, and copied from the *Life of Paul* which had been circulating so widely many paragraphs of description and comment. Some paragraphs she copied word for word—other paragraphs she copied in part and paraphrased in part for brevity because the book she was copying from was very full and she desired greater brevity. When the copy was presented to the printers, quotations marked those passages that were copied word for word, and the question arose how shall we deal with the passages that are paraphrased? The publishers advised that the marks be omitted and this was done. It was done without the least intention of injury or injustice to the Boston Publishers. It was done without any intention or expectation of deceiving the readers regarding the passages copied. There was little reason to believe that anyone should be deceived, because we had already placed more than 3000 copies of this popular *Life of Paul* in the homes of our people.” Two editions of *Sketches from the Life of Paul* were printed and when the publisher requested her approval for a third edition, she declined because she was not satisfied with the book and desired to add new material to it. The Boston publisher of the book by Conybeare and Howson sent “a letter of inquiry and protest” to the Review and Herald. After learning about the nature and circumstances of White’s book, the publisher chose to refrain from any actions. Yet, “this had no connection with the decision that another edition of this book should be printed.” The plates of the book were destroyed in the 1902 fire of the publishing house. The new book eventually appeared as *Acts of the Apostles* in 1911. See W. C. White to V. W. Thompson, 19 June 1923, WCWCF, EGWE; W. C. White to Lashier, 28 April 1924; W. C. White to Ella S. Barr, 28 April 1927, WCWCF, EGWE. See also W. C. White to Washburn, 3 January 1917; W. C. White to Claude E. Holmes, 1 April 1917, WCWCF,

contacted by T. E. Bowen who, confronted with charges made in E. S. Ballenger's *Gathering Call*, was looking for informed answers. W. C. White explained that his mother was not controlled by the Holy Spirit to an extent that the Spirit prescribed specific words to be used on different occasions. Drafting one of the most extensive overviews of the writing process, he outlined the history of her writings from her visions to the writing of letters and to the compiling of material for articles and books.⁴⁸⁷

From July to October 1926, White was contacted once again by Claude Holmes, to clarify issues that the *Gathering Call* had raised in its June issue.⁴⁸⁸ The interaction between Holmes and White was heretofore characterized by mutual respect and friendliness, but this changed when Holmes discovered that White had remarked to another person that Holmes was "making an improper use of unpublished testimonies and injuring the influence of the leaders." In response he unleashed his rage and criticism against White and other leaders.⁴⁸⁹

In July, the *Gathering Call* published an article by John Kolvoord who shared his recollections of a talk with H. W. Kellogg, former vice president of the Seventh-day

EGWE; W. C. White to Stevens, 25 July 1919; W. C. White to Hutches, 9 April 1929. In 1927, he wrote, "That a serious mistake was made by Sister White and by the Publishers in putting out the book as they did without a full acknowledgement regarding the help which the author had received from Conybeare and Howson's book, is freely admitted." See W. C. White to Ella S. Barr, 2 May 1927, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁴⁸⁷ W. C. White to Bowen, 18 November 1925.

⁴⁸⁸ Claude E. Holmes to W. C. White, 21 July 1926, WCWCF, EGWE; Claude E. Holmes to W. C. White, 16 August 1926, WCWCF, EGWE; Claude E. Holmes to W. C. White, 27 August 1926, WCWCF, EGWE; Claude E. Holmes to W. C. White, 4 October 1926, WCWCF, EGWE; Claude E. Holmes to W. C. White, 18 October 1926, WCWCF, EGWE. Ballenger had raised questions concerning Ellen White's amalgamation statement and the suppression of some of her early writings. See E. S. Ballenger, "The Editor Makes Reply," *Gathering Call*, June 1926, 3–5. Ballenger's published letter was a reply to a letter that Claude Holmes had written to him. It was published in the same issue. See Claude E. Holmes, "A Layman Comes to the Defense of the Denomination," *Gathering Call*, June 1926, 2–3.

⁴⁸⁹ Claude E. Holmes to W. C. White, [1926].

Adventist Publishing Association, about *Sketches from the Life of Paul* forty years earlier.⁴⁹⁰ No matter where White went, Ballenger's accusations caused church members to desire proper answers and to "demand that a comprehensive statement be made that will enable our young men to answer the enquiries of laymen." He was hopeful that A. G. Daniells' manuscript on the "shut door," when published, would meet that need.⁴⁹¹ In fact, White recommended the publication of Daniells' and F. M. Wilcox's articles on the shut door in book form.⁴⁹² With individuals who, in his opinion, held views different from his own, White generally tried to deal with them in a courteous and kind manner, attempting to avoid controversy.⁴⁹³

Two years later White reviewed F. C. Gilbert's book, *Divine Predictions of Mrs. Ellen G. White Fulfilled*,⁴⁹⁴ and a book manuscript by G. B. Starr on his experiences with Ellen White. Besides pointing out numerous inaccuracies in these documents,⁴⁹⁵ White

⁴⁹⁰ John Kolvoord, Sr., "A Little Unwritten History," *Gathering Call*, July 1926, 13.

⁴⁹¹ W. C. White to Daniells, 22 June 1906; W. C. White to Currow, 12 July 1906; W. C. White to F. M. Wilcox, 20 October 1926. See also B. R. Spear to W. C. White, 7 February 1926, WCWCF, EGWE, for the influence of Ballenger's charges in some churches. Interestingly, W. C. White had assumed that Butler's statements in the introduction to *Early Writings* (1882) were correct. When E. S. Ballenger asserted that substantial changes had been made in the first edition of *Experience and Views* (1851), White suggested a close examination of that edition with previous material. He felt that "acknowledgement should be made" if it were to be discovered that Ballenger's assertions were actually correct. See W. C. White to Froom, 18 August 1926.

⁴⁹² W. C. White to Hindson, 29 April 1930. See also McArthur, *A. G. Daniells*, 444.

⁴⁹³ An example for that is his dealings with Claude Holmes. See pp. 456, 457. In a different situation he assured W. M. Adams, "I have no love for controversy, and feel no necessity for vindication. My only anxiety is for souls that will be confused." See W. C. White to W. M. Adams, 14 July 1925, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁴⁹⁴ F. C. Gilbert, comp., *Divine Predictions of Mrs. Ellen G. White Fulfilled* (South Lancaster, MA: Good Tidings Press, 1922).

⁴⁹⁵ W. C. White referred to various inaccurate, imprecise, and unfortunate statements that needed to be changed in future editions. His review of the book came six years after its publication because he had never read it consecutively before. See W. C. White to Gilbert, 15 July 1928. Further, White remarked that

deplored the “very extravagant assertions” made in them and felt that without these extravagancies, criticism can be avoided and a more lasting conviction may be made on the minds of the people.⁴⁹⁶ Later, he seemed to suggest that these extravagancies stood in contrast to Ellen White’s clear statements “regarding the words used in her writings.”⁴⁹⁷

In the 1930s, White undertook several attempts to educate the membership on how the writings of his mother had developed. In 1935 he issued a small document on the origin and production of *Steps to Christ* (1892), in response to occasional rumors that the book had been written by Fannie Bolton.⁴⁹⁸ Starting in February, a series of thirty-six articles on experiences of his parents ran in the *Review* for the next thirteen months.⁴⁹⁹ In July 1935, he gave an address to the faculty and students of an advanced Bible school at Pacific Union College on how Ellen White’s books were written, intended to foster a nuanced understanding of her inspiration.⁵⁰⁰ His son Arthur White notes that W. C. White

in G. B. Starr’s manuscript it was sometimes difficult to distinguish between a quotation and a comment by the author because he used quotation marks for things he quoted from memory. Yet, “there [was] no way of verifying them.” See W. C. White to G. B. Starr and R. B. Thurber, 15 July 1928, WCWCF, EGWE.

⁴⁹⁶ W. C. White to Starr and Thurber, 15 July 1928.

⁴⁹⁷ W. C. White to Starr, 17 September 1929. He sent him the following documents: Ellen G. White, “Questions and Answers,” 260, 261; W. C. White to Our General Missionary Agents, 24 July 1911; W. C. White to the Members of the Publishing Committee, 25 July 1911; W. C. White to the General Conference Committee, 30 October 1911. He also asked him to help F. C. Gilbert to “see the blessing that will come to us all if in our efforts to uphold confidence in the messages which God has given his people and which means [*sic*] so much to us, we shall carefully refrain from any form of exaggeration or extravagance.”

⁴⁹⁸ W. C. White, *The Story of “Steps to Christ,”* Elmshaven Leaflets, vol. 2, no. 3 (Elmshaven, CA: Ellen G. White Estate, 1935).

⁴⁹⁹ The series began on February 28, 1935, and it concluded on March 26, 1936. See W. C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: [I.] The Man Who Couldn’t Wait,” *Review and Herald*, 28 February 1935, 8-10; W. C. White, “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: XXXVI. The Movement for Organization Consummated,” *Review and Herald*, 26 March 1936, 6-9.

⁵⁰⁰ W. C. White, “How Ellen White’s Books Were Written, Addresses to Faculty and Students at the 1935 Advanced Bible School.” See also Arthur L. White, “The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915,” 28.

continued to correspond with church leaders on various aspects of her writings and ministry.⁵⁰¹

Summary

W. C. White's correspondence from 1915 to 1930 contains a wealth of material on various aspects concerning the inspiration of Ellen White. Being both her son and a visible representative of the trustees of her writings, he was contacted by numerous people who sought answers on diverse issues relating to her writings and inspiration. His personal relationship to her and his direct involvement in the production of her publications for decades provided him with special insights in the manner in which inspiration operated in her experience. He objected to the theory of verbal inspiration as applied to both Scripture and her writings, and affirmed a concept that allowed for diverse operations of the Holy Spirit on the mind of Ellen White without dominating her or diminishing her freedom of choice. He outlined a process in which the Spirit truly assisted her. In fact, he shared aspects about her work and experience that are not even found in Ellen White's own writings.

Until 1913 he was eager to educate church members and workers on how inspiration operated in the experience of his mother and how her writings were generated. Negative experiences at the fall council of the General Conference, however, caused him to adopt a more cautious approach to inform others about these matters. The following years until the mid-1920s reveal him evincing a special cautiousness with aggressive proponents of verbal-inerrant inspiration. Starting in 1925, White seemed to change his

⁵⁰¹ Arthur L. White, "The Prescott Letter to W. C. White: April 6, 1915," 21.

personal policy as he provided longer and more comprehensive responses to the challenges raised by Ellen White's critics (E. S. Ballenger in the *Gathering Call* and A. N. Dugger's challenge) and her defenders (F. C. Gilbert and G. B. Starr). Both sides operated on the assumption of verbal-inerrant inspiration. In the 1930s he continued to affirm, in a balanced way, faith in the divine origin of her writings while honestly acknowledging the reality of how Ellen White had produced them. Throughout his life White sought to help people understand better the dynamics of how God had led his mother from the prophetic revelation to its development into written form, and then to the varied and complex personal testimonies and published works.

Conclusion

The present chapter dealt with the views of inspiration that A. G. Daniells, J. S. Washburn, F. M. Wilcox, and W. C. White held from the early 1910s to the early 1930s. Besides describing their affirmations, the chapter also traces their objections to other views, possible sources and influences, and the contexts in which they made their statements. They were, to varying degrees, thought leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, not only in the period of this chapter, but also beyond that period. They influenced how believers perceived the inspiration of both Scripture and Ellen White.

The previous chapter showed the presence of both verbal-inerrant views and thought-oriented views on the brink of the new period within Adventism without a living prophetic voice. The ideas that gained influence in the denomination from the late 1880s to the mid-1900s—the verbal-inerrant inspiration of Scripture and White's writings, and Ellen White as the final infallible interpreter of Scripture—continued to exist in certain quarters of the church. Those holding these assumptions concerning inspiration were

susceptible to reject White's inspiration altogether once they discerned the discrepancy between their assumptions and the manner in which her writings were generated. Some church leaders recognized that the failure to modify these assumptions would continue to provide fertile soil for critics of Ellen White's inspiration. Nevertheless, the proponents of a verbal-inerrant inspiration perceived such attempts to inform church members about the actual phenomena in her experience and writing ministry as a liberal threat that diminished White's authority and provided critics with arguments.

J. S. Washburn associated with the proponents of verbal-inerrant inspiration such as S. N. Haskell, and Claude E. Holmes and became critical of church leaders such as A. G. Daniells and W. W. Prescott because they deviated from some traditional interpretations of biblical prophecy and entertained a moderate, thought-focused view of Ellen White's inspiration. Washburn represented a number of church members and workers who shared these verbal views. It is nevertheless noteworthy that Daniells, F. M. Wilcox, and W. C. White, who all held thought-focused views, remained more or less in leadership positions for the remainder of their lives. Washburn's attacks may have been instrumental in removing Daniells from the General Conference presidency in 1922, yet Daniells continued to serve as General Conference secretary for four more years and was directly involved in the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association and *Ministry* magazine.

Wilcox tried to inform church members on matters of inspiration through the columns of the *Review and Herald* for several decades, and was appreciated by many people from various parties in the church for his honest, faith-affirming attitude. W. C. White was often perceived as an authority on his mother's writings and consulted by

church leaders and members on various issues. None of the individuals examined in this chapter seemed to experience a change in their perception of the divine inspiration of the Bible writers or Ellen White. One should certainly be careful to avoid extrapolating from their experience to the situation of the entire denomination. It nevertheless seems safe to conclude that at least these four individuals had formed their concept of inspiration during Ellen White's life time, and the interaction with those holding different views after her death only seemed to reinforce their own assumptions and perceptions. Thus the 1919 Bible Conference only offered a platform for them to share their perspectives.

The critical claims of Ballenger in the mid and late 1920s, and by extension those of D. M. Canright in *Life of Mrs. E. G. White* (1919), prompted Daniells and Wilcox, however, to research the questions raised by the criticism. They also seem to have induced W. C. White to share his memories and insights on how inspiration functioned in his mother's experience and in the production of her writings. All three men, Daniells, Wilcox, and W. C. White believed that the promotion of verbal, unrealistic views of inspiration was more dangerous to the prophetic role of Ellen White in the church than the assertions of the critics, because those views provided a foundation for critical arguments, reinforced the parameters in which the critical arguments operated, and maintained the potential for those holding these unrealistic assumptions to overreact when confronted with dichotomies between their assumptions and the reality of Ellen White's experience.

While other Protestants were exposed to the conflict between Fundamentalists and Modernists, struggling over the reliability and historicity of the biblical text, Seventh-day Adventists focused largely on the particulars of divine operation in the experience of an

inspired person in their midst. Many Adventists seemed to view the Fundamentalist movement as a welcome defender of the reliability of Scripture against higher biblical criticism, yet Adventist proponents of verbal-inerrant inspiration felt an even stronger historical and doctrinal affinity to the Fundamentalists—who came largely from the Reformed Protestant tradition and assumed a more dominant divine influence in human affairs—than Adventists who believed in a moderate, thought-focused view of inspiration.⁵⁰² Considering the hermeneutical tensions among American Protestants, Adventists were still quite united in their belief that the messages of the Bible and in Ellen White's writings resulted from the supernatural working of God's Spirit through inspiration and were therefore authoritative in the life of the believer.

⁵⁰² This seems to support the observations of Arnold Colin Reye, "Protestant Fundamentalism and the Adventist Church in the 1920s," paper presented at the Historic Adventism Symposium, Sydney, NSW, 1993, CAR, 40, 41.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Seventh-day Adventists emerged in the context of several religious trends within American Protestant Christianity in the mid-nineteenth century that affirmed their faith in the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible. The influence of new scientific and religious trends over the course of the next seventy years increasingly eroded, however, the belief of many Protestant theologians and lay members in the inspiration and historical reliability of the Bible and induced conservative Christians to retreat to verbal views of inspiration in the attempt to ensure a reliable biblical canon.

Meanwhile, Seventh-day Adventists witnessed Ellen G. White's claim to divine inspiration. With two sets of writings produced by divine inspiration, Scripture and White's writings, Adventists were confronted more directly with questions about the nature, operation, and product of inspiration, the personality of the prophetic claimant, and the role of her writings, particularly in relation to the Bible. The various answers that Adventists gave to these questions have been the focus of this study. More particularly, this study has examined the affirmations and objections of selected Seventh-day Adventist leaders concerning divine inspiration from 1880 to 1930. It further identified sources and influences underlying their views and situated their statements within the contexts in which they made them.

This chapter first provides a brief summary of the material presented. Then some conclusions are provided that demonstrate the development and interaction of the views on inspiration that the individuals examined in this study held. Finally, some suggestions are given for future study.

Summary

This section presents an overview of the content of the first four chapters of this study. Focus is given to the high points in the chronological progression of ideas and interactions between various individuals and groups.

Chapter 1 provides information on the historical, theological, and socio-cultural background to Adventist perceptions of inspiration. In the mid-nineteenth century American Protestant scholars were aware of at least five theories of inspiration—verbal-plenary inspiration, thought inspiration, inspiration of the person, degrees of inspiration, and partial inspiration. A brief appraisal of proponents of these theories suggests that while they agreed on the basic contours of the respective theories, they often differed on fine details about the human freedom in the inspiration process and potential imperfections in the final product. There was further overlap between the different theories so that some of them could even be complimentary.

Seventh-day Adventists emerged from three religious traditions—Wesleyan Methodism, Restorationism, and Millerism—that were characterized by a strong belief in the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture. The occasional use of dictation language and the frequent emphasis on the divine origin and the absolute reliability of Scripture could easily be interpreted as affirmations of the theory of verbal-plenary inspiration. Despite their employment of such language and emphases, Methodist writers seemed to

allow for a more active involvement of the human participant in the inspiration process. The writings of Restorationists and Millerite writers contain almost no unambiguous and explicit statements on the nature and manner of inspiration, suggesting a somewhat diffused understanding on inspiration.

From the late 1840s to the late 1870s Seventh-day Adventists emphasized their belief in the divine inspiration and reliability of both the Bible and Ellen White's writings, yet they commented more on her inspiration than on that of the Bible writers. Beyond the occasional use of dictation imagery, they nevertheless failed to specify the particulars of the nature and manner of inspiration. The existence of a diffused view of inspiration among them may have allowed for different unspoken assumptions concerning inspiration to arise. Those familiar with White's experience and the methods of producing her writings concluded that changes of language and adaptations for different purposes were permissible as long as the original ideas and messages were retained. They likewise perceived a difference between the sacred and the common in her experience. Those unfamiliar with these circumstances generally held word-focused views of inspiration. Ellen White perceived inspiration as a dynamic process in which the Holy Spirit assisted her in various ways to convey God's message in her own words. Appeals to her reason and conscience to communicate the message faithfully suggest that she did not perceive inspiration as a dominating, controlling influence by the Spirit.

Nineteenth century Protestant Christianity faced numerous challenges from science, theology, and society. Seventh-day Adventists felt an affinity to the conservative sector of American Protestantism in its rejection of the scientific and theological

criticism, yet they focused on proclaiming their end-time message and not on refuting the claims of biblical criticism.

Chapter 2 focuses on Uriah Smith, George I. Butler, Dudley M. Canright, and Ellen G. White from their first explicit statements on divine inspiration to the post-Minneapolis years, 1880 to 1895.

In the spring of 1882, Smith received a testimony from Ellen White concerning the tensions and conflicts surrounding the Battle Creek College faculty. As that letter seemed to conflict with his memory and perception of the events, the individuals involved, and himself, he determined that the letter was based merely on her personal opinion rather than on divine revelation. Heretofore Smith had assumed that a testimony was always preceded by and based upon a direct revelation. White's insistence that it constituted a testimony threw him into a crisis: he was forced to adopt a form of partial inspiration and to judge between vision and testimony. After about eighteen months his perception began to change, and as he developed a better understanding of certain aspects of that letter, he felt able to accept her inspiration without reservations.

Later in 1882, Ellen White's *Early Writings* was published and soon attracted much criticism from the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate*, a periodical of the Marion-based Church of God (Seventh Day), for its differences from her earliest documents. Butler took the lead in defending her inspiration and clarifying the particulars of the Spirit's operation. In late 1883, the planned revision of the *Testimonies of the Church* was criticized by some ministers for fear of potential criticism from adherents of the Church of God and by others on the assumption that inspired language should not be changed. To justify the revision process, to forestall any criticism, and to educate its membership on

the process of inspiration, the General Conference adopted a resolution that changes of the language were possible because inspiration generally operates on the thoughts. In addition, Butler wrote ten articles to develop a biblical teaching of inspiration that allowed for the Holy Spirit to operate in diverse manners or degrees without diminishing the reliability and accuracy of inspiration's final product. His remarks on the imperfections of language and the lack of comprehensiveness were nevertheless often misunderstood by Adventist scholars. Yet, at the time, the articles were apparently well received.

Over the years Canright had been plagued by alternating periods of enthusiasm and depression. His attitude towards White's personality, visions, and writings was often affected by his momentary emotional state—full affirmations of her divine inspiration alternated with phases of doubt and resentment. Whichever attitude he held at the moment was frequently formulated in absolute and unrealistic terms. In 1886 he experienced several episodes of distress and disappointments that affected his trust in the Adventist teachings and beliefs. Several months after his separation from the denomination, Canright began to criticize Ellen White. His series of thirteen articles in the *Michigan Christian Advocate* from July to October 1887 show that most of his arguments were copied from previous critics of Ellen White and Adventism. He nevertheless synthesized these arguments and added the charge of literary theft. Interestingly, Canright's arguments presupposed that Ellen White had claimed the verbal inspiration of her writings.

Besides Canright's accusations, Adventists were at the same time confronted with new charges by the Church of God (Seventh Day). Thus in the summer and fall of 1887,

Smith and Butler responded both to their charges and to Canright's accusations. The responses of Smith and Butler clarified once again that Adventists believed in the inspiration of the thoughts rather than the words, suggesting that the language could be modified as long as the ideas were retained. Both Smith and Butler were more or less aware of the manner in which Ellen White's writings were produced. At the Minneapolis General Conference session in late 1888 and subsequently, Ellen White's support for E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones threw Smith and Butler into doubts concerning the reliability of her testimonies. Butler, who initially suggested that Scripture contains uninspired albeit true statements, began to surmise that some of White's statements might not be inspired after all. Smith returned to his earlier distinction between acceptable and unreliable portions in her writings.

Chapter 3 focuses on A. T. Jones, W. W. Prescott, S. N. Haskell, and Ellen G. White from the post-Minneapolis years until White's death, from 1895 to 1915. That period may be divided into two phases. From the late 1880s to the early 1900s the theory of verbal inspiration gained widespread influence among Adventists in North America, yet in the 1900s several leading proponents of that theory were prompted to reevaluate their views of inspiration.

Haskell, Jones, and several editors of the *Signs of the Times* already believed in the verbal inspiration of Scripture in the mid-1880s. After the Minneapolis General Conference session, George I. Butler's theory of degrees of inspiration experienced a heavy blow as Ellen White and those connected with the *Signs of the Times* criticized it. The theory of verbal inspiration held a lot of promise because it seemed to ensure the absolute reliability of inspired writings. Prescott's discovery of Louis Gaussen's

Theopneustia and the subsequent promotion of the book by Dr. J. H. Kellogg among students and workers helped promote the theory among Adventists on the East Coast. Shortly afterwards in 1891, Ellen White left for Australia and remained there for the next nine years. Meanwhile the promotion of the verbal inspiration theory gained influence among Adventists in North America and by 1893 Jones began to stress Ellen White's verbal inspiration, the absolute perspicuity of inspired writings, and White's role as a final, infallible interpreter of Scripture. Prescott's involvement in the editorial work of White's writings may have prevented him from adopting these additional points concerning Ellen White's inspiration, yet Haskell seemed to advocate to the ideas of her verbal inspiration and her authoritative role as interpreter of the Bible.

Ellen White's return to the United States in 1900 and changes in the denominational leadership confronted particularly Kellogg and Jones with realities that challenged several of their basic assumptions concerning White and her inspiration. All of this occurred in the context of the crisis revolving around Kellogg's panentheistic views and Battle Creek Sanitarium. Jones felt unable to harmonize White's perception of these events with his own perception. As a result, he concluded that not everything she had said and written was inspired, leaving him to judge what was inspired and what was not. He felt betrayed and deceived by her. He maintained his basic view but rejected her divine inspiration as she did not fit his concept of inspiration. Ellen White's dialog with other individuals, such as Dr. David Paulson, revealed that a number of them had assumed that everything she said and wrote was inerrantly and verbally inspired, an assumption to which she objected. She referred to her previous writings, in particular the preface of the *Great Controversy* and a passage in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5,

to substantiate her view of inspiration. The communications allowed her to repeat and refine the distinction between the sacred and the common in her experience of inspiration.

As the Kellogg crisis receded into the past, Prescott began to advocate an interpretation of the *tāmīd* (daily, continual) in Daniel 8 that seemed to conflict with a statement that Ellen White had made almost sixty years earlier. Haskell and others who maintained the verbal inspiration of both the Bible and White's writings as well as the idea that her writings were a final, infallible commentary on Scripture, perceived the new interpretation as an effort to diminish White's inspiration and question her authoritative role in matters of biblical interpretation. The revision of the *Great Controversy* in 1911 was also considered problematic because the language was changed and, in a few instances, historical details were adapted. But W. C. White's assertion that all of the changes occurred under his mother's supervision did not change Haskell's thinking that the revision was an illegitimate tampering with an inspired text. Furthermore, Haskell was not convinced by W. C. White's assertions that his mother had never claimed verbal inspiration and the role of an authority in matters of history.

Chapter 4 focuses on A. G. Daniells, J. S. Washburn, F. M. Wilcox, and W. C. White during the first fifteen years after Ellen White's death, from 1915 to 1930. The early 1910s commenced with tension between Adventist leaders on the verbal or thought-based inspiration of Ellen White and her role in matters of historical details and biblical interpretation. Proponents of her verbal inspiration questioned the loyalty of those opposing a general verbal inspiration of her writings and a final authoritative role in historical and interpretative details.

W. C. White was directly involved in the revision of the *Great Controversy* (1911), and for the next two years he tried to inform church leaders and members concerning the process of inspiration, the production of his mother's writings, and the changes made in the book. Negative responses persuaded him to be more cautious in his efforts to foster a better understanding of inspiration, and until the 1920s he seemed to communicate his views only to people receptive to them. He avoided conflicts with those holding strict views concerning his mother's inspiration such as Claude Holmes and J. S. Washburn. Not only did they advocate the verbal inspiration of all of Ellen White's writings and their final authority in matters of historical details and biblical interpretation; they even attacked the character of those disagreeing with their theological positions and campaigned to remove Daniells from his office in 1922. Such endeavors only increased after fragmentary reports of statements from the 1919 Bible Conference began to circulate among members. To avoid misunderstandings among students, church workers, and members, the minutes of the meetings were not released; thus such fragmentary reports largely shaped the public opinion of what had been discussed during the conference.

The publication of D. M. Canright's *Life of Mrs. E. G. White* raised a number of questions concerning Ellen White's claim of inspiration, her literary customs, and the early Adventist belief in the "shut door," all issues that Daniells tried to answer in a letter to F. E. Dufty in 1919. His answers became the initial draft for several publications on these subjects in the next couple years. In 1926 E. S. Ballenger raised similar questions in the columns of the *Gathering Call*. About the same time, A. N. Dugger, president of the Church of God (Seventh Day), issued a challenge to Seventh-day Adventists concerning

Ellen White's inspiration. All these criticisms operated within the framework of the assumption that Ellen White had claimed the verbal-inerrant inspiration for all her writings, assumptions that were upheld by some vocal Adventists.

W. C. White, Daniells, and F. M. Wilcox perceived these assumptions as more dangerous than the actual arguments of the critics. Thus Daniells and Wilcox published numerous articles to clarify these questions and emphasize that Ellen White herself had never believed in verbal inspiration and that she made a distinction between the common and the sacred realm in her life. W. C. White clarified his mother's experience from receiving visions to preparing her writings for publication in greater detail than ever before. Since these clearer expositions were primarily made in his correspondence, their impact was probably fairly limited. The efforts of Daniells and Wilcox to educate the church concerning these matters shows that at the beginning of the 1930s the views of verbal-inerrant inspiration and a dynamic, thought-focused view of inspiration coexisted in the denomination. Both sides attempted to emphasize the divine origin and reliability of her writings.

Thus Seventh-day Adventists initially (prior to 1880) had a basic but diffused concept of the divine inspiration of the Bible and Ellen White's writings. The advocacy of the theory of degrees of inspiration was only short-lived. Its demise in the late 1880s made room for diffusion of a belief in Scripture's verbal inspiration and soon afterwards of White's verbal inspiration and interpretative authority. The 1900s witnessed tensions between that belief and the real phenomena of White's inspiration experience, causing people to review their concepts of inspiration. By the 1910s the selected individuals felt confirmed in their positions, whether verbal-inerrant inspiration or dynamic, thought-

focused inspiration. In the early 1920s these views coexisted with increased tensions, but these apparently abated by the second part of the decade.

Conclusions

This section presents the significant contributions of this study and outlines different Seventh-day Adventist perceptions of divine inspiration—degrees of inspiration, verbal-inerrant inspiration, and thought-focused inspiration.

Theories of Inspiration

The study has suggested several significant insights concerning the different theories or concepts of inspiration. Some statements concerned the inspiration of the Bible, but it seems that its inspiration was never really a matter of discussion. The majority of discussions concerned the inspiration of Ellen White and her literary work. Several important insights are outlined below.

1. A survey of proponents of the different theories of inspiration in nineteenth-century America has shown that each theory had a common denominator, but also allowed for a certain flexibility of other factors such as the existence or non-existence of inconsequential mistakes in the product of inspiration. For example, different proponents of thought inspiration agreed on the basic concept, but disagreed on whether the final product of inspiration was completely reliable or not. Furthermore, theories of inspiration are generally considered definite and distinct models, yet as some theories define the object (words, thoughts, the person) of inspiration and others the modes and the extent of inspiration (degrees of and partial inspiration), the elements of several theories could even be considered complementary. The “labels” used to identify a specific concept of

inspiration, such as verbal inspiration, thought inspiration, and degrees of inspiration, are therefore too imprecise to be meaningful.

2. So-called dictation language and imagery was employed by proponents and opponents of verbal inspiration. It seems that they used such language as figures of speech to emphasize the divine origin of Scripture. Scholars should therefore avoid interpreting the mere presence of such language as direct evidence for a dictation concept. They have to look for more direct evidence in order to determine whether the specific writer actually held a word-focused concept of inspiration, such as mechanical inspiration or verbal inspiration. The absence of direct evidence should remind researchers to avoid jumping to conclusions.

3. Ellen White's personal experience of inspiration did not fit any of the regular theories of inspiration. The nature of her visions and dreams differed, and the divine assistance extended to her in the transmission of these visions was diverse, dynamic, and flexible. Geographical and chronological details were often not provided, and the choice of language was usually left to her. As a result, she utilized the writings of others as literary repositories to compensate for her language imperfections and as aids to locate the times and places of scenes presented to her. She distinguished between the common, uninspired realm of life and the sacred, inspired realm. She nevertheless emphasized the authority and trustworthiness of those messages that she had received through revelation and/or inspiration. While she emphasized the reality of common writings, she also stressed the danger of standing in judgment over inspired writings. The fact that inspiration was in her experience dynamic and diverse may have caused her and her son, W. C. White, to avoid setting a specific theory of inspiration in stone. Of all the views

studied, W. C. White's view of inspiration seems to align most closely to that of his mother. They seemed to feel that a conceptualized system would give the impression that the Holy Spirit always operated in the same way or that the different modes of his working always operated in concert. W. C. White suggested that her experience and views of inspiration were well reflected in the essay on inspiration by Henry Alford, a document that has not received much attention within Adventist circles. Instead of referring to the phenomenon that Ellen White experienced as "thought inspiration," as Adventist scholars have frequently done, it would be more fitting to describe that experience as a dynamic, incarnational, multi-faceted divine inspiration.

4. The nonexistence of a systematic theory of inspiration, or the existence of only a basic affirmation of divine inspiration as it related to Scripture and Ellen White, allowed for different assumptions among Adventists about the particulars of inspiration. The diffused understanding among early Adventists thus allowed for both word-focused and thought-focused views. Some Adventists have occasionally suggested that they wanted to refrain from formulating a particular theory of inspiration, without realizing that they actually did advocate a theory. In 1888, J. H. Waggoner voiced this concern, combined with a critique of the theory of degrees, yet at the same time he advocated the verbal theory promoted by Louis Gaussen. Thus people may not have explicitly held a specific theory of inspiration, but they nevertheless entertained certain assumptions concerning the nature and manner of inspiration.

5. The resolution of the 1883 General Conference session concerning divine inspiration has often been interpreted as an affirmation of the theory of thought inspiration, overlooking the fact that the resolution presents a short yet complex view by

affirming the general inspiration of the thoughts and allowing for the giving of words in some cases. It further acknowledged that inspiration did not remove the struggle that Ellen White experienced in communicating the inspired message and the “imperfections” of language that came as a result. While the resolution mentioned these phenomena, it avoided conceptualizing them into a system.

6. George Butler’s theory of degrees of inspiration has been mistakenly associated with the idea of varying degrees of factual accuracy and the attempt to diminish the authority of Ellen White’s writings. In fact, he endeavored to develop a theory, based on biblical phenomena, that integrated various modes or manners of the Holy Spirit’s operation in the inspiration process, the assurance of complete factual reliability, the lack of perfection in language, the missing comprehensiveness and the progressive revelation of the presented truths, and the distinction between the sacred, inspired sphere and the common, uninspired sphere in the prophet’s experience. All these elements mirrored in one way or another the experience of Ellen White and remained within the parameters of the resolution of the General Conference session in 1883. Butler’s choice of an existing theory, i.e. the theory of degrees of inspiration, nevertheless evoked negative reactions as is evident from the subsequent perception of his theory. Another problematic aspect was his suggestion that the accepted corpus of inspired writings contained uninspired portions, despite his emphasis on their accuracy. While Ellen White distinguished between the common and the sacred in her experience, she opposed judging between inspired and uninspired parts within the corpus of inspired writings.

Areas of Tension

Seventh-day Adventists faced tensions as a result of differing assumptions concerning inspiration, particularly the inspiration of Ellen White. The following paragraphs describe four points of tension, to be concluded with a brief description of contemporary harmonizing efforts.

1. Some people assumed that White had claimed divine inspiration for everything she had said and written. However, she had indicated in several places that one had to distinguish between the common and the sacred in her experience. Nevertheless, this circumstance was probably better known to people close to her than to most church members. This assumption seemed to gain widespread influence among American Adventists during the 1890s when she lived in Australia, as the statements of David Paulson suggest. Those holding that assumption were prone to question White's inspiration altogether when they encountered aspects of her common, everyday-life experience (human fallibility and imperfection) as is evident in A. T. Jones' experience.

2. The idea that Ellen White had claimed verbal inspiration was assumed by some of her strongest defenders and many of her severest critics. Her defenders objected to the revision of the language in her writings, often interpreting such revisions as attempts to omit inspired truths or to insert heterodox teachings into her writings. They frequently manifested a spirit of suspicion and criticism. Discovering White's practice of preparing her writings prompted some people to review their position on inspiration in general and on her inspiration in particular. Insights into the literary and editorial process may have helped W. W. Prescott to move from a verbal inspiration view to a thought-focused view.

Unwilling or unable to modify their view of inspiration, others rejected the claim that Ellen White was inspired at all. Their subsequent criticism usually operated within

the framework that she had claimed verbal inspiration. That verbal-inspiration framework is visible in the criticism of Cornelius DeVos, D. M. Canright, A. T. Jones, E. S. Ballenger, and others. Proponents of a dynamic thought-based view of inspiration, such as F. M. Wilcox, A. G. Daniells, and W. C. White, considered the continued advocacy of the verbal inspiration of all of Ellen White's writings by Adventists dangerous because it allegedly supported the charges of the critics and promoted thought patterns among church members that were incorrect.

3. Another area of tension among Adventists was the role ascribed to Ellen White's writings in interpreting biblical passages. Proponents of her verbal inspiration often attributed to her the role of the final, infallible interpreter of the Bible. Proponents of a thought-focused view of inspiration generally valued her statements on biblical passages as a spiritual commentary on Scripture, but not as the final and exhaustive interpretation of a specific biblical passage. Denying to her the final authority on biblical interpretation nevertheless attracted the criticism of those who affirmed that interpretive role because they felt that this denial questioned the inspiration and authority of her writings. While Ellen White commented on biblical passages, she pointed to Scripture as the final authority in matters of faith and practice. Her unwillingness to be the final arbiter of truth permitted her fellow believers through their study of the Bible to develop their own understanding and therefore never completely solved the issue of her interpretative weight.

4. The accuracy of historical minutiae in Ellen White's historical writings became a matter of debate after the revision of the *Great Controversy* in 1911. Some believers felt that nothing should have been changed in the book while others argued that more

should have been changed. Following his mother's wish, W. C. White asked for a review of the historical quotations and references to insure their accuracy. They reviewed these suggestions and considered many of them helpful. In some cases, suggestions were made that they declined as they conflicted with the scenes that Ellen White had seen.

Interestingly, in some cases, such as her amalgamation statements, Ellen White chose not to include them in her later writings to avoid misunderstandings, prejudice, and misuse. She seemed to distinguish between scenes seen in vision, illustrations found in historical works, and details revealed to her but of lesser significance to the overall great controversy narrative. Her experience of inspiration indicated a divine assistance that usually left the human freedom of choice intact. Those who believed in the verbal inspiration of her writings, however, had difficulties comprehending these distinctions and accepting changes in her writings. One of the biggest questions was apparently how much divine influence or control was necessary to strengthen their need for safety so that they could be certain that the final product was trustworthy. This need for safety was particularly evident among those who were suspicious of church leaders who differed with them in their theological views. They seemed to suggest that the final product could only be trusted if it was produced under absolute divine control, a standard that they certainly did not require from other human communication. These individuals had an affinity for Presbyterian theologians and the Fundamentalists, possibly because they too emphasized a more direct, dominating divine control over the inspiration process.

5. In the early 1920s, F. M. Wilcox tried to overcome existing tensions by emphasizing the agreements among both adherents of verbal inspiration and those of thought-focused inspiration. He appealed to both groups to avoid condemning members

of the other group for their particular differences because both groups wanted to trust and apply the divinely inspired truths. It is unclear how successful his appeal was—something that a study of the 1930s and 1940s might reveal—but his articles in the late 1920s portray him as someone who realized that it was unavoidable to confront some of the false assumptions of the verbal inspiration framework. W. C. White tried both to inform people privately about the particulars of his mother’s experience and to avoid conflict with militant individuals. This balancing act may have been effective on an individual basis.

Methodological Issues

This study has selected a number of key Seventh-day Adventist thinkers and examined their affirmations, objections, and the influences on them over an extended period. The examination of the literary, historical, and biographical contexts of these individuals’ statements on inspiration has revealed several methodological issues of previous studies.

1. A frequent methodological issue appearing in the research of previous scholars has been the issue of generalization. As historians are by necessity forced to reconstruct the past from existing primary sources—many documents are no longer extant—there will always be a potential for inadvertent distortion. Drawing a conclusion based on a single statement nevertheless increases the potential for distortions. This may particularly be the case when researchers interpret a statement without paying sufficient attention to its immediate literary context, the author’s general mindset or developing thought, and the historical context in which the statement was made.

A few examples may suffice to illustrate this point. A statement by G. W. Morse in 1888 was interpreted as a rejection of a mechanical view of inspiration, yet the literary context of that statement specifies no type of inspiration whatsoever. In a letter to W. C. White in 1915, W. W. Prescott expressed his frustration with changes in the *Great Controversy*, yet they did not result, as previously suggested, from his supposed belief in Ellen White's verbal inspiration, but from his perception that the idea of a statement had been changed and that a proper education of the Adventist membership on inspiration and the production of her books had been neglected. By this time he no longer believed in the verbal inspiration of Scripture and it is questionable whether he ever advocated the verbal inspiration of White's writings. F. M. Wilcox has been perceived as a proponent of verbal inspiration, based on one statement in a letter in 1928, yet numerous primary sources before and after the one statement on which the previous conclusion was based explicitly deny the verbal inspiration theory, suggesting a *lapsus linguae* in that letter.

2. Another methodological mistake by previous researchers has been the tendency to read modern understandings of specific terms into past documents without paying sufficient attention to the author's use of that term. A case in point is George Butler's article series on degrees of inspiration in 1884. His use of the terms "degrees of inspiration" and "imperfections" has led scholars to conclude that Butler had degrees of accuracies and factual imperfections in mind. They further contrasted these views with the 1883 General Conference resolution on inspiration and Ellen White's personal views. However, they overlooked the fact that Butler actually emphasized the factual reliability of inspired writings and defined "imperfections" as the lack of perfect language and comprehensiveness. Likewise, researchers confused Ellen White's critique of the judging

between inspired and uninspired portions of her writings with Butler's endeavor to highlight the diverse modes or manners, unfortunately called "degrees," of the Holy Spirit's dynamic working in the inspiration process.

3. The sources generally provide an insight into the thinking of church leaders and thought leaders (i.e., people whose writings were preserved), yet the views and assumptions of church members may have been very different. Without sufficient source material from local members, researchers are left to extrapolate from church leaders' responses the probable views held by members.

4. These discoveries have shown the need to approach theological statements from various perspectives. To understand a statement properly and apply it correctly to the world of modern readers, researchers have to take into account the literary, biographical, and historical contexts of that statement.

Future Study

A challenge for any research is the absence of once existing primary sources. Research depends on the discovery of such sources. A couple of examples will be mentioned. The *Advent and Sabbath Advocate* extra of July 17, 1883 is mentioned in other sources, but no copy of that issue has yet been found. Locating one would shed light on the views to which Seventh-day Adventists responded. Furthermore, Uriah Smith objected to statements made in a small pamphlet entitled *Marks or Ellipsis*, published probably about 1887, yet so far all attempts to unearth the document itself have been unsuccessful. D. M. Canright employed language and arguments that could be seen as indicators of a verbal inspirationist position, yet locating direct, unequivocal evidence of this would be extremely valuable in determining his actual concept of inspiration. In

addition, the discovery of the misplaced letter from D. E. Robinson to W. C. White, dated September 5, 1919, containing his report of the 1919 Bible Conference, would clarify what exactly W. C. White responded positively to. Another mixed experience was, on the one hand, the joy of finding shorthand notes of W. W. Prescott's lecture about the inspiration of the Bible on March 2, 1891, and, on the other hand, the frustration of not being able to get these notes transcribed. It would be beneficial to get these notes, written in H. E. Rogers' variation of the Graham system of shorthand, transcribed. Fortunately, there are sufficient publications and correspondence to give reasonable certainty to the development and conclusions presented here.

The nature and limitations of this study points to the need for other research subjects. The writings of the individuals studied above have been considered primarily until the early 1930s although some of them lived longer. Research could be extended to include their later writings. A study of just one individual, such as W. C. White, and his interaction with church members and workers, would provide a more thorough perspective into his views, growth, and influence within the changing milieu of Adventism.

The study of the concepts of these individuals concerning inspiration shows an important but limited view of the developments and discussions in Seventh-day Adventism. Other individuals could be studied and compared with those studied here to provide a bigger picture of developments in Adventism. Studying individuals such as J. N. Loughborough, M. C. Wilcox, B. L. House, L. E. Froom, C. L. Taylor, L. R. Conradi, and others would certainly be quite insightful. As more individuals are studied, the more realistic and nuanced the view of the developments in these years will become.

Of course, the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church did not end in 1930. It would be helpful to continue beyond 1930 in studying the continuing interaction between the proponents of different concepts of inspiration. The developments from the 1970s to the 1990s have been studied by several scholars. The collective memory of these years is still fresh as many who engaged in these discussions are still alive. The developments from 1930 to 1970 may nevertheless need further study to understand the discussions that began in the 1970s.

There are several areas of study that were occasionally mentioned in this study, but they still need more scholarly attention. It would thus be very helpful to investigate how the use of Ellen White's writings in Adventist publications has changed over the years and how the use of her writings did or did not influence Adventists' use of the Bible. A better understanding of these and other related topics would further complete the picture that has been presented here.

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Essay on Archives and Manuscript Collections

This essay describes the principal archives, collections, and unpublished sources used in this study. Published materials will be treated in the final section of the Bibliography.

Archive and Special Collections, Stockwell-Mudd Library, Albion College Albion, Michigan

The archive holds records of Albion College and the West Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church for the last one-hundred seventy years. Of special value to this study is the microfilm collection of the *Michigan Christian Advocate*, a periodical of the Methodist Church in Michigan that published a series of articles by Dudley M. Canright on Ellen White and Seventh-day Adventism in 1887. While Canright's later writings have been discussed in Adventist scholarly writings, his articles from the *Michigan Christian Advocate* were never directly consulted.

Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan

The Center for Adventist Research is a combined repository of Adventist and Adventist-related materials as well as documents related to Ellen G. White. The Center holds one of the largest Adventist collections of monographs, serials, dissertations,

theses, research papers, correspondence, church records, and numerous manuscript collections. It also has an extensive document file and both duplicate and original material from the Ellen G. White Estate main office. Of special value are the private manuscript collections.

**Ellen G. White Estate, Main Office,
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists,
Silver Spring, Maryland**

The Ellen G. White Estate is one of the most important archives for this study. Ellen White's unpublished letters and manuscripts, her incoming correspondence file, the James White correspondence file, and the William Clarence White correspondence file were indispensable for this study. In addition, the Estate has made available online numerous shelf documents and other materials.

**General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day),
Broomfield, Colorado**

The Church of God (Seventh Day) is a descendent of the Marion, Iowa, party, a group of Sabbath-keeping Adventists that separated from the Seventh-day Adventists in the early 1860s. The Church holds the original periodicals and records of the denomination. Of particular interest for this study are the *Hope of Israel* from 1863 to 1872, the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate and the Hope of Israel* from 1872-1874, and the *Advent and Sabbath Advocate* from 1874 to 1888. The Church has an almost complete collection of that periodical whereas other repositories have not more than one copy. The periodical contains articles critiquing Ellen White's prophetic claim and reports about their interaction with Seventh-day Adventists.

**Heritage Research Center, Del E. Webb Memorial Library,
Loma Linda University,
Loma Linda, California**

The Department of Archives and Special Collections and the Ellen G. White Estate Branch office are located together but administrated separately in the Del E. Webb Memorial Library. Like other Branch offices of the Ellen G. White Estate, many of the Ellen White-related resources located at the main office in Silver Spring, Maryland, are available in copy form at Loma Linda. The Center has an extensive collection of Adventist-related monographs, serials, dissertations, theses, document files, correspondence, and manuscript collections. Of particular value to this study is the Francis M. Wilcox collection and the document files on G. I. Butler, D. M. Canright, A. G. Daniells, A. T. Jones, David Paulson, W. W. Prescott, Uriah Smith, and inspiration.

**Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research,
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists,
Silver Spring, Maryland**

The Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research is the official depository for the records of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Office has an extensive collection of denominational periodicals and correspondence of the presidents and secretaries of the General Conference. The online collection of periodicals, committee minutes, and Bible conference minutes has allowed a depth and extent of research that is extremely beneficial to this study. Of special value to this study is also the correspondence of Arthur G. Daniells, president of the General Conference from 1901 to 1922.

**Special Collections, Brown Library,
Abilene Christian University,
Abilene, Texas**

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